

Sharm still top tourist destination, city of peace



Rouhani: It's up to Muslims to correct Islam's image



Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' returns to Germany in new form



Trail Blazers humble Cavs, 76ers nab rare win



## LAWMAKERS REJECT PROPOSED MEASURES TO REDUCE WELFARE

NEW ANTI-CORRUPTION LAW TO BE APPROVED ON JAN 12



Min 05°  
Max 20°  
High Tide 00:31 & 14:44  
Low Tide 08:14 & 20:03



150 FILLS  
NO: 16739  
40 PAGES

## IRAQ DECLARES VICTORY OVER IS IN RAMADI

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq's army said yesterday it had defeated Islamic State fighters in a provincial capital west of Baghdad, the first major victory for the US-trained force since it collapsed in the face of an assault by the militants 18 months ago. Victory in Ramadi, capital of mainly Sunni-Muslim Anbar province in the Euphrates River valley west of the capital, deprives Islamic State militants of their biggest prize of 2015. The fighters captured it in May after government troops fled in a defeat which prompted Washington to take a hard look at strategy against the militants.

After encircling the city for weeks, the Iraqi military launched a campaign to retake it last week, and made a final push to seize the central administration complex yesterday. "By controlling the complex this means that we have defeated them in Ramadi," said Sabah Al-Numani, a spokesman for the force leading the fight on the government side. "The next step is to clear pockets that could exist here or there in the city."

State television broadcast footage of troops, Humvee vehicles and tanks advancing through Ramadi streets amid piles of rubble and collapsed houses. Some districts appeared to have been completely destroyed by the advance. Television also showed nighttime celebrations in mainly Shiite cities south of Baghdad, for the victory in Anbar, with people dancing in the streets and waving Iraqi flags from cars. Officials did not give any immediate death tolls for the battle. The government says most civilian residents of the city were able to evacuate before it launched its assault.



RAMADI: An Iraqi pro-government forces' member watches smoke billowing in Ramadi's Hoz neighborhood during military operations conducted by Iraqi forces against the Islamic State (IS) group yesterday. — AFP

Continued on Page 15

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** A number of MPs expressed their strong opposition to proposed government measures to reduce subsidies in a bid to cut spending in the face of a sharp fall in oil revenues. The lawmakers vowed that they will not allow the government to introduce the proposals, which will negatively impact the standard of living of Kuwaiti citizens.

The MPs were commenting on reports that an international consultancy has advised the government to take a number of austerity measures mainly focused on reducing subsidies. MP Fares Al-Otaibi said the proposals are totally rejected, adding that any plan to make citizens bear additional financial burdens to boost government revenues is not accepted and will be rejected outright. Otaibi said lawmakers will not accept the government undermining the housing policy by making some cuts in this policy, especially the housing loan or monthly allowance.

MPs will also reject any government plan to cut a KD 2,000 government grant given to Kuwaitis on their marriage. MP Saleh Ashour said that the government must first stop the squandering of public funds, especially by ministers and top officials, before they resort to overburdening the people. MP Askar Al-Enezi vowed that MPs will not allow the passage of any measures that could undermine the income of the Kuwaiti people. Enezi said MPs reject the findings and recommendations by the foreign firm on reducing or cutting subsidies.

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said yesterday that the Assembly will approve the new Anti-Corruption Authority law on Jan 12 to replace a similar legislation scrapped by the constitutional court two weeks ago. Ghanem said the Assembly was scheduled to pass the new law last week, but the sudden death of MP Nabil Al-Fadhli forced the cancellations of Assembly sessions until Jan 12.

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BARMER, India: In this photograph taken on Dec 11, 2015, a worker cycles by machinery at a Cairn India oil and gas exploration plant in Rajasthan. — AFP

## INDIA PUMPS DESERT OIL, SEEKS ENERGY SECURITY

**BARMER, India:** The deserts of Rajasthan may be the showcase for India's solar revolution but the oil explorer that struck gold beneath the same sands insists the country needs to pump out more fossil fuels to wean itself off imports. Ahead of this month's climate negotiations in Paris, India sought to deflect criticism by pointing to the solar panels and wind turbines sprouting across the sparsely-populated princely state.

Yet deep in the desert, and less well-publicized, are four oil fields operated by

an offshoot of Scotland-based Cairn Energy that churn out nearly a quarter of all domestic crude. Each day the world's longest heated pipeline funnels 176,000 barrels from the remote Barmer region near the Pakistan border, bound for the refineries of Reliance Industries, Essar Oil and Indian Oil Corporation. Exploration continues apace, with less than half the state's 150,000 sq km thought to contain crude deposits developed so far, and millions more barrels likely still trapped in the rock.

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## 11 KILLED IN TEXAS TORNADOES WILD WEATHER LASHES US

### News

in brief

#### Saudi seizes 5 million amphetamine tablets

**RIYADH:** Saudi authorities said yesterday that they had seized more than five million amphetamine tablets and arrested 11 people in one of the kingdom's largest drug busts. The suspects - nine Saudis and two Sudanese citizens - were arrested in Riyadh as an illegal deal was being completed, state news agency SPA quoted an interior ministry spokesman as saying. Three grams of heroin, a machine gun and a pistol were also seized from the suspects, the spokesman said without elaborating.

#### KNPC halts production at Mina Ahmadi units

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait National Petroleum Co (KNPC) has halted production at some units of its Mina Al-Ahmadi Refinery, with the suspended units expected to be restarted after "some time", a company statement carried by KUNA said yesterday. The parts affected were "some manufacturing units and other units", the statement said without elaborating. Khalid Al-Sousi, company spokesman for KNPC, was quoted as saying the suspension was due to a seawater cooling outage.

**DALLAS:** At least 11 people lost their lives as tornadoes tore through Texas, authorities said yesterday, as they searched home to home for possible more victims of the freak storms lashing the southern United States. The rare December twisters that flattened houses and caused chaos on highways raised the death toll from days

of deadly weather across the South to at least 28. An infant was reportedly among the latest casualties.

The extreme weather, fueled by unseasonably warm air, is likely to continue for the next few days, the National Weather Service warned, complicating search and

Continued on Page 15



DALLAS: People run as weather sirens sound as a severe storm passes over downtown Dallas on Saturday. — AP



HEMPSTEAD, New York: Michelle Esquenazi, known as The Bail Bond Queen, poses with her agents and bodyguards in front of the Nassau County courthouse on Dec 4, 2015. — AFP

## QUEEN OF A CONTROVERSIAL US INDUSTRY

**HEMPSTEAD, New York:** Michelle Esquenazi tosses her mane of flaming red curls, kicks her feet clad in five-inch stilettos onto her desk and hollers for her assistant. Meet the Bail Bond Queen, a New York mother of four with a "Master's degree from the streets of Brooklyn" who worked her way up from being a paralegal student on welfare to company CEO. She's the woman who can get you out of jail and calm your tearful mother - for a price - and she's the one who is going to put you back behind bars if you do a runner. "I always say I'm a b\*\*\*\*, but I'm not a stupid b\*\*\*\*," Esquenazi tells AFP in Hempstead, a town on Long Island about an hour's train ride east of New York.

Her company, Empire Bail Bonds, is the largest in New York state that helps thousands of clients navigate the US legal system when they get arrested. The Justice Policy Institute estimates there are 15,000 bail bond agents in

the United States, writing bonds for about \$14 billion a year in a private industry unmatched anywhere but the Philippines. Critics complain they take billions from low-income people, with no return on investment in terms of public safety. Esquenazi says she's doing society a favor. "We do what governments don't have the resources to do. We do everything at no taxpayers' expense," she explains, sipping milky coffee.

Anyone arrested in New York state must appear in court within 24 hours when the judge sets bail. Defendants can either pay cash or purchase a bond to secure their release. Those who can afford to pay bail get all their money back if they keep all their court dates, even if they are eventually found guilty. But for those of limited means, bonds are the only option. They pay Esquenazi a non-refundable fee to cover bail for them. So if they do a runner, she sends her bounty

hunters -Hollywood, Mr T and Jizo - to haul them back into jail.

She loves recounting the tales of her most famous clients: Michael Mastromarino, the dentist who illegally harvested bones from people's bodies, sold them on the black market and replaced them with PVC piping. When he was arrested in 2006, his bail was set at \$1.5 million, which at the time was the biggest bond she had ever written. She sent him fresh bagels - a reminder of the comforts of freedom - and then a bologna sandwich and a carton of milk, a reminder of lunches behind bars on Rikers Island.

"I had eyes on his ass. I didn't trust him, and I knew he had the ability to run and I wasn't letting my family go out of business," she said. Mastromarino became so unnerved, she says, that he bought her out for \$90,000 and transferred his bond elsewhere.

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**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Yemen Abdul-Malik Abdul Jalil Al-Mekhlafi. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets his Yemeni counterpart Dr Abdulmalik Al-Mekhlafi. — KUNA

## CROWN PRINCE RECEIVES SENIOR YEMENI OFFICIAL

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Yemen, Abdul-Malik Abdul Jalil Al-Mekhlafi and his accompanying delegation on the occasion of their official visit to the country.

During the meeting, issues of mutual interest and means of boosting them were tackled as well as the latest development in Yemen. His Highness the Crown Prince wished Yemen sustainable security and peace. The meeting was attended by acting

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and head of His Highness the Crown Prince's Protocols Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

### Gulf initiative

Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled reiterated during a meeting held later yesterday with his Yemeni counterpart Kuwait's firm stance calling for the full implementation of the Gulf initiative and its executive mechanism, the output of national dialogue and the UN Security Council Resolution

2216 in order to restore stability and security in this Arab country.

The two sides discussed all political and security developments the region is facing, and several regional and international issues of mutual interest as well as means of cementing relations between the two countries in all domains.

The meeting was attended by Acting Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghanim, head of protocol department at the Foreign Ministry Ambassador Dhari Ajran and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office

Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar. Kuwait's Ambassador to Yemen Fahad Saad Al-Mei' and other senior officials were present in the meeting. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled then held a luncheon banquet in honor of the Yemeni official and his accompanying delegation.

### Senior officials

Earlier, His Highness the Crown Prince received Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah,

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Hmoud Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Justice Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, and Minister of Communications and Minister of State for Municipality Affairs Essa Ahmed Al-Kandari.

In other news, Ghanem received in his office the Dean of the Board of Executive Directors and Executive Director of the World Bank Mirza Hasan. — KUNA

## KUWAIT'S AMBASSADOR VISITS AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL ARCHIVE

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Kuwait's Ambassador to Australia Najib Al-Bader met yesterday with Head of the historical references department at the National Archives of Australia Michael Winkey. An embassy statement said the two men discussed means of bolstering bilateral cooperation and exchanging expertise between the National Archives of Australia and Kuwait's National Archives and Research Center.

The statement added that Bader while visiting the headquarters of the National Archives of Australia in Canberra has viewed documents and official historical records and photographs related to the deep rooted Kuwaiti-Australian ties in the political, cultural, sports and economic fields.

The diplomat was also briefed on the tasks of the archive and means of collect-

ing and organizing official historical documents. He praised the developed mechanism of preserving the documents at the Australian National archive which allows an easy access to documents electronically in a short time which facilitates the process of preparing scientific researches.

The meeting between Bader and Winkey was attended by the Second Secretary at the Kuwaiti Embassy Zaid Al-Harb, in addition to a number of officials of the Australian National archives. The National Archives of Australia is a body established by the Government of Australia for the purpose of preserving Commonwealth Government records. It spread awareness of social accessibility to official documents issued by the Australian government. The national office is in Canberra with offices in each state capital and Darwin. — KUNA



**CANBERRA:** Kuwait's Ambassador to Australia Najib Al-Bader is pictured with Head of the historical references department at the National Archives of Australia Michael Winkey. — KUNA

## KUWAITI CHARITY GRADUATES QURAN MEMORIZERS IN TANZANIA

**KUWAIT:** A leading Kuwaiti charity has held a ceremony celebrating graduation of 50 male and female memorizers of the Holy Book the Quran in Tanzania. According to a statement by the Kuwaiti Embassy in Tanzania, Ambassador Jassem Al-Najem took part, along with Arab diplomats, in the graduates' honoring, held by International Islamic Charitable Organization.

Honoring memorizers of the Holy Book depicts Kuwait's renowned efforts for serv-

ice of His Almighty Allah's Book, Ambassador Najem said, as cited by the embassy statement. He congratulated winners of the Quranic memorization contest, organized by the Kuwaiti charity, and expressed gratitude to all who had a hand in "the blessed activity. The ceremony was attended by Tanzania's former president El-Hajj Ali Hassan Mwinyi, Tanzania's Mufti Sheikh Abubakary Zubeiry and other local and Kuwaiti dignitaries. — KUNA



**DODOMA:** Kuwait's Ambassador to Tanzania Jassem Al-Najem honors one of the Quran memorization contestants. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah is pictured during the opening ceremony of the 22nd Waqf Forum. — KUNA



Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah is honored at the event.

## KAPF SEEKS TO PROMOTE KUWAITI SOCIETY: MINISTER

**KUWAIT:** Promoting society lies at the core of the Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation (KAPF) elevated message, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah has said.

The Minister made the statement yesterday at the opening of the 22nd Waqf Forum on behalf of His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who patronizes the two-day event themed "managing waqfs; integration and entrepreneurship."

KAPF calls for Waqfs (religious endowment) and is involved in all that is related to it, including fund management, investment and the disbursement in all fields of development, in addition to communicating with endowers through an integrated system that aims to achieve entrepreneurship, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah said. He added that the theme of the forum sheds light on the bright march of KAPF and its methods of managing Waqfs.

The minister pointed to the great efforts by former KAPF Secretary General Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi, under whom a lot of local, regional and international Waqf achievements were realized.

### Pioneering experiences

The 22nd Waqf Forum will review pioneering experiences in Waqfs, both by KAPF and from sisterly and friendly countries, head of the event preparatory committee, Eman Al-Humaidan told the opening ceremony.

This forum and the previous ones have sought to enhance Kuwait as the "Capital of Islamic Culture 2016," Humaidan said, noting that KAPF was chosen as a member for the planning and the coordination of the relevant celebrations. She also highlighted the Waqf-related rulings by the Kuwaiti judiciary, all based on the Islamic Sharia. These rulings and fatwas (religious edicts) on Kuwaiti Waqf will be issued in a publication on the sidelines of the Forum, to func-



Mufti of the Islamic community in Croatia Aziz Hasanovic



Head of the event preparatory committee Eman Al-Humaidan



Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah delivers his speech.

tion as a reference for jurists in Arab and Muslim countries.

Meanwhile, mufti of the Islamic community in Croatia Aziz Hasanovic, addressed the forum on behalf of guests. He said that KAPF had realized great successes in promoting Waqfs in Kuwait, enhancing its role in support of development efforts. KAPF efforts have boosted its social, regional and international presence, he added. In addition, KAPF enriched the Islamic world

over the past years with a multitude of enlightening views on Waqf work.

### Persistent efforts

Hasanovic noted the choice of KAPF as a coordinator of the Muslim countries' efforts in Waqf work caps its hard and persistent efforts in social development and dissemination of Islamic religious sciences. According to Hasanovic, KAPF has played a significant role

supporting charity development projects and Muslim minorities, particularly in the Balkans: Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

Today's ceremony saw the official inauguration of the automatic system to manage Waqfs, to start work as of January 1. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah honored Al-Kharafi and a host of government and private institutions. He also opened the exhibition held as part of the forum. — KUNA



KAPF's former Secretary General Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Jarallah Al-Kharafi is honored.

Crime

Report



Material suspected to be drugs found in sea yesterday.

DRUG SMUGGLING BY SEA ATTEMPT FOILED

**KUWAIT:** The Sea Borders Security Department found 56 items suspected of being drugs, following a tip from an undercover source about an attempt to smuggle drugs by sea. A bag was found, and when opened, well-sealed cases containing the material were found. The material was sent to concerned authorities for testing. Interior Ministry Undersecretary for Sea Borders Security Affairs Major General Zuhair Al-Nasrallah and Acting Director General of Coast Guard Directorate Colonel Saleh Al-Foudary went to Sabah Al-Ahmad Naval Base and inspected the material. Nasrallah thanked all workers at the sea security department for their efforts.

Suicide

A 33-year-old Syrian man committed suicide by hanging in Jleeb Al-Shuyukh, his friend told police. Meanwhile, a 35-year-old Pakistani man was killed when his car flipped over on King Fahd road.

Man killed in fight

A citizen in his fifties was stabbed to death when he attempted to break up a fight. The citizen arrived dead at Adan Hospital. Investigations revealed the victim attempted to break up a fight during a party, and was stabbed by mistake by a citizen, who is at large. Detectives arrested most of those who were present, including a girl.

Bootleggers arrested

A bedoon man was sent to the drugs prosecution for trading in liquor. He was arrested with six cartons of liquor after selling four bottles to an undercover agent. Meanwhile, Andalus police arrested two Indian men for selling drugs and liquor. The two were arrested in a taxi, in which 10 locally-made liquor bottles were found. They were sent to concerned authorities. In the meantime, Ahmadi detectives arrested a Bangladeshi man with 60 bottles of homebrewed liquor, and a drunk Indian man in front of a residential complex in Mahboula. Both were sent to concerned authorities.



Police are seen during an inspection campaign at Kabd Road.

Kabd Road campaign

Jahra police authorities carried out a campaign along Kabd Road, resulting in impounding seven vehicles and six abandoned ATVs.

Food import ban

Chairman of the Food Safety Committee at the Municipality Fahad Al-Musabbahi said a decision was made on Nov 1, 2015 to ban the import of poultry meat (fresh, processed, cooled, frozen) and table eggs from Portugal. He also said another decision was issued banning the import of poultry products from Ghana and Ivory Coast due to bird flu. Musabbahi said the committee asked the commerce ministry representative to follow the issuance of a ministerial decision to lift the ban on importing poultry meat from Holland, because it is free of birds flu and the decision to lift the ban on importing bovine meat from Brazil, provided that a certificate from the country of origin stating that the meat is free of mad cow disease is submitted along with other required certificates. The ban will also be lifted on importing poultry products from the US.

Month's Mind



There will be aucharistic celebration at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, 29th December 2015 at St Theres Church in Salmiya for Xavier Moraes (Sports Editor, Kuwait Times), offered by his sorrowful wife. Relatives and friends kindly accept this as the only intimation. May his soul rest in peace

500,000 GUIDEBOOKS FOR EXPATRIATES

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** The Central Tenders Committee (CTC) is currently preparing to offer a new project for bidding - printing 500,000 copies of a guidebook for expatriate workers to be translated into several languages, namely those used most in Kuwait, well-informed sources at the Manpower Public Authority said. The sources added that the booklet would provide guidelines about workers' rights and duties while in Kuwait, in addition to manpower laws and regulations. The sources explained that a media campaign would be launched to promote the booklet amongst expatriate laborers in Kuwait as well as provide copies of it to various labor departments.

Meanwhile, the manpower authority's acting director Ahmed Al-Moussa said the new labor contract forms had been already approved by the fatwa and legislation department and would go into effect by the beginning of Jan 2016. Moussa explained that the new contract would protect both employers and employees' rights and additional clauses and conditions could be added subject to the private sector labor law and both sides' agreement. He added that the new contract form would be available at various labor departments within the



Fake products busted during a crackdown on private health clubs, spas and beauty salons yesterday.

coming few days.

Fake products

The Ministry of Health's medicine inspection teams recently inspected a number of private health clubs, spas and beauty salons where they detected some dangerous violations including selling expired ointments, creams, herbs and syringes in addition to some contaminated medical equip-

ment. Most of the products and equipment found during the inspection campaign were fake, smuggled or with unknown origins, the ministry's Undersecretary Dr Khaled Al-Sahlawi said. Meanwhile, Sahlawi warned citizens and expatriates, namely women and youth people who visit spas and beauty salons around Kuwait, from using medicines, creams, herbs or capsules with unknown origins.

LAWMAKER INQUIRES ABOUT SELLING STATE-OWNED FIRMS

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji yesterday filed an inquiry with Deputy Prime Minister Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh concerning the investment authority's response to the ministry's letter about regulations on selling state-owned companies. In his inquiry, Turaiji asked about the person responsible for leaking the new rules to the local press, the actual owner of the concerned companies and the ministry's attitude after the authority rejected its regulations.

Anti-Corruption Authority

MP Hamdan Al-Azmi hailed the current parliamentary legislation committee's achievements, noting that it had been explaining all positive and negative sides in all bills and proposals. Azmi urged the committee to discuss the proposals made about the Anti-Corruption Authority, pointing out that Kuwait needs passing its law as soon as possible to fight corruption prevailing in various ministries and government establishments. Azmi also called for immediate action towards all the violations mentioned in the Audit Bureau's reports that had been accumulating

year after year with no reaction on the government's side except promises.

Labor union

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) employees syndicate criticized lawmakers' silence about the government's actions and compliance to the interference of influential merchants in the oil sector in a way that jeopardizes Kuwait's prime wealth in view of the current international oil market challenges. A statement issued by the syndicate said that former oil minister Ali Al-Omar had put a limit to many public fund administrative violations and some suspicious contracts and that this did not appeal to some senior oil sector officials such as CEO Nizar Al-Adsani and Bader Al-Sherad, who stopped executing the government's decisions with the help of a 'lobby' of people with commercial interests in the oil sector and eventually put pressure on decision makers to remove Omar. The syndicate added that once Omar was reshuffled, the KPC board of directors 'paid the price' by giving 800 vacancies to a subcontractor, which violates the Audit Bureau regulations pertaining appointing citizens.

MINISTRY GEARS UP TO LINK EXPATS' RESIDENCY VISAS TO PASSPORTS VALIDITY

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Interior's General Directorate for Residency Affairs is to start the linkage of the expatriates' residency visas to the validity of their passports as of 1st January, 2016. In a press statement, the Ministry of Interior said that Director of the General Directorate for Residency Major General Talal Marafi held an expanding meeting with the directorate's senior officials and officials of other concerned departments to put the final touches on the ministry's preparations for the visa-passport linkage.

Marafi noted that the move would better regulate residency visa issuance services, detection of violations and collections of fines from the rule violators. He pointed out that the ministry coordinates with the foreign embassies to ensure their nationals' compliance with the new guidelines. He also urged Kuwaiti sponsors to check the validity of their domestic helpers' passports to avoid being penalized as per the regulation.

The linking comes in implementation of provisions of residency law No. 17 of 1959. This law stipulates that the validity of residency visa would not exceed the validity of the passports' and the residency would be cancelled the



KUWAIT: General Talal Marafi chairs the meeting.

moment the passports expire. Expatriates are not permitted to obtain a new residency until the passports are renewed.— KUNA



**KUWAIT:** As part of a fire safety awareness campaign which started Saturday, several fire department personnel were present during a recent activity held in cooperation with the interior ministry and presence of Assistant Undersecretary for Land Borders Security Major General Mohammad Al-Yousuf and Director General of Land Borders Security Major General Fuad Al-Athari. Safety equipment such as a fire extinguisher, smoke detector and educational leaflets were distributed to people returning from Mutlaa desert north of the country. —By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Legalese

VISA REGULATIONS FOR CONTRACTORS

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

I am going to be completely honest with you - visa regulations are not a simple topic to write about. The regulations themselves are easy to understand but they change on a regular basis, making it difficult, for even a lawyer, to stay updated. In fact as I was writing this article, the regulations changed again! There seems to be a lot of change in Kuwait in the past few months, and as you all know, change can be for the good and/or for the bad, but I am hoping that this change is for the best.

It is no secret that the government wants to bring down the number of 'violating' expats in Kuwait right now. We know this because various government officials have made this clear through public statements. One of the ways that they are doing this is by making visa obligations tougher for expats that are looking for employment. I understand that the Kuwaiti government would like to create more opportunity for locals currently, but I do personally hope that this change is fair for all. I must say though there have been some great changes in the past few weeks from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor regarding contractors.

Before I answer queries from contractors, I thought it is best to explain who contractors are in simple terms. Contractors are employees working for companies on government contracts. I have many clients at the firm that are on contracts and therefore I would like to write about what major issues they deal with. I have put together the most common questions below and tried to answer them.

I am currently working on a government project. The company I am working for is not implementing the Kuwait Labor Law for our benefit, I tried to file a complaint last year at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, but I was told that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor is only responsible for the private sector. Is this true?

Not anymore. Previously, that was the case, but since contractors are in a unique working position where they are working for a private company, yet doing work for the public, there was some confusion on which law is to be applied on them. Now it is clear that the Ministry of Social Affairs will handle all their complaints, as a new department has been in place specifically for visa 17/contractors. (Please note that you can be visa 18 or visa 17 and be working on a government contract.)

I was told that since I work in a camp for another country's military as a contractor, Kuwait's law does not apply to me. Instead, the labor law of my employer applies to me - is this true?

No, it is not true. Everyone that works in Kuwait for a company is under the Kuwait Labor Law (excluding those that work for the oil companies). A simple way to understand this is look at your passport - if you have a Kuwaiti work visa or a Kuwaiti work permit, most likely you do, then Kuwaiti law applies to you.

On the other hand if you are deployed to Kuwait for a certain project and a certain temporary timeframe, and you were already working in the foreign country and you will go back to working in that foreign country, then we could say that Kuwaiti law is not applicable to you.

I am currently on a contractor's visa and would like to transfer to another company once the project ends. Can I do this?

I know that this has been really confusing to a lot of my clients. Government officials have repeatedly stated that transfers will not be available for contractors in the future. With that said, as of now, there are three scenarios by which a contractor could possibly transfer his visa to another company, as follows:

1. If the company the contractor wants to transfer to is owned by the same owner as the company he or she is currently working in, regardless if the new job is not for a government contract. Here is a hypothetical example to make it easier for the readers to understand: You are currently working for company X that is building a spaceship for the Kuwait government, after building the spaceship, a sister company of company X offers you a job position as a salesman for a store they own. You could get a transfer

2. If you are transferring to another job position for a government contract, then you can do so if your current employer approves and signs a document for transfer that is available at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor.

3. If you entered Kuwait to work for the private sector, then you transferred to a government contract visa, you can retransfer back to the private sector. Example, you came to Kuwait to work as a clerk for a store, you then transferred to work for the government to build a spaceship, you can then transfer back to work as a waiter (please note that these examples are extremely hypothetical and are just there to help you understand the situation better!)

I hope the above helped. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me on ask@fajertlawyer.com

KUWAIT'S INFLATION RATE UP 3.13% IN NOVEMBER: REPORT

**KUWAIT:** The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) for the month of November, 2015 showed an increase estimated at 3.13 percent compared with November of 2014, the Central Statistical Bureau said in its report yesterday.

The report gives indications of the rates of changes in prices for the commodity groups influencing the families' expenditure and the ability of consumer spending. The index uses the year 2007 as the base year.

The index figure during the month of November, 2015, recorded a rise of 138.3 by 0.07 percent as a result of the rise in prices of some major groups with influential figures in the movement and low standard of some groups.

The inflation of groups of food and beverages, and tobacco narcotics rose respectively by 0.46 on a monthly basis and 0.26 percent on a yearly basis, however clothing and footwear dropped by 0.16 percent on a monthly basis and housing services was stable, the report added.

The CPI of furnishing equipment and household maintenance went up last November by 0.07 percent on a monthly basis compared with last October, while health increased by 0.16 percent on a monthly basis, it said. The CPI of transport was stable last November; however it rose in communication by one percent on a yearly basis and increased in recreation culture by 0.08 percent, it noted. The index figure is a tool to measure changes of prices in general between two periods either on a monthly or yearly basis. — KUNA



SHARM EL-SHEIKH: Members of the Kuwaiti media delegation are pictured inside a resort in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. — KUNA

Local Spotlight

# SHARM IS SAFE

By Muna Al-Fuzai  
muna@kuwaittimes.net

# SHARM EL-SHEIKH: STILL TOP TOURIST DESTINATION

‘CITY OF SECURITY AND PEACE’

**SHARM EL-SHEIKH:** Egypt’s wonderful Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh is still among the world’s five top tourist destinations, despite campaigns targeting tourism there. In fact, the external tendentious campaigns have been targeting the industry in Egypt, suggesting a link to terrorism, with the City of Peace as a major target.

As part of the persistent efforts to quash the cowardly attempts and foster the influx of tourists to Sharm El-Sheikh, the Egyptian Tourism Promotion Authority and Egyptian Embassy in Kuwait invited a Kuwaiti media delegation to visit the city, and participate in the hard work seeking to deliver a positive message.

The counter-campaign of peace and security is themed “Egypt is safe.” The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism has embarked on public relations campaigns to attract tourists to the terrific resort. The six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is a key target of these efforts. These include plans to encourage domestic tourism.

**Plans**

During a meeting with the visiting Kuwaiti delegation, Governor Khaled Fouda of Egypt’s South Sinai, where Sharm El-Sheikh is located, reiterated the plans

against tourism, and the Egyptian economy as a whole.

Four of South Sinai nine cities are situated on the Gulf of Suez and four others on the Aqaba Gulf, Fouda said. At the heart lies Saint Catherine Sinai. The total area of the governorate is 31,000 square meters.

He pointed to the huge potential of various types of tourism, religious, conference, therapeutic, safari and sports. The city has beaches with total length hits 600 kilometers. In addition, the governorate owns five of the world’s best dicing sites, in Ras Mohammad and Dahab. The governor also stressed the high level of security, peace and safety in South Sinai, particularly in Sharm El-Sheikh, rarely to find anywhere else in the world. Western media reports have criticized the security systems in the Sharm El-Sheikh Airport, though the Kuwaiti delegation had the opposite impression during their tour in the resort.

Sharm El-Sheikh, which was established in 1968 on a total area of 480 square kilometers, enjoys a fantastic location between the Gulfs of Suez and Aqaba. Visitors can enjoy maritime activities in the charming city throughout the year, in addition to scores of hotels, tourist villages, restaurants, markets and recreational sites.



Members of the Kuwaiti delegation are seen during a tour around the city.

**Impressed**

The Kuwaiti media delegation visited various sites in Sharm El-Sheikh, and was highly impressed by their beauty and feeling of safety. Manager of the Kuwaiti Journalists Association Adnan Al-Rashed urged Kuwaitis and Arabs to visit the wonderful resort to enjoy tranquility, security, peace and stability.

He expressed appreciation to the Egyptian Tourist Authority and the embassy for their invitation to visit Sharm El-Sheikh to have firsthand experience of the conditions there, as well as for the hospitality and warm reception. Kuwait is a major tourist-exporter market to Egypt. Reportedly, 121,000 Kuwaitis visited Egypt. — KUNA

I could not think of a better word to describe Sharm El-Sheikh. Sharm El-Sheikh is an Egyptian tourist city located at the confluence of the Gulf of Aqaba and Suez on the Red Sea coast. It is the largest city in South Sinai. The city has several spectacular touristic resorts, natural resources and has great economic and political importance.

I visited this magnificent city recently as part of an official Kuwaiti media delegation headed by the undersecretary for external media at the Ministry of Information and head of the Kuwait Journalists Association as well as some colleagues at a kind invitation of the Egyptian General Authority for Tourism and the Egyptian Embassy in Kuwait. This trip was an interpretation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah’s initiative to promote tourism in Egypt in order to convey the message that Egypt is always a safe country, which was the theme of our visit to Sharm El-Sheikh.

It was my first visit to Sharm and my mind was filled with all the thoughts and questions raised by my family and friends about safety and security in this town since the downing of the Russian plane there. The media image of security of visitors, sites and even beaches were dark indeed and our mission as journalists was to check this issue and tell the truth. We were not obliged to believe everything we heard or saw.

The journey was a chance to find an adequate answer to the question of whether security could pose a dilemma for Sharm El-Sheikh as a significant touristic spot, and how the Egyptian leadership could deal with this issue.

In the past 10 years, Sharm El-Sheikh had jumped to a good competitive position. It seems that it was punished for its success. The visit also confirms that Egypt’s security and safety is paramount, especially since Arab peoples are in one vessel and damage suffered by Egypt affects everyone. Egypt has a long history, and who doesn’t recall Egypt’s position towards the Iraqi invasion in 1990.

The most important meeting was a media conference that brought together Major General Khalid Fouda, governor of South Sinai, and Kuwaiti and Egyptian journalists. The governor gave a full explanation of the province and the kinds of tourism services such as religious tourism in St Catherine, leisure tourism in all the cities of the province, diving and beach tourism, and conference and medical tourism. He called for the promotion of Kuwaiti investments in the province, noting that talks with Kuwaiti and Saudi businesspeople for setting up joint ventures have been very promising.

We made many tours and I saw the security presence there. There was a policeman on every corner of the city, morning or evening, and so the fuss about insecurity is fabricated and pure slander, and a distortion of this beautiful city, as an aircraft crash is possible and happens every day. So I now know it’s just a smear campaign against Egypt and we should not accept it.

For all those concerned about security, I can confirm that the security situation there is completely normal. I believe that tourism will soon resume its routine during the next three months. Sharm El-Sheikh can be a new Dubai or Singapore, but media marketing is required and must have continuity. I hope the GCC sets up an exclusive media fund to support international media and marketing campaigns on international channels to show the true image of this city. Egypt is safe!



The entrance of Al-Othman House



An old Kuwaiti house.

## AL-OTHTMAN HOUSE REFLECTS KUWAIT’S HERITAGE, CULTURE

**KUWAIT:** From an old house of Al-Othman family in Hawalli area, into a cultural and humanitarian valuable edifice, Beit Al-Othman (Al-Othman House) emerges as a fruit of

relentless efforts carried out by Kuwait’s Heritage Team, National Council for Culture Arts and Letters (NCCAL) and Kuwait Voluntary Work Center (KWVC). This house has been

transformed into a remarkable museum showcasing the history of Kuwait and the identity of the Kuwaiti people. It includes various sections including antiquities dating back to the 30s

and 40s, besides a section displaying Kuwait’s television and radio drama programs, besides a large hall for folklore celebrations and old Kuwaiti songs. —KUNA



‘Livan’ or hall in the old Kuwaiti house.



Bedroom in the old house



An old grocery store



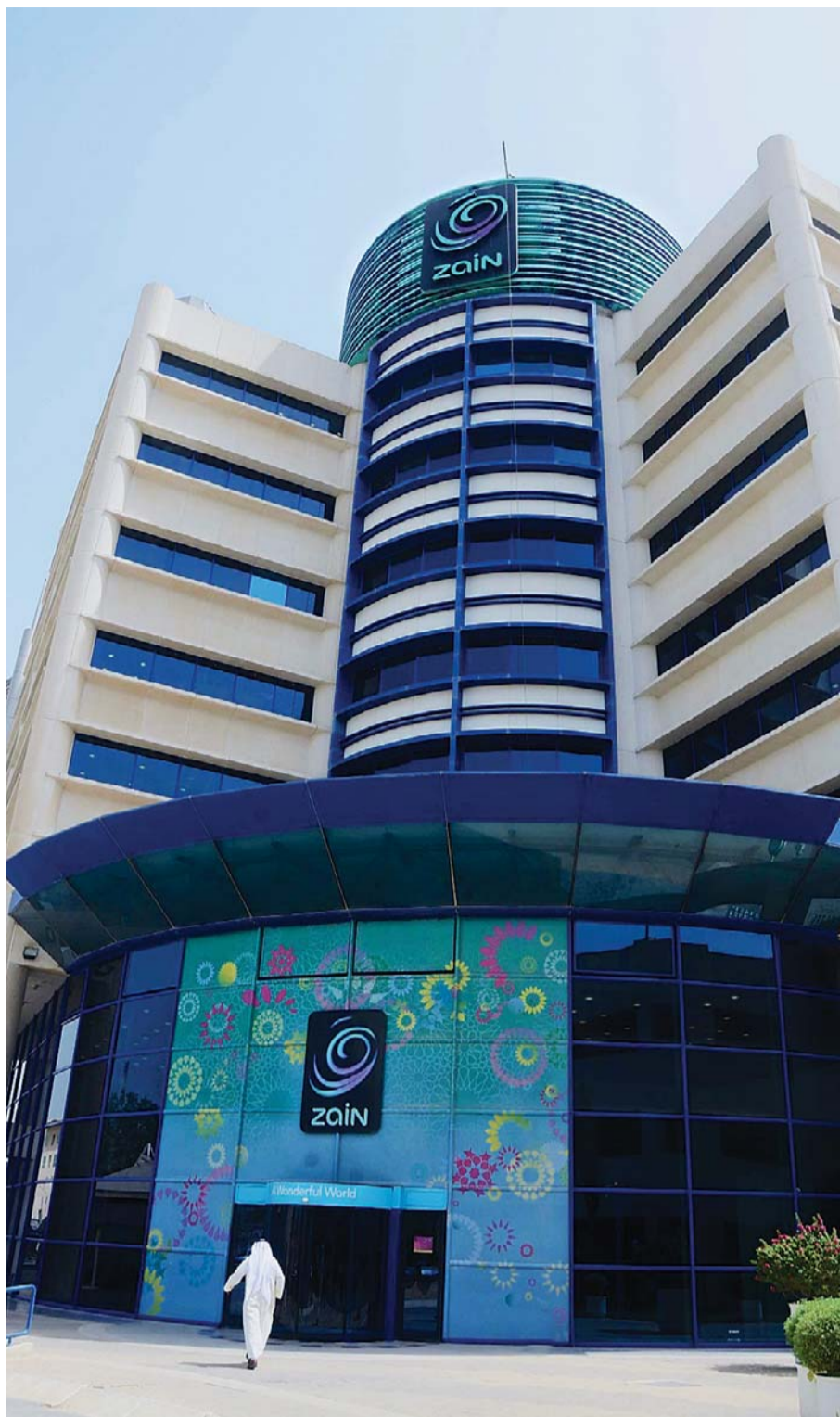
Old stores in the souq



Old radios and storage boxes



An office of a trader



Zain's headquarter building

## ZAIN KUWAIT SUCCESSFULLY TESTS REGION'S FIRST 4.5G MOBILE BROADBAND TECHNOLOGY

### TEAMING UP WITH HUAWEI TO BRING GREATER SPEED, CONNECTIONS

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced the successful testing of the Middle East's first 4.5G mobile broadband technology on its advanced network. The test, achieved in strategic partnership with Huawei, saw the operator's network reaching high-speeds of 1 gigabyte per second (1 Gbps).

Serving the largest customer base in the country, Zain expects this latest technology to spearhead the next phase of the mobile evolution by enabling individuals, corporate and government entities to enjoy increasingly faster connected and intelligent services.

Over the last year, 4G LTE network traffic has started to dominate the total traffic consumption worldwide as content streaming, ultra-high definition video and e-commerce tools see customers spending more and more time surfing the mobile world. Zain's latest testing of the 4.5G mobile broadband technology is a step towards delivering customers faster speeds, lower latency and better functionality than the best 4G technologies currently available.

#### Advanced technology

Commenting on this revolutionary testing, Eaman Al-Roudhan, Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer said: "In line with our strategy to place customers at the forefront of our priorities, we were keen on being the first in the region to build the necessary expertise to test this advanced technology and achieve the successful results we saw in preparation to launch it commercially".

Roudhan added: "Earlier this year, we teamed up with Huawei to trial and implement 4.5G services on our network in Kuwait, and we were pleased with the successful results we accomplished today. With the implantation of further tests in the near future, we will be better prepared to launch the 4.5G technology commercially within the next three years as soon as compatible devices are available in the market".

Furthermore, Roudhan elaborated: "Our investments in 4.5G technology—embodied by the latest 1Gbps trial—will provide cutting-edge services not only to consumers but also enterprises and government entities in Kuwait. This also reflects Zain's strategic aspirations of delivering on a compelling digital

lifestyle to its customers."

Through its strategic partnership with Huawei, Zain is planning to provide new services powered by 4.5G technology, including voice over LTE (VoLTE) and Narrow band IoT machine-to-machine applications.

#### Significant milestone

Li Dafeng, President of Huawei Middle East and Africa commented: "Zain Kuwait continues to invest greatly in new technologies and serv-

and our long-term vision for 5G connectivity, which is expected to be commercialized by 2020."

Zain's strategy of being a sustainable digital communications company has long focused on the customer experience and using technology to create more value for the customer. The latest 4.5G announcement comes on the back of the recently-concluded Zain Technology Conference 2015 in Bahrain during which Zain's global partners came together as part of its drive to build a



Eaman Al-Roudhan, Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer (right) and Li Dafeng, President of Huawei Middle East and Africa.

es as it seeks to surpass its customers' expectations. Our successful 4.5G trial together with Zain, the first in the region, is a significant milestone for the Middle East's entire telecommunications industry. Huawei will always serve our customer's strategy with original solutions, making it possible for local customers to enjoy the benefits of a better connected world.

Dafeng added: "According to Huawei's latest research, the 4.5G standard represents a necessary bridge between today's 4G mobile services

sustainable digital communications company.

Zain and Huawei have been eager to strengthen their strategic partnership in various technological fields to provide customers' with a superior telecommunications experience. In June 2014, Zain and Huawei launched the first-of-its-kind Joint Innovation Center based in Kuwait, which serves as a research hub from which Zain is able to advance its mobile broadband network, services, and applications offered to customers in Kuwait and across the region.

## KUWAIT JOINS WIPO GREEN

**KUWAIT:** The State of Kuwait has joined as a partner the Wipo Green initiative of the World Intellectual

Property Organization (WIPO), the country's top environmental authority announced yesterday. Kuwait, represented by the Environment Public Authority (EPA), has joined this international initiative following a Cabinet approval, said Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, EPA's General Director and Chairman in a statement. The initiative constitutes a global platform with a green technology data base, he said, clarifying importance of this step.

EPA had raised the issue of joining Wipo Green at a meeting of GCC environmental undersecretaries and a ministerial meeting of the Council member states, held in Doha, Qatar, on October 26-28, 2015. At the local level, the idea had been presented to a meeting of EPA's board, with aim of helping government departments and grass-root associations benefit from Wipo Green's expertise for safe-

guarding the environment and natural resources.

This move, joining the initiative, will enable Kuwait acquire environmentally friendly technology and other green methods and systems related for production of alternative energy, harnessing solar, water, thermal and wind power.

This international grouping is also engaged in energy saving and rationing. Moreover, it promotes new innovations for waste treatment and recycling, beside using alternatives to detergents and employing substitutes to irrigation technologies, Sheikh Abdullah elaborated. Furthermore, it provides latest researches and studies on climatic changes, through advanced data and information networks. The 188-member WIPO, the initiative sponsor, was founded in 1969, as one of the agencies affiliated to the United Nations. —KUNA



Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah

## 'KUWAIT KEEPS UP WITH GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS TO COMBAT AIDS'

**KUWAIT:** The Health ministry is keen to follow up on the World Health Organization (WHO) scientific developments on policies preventing and combating AIDS, said Dr Hind Al-Shomar, Head of the Office of AIDS, Statistics and Information in the Ministry of Health, and Head of the Permanent National Committee to Fight AIDS.

During a press conference at the end of the national AIDS campaign marking the World AIDS Day, Dr Shomar said that a modern strategy for AIDS will be discussed during WHO Executive Board meeting in Geneva in mid-January. The strategy will be presented to the WHO General Assembly, to be held next May in Geneva, she added. Dr Shomar pointed out that the new strategy for the prevention and response to AIDS 2016-2021 is one of the new global sustainable development goals to protect public health. —KUNA



Dr Hind Al-Shomar

## KUWAIT WINS AWU POSTS

**ABU DHABI:** Kuwait was elected president of the literature bureau of Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, and the bureau of intellectual property, affiliated to the Arab Writers Union (AWU), during forming its structure for a three-year term.

Khaled Al-Rumaidhi, head of the



Khaled Al-Rumaidhi

Kuwaiti delegation to the session and secretary general of Kuwait Writers Association (KWA), said yesterday that the two posts were given to Kuwait by the consent of AWU members during their meetings held on the sidelines of the 26th AWU General Conference currently hosted by UAE and runs until December 29.

"I, in the name of Kuwait, won the post of assistant secretary general of the literature bureau of Gulf and Arabian Peninsula," he said, indicating that the bureau includes Bahrain, UAE, Oman Yemen and Iraq. He noted that the bureau of Gulf and Arabian Peninsula has a key role in shedding light on cultural activities, and ancient and contemporary artworks pertaining to writers and intellectuals in this region.

Rumaidhi said the bureau will also pay much attention to the region and educate generations on

the value of literary heritage. He revealed that Al-Bayan Magazine will publish reports pertaining to affairs of literature of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, especially poetry, theater and short stories. The KWA will also highlight key issues related to the protection of rights of Arab writers and intellectuals, and find solutions to problems they facing, he made clear.

The conference, inaugurated by UAE's Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al-Nahyan, features some cultural seminars, scientific lectures and sessions of poetry. About 16 representatives from Arab countries, a delegation of Secretariat of AWU and a delegation from Uganda are participating in the event. The Kuwaiti delegation participating in the conference includes Dr Nawaf Al-Ajma, Sahar bin Ali and Mohammad Al-Baghaili. —KUNA

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Crime

Report

HIT-AND-RUN SUSPECT TURNS HIMSELF IN

**KUWAIT:** A 28-year-old citizen turned himself in to Naseem police, confessing to running over a 7-year-old boy in the same area last week, which led to his death. The man admitted that the accident happened due to reckless driving on his part. The man was handed to detectives. The incident took place last week, when the suspect was driving recklessly before running over the child and killing him.

Car mechanic attacked

A car mechanic was beaten by two men after he repaired their car. The Iranian man had tried to stop the men when they attempted to escape without paying him, but failed and they managed to flee. A case was filed for investigations.

Neighbor stabbed

A fight between two neighbors in Qairawan ended in stabbing one of them. The fight was over the children of one of them throwing stones at the other's house. Jahra police went to the scene and controlled the fight, and sent the injured man to hospital. He then went to lodge a complaint at the police station. An assault and grave harm charge was filed.

Ex-wife appeals ruling

A male radio presenter won a civil case committing his divorced wife, also a radio personality, to pay him a certain amount of money. Her lawyer also won a case to get his fees, which she refused to pay, taking the total to KD 41,000. The woman plans to appeal.

Car stolen

Four thieves beat a Syrian man severely then stole his car from the front of his house, according to police. The four escaped, after that the victim lodged a complaint at the police station. The man had just started his car's engine when four men asked him to get out of the vehicle. He refused, so they pulled him out and beat him before driving off in his car. He told police that he does not know the culprits. Detectives are working on the case. In a separate case, a citizen in his forties told Mubarak Al-Kabeer police that someone broke into his car and stole cheques, along with important documents and two passports. Criminal evidence lifted fingerprints and the case was handed to Mubarak Al-Kabeer detectives.

Liquor factory busted

Ahmadi detectives raided a liquor factory in Mahboula and arrested two Asian men who were running it. Two hundred and forty bottles and 90 full barrels were found. The two were sent to the Drug Control General Directorate.

Sisters' row

A citizen accused her sister of beating her over previous disputes. She submitted a medical report stating the injuries she suffered from the beating. Police called the sister, but she refused to come to the police station, so detectives were asked to arrest her. —Al-Rai

STAR FRUIT PARTICIPATES IN HORECA KUWAIT 2016

**KUWAIT:** Star Fruit Company recently announced its intention to participate in Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition, which is due to be held at Badriya Ballroom, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa in the period of January 18-20, 2016.

General manager of Star Fruit Company for Foodstuff, Vegetables and Fruits, Abdulrahman Sorour said on that regard that Horeca 2016 has proved its great abilities to

develop the hospitality, food industries and hotel sector, adding that it so far has attracted an unprecedented number of participating companies. Sorour added that Star Fruit is a leading company in the field of quality provision of highly selected products to meet the increasing demands for fruit, vegetables and foodstuff for elite hotels and restaurants. He added that his company imports all kinds of fruits and vegetable from all over the world, and that it owns a huge fully-equipped warehouse to store its products

in addition to a large fleet of equipped trucks to ensure delivering the best quality products on a 24/7 basis.

"Star Fruit has fixed values and rules to win clients' trust such as commitment to provide its clients with best quality products selected from world-class suppliers and providing the best prices," Sorour stressed.

Moreover, Sorour added that Star Fruit has participated in many specialized exhibitions such as the Fruit Logistics Exhibition annually held in Berlin, Germany. He also noted that Star Fruit was awarded may awards from international companies specialized in quality evaluation, such as WQC International Star Award on the basis of the WQC regulations and criteria of the QC100 Total Quality Management Model in Paris, France in 2010, from Amsterdam in 2012, in addition to HACCP award from major specialized companies.

Horeca Kuwait 2016 is organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with the Hospitality Services Company. It is held under auspices of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. Leader Group announced that over 60 companies had already announced their participation in the exhibition.



Abdulrahman Sorour



Al-Jarida

IS, PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR!

By Sami Al-Nisf

**N**aming the 'personality of the year' is not always done according to contributions made to humanity, but often happens according to the most negative impact on the course of history. Accordingly, many vicious people like Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Kim Il-song and Pol Pot have been selected as personalities of the year. Therefore, I believe that IS and its leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi deserve this year's title as 2015 personalities of the year, and they will probably hold the title for years to come as long as their crimes continue unstopped.

History has never witnessed a more mysterious terrorist organization that boldly brags for being responsible for victims I will mention below, that come from various geographic corners worldwide, who were brutally murdered in most monstrous ways. No other terrorist organization has managed to destroy immortal human heritage the way IS did. None had ever had mightier and wealthier militias that surpass official regular armies and has control over wealthy lands despite being at war with the entire world!

At the beginning of this year, Jordanian pilot Muath Al-Kasasbeh was burnt alive, and IS showcased some other brutal killing methods such as caging prisoners and submerging them in water or blowing up their bodies, in addition to randomly

killing passengers in vehicles driving on the international highway between Baghdad and Syria. In the same month, a hotel was attacked in Libya killing dozens and was followed by attacking a security checkpoint in Sinai killing 30, beheading 21 Christian Egyptians in Libya, attacks in Paris killing 23, blowing two mosques in Sanaa killing 137 and wounding 357, then a suicide attack in Jalalabad, Afghanistan which killed dozens.

In addition, there was a suicide attack in Saudi Arabia killing scores of people, killing 38 tourists in Tunisia, a suicide bomber blew himself at Al-Sadeq Mosque in Kuwait, two explosions in Turkey near the borders with Syria, 43 killed in the southern Beirut explosions, downing the Russian plane over Sinai killing all 220 onboard, the Paris attacks killing 136 and wounding over 300, then the San Bernardino massacre in California in the beginning of this month killing 14 and wounding 21. It seems that IS operations in 2016 will not claim less lives.

Just bear with this silly question: Can limited, ignorant fanatic groups living in Iraqi and Syrian deserts succeed in plotting, planning and executing this multitude of unprecedented successful military and terrorist operations? This will remain in 2015 and subsequent years a question as long as IS' successful strikes continue under the noses of the entire world.

—Translated by Kuwait Times



Dr Fahad Al-Ghimlas is pictured with the attendees of the workshop.

DR GHIMLAS ANNOUNCES SUCCESS OF EBCP AND HEALTH RESEARCH SKILLS WORKSHOP

**KUWAIT:** The Chair of the 4th Kuwait Evidence-Based Clinical Practice (EBCP) Workshop 'Improving Your Patient Care Through EBCP'; and Director of the Continuing Education and Professional Development Center at the Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization, (KIMS) and Consultant in Internal and Respiratory Medicine at the Amiri Hospital Dr Fahad Ahmad Al-Ghimlas, announced the conclusion of the activities of the workshop with great success, which was reflected by the satisfaction of the audience of in-training doctors from KIMS.

Dr Ghimlas congratulated the attendees of the workshop, which took place during 15 to 17 December 2015 under the patronage of the Ministry of Health (KIMS). He congratulated them on completing their requirements through their acquisition of special skills that will enable them to pick strong scientific studies in terms of conduct and results. This is in addition to the application of principles based on scientific evidence and clinical practice to create a basic framework that can address any of the research questions related to the modern methods of diagnosis and treatment, with emphasis

on the design of scientific research and the sources of error in studies and research.

18 hours

The workshop included 18 hours of educational instruction spread over three days and divided between mass lectures and specialized interactive sessions offered by a group of medical field specialists from the Ministry of Health, Kuwait University, and McMaster University. The latter is one of the pioneers and the main source of global health guidelines in the dies of the workshop.

Dr Ghimlas also added that after the completion of this intensive course participants are now able to distinguish between the different types of research study designs, including the systematic review studies, cross-sectional studies, cohort studies, and randomized-controlled trials, in addition to the scientific adaptation of the design appropriate for specific research questions. Also, they are able to identify the presence of any bias or inaccuracy in the research and studies and their results, or in a specific data set. Eventually, these skills help in



Dr Fahad Al-Ghimlas speaks at the workshop.

addressing any limitations in a systematic and logical manner. The workshop also improves the ability in interpreting the basic data contained in the studies and medical research, and the ability to formulate a research question, design and draw the necessary studies.

Achievement

In addition, Dr Ghimlas has announced the achievement of establishing the Kuwait Evidence-Based Healthcare Society of Healthcare. The main tasks of this society include ongoing provision of similar activities and educational events, in addition to building bridges of cooperation with similar bodies regionally and internationally.

Finally, Dr Ghimlas urged attendees to make the most of this opportunity through continuous application of the concepts derived from the sessions during daily exercise in the diagnosis and treatment of our valued patients.

He also added that as Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization (KIMS) has this workshop as one of its unique initiatives and state-of-the-art events in collaboration with prestigious universities and institutions, Dr Ghimlas promised that KIMS will continue serving in-training physicians through continuing medical education and professional development activities in the future.

ERNST AND YOUNG MAKES AUSTERITY SUBSIDIES RECOMMENDATIONS TO KUWAIT

**KUWAIT:** Ernst and Young (EY), assigned by the finance ministry to prepare a study on reducing governmental subsidies on various products and services, strongly recommended that citizens pay full or part of the interest on housing loans they get as well as reducing the interest by cutting down the installment period. EY also recommended linking loans to applicants' income. The recommendations reviewed by the finance minister during a meeting with the parliamentary subsidies committee also included cancelling the KD 2,000 additional marriage grant and return to the previous interest-free KD 4,000 marriage loan starting from 2016-2017.

EY also recommended limiting the subsidies paid for supplies of rice, sugar, oil and flour, in addition to cancelling

subsidized supplies for domestic workers, reducing construction material subsidies to KD 15,000 during the years 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 pending total cancellation in 2019-2020.

In addition EY explained that the 'reform years' (2015/2016 to 2018/2019), as described in the recommendations, would reduce subsidies paid for cost of living by KD 573 million and that financial subsidies would also drop during the same period by KD 261 million. Moreover, EY recommended linking rent allowance to family income so that it could only be paid to those who actually deserve it. "This will only cost a family with a KD 1,500 monthly income a 10 percent increase in its expenses," stressed the report, noting this

would reduce the rent allowance subsidy cost by KD 181 million during the reform years.

The report also recommended reducing the number of scholarships by raising the minimum score required to get a scholarship to 90 percent for all degrees and cancel the one-year language study, which would reduce costs by KD 264 million during the reform period. EY also stressed that gradual reduction of electricity subsidies would save KD 2.5 billion; reducing fuel subsidies would save KD 1 billion, and reducing the number of citizens sent for treatment abroad would save KD 991 million within the reform period. "Unless the recommendations are met, subsidies would reach KD 4.7 billion in 2018-2019," warned the report. —Al-Rai



Al-

THE NIGHT OF JLEEB STATE CLEANSING

By Waleed Al-Ghanim

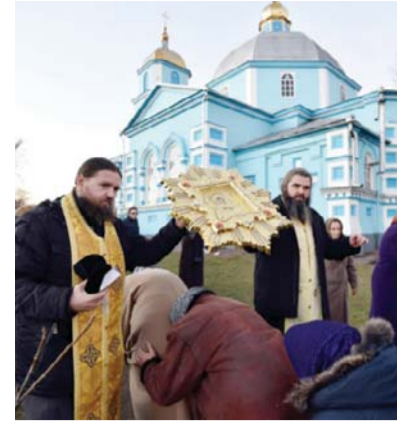
**A** major security campaign in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh resulted in the arrest of 3,338 violators: 1,248 without IDs, 305 residency violators, 135 wanted debtors, 63 on arrest orders, 123 prostitutes, 299 absconders, 16 for drugs offenses, 480 with expired residency, 23 wanted on felony and misdemeanor cases, 472 over detained affairs and deportation of 163 labor law violators. Five local liquor factories were busted and 38 shops were sealed for operating without a commercial license, reported Al-Anbaa on December 24.

A magnificent awaking by the Interior Ministry, during which it hit Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, one of the crime dens in the country and the refuge of fugitives away from the law. This huge cache was in one day only, so what should we expect if the interior ministry surrounded the area for days and weeks and cleansed it from immorality and criminal elements that are living in its basements?!

Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh has become a symbol of chaos in the country and a sign of violating the law, as liquor plants, tens of unlicensed stores, absconders and secret unethical dens all mushroomed over several decades in this dark spot. It is also a scandal for residency traders who have no fear from their Lord in the country, people and the poor. If the interior ministry succeeds in its latest campaign, it is required to make such campaigns as a method and continuous action in all Kuwait governorates and cleanse other suspected areas such as Hasawi, Bneid Al-Gar and others.

I am sure that the interior ministry's security men are able to perform this mission efficiently and successfully if they receive support and the necessary legal authorization. Kuwait needs its men to keep their continuous work in all fields and cleanse it from administrative and moral corruption that made it stumble in its march. If the men of this country do not carry out this mission sincerely, then no one will take it over following them. Thanks to the interior ministry for the success of this mission and we ask you to continue your hard work.

—Translated by Kuwait Times



Ukraine parish turns into battlefield

## BALUCH ACTIVISTS TAKE SEPARATIST BATTLE ONLINE

# REBEL'S DEATH RESHUFFLES DECK BEFORE TALKS

## ASSASSINATION COULD ALTER BALANCE OF POWER

**BEIRUT:** With Syrian peace talks scheduled to begin next month in Geneva, the assassination last week of a top Syrian rebel commander could alter the balance of power and reshuffle the lineup of key players on the ground battling President Bashar Assad's government.

On Saturday, the Army of Islam and allied militant groups in Syria mourned the killing of Zahran Allouch, while government supporters and the Islamic State group cheered his death - a reflection of his role in fighting both sides in the Syrian civil war.

Allouch was killed in airstrikes that targeted the group's headquarters during a meeting on Friday. He was instantly killed along with a number of senior commanders of his Army of Islam group and those of the ultraconservative Ahrar Al-Sham and the Faylaq Al-Rahman groups. The Syrian army claimed responsibility for the airstrike that killed Allouch, although many among the opposition blamed Russia, which has been bombing IS targets and other insurgent groups since late September.

Allouch was a controversial figure in the war and an authoritative rebel leader who commanded thousands of fighters on the doorstep of Damascus, the seat of Assad's power. His death may have contributed - at least partially - to a delay in an agreed-on pullout of thousands of militants and their families from neighborhoods on the southern edge of Damascus.

### Pullout begins

The pullout, supposed to start on Saturday, was to involve mainly militants from the Islamic State group who earlier this year overran the Yarmouk area, which is home to a Palestinian refugee camp and has been hotly contested and fought-over in the war, and two adjacent neighborhoods.

A Palestinian official in Damascus, Anwar Abdulhadi, told The Associated Press that the withdrawal is being delayed for "logistical reasons." But Lebanon's Hezbollah-run TV station Al Manar said that Allouch was a key figure in arranging the rare deal, and that his assassination has delayed its implementation. The report could not be immediately confirmed by the AP. Allouch's killing - a month before peace talks are scheduled to begin between the Syrian government and opposition rebel groups - is a blow to insurgents fighting to topple Assad and a boost to government forces who have been bolstered by the Russian military intervention in Syria.

The Army of Islam took part earlier this month in an opposition meeting held in Saudi Arabia during which it agreed to take part in political talks seeking to end the five-year-old conflict scheduled for late January in Geneva. The Syrian government describes the group as "terrorists" and has said it will not negotiate with such factions.

The UN envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, said Saturday that he has set a Jan. 25 target date for the talks in Geneva and said developments on the ground "should not be allowed to derail it." Anas Al-Abdeh, a senior member of the main Western-backed opposition group, the Syrian National Coalition, said the assassination "makes a mockery of all talk of a political settlement" and undermines the "negotiations before they begin."

### Eliminate rivals

Several opposition groups also mourned Allouch's death and accused the government and its allies of trying to eliminate rival groups ahead of the talks. Several rebel leaders have been killed since Russia's aerial campaign started on Sept. 30 in support of ally Assad, although Moscow has insisted that it is concentrating its attacks on Islamic State.

"Rebel groups should realize they are facing a war of extermination by (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's regime," said Labib Nahhas, a senior member of the militant rebel Ahrar Al-Sham group. Abu Hassan Al-Muhajer, another senior member of Ahrar Al-Sham, wrote on Twitter that the "next stage will witness the liquidation of those leaders who began the uprising" against Assad. Other insurgents, including the Al-Qaeda branch in Syria, the Nusra Front, also lamented the killing.

The Army of Islam swiftly appointed Essam Al-Buwaydhani, a field commander known as Abu Hammam, as Allouch's successor, and posted a video on the Internet late Friday saying Allouch's killing "will only increase our fight" against Assad's government and the Islamic State. However, Aron Lund, a Syria expert, said the death of Allouch, who led the Army of Islam since it was founded around four years ago, could amount to "a decapitation strike" for the group.

"Add to that the fact that the Islam Army's dominance has created so much resentment among other factions over the years, and the situation seems very unstable," Lund wrote in an analysis for the popular Syria Comment blog. A former Islamist prisoner who was released in a general amnesty after the uprising against Assad began in March 2011, Allouch, who was in his mid-40s, joined the armed opposition and formed the Army of Islam - which soon became one of the most organized rebel factions in Syria, based in the Damascus suburb known as Eastern Ghouta.

He reflected the difficulties in identifying moderate rebels from extremists and other militants in Syria. He was widely known to be supported by Saudi Arabia and Turkey but also fought pitched battles against rival Islamic State group near Damascus, with many crediting his group for keeping IS from making further advances toward the Syrian capital. But critics accused him of sectarian politics and brutal tactics similar to that of the Islamic State group.

He is blamed by other opposition groups for the December 2013 disappearance of four prominent activists, including human rights activist and lawyer Razan Zaytouni. He has denied holding them, although they were abducted from an area under the control of the Army of Islam.

Government supporters also celebrated his death, blaming his group for regularly shelling residential areas in Damascus. The state-run SANA news agency said nine civilians were killed and 18 were wounded later Saturday by mortar shells fired by the Army of Islam on districts in and around Damascus.

### New leader

After nightfall, the Army of Islam claimed on its Twitter account that it has attacked a checkpoint near Damascus, killing 28 Syrian troops. The AP could not immediately confirm the claim. The group also posted a video message by its new

leader, showing him with a long beard and in a uniform, pledging to continue on the same path as Allouch.

Earlier this year, after government airstrikes on the suburbs of Damascus killed dozens, Allouch's fighters forced some Alawites whom his group was holding into cages that were then displayed in public areas and markets, using them as human shields to try to prevent further airstrikes. Alawites are a Shiite offshoot to which Assad's family also belongs.

The large metal cages with men and women inside were then put on pick-up trucks that drove around Damascus suburbs. Though delayed, the agreed-on evacuation of insurgents and their families from several neighborhoods of southern Damascus could further bolster Assad's hold over the capital - if it goes through. The pullout, which was supposed to start on Saturday, was to involve mainly Islamic State militants who were holed up near the capital. Allouch's death leaves so much up in the air, Lund wrote, especially in the Damascus suburbs of Ghouta.

"If it leads to instability and infighting among the rebels, or weakens command and control in the Ghouta, we could start to see a shift in the balance of power in the Syrian capital over the coming months," he said. —AP



**DAMASCUS:** This image from video made available on Saturday, Dec 26, 2015, by Al-Mayadeen, government-controlled Syrian Television, which has been verified and is consistent with other AP reporting shows, drone footage allegedly showing Syrian army airstrikes targeting Zahran Allouch, the head of the Army of Islam group. — AP

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## CORSICA DEMOS BANNED AFTER 2 DAYS OF ANTI-ARAB PROTESTS

**AJACCIO:** France banned demonstrations in part of the Corsican capital Ajaccio yesterday following two days of anti-Arab protests and sectarian tensions. Security forces also cordoned off Ajaccio's poor Jardins de l'Empereur housing estate, as Corsica's administrator Christophe Mirmand said that the ban would be in effect until at least January 4 and cover "all protests and gatherings".

Hundreds of protesters marched for a second straight day Saturday through

several working-class districts of Ajaccio shouting slogans such as "This is our home!" and "Arabs get out!". The unrest followed a Christmas Eve clash in which two firefighters and a police officer were injured at the estate, home to some 1,700 people. Regional official Francois Lalanne said a fire had been "deliberately lit" in the neighborhood in a ruse aimed at "ambushing" the emergency services. A firefighter told French television that "about 20 people armed with iron bars

(and) baseball bats" had tried to attack them but were unable to smash through the windows of their truck.

The next day, 600 people gathered in front of police headquarters in Ajaccio in a show of support for the police and firefighters. But some 300 broke away to head for the housing estate.

Shouting xenophobic slogans, the group smashed a Muslim prayer room, partially burning books including copies of the Quran, Lalanne said. French Prime

Minister Manuel Valls wrote on Twitter that the break-in was "an unacceptable desecration", while also condemning the "intolerable attack" on the firefighters.

"This behavior must stop. It hurts Corsica's image," Mirmand said, describing as "shocking and unacceptable" remarks that could lead to prosecution for hate speech. The population of France's lush Mediterranean "Isle de Beauté" (Island of Beauty) increases by tenfold during peak tourist season. The

Jardins de l'Empereur (Emperor's Gardens) area perched on an Ajaccio hillside was tense on Sunday amid rumours that a new protest was planned despite the ban. The unrest came as France remains jittery following the November 13 jihadist attacks in Paris that left 130 dead. Regional elections in mid-December handed major gains to France's anti-immigration far right, with Corsica's nationalist party winning power for the first time. — AFP

## EGYPT TO TRY POLICEMAN FOR DEATH IN CUSTODY

**CAIRO:** An Egyptian policeman will go on trial for beating to death a veterinarian in custody, a judicial official said yesterday, after three sentences were handed down this month in similar cases. Prosecutors ordered Mohamed Ibrahim to be tried after charging him with killing the veterinarian in November in the Suez Canal city of Ismailiya.

Ibrahim is also charged with illegally detaining the veterinarian and of forging official documents to falsely accuse the victim of being a drug dealer. Rights groups regularly accuse the regular police and secret police of abusing and torturing detainees.

Earlier this month, President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi warned that police officers found guilty of "committing mistakes" would be punished. On Saturday, a court in the Nile Delta city of Tanta sentenced in absentia two policemen to life in jail for killing Ismail Abdelhamid in October last year.

On December 12, two secret policemen were jailed for five years for beating to death an imprisoned lawyer in a Cairo

police station in February. That verdict came two days after an officer was sentenced to five years for beating to death a suspect in a drug case in the Nile delta town of Rashid.

In a separate case, 13 policemen are to stand trial next month over the death of a man in custody in the southern city of Luxor in November. Police abuses under former president Hosni Mubarak were a key factor for the 2011 uprising that led to his ouster. One of the triggers of the revolt was the case of Khaled Saeed, a young man tortured to death by police after his arrest in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria.

Mubarak was succeeded in 2012 by the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi, who lasted a year in power before his ouster by the army following massive rallies demanding his resignation. Morsi's overthrow unleashed a deadly crackdown on his supporters in which hundreds have been killed and thousands detained, and accusations of ill treatment in prisons are common. The interior ministry has said it does not condone torture but that there have been "individual" cases of abuse. — AFP



**TEHRAN:** A handout picture provided by the office of Iranian President Hassan Rouhani shows a general view of the 29th International Islamic Conference. — AFP

## MUSLIM STATES SHOULD FIX ISLAM'S IMAGE: ROUHANI

'WE MUST REMOVE ISLAM'S NEGATIVE IMAGE'

**TEHRAN:** Iran's President Hassan Rouhani yesterday said that Muslim countries should strive to improve the world's opinion of Islam. "We must remove Islam's negative image from today's cyber and real space," he said in Tehran at an international conference on "The Islamic World's Current Crisis".

Most "violence, terror and massacres, unfortunately, take place in the Islamic world," he said. "I invite all Islamic countries in this region and beyond-even those who until today have bombed and launched missiles on their neighbors-for all of us to stop this and choose the right path," he said. He did not give any country names. Shiite Iran supports Yemen's Houthi rebels, while its Sunni-ruled regional rival Saudi Arabia leads a military coalition that has been bombing them in support of the loyalists since March. "How many bombs and missiles have you purchased from America this year?" he asked. "If you had distributed the money for those bombs and missiles among poor Muslims, nobody would be going to bed hungry."

Tehran also backs the Syrian regime, whose army is fighting rebels and jihadists, including the Islamic State group that has taken over large swathes of the country and neighboring Iraq. "If some groups like Daesh can recruit soldiers, the reason is financial and cultural poverty," Rouhani said, using an Arabic acronym for IS.

Both types of poverty should be eliminated from "Islamic society," he said. "Terrorism will not be destroyed by bombs." "For years and years, we have talked of unity. Is unity possible without economic connections within the Islamic world?" he asked. The Syria and Iraq conflicts only benefit Israel and "those who are against Muslims," he said.

### US visa rules

In other news, a top Iranian parliamentary official has written to his counterparts in Europe, China and Russia calling on them to oppose "discriminatory" new US visa regulations. A bill passed by Congress this month bars citizens from 38 mainly European countries from travelling to the United States without a visa if they have previously visited Iran, Iraq, Syria or Sudan since 2011.

It also requires a visa for citizens of those countries if they are dual nationals of any of the four target nations. Tehran says the new regulations fly in the face of its landmark nuclear deal struck with major powers, including the United States, in July. In the letter to his counterparts in the European parliament, France, Britain, Germany, Russia and China, the chairman of the Iranian parliament's national security and foreign policy committee, Alaedin Boroujerdi, described the law as "unfair and discriminatory". "I would like to urge you to make every effort to oppose this decision by the US administration," he said, quoted by the ISNA news agency, describing it as a "destructive blow" to the nuclear agreement. The president of the French Senate, Gerard Larcher, criticized the new US rules on a visit to Tehran last week, saying they sent the "wrong signal" and undermined efforts to build confidence with Iran.

The move reflects calls by US lawmakers and authorities to reduce security vulnerabilities after the deadly strikes last month in Paris, where some of the attackers were French and Belgians who could have travelled unrestricted to the United States to carry out attacks. Those

affected will not be barred from the United States, but will be required to obtain a visa

through standard means, which includes a face-to-face interview at a US consulate. —AFP



**NUSAYBIN:** A woman complains inside her house. — AP

## TURK CIVILIANS STUCK IN URBAN WAR ZONE

**ISTANBUL:** Tens of thousands of civilians in southeast Turkey have been caught in the middle as government forces and Kurdish militants battle it out in urban areas - violence that has shattered hopes of reviving peace talks.

Turkish security forces launched a large-scale operation last week hoping to rout militants linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Worker's Party, or PKK, and say more than 180 of them have been killed. Thousands of troops and tanks have been sent to crush pockets of resistance across mainly Kurdish districts, where PKK fighters and youth have set up trenches to keep them at bay. Flashpoints have been under a 24-hour curfew since mid-December.

While there have been repeated clashes and long curfews since the collapse of peace talks in July, many in the region had hoped the talks would resume after a November election gave a decisive majority to the Justice and Development Party founded by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Instead, the fighting has gotten worse.

"If things continue like this, we will become just like Syria," says Mehmet Salih Bagata, a lawyer in the southeastern town of Cizre, the scene of the heaviest clashes and the highest reported fatalities since authorities stepped up military operations. The leader of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party, which made history when it entered parliament in June but lost seats in the November vote, has attempted to mediate the conflict with the PKK, repeatedly urging both sides to "silence their arms."

### Running out of food

Residents of Cizre say they are fast running out of food and water, and rights abuses have been rife. Shops have been shuttered for 11 days as a result of the government curfew. The fighting means many are stranded at home or in basements and those in need of medical attention cannot reach hospitals.

"People are waiting and hoping for the peace process," said Cihan Sariyildiz, a pharmacist in Cizre. The situation is similar in the southeastern town of Silopi, near the border with Syria and Iraq, where residents are struggling to survive the round-the-clock curfew, fighting and power cuts. One lawmaker said more than 11 civilians have been killed in Silopi since Dec. 14, when the curfew was imposed to aid security operations. She says the fighting is so intense that families are unable to bury their dead. "There are military tanks everywhere in Silopi but people are still living here," says Aycan Irmez, a lawmaker with the Peoples' Democratic Party. "We cannot sleep day or night because of the constant shelling or gunfire."

Ankara - along with the European Union and the United States - considers the PKK a terrorist organization. It fought a three-decade conflict with the rebels that killed tens of thousands of people and traumatized the nation. While Turkey has developed strong ties with the Kurds of Iraq, it views their brethren in Syria with distrust, a dynamic that complicates international efforts to fight Islamic State extremists. In the eyes of the Western anti-IS coalition, both Syrian and Iraqi Kurds have proved reliable allies worthy of weapons and backup. —AP

## ISRAELI MINISTERS ENDORSE BILL TO SPOTLIGHT FOREIGN-FUNDED NGOS

**JERUSALEM:** Israeli ministers yesterday endorsed contentious draft legislation to toughen rules on rights groups receiving funds from abroad, the justice minister said, in a move left-wing NGOs have called a witch-hunt.

Approval of the draft by the ministerial committee on legislation means that it now goes to parliament as a government bill, where it must pass three readings to become law. If the initiative is successful, Israeli non-governmental organizations which get at least half of their funding from "foreign state entities" will be obliged to identify donors on their financial statements and in official statements to Israeli public bodies.

It would also compel staff from such NGOs to wear special identity tags when appearing in front of parliamentary committees, as is currently the case with paid lobbyists. The bill's sponsor, Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked, has alleged that "blatant interference in internal Israeli affairs by foreign governments is unprecedented and widespread."

Shaked cited a UN inquiry into the 2014 summer war in Gaza, which concluded that Israel may have been guilty of war crimes. She

said it relied on evidence from foreign-backed NGOs B'Tselem, Adalah and Breaking the Silence. She is a member of the far-right Jewish Home party, which has led criticism of such groups.

### Internal affairs

"We are asking of states that wish to intervene in Israel's internal affairs to do so publicly via diplomacy," Shaked said in a statement yesterday. Party leader Naftali Bennett, also education minister in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition government, has banned Breaking the Silence from addressing high-school students, which it had done for many years.

The group is made up of Israeli military veterans who publicize abuses they say they have seen or taken part in during their military service in the occupied Palestinian territories. Several left-wing Israeli NGOs receive large percentages of their funding from abroad, including from European governments. Right-wing NGOs tend instead to be funded by private individuals, also often outside Israel, and so are not subject to the restrictions. —AFP

## IS, MILITIA BEHEADING EACH OTHER'S FIGHTERS

**KABUL:** Fighters from the Islamic State group and a militia controlled by a prominent lawmaker have beheaded a total of eight men in tit-for-tat revenge killings in the eastern border province of Nangarhar, an Afghan official said yesterday. Four men from each side had been decapitated after being caught by the opposing side during battles on Saturday, Ghalib Mujahid, the governor of the Achin district, said.

During a fight with gunmen affiliated with the IS, he said, four members of a militia loyal to Zahir Qadir, deputy speaker of parliament, were taken hostage and beheaded. In revenge, four of five IS gunmen held by Qadir's militia were beheaded, Mujahid said. Their heads were placed on piles of stones along a main road through Achin, he said.

It is not unusual for powerful figures in Afghanistan to control personal militias, though the central government and international organizations such as the United Nations have expressed concern about a proliferation of armed groups that are not part of the government's security force.

Achin is one of four districts that Afghan

officials say has come under IS control in recent months. Government forces have returned to the area to try to dislodge the extremists, who also fought fierce battles with the rival Taliban in the region during the summer months. IS has a presence in other volatile regions of Afghanistan, but Nangarhar appears to be their main power-base.

Mujahid said the decision to behead the IS gunmen had been made by Qadir's militia leaders. "We condemn the act of Daesh, and of course we condemn the act of Qadir's men here," he said, using an alternative name for the Islamic State group. "It is not acceptable for either side to act like this."

Meanwhile, in southern Helmand province - where the Taliban are fighting government forces for control of a number of districts - a roadside bomb killed a local police commander and two of his bodyguards, said provincial police spokesman Shah Mahmood Ashna. He said that other two police officers were wounded in the explosion in the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah. — AP



**NANGARHAR:** Afghan militia men stand near to the dead body of a beheaded Islamic State group loyalist in the Achin district. — AP



# TRUMP: RELYING ON, TRYING TO CONTROL FREE COVERAGE



LAS VEGAS: A file picture taken on December 15, 2015 in Las Vegas, Nevada, shows Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump during a presidential debate. —AFP

**NEWARK:** Nobody understands the power of the media on public perception quite like Donald Trump. The former reality television star and tabloid king, who has relied on free news coverage and social media to power his presidential campaign, is uniquely obsessed with how the news media portray his events.

Trump routinely orders news camera operators to pan the crowds at his rallies to show how large the gatherings are - and then chastises them, with disgust, when they fail to obey. His team has experimented with event setups, often placing groups of supporters on risers behind the candidate so that cameras can't miss the carefully curated faces.

He's fumed over television reporters doing live shots from empty auditoriums once his supporters have left. And on Twitter, Trump is one of the most prolific media critics, offering his live commentary on cable news reporters and analysts, lashing out at news outlets he feels have treated him unfairly. The approach is yet another aspect of Trump's unorthodox campaign. As other candidates and their affiliated super Political Action Committees have spent millions of dollars on expensive television ads, Trump's campaign has reported

spending just \$300,000 on a sprinkling of radio ads.

## Rock star

Instead, Trump has logged a whopping 22 hours and 46 minutes of free airtime from May 1 to December 15 on Fox News alone, according to a tally by Media Matters for America, a liberal nonprofit group. That's more than twice as much as any other candidate and more than some of his closest rivals, Texas Sen Ted Cruz, former Florida Gov Jeb Bush and Florida Sen Marco Rubio, combined.

While other candidates spend their time at small-scale retail events interacting one-on-one with voters, Trump's campaign centerpiece is the large-scale rally, where he is greeted like a rock star by thousands of adoring - and increasingly boisterous - fans. The events are often held in arenas and convention centers, with crowd sizes that dwarf his rivals' rallies - a fact he is never shy to point out.

"Nobody gets audiences like I get," Trump said at a rally in Michigan on Monday. "We broke the record. And I don't have a guitar, no guitar. Elton John said, 'You get the biggest

crowds in the world for a guy without a guitar.'"

Despite Trump's off-the-cuff, tangent-filled speeches, the events are meticulously staged. Reporters receive laminated press credentials that include the date and city. At one rally earlier this month, held in a private airplane hangar, Trump staged a dramatic entrance, pulling up to the open venue in his custom Boeing 757 airplane as the theme music from the movie "Air Force One" blared on loudspeakers. Entertainment has included live bands and DJs. Children are sometimes offered free helicopter rides.

## 'So much rage'

The spectacle has created a legion of Trump fans who attend one event after the next to hear the candidate speak. "This is better than a concert in the '70s," said Trump supporter Bill Kullander, ahead of a recent rally in Des Moines, Iowa - the fourth the 62-year-old had attended so far this year. In Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Monday, staunch supporters mixed with curious onlookers eager to see the Trump show in action.

"I just want to hear what he has to say,"

said Jim Rhodes of Belmont, Michigan. "Am I going to vote for him? Probably not. I like to refer to this as the second comedy show I've been to in my lifetime. The first one was Tim Allen. "Trump loathes the suggestion that his crowd sizes have anything to do with his celebrity status.

Trump's events have also become popular venues for protesters, who have grown increasingly adept at causing maximum disruption. Their strategies have vexed Trump, who frequently complains about the attention they receive in news reports. "Do you ever notice how few it is?" he complained last week. "We've got 9,000 or 10,000 people in here. They'll talk about one guy or two guys. Headline: Trump had pickets. They had like three people, there was nobody outside."

The charged atmosphere has also led to frequent violent clashes, with Trump supporters physically assaulting protesters at multiple events. At a recent rally just outside Las Vegas, Ender Austin III said he was assaulted. Trump supporters, he said, called for him to be set on fire. Another shouted, "Heil Trump." "I've never felt so much rage," he said of the crowd. — AP

## SHOOTINGS WEIGHED ON AMERICANS IN '15

**NEW YORK:** Mass shootings and attacks weighed heavily on the minds of Americans in 2015, according to a new poll that found most believe this year was worse for the world than last year. Take a look at the key findings of The Associated Press-Times Square Alliance poll.

### Preoccupied by mass shootings

Americans say the most important events of 2015 were a string of mass shootings, including the attacks in San Bernardino, California, and Paris, plus Islamic State group atrocities. Fifty-seven percent of those polled say this year was worse than the last year for the world as a whole, up from the 38 percent asked that question a year ago. Only 10 percent believe 2015 was a better year than 2014, while 32 percent think there wasn't much difference.

Americans also are much less likely than they were a year ago to believe that the current year was better for the United States - only 17 percent compared with 30 percent a year ago. Thirty-seven percent think this year was worse for the country than last year, while 44 percent don't think there was much difference. On a personal level, fewer than a third (29 percent) believe 2015 was better for them than 2014, while 21 percent feel it was worse, compared with 15 percent in 2014.

Interviewed separately from the poll, Jason Pruitt, a 43-year-old corporate pilot from the Detroit area, said security concerns were a factor in deciding whether to take his wife and daughter along on a Christmas trip to New York. "We were thinking about not coming this year, because of everything that's going on," Pruitt said. But they went ahead "because when you change your life, the terrorists win."

### Three events share top spot

Of those polled, 68 percent listed mass shootings in the US as very or extremely important news events this year, including the one in San Bernardino that heightened fears of domestic terrorism, plus shootings in Charleston, South Carolina; Roseburg, Oregon; and Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Close behind, at 64 percent, were the Paris attacks that ushered in 2015, targeting Charlie Hebdo and the Jewish market, then the Bataclan concert hall and other city sites in November. And third, at 63 percent, came the Islamic State group's various far-flung atrocities. Commenting on the completed poll was 32-year-old JP Fury, working in a food truck in Times Square. "At this point, I'm numb to all of it," he said. "This is nothing new. Every week there's a new shooting somewhere in America, and there's a new terrorist attack somewhere around the world."

### Other issues

Domestically, 44 percent of those polled rate as extremely or very important the deaths of blacks in encounters with police that sparked "Black Lives Matter" protests in Baltimore and Chicago. Another 44 percent rate the deal reached to curtail Iran's nuclear program as important, and nearly as many (42 percent) Europe's migrant crisis. Only 40 percent said the presidential race was important to them, with the Paris climate change conference right behind (at 38 percent), followed by the Supreme Court's legalization of gay marriage (36 percent) and the Cuban-US thaw (30 percent). — AP



CHICAGO: Melvin Jones, facing camera, hugs Robin Andrews, both brothers of Bettie Jones, 55, in Jones' living room after she was shot and killed by a Chicago police officer on Saturday December 26, 2015. — AP

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## CZECH PRESIDENT CALLS MIGRANT WAVE AN 'ORGANIZED INVASION'

**PRAGUE:** Czech President Milos Zeman on Saturday called the current wave of refugees to Europe "an organized invasion", adding young men from Syria and Iraq should instead "take up arms" against the Islamic State (IS) group. "I am profoundly convinced that we are facing an organized invasion and not a spontaneous movement of refugees," said Zeman in his Christmas message to the Czech Republic released Saturday.

He went on to say that compassion was "possible" for refugees who are old or sick and for children, but not for young

men who in his view should be back home fighting against jihadists. "A large majority of the illegal migrants are young men in good health, and single. I wonder why these men are not taking up arms to go fight for the freedom of their countries against the Islamic State," said Zeman, who was elected Czech president in early 2013.

He added that their fleeing their war-torn countries only serves to strengthen the IS group. The 71-year-old evoked a comparison to the situation of Czechs who left their country when it was under

Nazi occupation from 1939-1945. It is not the first time Zeman has taken a controversial stance on Europe's worst migrant crisis since World War II.

In November, the leftwinger attended an anti-Islam rally in Prague in the company of far-right politicians and a paramilitary unit. The country's Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, who has previously criticized the head of state's comments, said Zeman's Christmas message was based "on prejudices and his habitual simplification of things". Migrants are not the only target of Zeman's caustic remarks: He

said last week that his country should introduce the euro on the first day after indebted Greece's departure from the common currency, causing Athens to recall its ambassador.

He also said he was "very disappointed" that talks in the summer to eject Greece from the euro did not come to fruition. Both the Czech Republic and Slovakia, former communist countries that joined the European Union in 2004, have rejected the EU's system of quotas for distributing refugees amid the current migrant wave.

More than one million migrants and refugees reached Europe this year, mainly fleeing violence in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The crisis has strained ties within the European Union, with mostly newer members taking a firm anti-migrant stance and some northern countries like Germany welcoming those fleeing war. Few asylum seekers have chosen to stay in the Czech Republic, a NATO member nation of 10.5 million people. Regardless, a recent survey showed that nearly 70 percent of Czechs oppose the arrival of migrants and refugees in their country. — AFP



**PTYCHA:** Priests of the Russian Church bless believers after religious service near the church on December 23, 2015 in a village Ptycha, Rivne region. — AFP

## UKRAINE PARISH TURNS INTO BATTLEFIELD AMID CONFLICT

FIGHT BETWEEN PRO AND ANTI-MOSCOW ALLEGIANCES

**PTYCHA:** The quiet village of Ptycha has become an unlikely battleground for the Orthodox faithful in western Ukraine, where the divide between pro- and anti-Moscow factions plays out far from the eastern front of the war-torn country.

Armed with sticks, spades and Molotov cocktails, the Orthodox faithful in the Ukrainian-speaking village this month moved against each other, leaving at least one cleric with a bloodied head, according to video footage that went viral across Ukraine. Since the outbreak of the separatist conflict in April 2014, passions have steadily risen in the ex-Soviet nation, with tensions crossing political and even religious fault lines.

After Ukraine gained independence in 1991 a conflict erupted between the Ukrainian Orthodox Church backed by Moscow and a breakaway Kiev-based Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Now the war pitting the Ukrainian army against pro-Russian separatists in the east has sharply exacerbated those strains, leading to a schism among churchgoers.

In Ptycha, some 350 kilometers west of Kiev, the 1,000-odd parishioners are divided over the blue and white shrine where they worship. The parish belongs to the Moscow-backed Church but an informal local referendum last year showed that a majority of villagers wanted it to come under control of the Kiev Patriarchate.

#### 'Refuse to pray for army'

"The annexation of Crimea and the war in the east have clearly shown which church is really Ukrainian," Father Ilarion, the head of the diocese of the Kiev Patriarchate in the western Rivne region, where the parish is located, said. "The priests of the Moscow

Church hold services in Russian, they refuse to pray for the Ukrainian army and hold burial services for Ukrainian soldiers killed at the front."

After the improvised plebiscite, clerics of the two churches took turns to conduct services at the Ptycha shrine. But the fragile equilibrium was upended when a Kiev court in early December ruled that the parish belonged to the Moscow-backed Orthodox Church. Several priests and believers of the Russian Church then barricaded themselves inside the place of worship, and skirmishes ensued.

Dozens of police officers swarmed to the village to guard the shrine as clerics were forced to conduct services in the church yard. After the nearly week-long standoff, food was finally allowed to be passed on to those holed up in the church and heating was switched on. "According to the law, this church is ours. It is unacceptable to take turns to conduct services here," Father Andriy of the Moscow-backed Ukrainian Orthodox Church said.

#### 'War provoked this'

The local priest has also come under pressure, with someone scrawling "Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!"—the slogan of Kiev's pro-European protesters who toppled a Russia-backed president in February 2014 — outside of his home.

Nadiya Kalinina, a local pensioner, defended the priest who she said "had been serving here for more than 45 years." But many locals have condemned her, calling the woman a "separatist", a reference to pro-Russian rebels fighting government forces in a conflict that has claimed more than 9,000 lives.

"The war has provoked all of this," Kalinina sighed. The Moscow-aligned Church claims that the church-

goers whose allegiances lie with the Kiev Patriarchate have received support from members of the ultranationalist Right Sector movement. Russia, which is accused by Kiev and the West of fuelling the separatist insurgency, denounced the religious conflict, calling it "an unacceptable assault of radical nationalists and schematics of the Ukrainian Church."

#### Shifting allegiances

At the start of the year, the Kiev-aligned Orthodox Church, which is strongest in central and western Ukraine, claimed around 16.3 million faithful, according to the Democratic Initiatives Foundation. The Moscow-backed Church had 7.8 million believers, mainly in eastern and central regions.

Father Ilarion said the conflict with the pro-Russian rebels has prompted around 100 parishes of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church to switch their allegiances to the Kiev Patriarchate over the past year. "The churchgoers have begun to understand that they were deceived (by the Moscow Patriarchate)," he said.

Many in Ukraine now want Kiev-Pechersk Lavra—one of the most revered sites of Orthodox Christianity also known as the Kiev Monastery of the Caves—to be transferred under the jurisdiction of the Kiev Patriarchate. More than 10,000 residents of the Ukrainian capital in December signed an electronic petition advocating the handover of the monastery that dates back to the 11th century.

Patriarch Filaret, the head of the Kiev-based Ukrainian Orthodox Church who supported the Kiev uprising, urged the faithful to wait. "The monastery will be Ukrainian, we should have a little patience," he said recently. — AFP

## CAR MUSLIMS HOPE HISTORIC ELECTION WILL HERALD PEACE

**BANGUI:** Made homeless and jobless by conflict, young Muslims displaced by sectarian violence who are now sleeping out in the Central African Republic's capital Bangui see Wednesday's elections as their only salvation.

The onetime drivers, mechanics, merchants and electricians found refuge in a mosque in Bangui's flashpoint Muslim PK-5 district after a September spike in violence drove them from their homes. Their homes located by Christian neighborhoods were looted and burnt down as were many Christian homes in tit-for-tat sectarian violence that month that killed 61 people and wounded more than 300 people.

Eager to vote in elections seen as turning the page on almost three years of such violence, the men this weekend turned up at the Koukoukou School to pick up voter cards ahead of the vote. "I'm going to opt for an upright man as president, someone who doesn't steal. Someone who can ensure peace and security in the country, so we won't hear the sound of weapons," said Hissein Sale, an electrician.

Everyone agrees that reconciliation is the need of the hour. "It is our duty to vote," said Mohamed. Wednesday's much-delayed legislative and presidential elections follow a December 13 referendum that delivered a resounding 93 percent vote in favor of a new constitution—signaling how much people yearn for a return to normalcy.

After more than two years of fighting that forced 10 percent of the population to flee their homeland, the vote will show whether the mineral-rich but dirt poor nation-wracked by coups, dictatorships and endemic unrest since its 1960 independence from France—can close the door on bloodshed.

#### Fear still prevails

But many PK-5 residents say they remain confined to the area as it is too dangerous to venture out. "The Christians can come here but we cannot go to their areas.

They decapitate us, they cut us up into pieces," said Mohamed Moustapha. Moustapha, a driver, lost his license during the latest surge in violence but does not dare try and get a new one as "it means venturing into the city centre where there are too many enemies."

Bachir Hissein meanwhile has tucked a formidable looking dagger in his belt but hastens to say he "does not cross the border"—that is leave PK-5. "We want a president who loves his country, works for reconciliation, reduces unemployment and raises the GDP" of one of the world's poorest countries, he said.

Almost 70 percent of people live in poverty, and in 2014 the World Bank estimated per capita income at \$320 (295 Euros). UN peacekeepers have beefed up their presence in the district and Muslim troops from the country's 8,000-strong armed forces have been deployed here.

At the exit of PK-5, motorcycle taxis are lined up for clients near a barricade which leads to the 5th arrondissement, or district, inhabited mainly by Christians and patrolled by Christian vigilantes. Preparations for the vote are far from perfect. Almost two million Central Africans have registered to vote in a population of 4.8 million.

The vote was originally supposed to be held on Sunday but was postponed because the ballot papers—which were printed in France—only reached Bangui on Thursday. "Often, two or three cards are issued for the same person," said Madeleine Yapiere, the head of a polling station.

There are 30 candidates running for president and one of the front-runners Karim Mekassoua is Muslim "but that doesn't mean that we will all vote for him," said Camara Bouba. "We will keep our choice secret," he said. The other prominent candidates are Anicet Georges Dologuele, a former premier widely known as "Mr Clean" for his efforts to wipe out graft and theft, and Martin Ziguéle, also a former premier. — AFP



**BANGUI:** People wait to receive their voter registration card in the PK5 Muslim district on December 25, 2015 during a voter card distribution ahead the country's presidential elections. — AFP

## CATALAN PARTY IN CRUCIAL MEET ON SEPARATIST GOVT

**BARCELONA:** Members of a far-left Catalan separatist party gathered Sunday to decide whether to back the formation of a new government led by outgoing Catalan president Artur Mas that would work towards breaking away from Spain. Separatists won a majority of seats in the 135-seat Catalan parliament for the first time in a September election in the wealthy northeastern region of Spain which is home to 7.5 million people.

Last month they approved a resolution in the assembly that calls for the creation of an independent Catalan republic within 18 months, laying down a major challenge to the central government in Madrid. But Mas's "Together for Yes" secessionist alliance, which won 62 seats, and the smaller far-left separatist CUP group, which has won tens of seats, have so far been incapable of forming a government due to their ideological differences.

To be re-elected head of the regional government Mas, a conservative, needs at least two favorable votes from the CUP. The CUP has refused to back Mas because of his austerity policies as well as corruption scandals dogging his party and has pressured "Together for Yes" to put forward another candidate.

To coax the CUP to back Mas the

"Together for Yes" on Tuesday promised a series of social measures such as extra funding to homeowners facing eviction and school meals for poor children. Over 3,500 grassroots members of the CUP, which opposes NATO and European Union membership, gathered at a sports hall in Sabadell, a town some 30 kilometers north of Barcelona, to decide whether or not to back Mas.

The closed door assembly is expected to wrap up at 8 pm with the decision announced shortly after at a news conference. "If the assembly rejects this proposal, there is no more possibility for an agreement" with "Together for Yes," said CUP spokesman Albert Botran.

The Catalan parliament has until January 9 to elect a leader and form a new government or it must call fresh elections, probably in March, the fourth in the region since 2010. If the CUP decides to back a government led by Mas, he could be sworn in by the end of the year. The decision comes as Spain faces weeks of political uncertainty at a national level following an inconclusive general election on December 20. Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's conservative Popular Party, a staunch opponent of Catalan separatism, won the most votes but lost its majority in parliament and faces an uphill battle to stay in power. — AFP

## UK GOVT HOLDS EMERGENCY SESSION ON FLOODED NORTH

**LONDON:** Hundreds more people were told to leave their homes in northern England yesterday as Prime Minister David Cameron said more troops would be deployed to protect people's lives and property after weeks of heavy rainfall caused widespread flooding.

Cameron said after an emergency Cobra ministerial meeting yesterday that the government would "do whatever is needed" to deal with the crisis. He called the rising waters "unprecedented" and promised a full review of contingency plans in the coming weeks. Police in the York area 200 miles north of London advised more than 300 people to leave their homes because of rising river waters.

Several hundred had been evacuated the day before in the West Yorkshire and Lancashire regions and officials said thousands had lost power. The number of people affected continues to grow as flooding spreads and impacts cities as well as villages and towns. A picturesque 200-year-old pub, The Waterside, in the greater Manchester area, collapsed, with part of the structure swept away by the River Irwell. Rising river levels also threatened downtown Manchester and police dealt with a ruptured gas main and small fire believed to have been caused by the flooding.

The official Met Office weather service indicated that only very small amounts of rain are expected in the flooded areas in the next day. The ground remains heavily saturated, however, leaving it vulnerable to further storms in the

coming weeks.

Hundreds of flood warnings and alerts remain in place in parts of England and Wales. The Environment Agency begged people to be

cautious, tweeting that driving or walking in flowing flood waters could be life-threatening. Rescue crews have been using boats to help remove people from their homes. — AP



**YORK:** Members of the emergency services paddle down Huntington Road past a submerged parked car, after the adjacent River Foss burst its banks. — AFP

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## TAIWAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES CLASH IN FIRST TELEVISED DEBATE

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan's presidential candidates clashed over China policy during their first televised debate yesterday, ahead of elections in which relations with Beijing will be a key issue for voters. Fears over Beijing's influence on the island have grown since a rapprochement under the ruling Kuomintang (KMT), culminating in a landmark meeting between current President Ma Ying-jeou and Chinese President Xi Jinping in November.

Public unease over closer relations is a major factor behind the KMT's dwindling popularity and sparked the occupation of parliament by protesters last year over a trade pact with China. Tsai Ing-wen of the Beijing-skeptical Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), widely tipped to win the presidency in January, criticized the KMT for relying too much on China.

"We need to be comprehensively linked to the major global economies, and not just solely tied to China," she said, arguing that the KMT had only given Taiwan "one option". But she tread carefully when it came to political relations with

Beijing. "Everything can be discussed," she said. "This is a rational approach and I believe China will also take a rational attitude in interactions with DPP."

### '1992 consensus'

Tsai has consistently said she will not rock the boat with China if elected, but has been slammed by the KMT for being unclear on her strategy. "Tsai said she will not provoke China and there will not be surprises, but she is still being vague," her KMT opponent Eric Chu countered. He also defended the KMT's China policy.

"China is not our only option but we should not oppose everything China-related," he said. Taiwan is self-ruling since a split with the mainland in 1949 after a civil war, but has never formally declared independence. Beijing sees it as a renegade province awaiting reunification. Beijing insists any new leader must recognize the "1992 consensus"—a tacit agreement between the KMT and China which says there is "one China" with different interpretations.

The DPP has never recognized the

agreement and Tsai remained circumspect yesterday. "I believe cross-strait relations can remain stable... the 1992 consensus is an option, but it's not the only one," she said. Some analysts said she was taking a softer line, assuaging China and major ally the United States, which does not want to see increased tension in the region. "She is sending a message not only to voters in Taiwan but China and the US that she is willing to communicate," said Shih Cheng-feng, a political analyst at National Dong Hwa University.

Others said there was little concession. "She says nothing about 'one China' which is the crucial part of (the) 1992 (consensus)," said Jonathan Sullivan, a China specialist at the University of Nottingham. Third presidential candidate James Soong of the China-friendly People First Party (PFP) said China and Taiwan should "seek common ground", but urged Beijing to respect Taiwan's sovereignty. Soong, a conservative political veteran, is trailing both Tsai and Chu in the polls. — AFP



**TAIPEI:** (Left-right) Taiwan's 2016 presidential election candidates, People first Party's James Soong, Kuomintang's Eric Chu, and Democratic Progressive Party's Tsai Ing-wen join hands at the start of their first televised policy debate. — AFP

## PAKISTAN'S BALOCH ACTIVISTS TAKE THEIR SEPARATIST BATTLE ONLINE

### 'BALOCHISTAN A BLACK HOLE IN TERMS OF INFORMATION'

**ISLAMABAD:** Images of burned villages and charred bodies, clips of people screaming for help: With a wall of silence hindering traditional media, insurgents are using social networks to present a narrative of violent abuses by security forces in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province. A simple search for "Awaran Operation" on Twitter is enough to reveal dozens of photographs said to be from the July offensive launched by the army against separatist Baloch rebels, many of which are difficult to look at.

Baloch activists have flooded the web with such

ies on the streets in the western province.

### Most dangerous province

Thousands of people have simply vanished, according to various estimates by non-governmental organizations such as the Voice of Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP). And the province's own Home and Tribal Affairs Department said last year said 800 bodies had been recovered between 2011 and July 2014, many of them activists linked to the insurgency. The army denies being involved, and has repeatedly

"Balochistan is a black hole in terms of information," says a senior local journalist, who asked not to be named. "Only the security forces' version is issued to the media, which run their stories," says another local editor, Anwar Sajidi.

Social media is therefore one of the only mediums that insurgents have of getting their own narrative out. "It is because of social media that the world knows what Pakistan is doing in Balochistan," claims Lateef Johar Baloch, an activist who rose to prominence last year after a 46-day hunger strike that played out on social networks.

Arif Rafiq, a Pakistan expert at the Middle East Institute in Washington, agrees. There is little doubt, he says that many activists' accounts "provide fast and accurate information on the conflict in Balochistan". The emergence meanwhile of social media as a force echoes parallel moves in Syria where groups opposing President Bashar al-Assad have used it as a tool to expose rights abuses such as mass killings.

### A question of survival

But social media is notoriously unreliable even at the best of times, and many are sceptical of what is being published online from Balochistan. "Nobody can verify it," says Siddique Baloch, a local editor. Journalists are not allowed to visit many areas and if any try to go without official permission, "they will be killed", he says, adding that even human rights activists are often targeted in the region.

Without being able to verify it is impossible to know if what is being posted is real or indeed if it is being posted by the insurgents, their political rivals, or even security forces. As a media strategy, then, the online campaign is not always effective. However the insurgents are using social networks not only to promote their version of events, but also as a survival tool.

Early in the conflict, the Pakistani secret services "listened to our phones" and "went from house to house threatening people and their families," says Brahumdagh Bugti, leader of the Baloch Republican Party, who lives in exile in Switzerland. Those suspected of links with nationalists were arrested and then "tortured" and even "killed", their bodies abandoned roadside, Bugti claims—such as his grandfather Baloch Nawab Akbar Bugti, also a nationalist leader, who was killed during a military operation in 2006. His grandson says he was executed by the army. — AFP



**DERA BUGTI:** In this file photograph taken on September 1, 2006, Pakistani tribal's bury the coffin of rebel tribal chief Nawab Akbar Bugti, in the remote town of Dera Bugti in the south-west province of Baluchistan. — AFP

content in recent months. They say they want to provide information on a separatist insurgency that has racked Balochistan since 2004, arguing there is no one else who can fully tell their story. International rights groups have for years said that Pakistan's security forces have committed abuses, accusing them of picking up non-militant separatists—including academics and students—torturing them and dumping their bod-

denounced the rebellion as "terrorism" promoted by states hostile to Pakistan, including India. Verifying the claims from either side can prove deadly.

Amnesty International says Balochistan is Pakistan's most dangerous province for journalists, with 12 killed since 2008 and reporters under pressure mainly from authorities but also armed groups or Islamist and nationalist militias. As a result,

## RED CHRISTMAS IN PHILIPPINES AS MUSLIM GUERRILLAS KILL 10

**MANILA:** Muslim guerrillas killed 10 civilians in the majority Catholic Philippines over Christmas, the military said yesterday, with some Christians in the affected areas now too scared to sleep in their homes.

Guerrillas from the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) captured nine farmers and shot them dead on December 24 in the southern island of Mindanao, said Colonel Ricky Bunayog, commander of the local battalion. Some of the bodies were not found till two days later, he told AFP.

Also on Christmas eve, the BIFF launched an attack on a village in Pigcawayan town, some 900 kilometers south of Manila, that left a district official dead, the colonel added. Six guerrillas were killed and eight wounded in fighting which lasted three days, although only one body was recovered, Bunayog added.

The raids have stoked fear in Mindanao where Christians are the majority but which the country's Muslim minority claims as their ancestral homeland. "Since (Saturday), it has been quiet. But the damage has been done. People on the outskirts are scared and at night, they move to the centre of the town," sleeping in the local gymnasium, he said. "I tell them we have enough security forces but they are too scared," he added. Bunayog could not rule out more attacks by the BIFF, which split from main Muslim rebel group the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2008 after the MILF opened a peace process with the government. He said members of the group had been seen meeting "in numbers beyond their usual size," but could not give a motive for their new attacks on Christian communities. — AFP

## KOREA DIGS IN HEELS AHEAD OF 'COMFORT WOMEN' TALKS

**SEOUL:** South Korea yesterday dug its heels in ahead of talks with Japan over the thorny issue of wartime sex slaves that has long strained ties. Foreign Minister Yun Byung-Se dismissed Japan's claim that the issue of "comfort women" who were forced to work in Japanese military brothels during World War II was settled in a 1965 agreement on normalizing relations.

"There is no change to our position and there won't be any in the future," Yun told journalists as senior officials of the two countries met to prepare for talks between Yun and his counterpart Fumio Kishida today. Japan has long maintained that the dispute was settled in the 1965 which saw Tokyo make a total payment of \$800 million in grants or loans to its former colony.

But Seoul says the treaty does not cover compensation for victims of wartime wrongdoing such as the comfort women and that the agreement does not absolve the Japanese government of its legal responsibility. South Korean President Park Geun-Hye has said settlement of the issue remains the "greatest stumbling block" to friendlier ties.

When she met Japanese Prime Minister

Shinzo Abe in Seoul last month for a rare summit, they agreed to speed up talks on the issue. The foreign ministers' meeting today is a part of such efforts. Up to 200,000 women are estimated to have been sexually enslaved by Japan during the war, many of them Korean. Seoul is demanding a formal apology and compensation for the 46 surviving Korean "comfort women".

### 'Preposterous reports'

Japan issued a landmark 1993 statement that expressed "sincere apologies and remorse" to the women "who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women". Abe, who once added fuel to the row by questioning whether comfort women were really "forced" against their will to serve Japanese soldiers, says his government stands by the 1993 statement.

In a fresh irritant ahead of the foreign ministers' talks, Japanese news reports said Seoul was reviewing the relocation of a statue symbolizing the comfort women at the request of Tokyo. The statue currently stands in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul. — AFP



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Focus

ALLOUSH'S DEATH  
MAY HURT SYRIA  
TALKS, BOOST IS

By Rouba El Husseini and Maya Gebeily

The killing of Syrian rebel chief Zahran Allouh, fiercely opposed to both the regime and the Islamic State group, has eliminated a key bulwark against the jihadists and could derail UN-brokered peace talks, analysts say. The head of Jaish al-Islam, the foremost rebel group in Damascus province, was killed on Friday in an air strike claimed by Syria's government. Jaish al-Islam has fought off both government forces and IS jihadists in its Eastern Ghouta bastion, east of the capital. It even recently agreed to eventual peace talks with the regime of Bashar Al-Assad.

But with Allouh gone, that centralizing force has vanished, says Andrew Tabler, analyst at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "He occupied a space between the extremists and the Free Syrian Army, which was important to hold off the spread of IS in the short term and unify the rebels vis-a-vis the regime in the long term," says Tabler. Without him, Islamist fighters could lean towards further radicalisation and join jihadist groups, Tabler adds. Despite Allouh's ferocious opposition to IS, Syria's regime and its media consistently referred to him and to Jaish al-Islam as "terrorists". Syria's army command did so again in the statement claiming responsibility for his death. Damascus has used the term for all its opponents - including US-backed rebels - since the conflict erupted in 2011. It has strived to present itself globally as a legitimate government fighting jihadist groups across the country.

## 'Severe Blow' to Talks

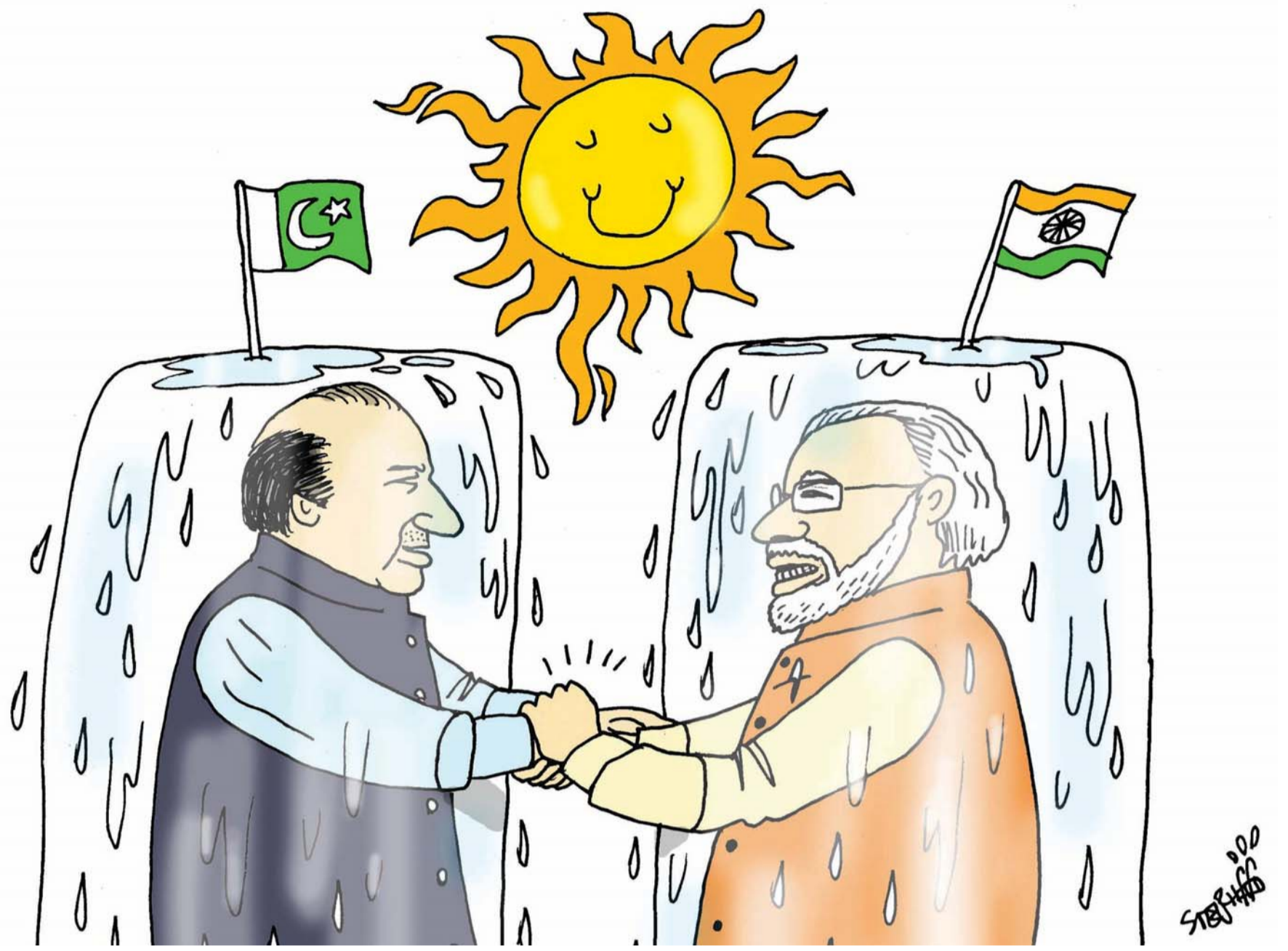
Allouh's death is "a major blow to the rebels," says Karim Bitar of the Institute for International and Strategic Affairs. "It might temporarily help the regime, as his disappearance reinforces the binary Assad-versus-Daesh dichotomy," Bitar tells AFP, using the Arabic acronym for IS. It could also thwart potential peace talks between the regime and the opposition, which the UN announced could begin in less than one month. His killing is "a severe blow to the Riyadh negotiations process. In the past two years, the Saudis have been propping up Allouh and trying to present him as an alternative," Bitar says.

Jaish al-Islam will need time "to recover from this blow and for the alternative leadership to emerge," he adds. And given Allouh's fate, other groups participating in the talks could back out. "His death shows the severe disincentive of Islamist groups to stay in the negotiations outlined by the UN," Tabler tells AFP. In a statement released Saturday, UN peace envoy Staffan de Mistura said he would aim to convene the landmark meeting between the opposition and the regime on January 25 in Geneva. He expressed hopes the "broadest possible spectrum" of opposition representatives would be involved, he adding: "Continuing developments on the ground should not be allowed to derail it." Backed by Saudi Arabia, Jaish al-Islam was one of the most influential armed groups invited to broad-based opposition talks in Riyadh earlier this month. Representatives in the Saudi capital agreed to eventual negotiations with the regime and were set to choose at least part of the opposition delegation for upcoming talks.

## 'Constructive' Image

The son of a Salafist preacher, Allouh took up arms as part of Syria's uprising shortly after being released from prison in a general amnesty. He often expressed his hatred of Shiites and Alawites - the sect of Assad's clan - but recently began reeling in his sectarian diatribes and attempted to present his group as more moderate or nationalistic. "Allouh tried to come off as a constructive, responsible centrist, an anti-terrorist ally, and an all-around gentleman," writes expert Aron Lund on the Syria Comment website. "You know, the kind you'd like to see in a coalition government."

With him gone, more hardline groups could step in to fill the void in Eastern Ghouta. "It is possible the death will be a significant blow to Jaish al-Islam because the movement has been heavily centred around (Allouh) as an individual," says Syria analyst Aymenn Al-Tamimi. Tamimi said other groups in Eastern Ghouta, like hardline group and Al-Qaeda ally Ahrar al-Sham, will now "move to assert more influence in the political landscape there." —AFP



## FEAR AND FEW ANSWERS IN REFUGEE ROUNDUP

By Melih Aslan

Ghada's five children cried out in terror when police broke into their run-down Istanbul flat at dawn and ordered the 36-year-old Syrian's family onto a bus, without saying why. The family of seven from the northern Syrian city of Aleppo was among a group of refugees rounded up two weeks ago and sent to a detention centre on the Asian side of Istanbul, where they passed several days guarded by police and surrounded by high walls topped with razor wire. "It was as if we were criminals," Ghada said, as she sat with her children in a basement apartment in a poor Istanbul suburb, where they now live with another family after being released from the detention centre through the help of friends.

Aid organisations and rights group Amnesty International say Turkish authorities are rounding up scores, maybe hundreds, of Syrian migrants off the streets, sometimes targeting beggars, and sending them to detention centres. The process has resulted in the deportation of some back to Syria against their will, they say. In a report this month, Amnesty said it had interviewed 50 refugee families who had been detained. It said more than 100 had been deported.

Turkey denies it is forcing any refugees back to Syria and says it is only rounding up Syrians affiliated with crime. A senior government official, agreeing to speak about the politically sensitive issue on condition of anonymity, said refugees linked to criminal gangs were being settled in a camp in Duzici district of Osmaniye province, in southern Turkey, where their mobility is restricted to maintain public order. He described the measure as part of a "crackdown on organized crime" affecting less than 1 percent of Turkey's 2.2 million Syrian refugees.

While much of the Western world woke up to the scale

of the refugee crisis only this summer when hundreds of thousands of Syrians left Turkey for Europe, Turkey has had an open door policy to Syrian refugees since early 2011, spending more than \$8 billion on humanitarian aid for Syrians. It has built refugee camps considered to be among the best in the world and provided healthcare and education. But most refugees live outside the camps, where they are not permitted to work legally.

"The police knocked the door as if they wanted to break it. We got scared so we didn't open it," Ghada said of the raid. "Then they treated us like we committed a crime. They never told us why or where we were being taken." Aya, 25, whose family of four shares the tiny basement flat, separated by curtains from Ghada's family, was also taken away and later released without explanation. "We are no criminals, we didn't do anything wrong," Aya said, holding her toddler daughter who coughed in her arms.

She would rather stay in Turkey than have the family try its luck in Europe, which seems even more foreign. "We already feel like outsiders here. If we go there we couldn't imagine how it will be," she said. "We are not beggars. We are people who work with dignity. We are poor but we don't bother or hurt anyone."

## 'Accommodation Centre'

The detention centre where the two families were held, a sprawling building in the working class suburb of Pendik in eastern Istanbul, is guarded by plain clothes policemen and riot police, who did not permit Reuters to enter. An official at the door said it was used as "an accommodation centre for Syrians before they are sent off to Osmaniye camp", the location where the government says it houses refugees with ties to criminal gangs. The centre became active almost a year ago, said the owner of a nearby fast-food restaurant. At least two busloads of refugees are now

brought there each week, he said. Once, he saw a man who tried to escape over the razor wire.

Syrians often come to secure the release of relatives held there, he said. Often they leave empty handed. Ghada said Syrians at the centre believed they would either be sent to Osmaniye or deported to Syria. Aid workers said that, once at Osmaniye, refugees are forced to either stay in the camp throughout their time in Turkey or sign a paper saying they are returning to Syria voluntarily.

## EU Seeks Migration Curbs

Turkey's treatment of Syrian refugees has gained international notice since around 500,000 refugees risked their lives at sea to reach Greece from Turkey this year. Struggling to cope, the European Union asked Turkey to tighten its borders and limit departures in return for aid and renewed talks on admitting Turkey to the EU. If fewer refugees depart for Europe, that could increase pressure on the Turkish authorities to keep them off Turkish streets.

Volkan Gorenadog of Amnesty International said the detentions seem to have increased since Ankara reached its agreement with Brussels. Europe had an obligation to ensure its Turkish partners were not abusing human rights, he said, describing it as "shocking that EU money is being used to fund an unlawful detention and return program". One aid official familiar with the detentions, said many of those being targeted had been begging in Turkey, a common way of earning a livelihood for refugees who are barred from seeking employment.

Dozens of families had already been apprehended in one busy Istanbul district, said the aid official, who declined to be identified. "This is happening every day. If they take a person from a particular area then they will continue to clean out all of the neighborhood," the official said. —Reuters

## 'MEIN KAMPF' RETURNS TO GERMAN MARKET

By Geir Moulson

For 70 years since the Nazi defeat in World War II, copyright law has been used in Germany to prohibit the publication of "Mein Kampf" - the notorious anti-Semitic tome in which Adolf Hitler set out his ideology. That will change next month when a new edition with critical commentary, the product of several years' work by a publicly funded institute, hits the shelves. While historians say it could help fill a gap in Germans' knowledge of the era, Jewish groups are wary and German authorities are making it clear that they still won't tolerate any new "Mein Kampf" without annotations.

Under German law, a copyright expires at the end of the year 70 years after an author's death - in this case, Hitler's April 30, 1945, suicide in a Berlin bunker as the Soviet army closed in. That means Bavaria's state finance ministry, which holds the copyright, can no longer use it to prevent the work's publication in several other countries; in the US, for example, Bavaria never controlled the copyright.

In Germany, many argue that holding back "Mein Kampf" merely created mystique around the book. The idea of at least a partial version with critical commentary for the German market dates back as far as the late 1960s. The Munich-based Institute for Contemporary History, which is behind the new version, sought and was denied permission to produce the book in the mid-1990s when it published a volume of Hitler's speeches.

Hitler wrote "Mein Kampf" - or "My Struggle" - after he was jailed following the failed 1923 coup attempt known as the Beer Hall Putsch. Millions of copies were printed after the Nazis took power in 1933. The rambling tome set out Hitler's ultranationalist, anti-Semitic and anti-communist ideology for his National Socialist German Workers Party, or Nazi party, airing the idea of a war of conquest in eastern Europe. "The book should not be underestimated as a historical source and also as a key to understanding the history of National Socialism," the director of the Munich institute, Andreas Wirsching, said ahead of the new edition's mid-January publication.

"Among serious historians in Germany, you

won't find one who is against a commented edition and hasn't been calling for one for years," said Sven Felix Kellerhoff, a journalist with the daily Die Welt and a historian who has written about "Mein Kampf" himself. "That goes from conservatives to the left." Jewish opinion varies. The head of Germany's Central Council of Jews, Josef Schuster, says that knowledge of "Mein Kampf" is important in explaining Nazism and the Holocaust - so "we do not object to a critical edition, contrasting Hitler's racial theories with scientific findings, to be at the disposal of research and teaching." One of his predecessors is more critical. Charlotte Knobloch, a Holocaust survivor who heads Munich's Jewish community, says she trusts the expertise of the institute's researchers but doubts that the new edition will achieve its aim of "demystifying and taking apart 'Mein Kampf'."

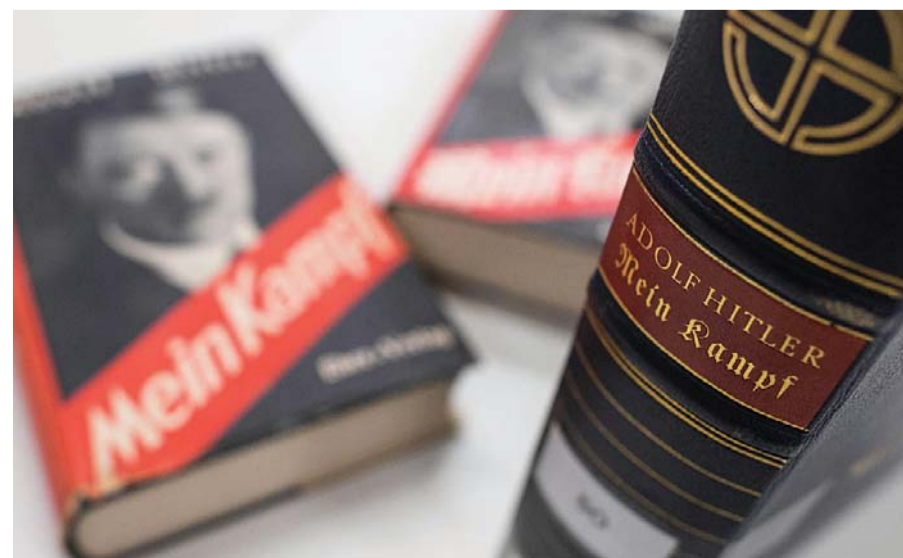
## Interest

It is likely to awaken interest "not in the commentary, but the original - and that remains highly dangerous," Knobloch said. "It could still have an

impact because both of the core ideas are timeless: ultranationalism and racism." Given that "Mein Kampf" is already widely available in university libraries and on the Internet, "we don't see a need to print more copies of it and thus ensure mass distribution, including of an annotated version," said Ronald Lauder, president of the World Jewish Congress.

The publishers say they understand the objections, while noting that the book is already freely available secondhand and online, not to mention in other languages, without annotations. Christian Hartmann, who led the team putting together the heavily annotated version, says that "we are linking Hitler's text and our commentary firmly together - we are practically encircling Hitler with our remarks." Hartmann said they have attempted "the most intensive examination and rebuttal that is possible" of "Mein Kampf".

Amid disagreement over the annotated edition's merits, there is wide agreement that Hitler still shouldn't be left to speak uncontradicted. In mid-2014, Germany's federal and state justice



In this Dec 11, 2015 photo, a 1939-edition (right) and different other editions of Adolf Hitler's "Mein Kampf" are on display at the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich. —AFP

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Jockeys race purebred Arabian horses yesterday on the sidelines of the Mazayin Dhafra Camel Festival in the desert near the city of Madinat Zayed, 150 km west of Abu Dhabi. The festival, which attracts participants from around the Gulf region, includes a camel beauty contest, a display of UAE handicrafts and other activities aimed at promoting the country's folklore. — AFP

## DEMS FIND UNLIKELY ALLY ON MUSLIMS: GEORGE W BUSH

WASHINGTON: Democrats are turning to an unlikely ally, George W Bush, to respond to Republican pledges to declare war on "radical Islamic terrorism". President Barack Obama, under pressure to be more aggressive on terrorism, regularly cites his predecessor's refusal to demonize Muslims or play into the notion of a clash between Islam and the West. It's a striking endorsement from a president whose political rise was predicated on opposition to the Iraq war and Bush's hawkish approach in the Middle East.

As Hillary Clinton put it, "George W Bush was right." Laying out her plan to fight domestic terrorism, Clinton reminded voters in Minneapolis earlier this month of Bush's visit to a Muslim center six days after the Sept 11 attacks. She

even quoted his words from that day about those who intimidate Muslim-Americans: "They represent the worst of humankind, and they should be ashamed of that kind of behavior."

Bush, of course, was not referring to the 2016 Republican presidential field. Clinton certainly was. Donald Trump has called for a temporary ban on Muslims entering the US - then enjoyed a bump in the polls. Ben Carson deems traditional Muslims unfit for the presidency. Marco Rubio warns of a "civilizational struggle against radical, apocalyptic Islam", making a distinction, at least, between ordinary Muslims and extremists. Ted Cruz berates Clinton and Obama incessantly for refusing to declare war on "radical Islamic terrorism".

Clinton and Obama argue that rhetoric just helps the Islamic State group and likeminded extremists, whose recruitment pitch is based on the narrative of an apocalyptic battle between Islam and the West. The Democrats warned that proposals like Trump's Muslim ban jeopardize national security, drawing a contrast with Bush. "I was very proud after 9/11 when he was adamant and clear about the fact that this is not a war on Islam," Obama said recently. His message to today's Republican leaders: "They should follow his example. It was the right one. It was the right impulse."

Sen Bernie Sanders, Clinton's top challenger for the Democratic nomination, visited a mosque this month in a show of solidarity that evoked Bush's after 9/11. And the

Democratic National Committee released an ad contrasting comments by the 2016 GOP contenders with footage of Bush declaring that "Islam is peace". All of that marks a rare departure for a party that has spent the last decade slamming the former president - to much electoral success. After all, even many of the Republican candidates, even if in retrospect, have criticized the war in Iraq, where Islamic State militants are now control part of the country and are seeking to export terrorism around the world.

But Bush's example has become particularly poignant for Democrats following recent terrorist attacks in Paris and California that have left people more preoccupied with terrorism than at any time since 9/11. Both Clinton and Obama have sought to deflect the critique that they're too soft on the domestic terrorism threat. "There weren't a lot of policy decisions that I agreed with George W Bush on,

but I was never going to call him weak on terror," said Mo Elleithe, a long-time Democratic Party official who now runs Georgetown University's Institute of Politics and Public Service.

Not all Republican candidates have been as harsh about Muslims as Trump has been. Jeb Bush has joined his GOP challengers in describing the enemy as "radical Islamic terrorism." But he's also said the U.S. should follow his brother's lead, arguing in the last GOP debate that "we can't dissociate ourselves from peace-loving Muslims."

During the 2001 mosque visit, one of several occasions Bush denounced anti-Muslim bias, he stood alongside Muslim leaders and quoted the Quran about evil-doers being ultimately defeated. He insisted that intimidation against Muslims in America would not stand. "The face of terror is not the true faith of Islam," Bush said. The former president has stayed mostly silent

throughout the recent debate. His spokesman, Freddy Ford, recently said Bush wouldn't comment on "Trump's bluster" but repeated Bush's insistence that "true Islam is peaceful." Ford declined to discuss what Bush thinks about Democrats quoting him now.

Muslim groups have called on Obama to follow Bush's example by visiting a mosque, a move that would be risky for a president who has faced longstanding but false claims that he is a Muslim. White House officials didn't rule out the possibility Obama would visit a mosque, but said there were no imminent plans to do so. "Bush sent a very powerful message to the world and American Muslims that backlash and attacks on this faith community will not be tolerated," said Ibrahim Hooper of the Council on American-Islamic Relations. "We would hope President Obama would make a similar gesture." — AP

## LAWMAKERS REJECT PROPOSED MEASURES...

Continued from Page 1

The speaker assured the employees of the Anti-Corruption Authority that they will be reappointed in their posts and given the same salary and benefits once the law is passed.

The constitutional court has ruled that the Amiri decree establishing the authority was not in line with the constitution because it was issued when the Assembly was in recess. Ghanem also said that the parliamentary seat vacated by Fadhil will be declared

vacant on Jan 12 during the Assembly session as per the constitution. A by-election will be held to elect a replacement within 60 days from the day of announcing that the seat is vacant by the Assembly.

Secretary of the Assembly MP Adel Al-Khorafi said that the Assembly bureau has decided to set up a permanent medical emergency unit at the Assembly. The decision came after the death of Fadhil, who suddenly died on his seat last Tuesday, apparently from a heart attack. Fadhil was rushed to the nearby Amiri Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

## 11 KILLED IN TEXAS TORNADOES

Continued from Page 1

rescue efforts and possibly wreaking more havoc on the region. Several tornadoes touched down around the densely populated Dallas area Saturday evening, the day after Christmas, with the city of Garland to the northeast the hardest hit.

Aerial footage taken as day broke showed some homes completely flattened, while others had roofs blown off and windows shattered, curtains fluttering in the wind. "It is total devastation," local police spokesman Lt Pedro Barineau was quoted as saying by the Dallas Morning News. It was here that authorities confirmed eight fatalities, adding that 15 people were taken to hospital with injuries. About 600 buildings have been damaged, they said, with single-family homes most affected. "Officials are continuing this morning to check and clear structures as they assess the damage in the approximate 2-square-mile area," officials said in a statement.

Police said the deaths happened during tornado-related traffic accidents near Interstate 30 and the George Bush Turnpike, the Dallas Morning News reported, saying some of the bodies were found in cars while others were catapulted from the scene. Three other storm-related fatalities occurred in the towns of Copeville and Blue Ridge in Collin County to the northeast of Dallas, the local sheriff's office confirmed to AFP, without providing more details. The Dallas Morning News reported that an infant was among the dead.

The late Saturday deaths in Texas came as millions of residents in the southern United States struggle to recover from fierce storms and heavy flooding, with more rain in the forecast. At least 17 people were killed in storm-related incidents since Wednesday in Mississippi, Tennessee and Arkansas, local officials said. In Alabama, heavy flooding continued yesterday following several days of heavy rain that began on Thursday. Governor Robert Bentley declared

a state of emergency to deal with the flooding just before tornadoes uprooted trees and tore off rooftops on Christmas Day.

One touched down in Birmingham, the state's most populous city. There were no fatalities, but the twister damaged three homes, local fire chief Charles Gordon told CNN. Near the state capital Montgomery, more than 300 inmates at the minimum-security Red Eagle Community Work Center were forced to evacuate due to flooding, local media reported. And residents of the town of Elba were nervously eyeing a levee amid forecasts that the Pea River would crest and possibly overflow the barrier, the AL.com news site reported.

In Mississippi, where Governor Phil Bryant declared a state of emergency to deal with flooding, "severe storms" are forecast for late Sunday through Monday, the state Emergency Management Agency said. Early EMA damage reports showed 241 homes destroyed or with major damage, and more than 400 total homes affected. The agency confirmed the deaths of 10 people in Mississippi. There were another six confirmed fatalities in Tennessee, and one person was killed in Arkansas.

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal also declared states of emergency in counties affected by the weather. "A variety of dangerous weather conditions will continue across the middle of the country through Sunday," the National Weather Service said. It warned of "blizzard conditions" from west Texas into Kansas, and "hazardous ice accumulations" in Oklahoma. "Dangerous flooding will extend from north Texas to central Illinois," it said. Flood warnings and advisories also remained in effect in parts of Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Kentucky and other areas in the southeast.

Separately, a southern California brushfire that forced the closure of part of two major highways was mostly under control. As of early yesterday, the fire was 60 percent contained and evacuation orders were lifted, the Ventura County Fire Department said. The fire scorched 486 hectares, but there were no fatalities, and no structures were reported damaged, officials said. — Agencies

## IRAQ DECLARES VICTORY OVER IS IN RAMADI

Continued from Page 1

Islamic State, also known by the acronyms ISIS, ISIL or Daesh, swept through a third of Iraq in June 2014 and declared a "caliphate" to rule over all Muslims from territory in both Iraq and Syria, carrying out mass killings and imposing a draconian form of Islam. Since then, the battle against the group in both countries has drawn in most global and regional powers, often with competing allies on the ground in complex multi-sided civil wars.

A US-led coalition has been waging an air campaign against the fighters in both countries, but rebuilding the Iraqi army to the point that it was capable of recapturing and holding territory has been one of the biggest challenges. In previous battles, including the recapture of former dictator Saddam Hussein's home city Tikrit in April, the Iraqi government relied on Iran-backed Shiite militias for ground fighting, with its own army in a supporting role.

Ramadi was recaptured by the army itself, without relying on the militias, who were kept off the battlefield to avoid sectarian tensions with the mainly Sunni population. "The complex is under our complete control, there is no presence whatsoever of Daesh fighters in the complex," Numan told Reuters. The government said the next target after Ramadi will be the northern city of Mosul, by far the largest population center controlled by Islamic State in either Iraq or Syria. "The smooth victory in Ramadi should be happy news for the residents of Mosul," Numan said.

US officials had hoped Baghdad would launch an assault on Mosul during 2015, but this was put off after the fighters swept into Ramadi. Dislodging the militants from Mosul, which had a pre-war population close to 2 million, would effectively abolish their state structure in Iraq and deprive them of a major source of funding, which comes partly from oil and partly from fees and taxes on residents. — Reuters

## QUEEN OF A CONTROVERSIAL US INDUSTRY

Continued from Page 1

He eventually pleaded guilty in the case and died while serving a prison term.

Another was Jonathan Roth, arrested for helping his father fake death in an insurance scam, who jumped bail and ran off to Ohio in 2013. He had no collateral, so Esquenazi turned his manhunt into a business opportunity. The bounty hunters used a honey trap to flush Roth out. When they brought him back, she dressed him in an Empire shirt and put him in a company vehicle to escort him into custody. "I made sure that he went in with a bang, that he walked in like a billboard," she said. "He cost me a lot of money, I had to get my money back somehow." Hollywood and Mr T - whose real names are James Carrion and Thomas Avila - say they keep communities safe by tracking down individuals police don't always have the time to find.

Hollywood, 46, often enlists his wife to reel in suspects, "making love" to them over the telephone, sometimes for weeks. "I used to sit in bed and say, 'Hey, my wife was never that sweet to me,'" he says. She bought an airline ticket for one man who flew to New York thinking he was in for a dirty weekend - only to walk into Hollywood's arms. They case dangerous neighborhoods, and choose their time carefully to avoid risks. Dogs can be a problem, as can relatives and gangs. "You never know what to expect," says Avila, 43. "People pop

out of everywhere - closets, attics, basements."

Esquenazi goes nowhere without bodyguards, though she boasts of being able to take out a knee cap or an eyeball in a second. "I'm a mother first," she says. "I'd be a moron if I were not more careful." The hunts are the headline-grabbers, but Esquenazi says her skip rate is less than two percent and she claims to rehabilitate a number of clients, some of whom end up joining her staff. "There's a lot to be said for what we do and the circle of love," she said. "That's why I think we've got it right."

But critics believe the industry, which dates back to medieval England, is the ultimate abdication of government responsibility. "The practice of essentially setting a price on people's heads for their liberty is at odds with our fundamental legal system (and) the presumption of innocence," says Jon Wool of the Vera Institute of Justice. "It's just shifting the burden from government funding the system to requiring that the poorest communities fund the system," he told AFP. Wool says pre-trial detention should be the exception, not a standard threat for everyone arrested.

America has the highest incarceration rate in the developed world, around 20 percent of whom are awaiting trial. Esquenazi says it's not fair to blackball the entire industry. "There are always going to be bad apples," she said. "There are bad operators in every facet of every industry there is." — AFP

## INDIA PUMPS DESERT OIL, SEEKS ENERGY...

Continued from Page 1

Oil magnates echo Prime Minister Narendra Modi's insistence that the world's third-biggest carbon-emitter must keep polluting to power its way out of poverty. "We would all like solar power and clean energy, but the reality is today you need all kinds of energy - you need clean energy, you need fossil fuels," Cairn India's chief executive Mayank Ashar told reporters on a site visit. "A country like India can either make the fossil fuels, or it can import it. And making it is a lot better."

India already imports three-quarters of its oil and as its fast-growing economy sucks up more and more fuel, the International Energy Agency (IEA) projects this will rise above 90 percent. Its few domestic fields like Barmer and Bombay High off the coast of Mumbai go only a short way to countering its import dependence. "When it comes to oil and gas we have a strategic vulnerability," Ashar said.

The discovery of oil in a region so harsh it was once considered a punishment posting for civil servants was hard won. Shell, which first got the licence to explore Barmer in 1995, had given up after several wells came up dry, but its maverick geologist Mike Watts, who was convinced it held potential, moved to Cairn and kept searching. Cairn drilled 13 wells before hitting an abundant flow of highly paraffinic crude in 2004, the world's biggest discovery of onshore oil that year.

Two years later as engineering was underway, flash floods rendered the site unusable. But Cairn regrouped and in the decade that followed impoverished Barmer, whose farmers were once wholly at the mercy of sporadic rainfall, became a bustling oil town. "This is changing the lives of the people in the desert," Deepak Upreti, principal secretary to the Rajasthan government, told

AFP. More than a dozen luxury hotels have sprung up to cater to oil executives. Local businesses set up to serve the industry have generated a market worth 15 billion rupees (\$225 million) in procurement.

Yet it sits somewhat uneasily with Rajasthan's status as the biggest solar-producing state - seeking to install 25,000 megawatts (MW) of India's ambitious target for 100,000 MW of solar energy capacity by 2022. In Paris, Modi launched a 121-nation alliance committed to dramatically boosting solar power and acknowledged "the energy sources of the industrial age have put our planet in peril". But he argued that rich nations have no right to stop the poor from using fossil fuels such as coal and oil, blamed for warming the planet. Upreti said Rajasthan needed to harness all energy sources and that fossil fuels and renewables would "go hand in hand".

With the price of Brent crude crashing to an 11-year low of \$36 a barrel from above \$100 18 months ago, worries over India's imports bill have eased. But when prices rise again - they are likely to start recovering in 2017, according to the IEA - the pain will be acute. Experts say potential for undiscovered native reserves of oil and gas is limited, while instability in Middle East supplier countries is a concern. New Delhi has been pushing to take advantage of cheap oil to invest in assets abroad, with two state-run firms reportedly in talks to take a stake in a Siberian oil asset.

Cairn's Rajasthan fields are expected to keep producing until about 2050 by which time India will be the most populous nation in the world and, projections suggest, its third-largest economy. "We know the region is deficient in resources," Ajay Gondane, a senior foreign ministry official told a recent energy conference in Delhi. "But there is a lot of potential that is not utilized. Realizing that potential is the challenge." — AFP

## IRAN CANCELS TWO FOOTBALL GAMES OVER POLLUTION

**TEHRAN:** Iran postponed two premier league football matches yesterday, state media said, as air pollution more than twice the acceptable level persisted in the capital.

The games-between Tehran teams and clubs visiting from Mashhad and Tabriz-were rescheduled for Tuesday after Tehran's environment authority recommended "refraining from all sport activities," the Fars news

agency said. Severe air pollution earlier this week had already led authorities to close schools for three days in and around the capital, where an estimated 14 million people live.

The Air Quality Index in Tehran yesterday stood at 132, an official told state television, well above the World Health Organisation's advised level of between zero and 50.

Mohammad Rastegari advised the elderly, children and sick people-including those suffering heart problems-to stay indoors.

Exhaust fumes from the five million cars and almost as many motorcycles that ply Tehran's roads account for 80 percent of its pollution, which increases in winter as emissions fail to rise above cold air.

Lawmakers criticised the government on

Sunday for its response to the situation.

Saturday's "pictures of Tehran, Qazvin, Qom and Esfahan show that the level of air pollution is very high in these provinces," said one ultra-conservative parliamentarian, who handed out pollution masks to colleagues in protest. "In the last two years, it has been said that the cause of air pollution was imported petrol," said Hamid Razaie.

"What is the reason now?"

Last December, almost 400 people were hospitalised with heart and respiratory problems caused by heavy pollution in Tehran, with nearly 1,500 others requiring treatment. In 2012, pollution contributed to the premature deaths of 4,500 people in Tehran and about 80,000 in the country, the health ministry said. — AFP



This handout photo from Rolex, shows Helsal 3 competing in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race yesterday. — AFP

## AMERICAN YACHTS LEAD SYDNEY-HOBART

**HOBART:** American yachts Comanche and Rambler 88 led the Sydney to Hobart fleet into Bass Strait yesterday in a race with nearly 30 retirements due to bad weather, including eight-time and defending champion Wild Oats XI. Nearly 34 hours into the race, the 100-foot super maxi Comanche, skippered by Ken Read and which was forced to make repairs to a damaged rudder after an overnight storm, led Rambler 88 by 10 nautical miles.

Comanche had covered nearly 400 of the 628 nautical miles to Hobart on the island state of Tasmania. Rambler 88 took the race lead when Comanche had the rudder prob-

lems which were serious enough for Read and his crew to consider pulling out and returning to Sydney.

Comanche passed Rambler 88, which is skippered and owned by George David, in easing winds just before the 24-hour mark Sunday. Based on current projections, the leading yacht could cross the finish line at Constitution Dock in Hobart late Monday.

Rambler 88 had equipment problems of its own later yesterday. "We had a bit of a disaster ... we hit a submerged object with our starboard daggerboard so our boat speed on port tack is severely limited," navigator Andrew

Cape said. "It was a pretty solid hit ... it knocked the boat and did quite a bit of damage to the board, so it's not the best scenario."

Australia's Ragamuffin 100, the only other super maxi left in the race, was in third place, followed by Italian yacht Maserati. The Sydney to Hobart race hasn't had a foreign winner since Swedish entry Assa Abloy in 2001.

### DAANGEROUS SITUATIONS

Wild Oats XI, also a super maxi, retired late Saturday when its mainsail was torn in half by the storm. "To fight on, we could have put the crew into real dangerous situations," Wild Oats

skipper Mark Richards said when the yacht returned to Sydney. Another potential line honors winner, super maxi Perpetual Loyal, left the race with a broken rudder. It also sailed back to Sydney with a crew that included former Australia cricket captain Michael Clarke and rugby player Kurtley Beale.

The 29 retirements, of 108 starters, by late Sunday were already higher than last year's 14 for the entire race. Race officials said Sunday that one of the crew members on the retired yacht Black Jack has sustained a broken leg. The 70-foot boat, carrying a crew of 12, was sailing to Jervis Bay, New South Wales, where

the crew member was to be treated at an Australian naval base. There were 27 international starters, including 12 from the Clipper Round the World Race, who are competing in the Sydney to Hobart as the fifth leg of their series. Sydney-born Jimmy Spithill, the winning skipper in the last America's Cup aboard Oracle Team USA, is a crew member on Comanche. It was beaten into Hobart a year ago by Wild Oats XI by 55 minutes.

Wild Oats XI is the most prolific winner in the race's history. Along with its eight line honors wins, it set the race's fastest time in 2012 of 1 day, 18 hours, 23 minutes, 12 seconds. — AP

## SPIETH WILL FIND IT TOUGH TO MATCH 2015 FEATS: MCILROY

**LONDON:** Rory McIlroy has warned rival Jordan Spieth that "self-inflicted pressure" will make it difficult for the American to follow up his blockbuster 2015 season with an equally successful 2016 campaign. World number three McIlroy knows how tough it is to maintain peak form for a sustained spell.

The Northern Irishman won two majors in 2014 and was considered the man to beat in 2015, only to get derailed by a slowish start to the season at the big tournaments and an ankle injury that kept him out of the British Open in July. Spieth took over as world number one, producing a magnificent season as he captured the US Masters and US Open titles and came perilously close to winning the British Open and US PGA Championship.

"It will feel completely different for Jordan (in 2016)," McIlroy told the Daily Telegraph. "If you look at the stats at how those who have had a double-major season have performed the next year ... it's hard to back up."

"There's so much expectation, so much

attention and focus. And I think it is more self-inflicted pressure really as your expectations are so high." McIlroy recalled that 12 months ago he was preparing for 2015 with high expectations of adding to his tally of four major victories.

"This time last year mine were through the roof coming off a great season, winning those back-to-back majors and although I started well I never felt I really got into my stride with the injuries and stuff," he said.

McIlroy ended 2015 on a high note, winning the European Tour's season-ending event in Dubai where he felt he finally got the "speed" back in his swing. He has vowed to be tournament-ready by the time the Masters comes around in April.

"It just sort of all came together in Dubai and it makes me excited about next year," said McIlroy.

"I'm not saying I was undercooked this year but I definitely won't be next year. I'm playing (the Northern Trust Open at Riviera (in California) for the first time and with the WGC-Matchplay moving dates, Augusta will be my eighth event." — Reuters



ARCADIA: In this image provided by Benoit Photo, Om, with Gary Stevens aboard, wins the Grade II \$200,000 Mathis Brothers Mile horse race Saturday, at Santa Anita Park in Arcadia, Calif. — AP

## KING GEORGE HERO CUE CARD TARGETS £1M BONUS

**LONDON:** King George VI Chase hero Cue Card will go straight for the Cheltenham Gold Cup where victory will net his connections a £1 million (\$1.5 million) bonus, his trainer Colin Tizzard announced yesterday.

Cue Card overhauled Vautour on the line to snatch a thrilling win in Kempton's Grade 1 showpiece on Saturday.

Now the nine-year-old has chasing's blue

riband firmly in his sights and the chance of landing the bumper bonus on offer for any horse landing the Betfair Chase-King George-Gold Cup Triple Crown. "The bonus I thought was an impossible task but we are another step closer to it," Tizzard told At The Races television channel. "It would be fantastic, but just to win the King George and Gold Cup is more than enough - it would be something I would live on for the

rest of my life anyway."

Cue Card had a gruelling race in the King George which he was winning at the fourth attempt, and Tizzard believes he will benefit from the two-month gap before the Gold Cup.

"He had a hard race and he has had three races quite quickly now. There is eleven odd weeks until Cheltenham so we're going to head straight there." Cue Card is a top priced 7-1 in the

## US BEAT CANADA 4-2 IN JUNIOR HOCKEY OPENER

**HELSINKI:** Louis Belpedio and Auston Matthews scored in a 41-second span late in the third period to give the United States a 4-2 victory over Canada 4-2 on Saturday in their first round-robin game in the world junior hockey championship.

Belpedio, a defenseman from Miami of Ohio, broke a tie with 3:18 left. Matthews completed the scoring with 2:37 to go. He plays for ZSC Lions Zurich in Switzerland. Boston College's Colin White and Michigan's Zach Werenski also scored. Alex Nedeljkovic made 25 saves.

He plays for the Niagara IceDogs in the Ontario Hockey League.

Matt Barzal and Dylan Strome scored for defending champion Canada, and Mason McDonald made 21 saves. In the other Group A game, Dmytro Timashov had two goals and an assist in Sweden's 8-3 victory over Switzerland 8-3.

In Group B, Russia edged the Czech Republic 2-1 in a shootout, and Finland routed Belarus 6-0. Maxim Lazarev had the lone shootout goal in Russia's victory. Jesse Puljujarvi had two goals and an assist for Finland. — AP



# PAKISTAN'S YASIR SHAH SUSPENDED FOR DOPING: ICC



Yasir Shah

**DUBAI:** Pakistan's leg-spinner Yasir Shah was yesterday provisionally suspended for failing a dope test by the International Cricket Council (ICC).

"Shah has been charged with an anti-doping rule violation on a sample he provided in an in-competition test," an ICC statement announced. "The test, conducted on 13 November 2015, was found to contain the presence of chlortalidon, a Prohibited Substance which appears in Section 5 of the World Anti-Doping Agency list (in the category of Specified Substances)."

"In accordance with the ICC Anti-Doping Code, pending the outcome of the disciplinary process, Yasir has been provisionally suspended," said the ICC.

The 29-year-old has emerged as a match-winner for Pakistan since ace spinner Saeed Ajmal's action was reported and subsequently lost his wicket-taking ability with a remodelled action.

Shah took 12 wickets in Pakistan's 2-0 win against Australia last year before playing a key role in this year's 2-1 Test series win in Sri Lanka with 24 wickets.

A month before he was tested (October 12) Shah had fallen down while bowling in the nets in his follow through and had to miss the first Test against England in Abu Dhabi with a back problem.

He returned for the second and third Tests, taking 15 wickets to help Pakistan beat England 2-0 and was tested during the one-day series. Shah has so far taken 76 wickets in 12 Tests and became the fastest to complete 50 wickets in nine Tests—a record for Pakistan.

He has also played 15 one-day internationals and two Twenty20s after making his debut in 2011. The lat-

est doping issue came after Sri Lankan wicketkeeper batsman Kusal Perera tested positive for a banned substance earlier this month.

Prera faces a lengthy ban from international cricket with his B sample understood to have also tested positive. Perera had to be withdrawn from Sri Lanka's tour to New Zealand after the news came. His test was conducted in October.

Pakistan has a history of doping related offences as in 2006 pace duo of Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif tested positive for banned substances and had to

be pulled out of that year's Champions Trophy in India. But both were cleared on the basis that tests were conducted internally and not by the ICC.

Pakistan Cricket Board, which conducts regular education programmes for players on anti-doping and corruption, said it will study the case in the next two days.

Under the rules Shah has seven days to demand a test on his "B" sample and another seven days to plead guilty. The ICC tribunal on anti-doping will determine the extent of his ban which could be from two to four years. — AFP

## PAKISTAN CRICKETERS BANNED FOR DOPING

**DUBAI:** Pakistan cricketers banned or suspended for doping after the International Cricket Council suspended leg-spinner Yasir Shah yesterday:

**November 1, 2006:** Fast bowlers Shoaib Akhtar and Mohammad Asif were banned for two years and one year respectively after both were found guilty of using the banned anabolic steroid nandrolone. Both were absolved by a tribunal because the tests were conducted out of competition.

**October 2, 2012:** Left-arm spinner Abdul Rehman was banned for 12 weeks by the England

and Wales Cricket Board under its anti-doping rules after testing positive for the recreational drug cannabis during his stint with Somerset county.

**May 07 - 2014:** Kashif Siddiq was banned for two years for violating anti-doping rules.

**May 25 - 2015:** Pakistan's spinner Raza Hasan banned for two years after failing a dope test in national competition.

**Dec 27, 2015:** The International Cricket Council provisionally suspended leg-spinner Yasir Shah on violating anti-doping rules. — AFP

## BROAD STRIKES PUT ENGLAND ON TOP

**DURBAN:** Stuart Broad bowled two fiery spells and took three wickets to give England a slight advantage at the end of the second day of the first Test against South Africa at Kingsmead yesterday.

South Africa were 137 for four at the close, still 166 runs behind England's first innings total of 303.

Broad dismissed opener Stiaan van Zyl as well as South Africa's two key batsmen, captain Hashim Amla and AB de Villiers, to finish the day with three for 16 from ten overs.

Opening batsman Dean Elgar withstood the Broad barrage and was unbeaten on 67, although he could have been out for 58 if England had sought a review after an appeal for leg before wicket by Ben Stokes had been turned down. Off-spinner Moeen Ali took the fourth wicket when he bowled Faf du Plessis. Fast bowlers Morne Morkel and Dale Steyn finished with four wickets each as England lost six English wickets in an extended morning's play. Morkel took all of his wickets on Sunday, including a burst of three wickets for no runs off six balls, and finished with four for 76, while Steyn took four for 70.

Morkel's victims included top scorer Nick Compton, who made a painstaking

85 off 236 balls. Fresh from making a hard-hit 32 not out in a last wicket stand of 36 with Steven Finn, Broad struck with the second ball of the South African innings when Van Zyl failed to play a shot against a ball which cut back and hit the top of his off stump.

Amla survived two appeals for caught behind off Broad and was dropped by wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow off Chris Woakes before edging a routine catch to Bairstow after making seven.

South Africa would have been in worse trouble if AB de Villiers, on 11, had not survived an umpires' review after edging Steven Finn low to Ben Stokes at gully. Stokes was not certain whether the ball had carried, an opinion shared by television umpire Bruce Oxenford after viewing several replays. De Villiers went on to make an accomplished 49 before Broad returned to the attack and had him caught behind, pushing at a ball which left him off the pitch to provide a second catch for Bairstow.

The left-handed Elgar, who reached 1000 runs in his 22nd Test when he had 35, reached a 93-ball half-century with a straight six off Ali. He had faced 155 balls by the close, hitting five fours and a six. — AFP



**MELBOURNE:** West Indies batsman Marlon Samuels (L) is trapped for a leg before wicket (LBW) by Australian paceman James Pattinson for a duck on the second day of the second cricket Test in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

## WEST INDIES BATSMEN CRUMBLE AGAINST RAMPANT AUSTRALIA

**MELBOURNE:** James Pattinson, Nathan Lyon and Peter Siddle claimed two wickets each yesterday as the West Indies staggered to 91-6 at stumps on the second day of the second test in reply to Australia's daunting first-innings total of 551-3 declared.

The West Indies seem destined to follow-on, trailing Australia by 460 runs. Darren Bravo was 13 not out at stumps and Carlos Brathwaite on 3. Openers Kraigg Brathwaite and Rajendra Chandrika provided a decent start, putting on 35 runs for the first wicket before the innings quickly fell apart.

West Indies coach Phil Simmons said the team was showing flashes of good form, but having trouble maintaining it. "That's the frustrating part," Simmons said. "It's about doing the things, but not just for an hour. It's about doing it for two hours, having a rest and doing it for another two hours. That's where we fall down."

Off-spinner Lyon (2-18) made the breakthrough shortly after tea when Brathwaite was caught by Joe Burns at forward short-leg for 17. Pattinson (2-36) then removed Chandrika lbw for 25 and Marlon Samuels, also lbw, for a duck to make it 50-3.

Bravo and Jermaine Blackwood briefly steadied the ship before Lyon ended their partnership by removing Blackwood (28) caught and bowled.

Siddle (2-19) had Denesh Ramdin (0) caught by Burns with an athletic, diving effort at square leg, and knocked back the off stump of Jason Holder (0) with the next ball, as the West Indies lost three wickets for one run.

"The team's in a really good place at the moment," Australia batsman Adam Voges said. "The batsmen are doing a good job, and I thought the bowlers were really, really good. 'We're playing good cricket, we're confident and as a group that's still new and gelling together.'"

Blackwood looked to be out while on 18 when Burns took a diving catch off Siddle, but

SCOREBOARD	
<b>MELBOURNE:</b> Scores at the close on the second day of the second Test between Australia and the West Indies at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday:	
<b>Australia 1st innings</b> (345-3 overnight)	<b>West Indies 1st innings</b>
J. Burns stp Ramdin b K. Brathwaite 128	K. Brathwaite c Burns b Lyon 17
D. Warner c Samuels b Taylor 23	R. Chandrika lbw b Pattinson 25
U. Khawaja c Ramdin b Taylor 144	D. Bravo not out 13
S. Smith not out 134	M. Samuels lbw b Pattinson 0
A. Voges not out 106	J. Blackwood c and b Lyon 28
Extras (lb10, w4, nb2) 16	D. Ramdin c Burns b Siddle 0
Total (3 wickets declared; 135 overs) 551	C. Brathwaite not out 0
Fall of wickets: 1-29 (Warner), 2-287 (Burns), 3-328 (Khawaja)	Extras (lb2, nb3) 5
Bowling: Taylor 22-2-97-2, Roach 17-1-97-0, Holder 22-7-47-0(2nb), C. Brathwaite 30-3-109-0(4w), Warrican 26-2-113-0, K. Brathwaite 18-1-78-1	Total (6 wickets; 43 overs) 91
Did not bat: M. Marsh, P. Nevill, P. Siddle, J. Hazlewood, J. Pattinson, N. Lyon	Fall of wickets: 1-35 (K. Brathwaite), 2-50 (Chandrika), 3-50 (Samuels), 4-82 (Blackwood), 5-83 (Ramdin), 6-83 (Holder)
	Bowling: Hazlewood 11-5-16-0, Pattinson 10-1-36-2 (2nb), Lyon 11-5-18-2, Siddle 9-2-19-2 (1nb), Marsh 2-2-0-0.
	To bat: K. Roach, J. Taylor, J. Warrican.

after a long deliberation by the on-field and TV umpire, it was decided the ball did not carry. Australia began the day at 345-3, and overnight batsmen Steve Smith (134) and Voges (106) were rarely troubled as they added another 206 runs before declaring midway through the afternoon session.

Smith brought up his sixth test century of the year shortly after lunch to an ovation from the 40,000-strong Melbourne Cricket Ground crowd as he and Voges shared an unbeaten 221 partnership.

Voges completed his century shortly after Smith with a drive to the boundary, passing 1,000 runs in a calendar year, finishing with 1,028. "I'm just out there playing test cricket for Australia and trying to be as ruthless as I can," Voges said. "If I get an opportunity to get in and score runs I'm trying to go as big as possible, stay hungry and stay ruthless."

Australia has scored 1,134 runs for just sev-

en wickets against the West Indies so far this series. Australia declared at 583-4 in the first test, when it beat the West Indies by an innings and 212 runs.

Jerome Taylor finished the innings with best figures of 2-97, but it was a meek effort by an inexperienced West Indies attack. The fielding was no more impressive, with Voges and Smith playing shots all around the field and taking quick runs thanks to some sloppy returns. Smith hit eight boundaries in his 177-ball knock, while Voges smashed 12 fours from his 166 balls. Opener Joe Burns scored 128 and fit-again Usman Khawaja had 144 to set a solid foundation on the opening day. Opener David Warner was the only batsman not to score a century. It was just the third time in history that four of the top five batsmen made centuries in a test innings after Pakistan in 2001 and India in 2007, both against Bangladesh. — AP

### SCOREBOARD

**DURBAN, South Africa:** Scores at close on the second day of the first Test between South Africa and England at Kingsmead yesterday:

<b>England, first innings</b> (overnight 179-4)	16-2-63-1, Van Zyl 2-1-2-0, Elgar 7-2-22-0	<b>South Africa, first innings</b>	
A. Cook c Elgar b Steyn 0		S. van Zyl b Broad 0	
A. Hales c De Villiers b Steyn 10		D. Elgar not out 67	
N. Compton c De Villiers b Morkel 85		H. Amla c Bairstow b Broad 7	
J. Root lbw b Piedt 24		A. de Villiers c Bairstow b Broad 49	
J. Taylor c De Villiers b Steyn 70		F. du Plessis b Ali 2	
B. Stokes c Duminy b Morkel 21		T. Bavuma not out 10	
J. Bairstow c Elgar b Abbott 41		Extras (lb1, w1) 2	
M. Ali c De Villiers b Morkel 0		Total (4 wkts, 52 overs) 137	
C. Woakes lbw b Morkel 0		Fall of wickets: 1-0 (Van Zyl), 2-14 (Amla), 3-100 (De Villiers), 4-113 (Du Plessis)	
S. Broad not out 32		Bowling: Broad 10-5-16-3, Woakes 11-1-22-0, Ali 13-0-45-1, Finn 10-1-34-0, Stokes 7-1-19-0 (1w), Root 1-1-0-0	
S. Finn lbw b Steyn 12		To bat: J. Duminy, D. Steyn, D. Piedt, K. Abbott, M. Morkel	
Extras (b1, lb3, nb3, w1) 8		Match situation: South Africa trail by 166 runs with six wickets remaining in the first innings.	
Total (101.1 overs) 303			
Fall of wickets: 1-3 (Cook), 2-12 (Hales), 3-49 (Root), 4-174 (Taylor), 5-196 (Stokes), 6-247 (Compton), 7-253 (Ali), 8-253 (Woakes), 9-267 (Bairstow)			
Bowling: Steyn 25.1-5-70-4, Abbott 24-4-66-1 (1nb), Morkel 26-5-76-4 (2nb, 1w), Piedt			



**DURBAN:** South Africa Dean Elgar runs towards AB de Villiers, who had removed his helmet due to the intense heat, during day two of the first Test match between South Africa and England at Kingsmead Stadium in Durban yesterday. — AFP



## PRINCE ALI SEEKS IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF GARCIA REPORT

**DUBAI:** FIFA presidential hopeful Prince Ali bin Al Hussein yesterday called for the immediate publication of Michael Garcia's report on alleged bribery and corruption during bidding for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups.

The Jordanian prince made the remarks at a conference in Dubai alongside UEFA general-secretary Gianni Infantino, another candidate in the race to be elected the head of world football's governing body on February 26. Prince Ali urged FIFA to have "some basic norms, like publishing the Garcia report immediately, because even those who are running for the position of FIFA president... need to know what has been going on in this organisation, and the public needs to know as well."

Former US prosecutor Garcia resigned as FIFA's chief corruption investigator last year in protest at the body's handling of his report on the decisions to award the 2018 World Cup to Russia and the 2022 World Cup to Qatar. Garcia said he had found "serious and wide-ranging issues" in

the bidding process for both of the World Cups.

He had complained that a summary of his report released by FIFA's top judge, Hans-Joachim Eckert, was "incomplete and erroneous". Eckert had insisted there was no evidence of corruption and that there should be no new vote on the venue for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. FIFA has defended its refusal to publish Garcia's report on the grounds it would undermine a promise to all those who gave evidence on condition of anonymity. "There have been a lot of proposals for reform within FIFA, but the main issue is not the proposals themselves, but the implementation of these proposals," said Prince Ali.

### 'TRANSPARENCY IN MONEY FLOWS'

UEFA president Michel Platini and FIFA chief Sepp Blatter were suspended by FIFA's ethics committee over a 2 million Swiss franc (\$2 million/1.8 million euro) payment made to Platini in 2011 for work carried out between 1999 and 2002.



**DUBAI:** Jordanian Prince and President of Jordan Football Association Ali bin Al Hussein (2R) speaks with an United Arab Emirates official as Barcelona's President Josep Maria Bartomeu (L) speaks with Sheikh Ahmad Bin Rashid al-Maktoum, the son of the ruler of Dubai during the opening session of the 10th edition of Dubai International Sports Conference in Dubai yesterday. — AFP

Corruption charges against the two men were dropped by the FIFA court, but they were found guilty of "abusive execution" of their powers and a conflict of interests. At the Dubai conference, Infantino called for "transparency in the money flows" which is "the single most important reform decision from FIFA." "Once you know how the money comes in and how the money goes out, and this is transparent, this is documented, this is clear, you have solved 95 percent of the real or perceived problems of FIFA."

"So the transparency of the money flow is key." The Swiss candidate said the world should "work together" to bring football to centre stage.

"How do we develop football? By investing, of course. The money is there... but by investing it in a proper way," he said. Prince Ali reiterated his calls for a maximum of two terms for future FIFA presidents. However, "I think there a lot of good suggestions in the latest reform proposals, but again I don't think that they go far enough," he said. — AFP



**SOUTHAMPTON:** Arsenal's Calum Chambers, left, and Southampton's Oriol Romeu battle for the ball during the English Premier League match Southampton against Arsenal at St Mary's, Southampton, England. — AP

## WENGER FINDS FAULT WITH REFEREE, TEAM

**SOUTHAMPTON:** Arsene Wenger believes referee Jon Moss incorrectly allowed three goals in his side's 4-0 rout at the hands of Southampton, but insisted his Arsenal team's performance was more of a concern. Arsenal began Saturday's match well but simply fell apart after Southampton's opening goal, scored with a 30-yard shot by Cuco Martina on his first Premier League start. Wenger believed that the goal should not have stood, nor the second, nor the third.

But he was more concerned that his players had not stood up to the physical challenge of the Saints, particularly Shane Long, who scored the second and fourth goals at St Mary's. "Southampton made the game very physical and we lost too many challenges and that explains why we lost," said Wenger.

"But we were unlucky with the decisions of the referee. The first goal was offside, the second a foul and the third was a goal kick. "If you're a bit below par and, on top of that, three goals go against you in the

decisions it's very difficult. But well done Southampton and we hope that in the next game we have this type of decisions. "I smile but what can I do about it? I must say they were sharper than us in the challenges and we have to look at what we can master. "We cannot master the decisions of the referee but our own behaviour we can and on that front I believe Southampton looked stronger in the challenges and we lost too many. Long got away with a lot, but he was good." Per Mertesacker looked slow as Long danced or barged past him on occasions, and to a neutral it appeared that Laurent Koscielny was simply outmuscled, first by Long and then Jose Fonte, for the second and third goals.

The upshot was that Arsenal missed the chance to move above Leicester City into first place in the Premier League. That, in itself, was less of a concern to Wenger than his team's below-par showing ahead of home matches against Bournemouth and

Newcastle, which both look like must-wins if Arsenal are to remain serious title contenders.

### 'NOT GOOD ENOUGH'

"I said before the game that being one point behind or in front is not too important, it's the quality of our performance that counts and we were not good enough to win the game," Wenger said. "We have just to look at that. On the other side we have not to moan too much because we play again in 48 hours. There is only one way to respond." He denied that his team had been unable to take the pressure of being at the top.

"Personally I don't think the pressure got to us but there's no way to check that. I felt we were physically not at our best tonight."

Southampton manager Ronald Koeman dismissed Wenger's criticism of the referee, preferring to praise Long, who has been in the shadow of top

scorer Graziano Pelle, who missed the match with a knee injury.

"If you lose 4-0 it's not about the referee," he said. "It's not my way to analyse a game. But Shane Long created big problems and was very dangerous. He attacked the spaces behind the Arsenal defenders. He's a different number nine than Graziano and that's important." Long is likely to keep his place in Monday's match away to West Ham United. "I don't think Graziano will be back for Monday but we know the qualities of Shane and he was one of the key players against Arsenal."

So should Dutch-born Curacao defender Martina, signed from FC Twente in the summer and only in the team thanks to an groin injury to first-choice right back Cedric Soares. "We didn't sign the player to score goals," Koeman said. "But it was a great goal because it's not easy to score against a great keeper like (Petr)Cech." — AFP



**Matches on TV**  
(Local Timings)

### ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Norwich City v Aston Villa	18:00
Watford v Tottenham	18:00
Crystal Palace v Swansea	18:00
West Bromwich v Newcastle	18:00
Everton v Stoke City	18:00
West Ham v Southampton	20:30
Manchester United v Chelsea	20:30
Arsenal v Bournemouth	20:30

## HIDDINK FRUSTRATED AT DIEGO COSTA BLOW

**LONDON:** Guus Hiddink admits the absence of Diego Costa is a major blow to Chelsea's hopes of taking advantage of Manchester United's struggles when they travel to Old Trafford yesterday.

Hiddink took charge of his first game since being installed as Chelsea interim manager, overseeing a frustrating 2-2 draw against Watford at Stamford Bridge on Saturday. The result left Chelsea in 15th place and came at the cost of a fifth booking of the season for Costa, who will now miss the meeting with United while he serves a one-match ban.

The Spain striker had confirmed his value to Hiddink's side by scoring twice against Watford and the Dutch manager said: "It's a setback of course. "Costa's performances are improving. I can complain (about the booking), but it's not my nature. I have to go on and find a solution as soon as possible."

Loic Remy is expected to step into the line-up for the meeting against United, whose 2-0 defeat at Stoke means they are going into the game without a win in seven matches. Hiddink acknowledged United are going through a difficult time, but he refused to consider the uncertainty surrounding the future of Old Trafford boss Louis van Gaal.

"Manchester United were first and now they are in a different period. I can't comment on another manager's position," Hiddink said. Hiddink did, however, express sympathy for the difficulties facing Memphis

Depay, the young Holland forward signed by United for £23 million from PSV Eindhoven during the close season.

"In Holland, Memphis Depay was a star player at a young age," he said. "He has the talent but is now battling the demands of the Premier League, playing three games a week. These players need the cover of experienced players. "We will go to Old Trafford, it will be difficult, but I hope this team will show, in every game, the ambition like they showed against Watford - we are going there for the win."

### RESPECT

Costa put Chelsea ahead and salvaged a point after a Troy Deeney penalty and an effort from Odion Ighalo had put Watford ahead. Hiddink's side, though, could have claimed all three points had Oscar not failed to convert a late penalty. "When we are near the end of the game and get a penalty, we deserved a 3-2 win," he said.

"It's a pity and a setback. But we have to analyse the game and Watford deserves respect - they have had a lot of clean sheets.

"But the two goals conceded were unlucky, a penalty and a deflection. I'm disappointed but it was important how we reacted when it was 1-2 - that was good."

Chelsea's first game since the departure of Jose Mourinho had been played in a hostile atmosphere, with some Blues supporters targeting those players they felt had underperformed under the previous manager. —AFP

## MAN UTD AND VAN GAAL IN SUSPENSE AS CHELSEA LOOM

**LONDON:** Manchester United's under-performing players approach today's home game with Chelsea not knowing whether besieged manager Louis van Gaal will still be in the dug-out when they take to the field. United's 2-0 defeat at Stoke City on Saturday was their fourth loss in succession - the club's worst run within a season since 1961 — and reduced Van Gaal to a dead man walking in the eyes of the British media. The Dutchman admitted afterwards that he could not be certain of the United board's support and raised the prospect that he could choose to leave Old Trafford of his own accord.

"I have said already in former press conferences that it is not always that the club has to fire or sack me. Sometimes I do it by myself," he said. "I am the one who wants to speak first with the board of Manchester United, with my members of staff, with my players and not always you (the media)." Chelsea dispensed with their own manager last week, Jose Mourinho paying the price for a calamitous start to the season, and the Portuguese is the favourite to take over at United in the event that Van Gaal departs. Whatever fate befalls Van Gaal, there is guaranteed to be at least one sexagenarian Dutch coach in attendance at Old Trafford after Guus Hiddink's appointment as interim manager at Chelsea.

Reprising a role he previously performed in 2009, the 69-year-old began life back at Stamford Bridge with a 2-2 draw at home to Watford that left the champions two points above the relegation zone in 15th place. Diego Costa scored twice to earn Chelsea a point-book-ending goals from Watford strikers Troy Deeney and Odion Ighalo-but will miss Monday's game through suspension. Loic Remy is expected to deputise. "We will go to Old



**STOKE ON TRENT:** Manchester United's Dutch manager Louis van Gaal (C) waves as he leaves after the English Premier League football match between Stoke City and Manchester United at the Britannia Stadium in Stoke-on-Trent, central England on Saturday. — AFP

Trafford. It will be difficult, but I hope this team will show, in every game, the ambition like they showed against Watford," Hiddink said. "We are going there for the win." Second-place Arsenal will hope to get their title challenge back on track when they host Bournemouth on Monday, less than 48 hours after an embarrassing 4-0 defeat at Southampton.

With leaders Leicester City having lost 1-0 at Liverpool, victory would have sent Arsenal top, but they put in a bafflingly below-par display that resulted in their heaviest defeat of the campaign.

### AGUERO PRIMED FOR LEICESTER

"These players have fantastic spirit and they will show that in 48 hours. We want to respond from the disappointment," said Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger. "I trust my players to respond well on Monday. Bournemouth have played very well recently." Leicester remained top despite their first away defeat of the campaign, but on Tuesday face a taxing home game against third-place Manchester City, who returned to form on Saturday by crushing Sunderland 4-1. —AFP

# Sports

American yachts lead Sydney-Hobart

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Duke beat Indiana in Pinstripe Bowl 44-41

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PHOENIX: Phoenix Suns center Alex Len (21) attempts to shoot as Philadelphia 76ers guard Hollis Thompson, left, and Nerlens Noel defend in the third quarter during an NBA basketball game, Saturday, in Phoenix. — AP

## 76ERS BEAT SUNS 111-104 FOR SECOND WIN

**PHOENIX:** Isaiah Canaan scored 22 points, reserve Nik Stauskas had 17 and the lowly Philadelphia 76ers beat the Phoenix Suns 111-104 on Saturday night for their second victory of the season. Carl Landry added 16 points as Philadelphia (2-30) snapped a 12-game losing streak with its first win since Dec. 1. The 76ers also stopped a 23-game road slide dating to last season. Former Suns guard Ish Smith, who was acquired in a trade with New Orleans on Christmas Eve, scored 14 points in a starting role. Nerlens Noel added 14 points and 11 rebounds. The Suns lost leading scorer Eric Bledsoe to a sprained left knee in the first half. The team said he would go for an MRI. Brandon Knight led Phoenix with 21 points. Devin Booker scored 19 points, and Jon Leuer had 14 points and nine rebounds. The Suns have lost four in a row and six of seven.

**TRAIL BLAZERS 105, CAVALIERS 76**  
Allen Crabbe scored a career-high 26 points, and Portland held LeBron James to just 12 points. Crabbe scored 21 in the first half, helping Portland (12-20) stop a five-game losing streak. He was 4 for 6 from 3-point range for the night. C.J. McCollum had 16 points for the Trail Blazers, while Mason Plumlee had 11 points and 14 rebounds. James missed his first four shots, had six points at halftime and didn't play in the fourth quarter. He matched his season-low scoring total. Kevin Love had 13 points for Cleveland, which was coming off an 89-83 loss at Golden State on Christmas.

**MAVERICKS 118, BULLS 111**  
J.J. Barea made a career-high seven 3-pointers and finished with 26 points coming off his first 30-point game, powering the Mavericks to the win. Derrick Rose led the Bulls with 25 points, including nine in the fourth quarter, but had a key turnover before getting called for a 5-second violation when Chicago had a chance to tie in the final 11 seconds. Dirk Nowitzki scored 16 points in his first home game since passing Shaquille O'Neal on the career scoring list, and Zaza Pachulia had 17 points and 12 rebounds. Barea was 7 for 8 from beyond the arc. Nikola Mirotic had 23 points, seven rebounds and three blocks for the Bulls, who were trying for back-to-back wins a night after winning at Oklahoma City.

**CLIPPERS 109, JAZZ 104**  
Playing without an injured Blake Griffin, J.J. Redick scored 25 points and Paul Pierce had 20 to lead the Clippers to the road victory. The Clippers learned before the game that Griffin, their leading scorer, had a partially torn left quadriceps tendon and is expected to miss at least two weeks. Chris Paul scored 19 points and DeAndre Jordan added 14 points and 13 rebounds for the Clippers, who won their second straight game

after losing three in a row. Gordon Hayward scored 28 points for Utah.

**PELICANS 110, ROCKETS 108**  
Anthony Davis had 24 points, 13 rebounds and three blocked shots for New Orleans, and Tyreke Evans stole Trevor Ariza's inbound pass in the final seconds. Eric Gordon scored 26 for the Pelicans, hitting six 3-pointers as New Orleans shot 13 of 24 from long range. Ryan Anderson scored 16, and Evans finished with 11 points and 13 assists. James Harden scored 25 points for Houston. His final basket was a 3 that tied it at 108 with 2:27 left. Ariza and Patrick Beverley each had 16 points for Houston. Right after Harden's tying 3, Davis dunked an alley-oop lob from Evans, and neither team scored during the last 2 minutes.

**WIZARDS 111, NETS 96**  
John Wall had 22 points and 13 assists, Marcin Gortat scored 25 points, and Washington earned its fourth straight victory. Rookie Jarell Eddie made four 3-pointers and scored 12 points in the fourth quarter of his NBA debut, helping the Wizards blow open what was a two-point game after three. Washington (14-14), despite a number of injuries, is back at .500 for the first time since it was 6-6 a month ago. Brook Lopez had 19 points and 11 rebounds for the Nets, who lost their sixth straight home game. Thaddeus Young finished with 16 points and 14 boards.

**HAWKS 117, KNICKS 98**  
Paul Millsap scored 22 points, Al Horford added 19 points and Atlanta won its sixth straight game. Carmelo Anthony, returning after missing one game with a sprained right ankle, finished with 18 points and 12 rebounds for the Knicks. New York has dropped three straight and seven of 11. Atlanta trailed by 15 midway through the first quarter and was down 14 late in the third before blowing past the Knicks to take a 20-point lead on Thabo Sefolosha's three-point play early in the fourth. Mike Scott had a season-high 18 points for the Hawks.

**SPURS 101, NUGGETS 86**  
Kawhi Leonard had 20 points, and the Spurs rebounded from a rare loss. San Antonio extended its franchise record for consecutive wins at home to 26, including a record 17 straight to open this season. LaMarcus Aldridge had 12 points and nine rebounds for the Spurs, and Boris Diaw had 16 points. Denver's Nikola Jokic scored 22 points on 10-for-19 shooting.

**HORNETS 98, GRIZZLIES 92**  
Kemba Walker scored 11 of his 22 points in the fourth quarter, and Charlotte held on for the victory. Nicolas Batum had 20 points and 11 rebounds for the Hornets, who trailed 81-76 early in the final period. P.J. Hairston added 14 points, and Jeremy Lin had 13. Mike Conley scored 19 points for Memphis, and Marc Gasol had 18. Zach Randolph added a double-double with 18

points and 12 rebounds. Charlotte fought back to take the lead for good at 89-88 on a layup by Walker with 1:55 left.

**HEAT 108, MAGIC 101**  
Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh each scored 24 points, leading Miami to the victory. Goran Dragic added 22 points as Miami won for the third time in four games, including a 94-88 overtime victory against New Orleans on Christmas. Gerald Green scored 15 points, and Bosh also had 10 rebounds. Orlando led 76-69 after three, but Wade fueled Miami's rally with 12 points in the fourth. The Heat outscored the Magic 39-25 in the final period. Nik Vucevic led Orlando with 22 points and 10 rebounds. Elfrid Payton added 18 points and seven assists.

**CELTICS 99, PISTONS 93**  
Avery Bradley scored 18 points, Isaiah Thomas had 17 points and nine assists, and the Celtics got the win on the road. Each of Boston's starters scored in double figures, and reserve Evan Turner added 13 points. Detroit pulled within five in the last minute, and Turner was called for an offensive foul with 36 seconds left. Reggie Jackson's 3-pointer then trimmed Boston's lead to 95-93, but former Piston Jonas Jerebko hit a baseline jumper with 10.7 seconds left. Pistons center Andre Drummond scored 20 points and 22 rebounds for his fifth 20-20 game of the season.

**RAPTORS 111, BUCKS 90**  
DeMar DeRozan scored 22 points and Terrence Ross had 21, leading Toronto to the road win. Luis Scola had 17 points and 11 rebounds for the Raptors, and Bismack Biyombo added 14 points and 12 rebounds. DeMarre Carroll, who missed the last nine games with a bruised right knee, scored seven points as Toronto won its third straight over Milwaukee. After the Bucks took a slim lead late in the third quarter, the Raptors made eight 3-pointers - most were wide-open looks - and closed the game with seven straight for their final 21 points. Khris Middleton scored 20 points and Greg Monroe added 16 for Milwaukee.

**PACERS 102, TIMBERWOLVES 88**  
Monta Ellis had 22 points and six rebounds to help the Pacers rally for the victory. Paul George scored 18 points on 7-of-16 shooting for Indiana, and reserve Jordan Hill scored 12 points. The Pacers snapped a three-game skid. Karl-Anthony Towns had 24 points and eight rebounds for Minnesota, which has lost three in a row. Ricky Rubio finished with 15 points, nine assists and five rebounds. Indiana, the league's fourth-best 3-point shooting team, was 3 of 17 on 3s through three quarters before hitting 6 of 9 in the fourth. — AP

### NBA results/standings

Washington 111, Brooklyn 96; Toronto 111, Milwaukee 90; Charlotte 98, Memphis 92; Miami 108, Orlando 101; New Orleans 110, Houston 108; Atlanta 117, NY Knicks 98; Boston 99, Detroit 93; Indiana 102, Minnesota 88; Dallas 118, Chicago 111; San Antonio 101, Denver 86; Philadelphia 111, Phoenix 104; LA Clippers 109, Utah 104; Portland 105, Cleveland 76.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Toronto	19	12	.613	-	Oklahoma City	20	10	.667	-
Boston	17	13	.567	1.5	Utah	12	16	.429	7
NY Knicks	14	17	.452	5	Denver	12	18	.400	8
Brooklyn	8	22	.267	10.5	Portland	12	20	.375	9
Philadelphia	2	30	.063	17.5	Minnesota	11	19	.367	9
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	19	9	.679	-	Golden State	28	1	.966	-
Indiana	17	12	.586	2.5	LA Clippers	18	13	.581	11
Chicago	16	12	.571	3	Sacramento	12	17	.414	16
Detroit	17	14	.548	3.5	Phoenix	12	20	.375	17.5
Milwaukee	12	19	.387	8.5	LA Lakers	5	25	.167	23.5
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Atlanta	20	12	.625	-	San Antonio	26	6	.813	-
Miami	18	11	.621	0.5	Dallas	17	13	.567	8
Orlando	17	13	.567	2	Memphis	16	16	.500	10
Charlotte	16	13	.552	2.5	Houston	16	16	.500	10
Washington	14	14	.500	4	New Orleans	10	20	.333	15

# Kuwait Times BUSINESS

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2015 Chevrolet Tahoe  
and Impala win  
'2016 Best Buy' award

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Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer,  
Lexus introduce IS 200t

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Bahrain opens \$100m  
'Chinese Dragon City'

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EMERGING MARKETS CAUGHT BETWEEN DIVERGING MONETARY POLICIES

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HAMBURG: Computer fans attend the congress held by the Chaos Computer Club (CCC) at the CCH Conference Centre in Hamburg yesterday. At the meeting of the 'Hacker scene' more than 10,000 people are expected. Themes will be Internet security, state surveillance and creative IT solutions.—AP

## DUBAI 2016 BUDGET EYES 12% RISE IN SPENDING

SAUDI ARAMCO OFFICIAL, MINISTERS TO SPEAK ON BUDGET

**DUBAI:** Dubai plans to raise state spending by 12 percent in 2016 as it invests in infrastructure to sustain economic growth, but an equal rise in revenues will allow the emirate to balance its budget, the government said yesterday.

The ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, approved spending next year of 46.1 billion dirhams (\$12.6 billion), up from 41.2 billion dirhams in the 2015 budget plan. The 2015 budget featured a 9 percent rise in spending. It is the second year in a row that Dubai, which came close to defaulting on its debt in 2009 because of a real estate crash, expects to avoid posting a deficit.

Economies in the Gulf, where Dubai is a leading trade and business centre, are slowing because of low oil prices. But the government said it expected to boost its

income by 12 percent next year through additional revenue from government services, which would provide 74 percent of total income. It said revenue would increase on the back of strong economic growth and changes to the fees for some services. Thirty-six percent of state spending would go towards wages and salaries, as the government provided 3,000 new jobs for its citizens. Spending on infrastructure, transport and economic development would rise by slightly more than 12 percent, accounting for 36 percent of all spending, while 5 percent of spending would go to servicing Dubai's debt.

### Saudi budget

A senior official of state oil giant Saudi Aramco and the ministers of Economy and Planning, Finance, and Water and Electricity

will appear at a news conference on Saudi Arabia's 2016 state budget today, official sources said yesterday.

The news conference is scheduled for 1200 GMT today and details of the budget are expected to be announced at or shortly before that time. The ministers are expected to give presentations on their parts of the budget. The Maal financial website reported that Aramco would be represented by chief executive Amin Nasser.

In recent years, the government has released the annual budget without holding a news conference. But the 2016 budget is expected to contain major changes in spending and possibly revenue policy in order to cut a deficit caused by low oil prices, and officials may want to explain these to the public. The deficit for this year is expected to come in at about 400-500

billion riyals (\$107-133 billion), around 20 percent of gross domestic product, prominent Saudi economists estimate.

They expect the 2016 budget to plan spending of about 800 billion riyals, roughly 20 percent lower than their estimate of this year's actual spending. The result, if Brent oil stays around \$40 a barrel next year, could be a deficit of around 200 billion riyals - still large, but enough of a cut to let Riyadh slow the liquidation of its foreign assets. Minister of Economy and Planning Adel Fakhieh took office in April and, in the administration of Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has begun to play a key role in planning Saudi Arabia's strategy to cope with an era of cheap oil. As the company handling Saudi crude oil production, Aramco is central to economic policy and government finances. — Reuters

## GULF MARKETS ADVANCE AHEAD OF SAUDI BUDGET

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

**DUBAI:** Gulf stock markets edged higher yesterday with Saudi Arabia rising in the final hour of trade as local traders bought back ahead of today's 2016 budget announcement. Egypt dropped in response to an interest rate hike. The Saudi index closed 0.1 percent higher at 6,946 points, rebounding from a low of 6,874 points because of rises in stocks which investors hope will be largely unaffected by the Saudi budget, due to be announced today afternoon.

To narrow a huge deficit caused by low oil prices, the budget is expected to contain spending cuts, possibly including a rise in natural gas feedstock prices for petrochemical producers such as Saudi Basic Industries. The stock fell 0.6 percent. Other stocks seen as dependent on state spending also sold off. National Shipping Co (Bahri) slumped 7.4 percent in active trade although the shipper's board proposed more than doubling its annual cash dividend for 2015 to 2.5 riyals per share.

"Bahri is a stock that is highly sensitive to the government's spending plans," said a Jeddah-based trader. "The stock is selling off because traders are skeptical of the transportation sector, despite the fact that the company's earnings were strong last quarter."

Some stocks seen as relatively immune to budget cuts were strong. National Commercial Bank edged up 0.5 percent in thin trade; it recommended paying a dividend of 0.75 riyal for the second half of 2015, up from 0.65 riyal in the second half of last year.

Saudi Telecom (STC) rose 1.1 percent after the kingdom's largest telecommunications operator offered to buy the shares in a Saudi-based sales services company, Sale Advanced Co, that it does not already own for 400 million riyals (\$107 million). It was STC's second announcement of an acquisition offer this quarter.

### DUBAI

Dubai's index rose 0.8 percent, bringing its rebound from its December low to 10.8 percent. The two largest companies by market value, Emaar Properties and Emirates NBD, carried the market higher, advancing 1.1 and 1.4 percent respectively.

Abu Dhabi climbed 0.1 percent for a seventh straight session of gains. Most banks rose, with National Bank of Abu Dhabi, the market's largest bank by value, advancing 1.8 percent.

Qatar's market rose 0.4 percent in modest volumes as international portfolio managers were largely absent because of the year-end holiday season. Gulf International Services jumped 2.6 percent and was the bourse's most heavily traded stock. Cairo's benchmark fell 0.9 percent in low volumes after the central bank raised key interest rates by 50 basis points on Thursday, citing inflationary pressures.— Reuters

## GLOBAL MINERS STEEL FOR WORSE AFTER TORRID YEAR

**SYDNEY:** Global miners are battling to stay afloat after enduring one of the toughest years in recent times, with tumbling commodity prices and supply gluts set to force more closures and massive cuts in 2016, analysts say. China's once insatiable appetite for commodities-boosted by an unprecedented investment boom in the world's second-largest economy-has waned, with its shift towards consumption-driven growth dampening demand.

At the same time, large producers have continued to lift output levels, which critics say is designed to flood the market and push out smaller competitors, accelerating the decline in prices.

The iron ore price sank below US\$40 in early December, its lowest since May 2009, thermal coal prices are 80 percent off their 2008 peak while world oil prices have spiralled down to an eight-year low. The sharp falls have ravaged the bottom line of miners across the world, pushing smaller players to the brink while tearing billions of revenue out of the government budgets of resources-dependent economies such as Australia.

Even major players such as London-listed Anglo-American has had to slash its workforce by almost two-thirds and shut loss-making mines amid the deepening rout, while Swiss giant Glencore is planning to trim its debt by cutting investment and selling assets.

"You only need to look at any share price to know it's been an absolutely shocking year for commodity markets and for mining companies," CLSA's head of resources research Andrew Driscoll told AFP. Anglo-Australian BHP Billiton, one of the world's largest miners, has seen its

Australian share price dive by more than 40 percent this year, while stocks in rival Rio Tinto have dropped by 26 percent.

Rio's chief executive Sam Walsh said the firm's competitors were in so much trouble that they were "hanging on by their fingernails." "Sooner or later the adjustment will take place," Walsh told Bloomberg Television this month.

### End of commodities super-cycle

The slump comes on the back of a commodities supercycle over the past decade, led by China but also fuelled by other resources-hungry developing nations growing their economies at a rapid pace, which pushed prices to record levels. But as miners borrowed heavily and ramped up output, they overestimated the growth in demand, analysts said.

"They've added far too much capacity for that new, more moderate demand outlook, so we have surpluses in every commodity," said UBS commodities analyst Daniel Morgan.

"I think it's definitely one of the toughest years the mining industry has faced in many years," he added, saying the woes were comparable to previous slumps sparked by the 2007-08 global financial crisis, the 1997 Asian financial crisis and even the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union.

Goldman Sachs said last week the iron ore sector might need to "hibernate for an extended period", predicting that prices would stay below US\$40 for three years.

The International Energy Agency said in mid-December that "the golden age of coal in China seems to be over", with demand slowing as the East-Asian nation turns to cleaner energy sources.

Meanwhile, the OPEC oil group recently left its output ceiling unchanged despite crashing energy prices in a move likely to further depress the market. "We had the big party from 2005-2011, and now we are suffering the big hangover," Breakaway Research senior resources analyst Mark Gordon said. "The so-called supercycle was a real anomaly in history, so the upward trend was an anomaly, and the downward trend is also an anomaly."

### More shutdowns

With demand projected to soften along with China's slowing economic growth, the adjustments have to come from the supply side, analysts said.



Miners embrace as the last shift finishes at Kellingley Colliery in Knottingley.





## 2015 CHEVROLET TAHOE AND IMPALA WIN KELLEY BLUE BOOK'S '2016 BEST BUY' AWARD

**KUWAIT:** It's another big win for Chevrolet! The premium 2016 Chevrolet Tahoe and the imposing Chevrolet Impala are named "2016 Best Buy" by Kelly Blue Book's kbb.com in the "Full-Size SUV/Crossover" segment and the "Full-Size Car" segment, respectively. This decision was made after editors at Kelley Blue Book had whittled down a field of 300 new cars and trucks for its coveted 2016 Best Buy Award winners in 12 categories, carefully analyzing a wealth of data and conducting extensive vehicle testing and evaluation in the process.

This is the second year in a row that the Chevrolet Impala bested the other value leaders in the full-size-car competition. The Impala's 2016 encore performance includes the new

addition of Apple CarPlay capability and wireless charging as available technologies in LTZ models.

Introducing new levels of comfort and technology, the 2016 Impala boasts a head-turning design, a spacious refined interior and advanced technologies. Featuring 10 standard air bags as well as a host of available safety technologies such as forward collision alert, lane departure warning, side blind zone alert, rear cross traffic alert, rear camera and rear-park assist. Additional available features include remote start, passive entry/exit, keyless starting, and power tilting/telescoping steering column with memory, dual-zone climate control and heated and ventilated front seats. It is pow-

ered by a 3.6L V6 with Variable Valve Timing which featuring fuel-saving direct injection and lightweight components; matched with six speed automatic transmissions, it is rated at 305 horsepower and 356 Nm of torque, with excellent fuel economy of 8.1 L/100km (highway).

As for the 2016 Chevrolet Tahoe, the full-size SUV, according to the editors of Kelley Blue Books, "isn't just the sales leader in the segment; it is also the vehicle that has benefited most from years of development including four distinct generations." Simply put, the all-new Tahoe "hits every important nail for full-size SUV buyers right on the head."

Available in three trim levels that include LS, LT and LTZ, the all-new Tahoe has been com-

pletely redesigned. Featuring premium materials that contribute to the functional, sophisticated design as well as available 8-inch diagonal color touch-screen with 3D navigation, in addition to up to six USB ports to connect smartphones, Blue Ray DVD rear entertainment system and fold-flat third-row seat that provides incredible spaciousness for the whole family. In addition to keyless access, the Tahoe also features a host of available driver assistance technologies, such as Standard Front and Rear Park Assist helps when maneuvering Tahoe in tight parking situations and Side Blind Zone Alert with Lane Change Alert use radar sensors in the rear quarter panels to detect fast approaching vehicles.

### Chevrolet Care

All customers who purchase a Chevrolet from Alghanim will receive the benefits of the Chevrolet Care, which entails new levels of post-sale support and trust. The Chevrolet Care is an exceptional customer service that is based on four main pillars: competitive and transparent service costs (especially for four-wheel drive vehicles), scheduled service appointment booking with same day delivery, quality service by certified technicians and 3yr/100,000km warranty with 24/7 roadside assistance. Visit our showrooms in Safat Alghanim Al-Rai, Sharq, Fahaeel, Al-Ahmadi, and Shuwaikh and make Chevrolet Tahoe and/or Impala yours today.



**MIAMI:** A GACI clothing store hiring manager Marcie Lowe, right, gives her card to job applicant Xionara Garcia, left, of Miami, during a job fair at Dolphin Mall in Miami. According to the Labor Department, 2015, the number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits fell the week before, reflecting a job market that continues to look persistently healthy. — AP

## JAPAN INFLATION TICKS UP IN NOV, BUT SPENDING WEAK

**TOKYO:** Japan's inflation rate ticked up in November, posting the first gain in five months, official data showed, but still-weak household spending weighed on the world's number three economy.

The tepid figure—a 0.1 percent gain in core inflation excluding volatile fresh food prices—offered a glimmer of hope for Tokyo's bid to conquer years of deflation, after the economy narrowly sidestepped a recession last quarter. But the latest inflation number remains way below the Bank of Japan's 2.0 percent target, as officials struggle to convince cautious firms to usher in big wage hikes to stir spending.

A falling price spiral in Japan for years put consumers off buying in the hopes of getting goods cheaper down the road, denting firms' expansion and hiring plans. That has weighed on growth in the wider economy. In November, household spending fell 2.9 percent from a year ago, the third monthly decline.

Friday's weak figures came despite signs of a tight labor market, with the headline unemployment rate at a near two-decade low of 3.3 percent, slightly up from 3.1 percent in October.

Japan's economy saw a slight uptick in the July-September quarter, rising 0.3 percent and reversing an earlier forecast of a contraction that had risked putting the country into recession for the second time in as many years. A lacklustre global economy, marked by the slowdown in China and weakness in emerging markets, is posing challenges to the recovery.

Tokyo has approved an extra spending budget to stimulate the still-weak economy.

The latest inflation data followed three months of consecutive declines and a flat reading in July, according to the internal affairs ministry.

The gain was mainly due to a slowing decline in oil prices, as well as rising prices of travel-related goods and services, the ministry said.

### 'Stimulus pressure'

"The price gain was too small given the (BoJ's) 2.0 percent target," said Yusuke Shimoda, economist at Japan

Research Institute. "While prices are expected to improve moderately, it will take time to achieve that ambitious goal. I don't think the Bank of Japan will take additional steps for now, but the market is pressuring the BoJ to launch more stimulus."

Last week, Japan's central bank announced an unexpected tweak to its vast monetary easing program in a bid to power a recovery in the economy.

BoJ policymakers rolled out a series of changes, including boosting their holdings in firms dedicated to capital spending and new hiring. They also made some other changes—including hiking the bank's exposure to longer-term bonds—after wrapping up their last policy meeting of the year.

The announcement comes as analysts raise concerns the BoJ would struggle to scoop up enough bonds under its 80 trillion yen (\$665 billion)

annual asset-buying scheme—which effectively prints money to spur lending.

The central bank's stimulus, launched more than two years ago, is a cornerstone of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's attempt to kickstart the long-lumbering economy with a policy blitz dubbed Abenomics.

BoJ chief Haruhiko Kuroda said he was keeping a close eye on how much cash firms hand out in winter bonuses, and in spring wage negotiations. Policymakers hope that putting more cash in shoppers' wallets will spur spending and move Japan closer to the bank's inflation target.

Kuroda also left the door open to further stimulus, saying there was "no limit" to what policymakers might do to boost growth. He last year shocked markets with an unexpected expansion to its already huge asset-purchase scheme. — AFP



**TOKYO:** Shoppers take a look at orange on sale at a shop at a shopping street of Ginza area in Tokyo. Japan's inflation rate rose slightly in November, though lower household spending and incomes slowed progress toward a sustained recovery for the world's third-largest economy. — AP

## JAPAN BUSINESSES GIVE MUTED SUPPORT TO WAGE OVERTURE

**TOKYO:** Japan's prime minister and central bank governor applied fresh pressure on companies to do their part in putting a sustained end to deflation by boosting wages and investment.

The head of Japan's biggest business lobby, however, offered only conditional support, underscoring the difficulty policymakers face in convincing risk-shy Japanese companies to divert more of their record profits to innovation and human resources. At an annual meeting of the business lobby Keidanren, Abe voiced hope that companies raise wages next year at a faster pace than this year, saying that boosting salaries and capital expenditure was critical for Japan to exit deflation.

Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda also waded in, telling the same

meeting that companies who invest now are the ones to be rewarded when the central bank's aggressive money printing succeeds in accelerating inflation to its 2 percent target.

"Fortune favours the bold," Kuroda said, citing a famous proverb and stressing that more companies needed to be spending further on new innovation and raising salaries to lure talent in a tightening job market. Kuroda also said the BOJ remains "unwavering" in its determination to do whatever it takes to hit its 2 percent inflation target, suggesting his readiness to expand monetary stimulus if risks threaten a broad uptrend in prices.

Despite assurances by Kuroda that Japan's economic prospects are bright, many companies still sit on a huge pile of

cash because of uncertainties over the external outlook and a shrinking domestic market as the country's population ages rapidly. In the meeting, Keidanren chairman Sadayuki Sakakibara praised Abe's efforts to reflate growth and his pro-business policies such as a pledge to cut Japan's corporate tax rate.

But he said companies had the flexibility to decide to what degree and how employees should be compensated, signalling that smaller and less-profitable firms may opt to pay one-off bonuses rather than increase base salary. "Each company faces a different business environment," Sakakibara said. "I'd like to urge companies to take measures that best suit their needs," he said, adding that companies did not necessarily need to persist in raising regular pay. — Reuters

## TURKEY'S SIMSEK SEES 2016 GROWTH ABOVE 4%

**ANKARA:** Deputy Turkish Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek said he expected faster economic growth this year than official forecasts, and an even stronger expansion next year, and he played down tensions with Moscow over Ankara's downing of a Russian jet.

Simsek also told Reuters in an interview that the central bank had been "very clear" in its statement explaining its surprise decision to leave interest rates steady this week, in comments that may do little to quell investors' concerns about the bank's independence. The "positive surprise" of third-quarter GDP growth of 4 percent pointed to full-year growth of 3.5 to 4 percent and more than 4 percent growth in 2016, said Simsek, who is responsible for the performance of the economy.

In October, the government cut its growth forecasts to 3 from 4 percent in 2015 and to 4 from 5 percent in 2016. "This growth is a rather good outcome given the serious political instability due to elections, troubles in the Middle East and surrounding countries and the narrowing demand due to the collapse in commodity

prices," he said late on Wednesday.

Commenting on those problems, Simsek said souring relations with Moscow after Turkey shot down a Russian warplane last month had not had a serious impact on trade and was unlikely to do so. "We do not anticipate a lasting, significant impact on foreign trade. If there is one, it will be limited," he said. "We will be able to find alternative markets for our products."

Simsek, a former finance minister, took up his new post last month after an election that handed one-party rule back to the AK Party, which oversaw an economy that has grown around 5 percent annually on average since it first came to power in 2002.

The deputy prime minister also said he expected the current account deficit, resource-poor Turkey's biggest economic weakness, to narrow to about 4.5 percent of GDP this year and then to 4 percent next year. "We think the narrowing in the current account deficit will continue next year despite developments in Russia and the region," he said.

### BANK ON TRACK

Simsek said the central bank, which stunned the markets on Tuesday by not hiking interest rates as widely expected, was acting in line with its "road map" towards a simpler policy framework aimed at narrowing its corridor of interest rates.

"(The central bank) has taken many steps required by this road map and said that the next step would be a process of narrowing the corridor. It linked this to market volatility," he said, avoiding further comment. Analysts have been urging an interest rate hike to rein in inflation and boost the lira currency, but the bank has faced political pressure to keep monetary policy loose. President Tayyip Erdogan has called for rate cuts and even equated high interest rates with treason.

The lira, which weakened to 2.96 to the dollar after Tuesday's rate decision, has since recovered and stood at 2.9232 on Thursday. The main share index was up 0.1 percent and the 10-year benchmark bond yield

was steady at 10.78 percent.

"In the short term, naturally, inflationary pressures will continue to be strong," Simsek said. "The decline in global commodity prices will be somewhat supportive in the period ahead," he added, suggesting the inflationary pressure the central bank faces may ease.

"To lower (inflation) we have to raise productivity, securing this with structural reforms. We must strengthen monetary policy's hand by keeping fiscal policy tight," he said. He added that the 2016 budget would give the signal that fiscal discipline will be maintained and forecast faster growth next year as political uncertainty wanes and European economies recover.

"The reform agenda, serious real increases in wages, domestic investment and consumption will boost demand," he said. He added that a delay in Turkey's implementation of the Basel III set of global banking regulations, expected to take place in March, was not currently on the agenda. — Reuters

FINANCIAL SECTOR KEY TO FINAL WEEK OF TRADING

WALL STREET WEEK AHEAD

NEW YORK: As 2015 draws to a close next week, the fortunes of the last few trading days of the year may be dictated by the direction of the financial sector.

The financials have risen more than 6 percent this quarter, with investors expecting the sector to be one of the main beneficiaries of the first interest rate hike by the US Federal Reserve in nearly a decade last week.

However, the potential exposure of banks to the energy-dominated US high-yield corporate bond markets has

unnerved investors, and caused financial and energy shares to stall during the two trading sessions that followed the hike. Stocks in both those sectors have been closely correlated in recent weeks.

"That trade, the oil-financials, it is going to be with us for quite some time," said Peter Kenny, equity market strategist at Kenny & Co LLC, in Denver.

The benchmark S&P 500 index has rallied nearly 3 percent this week, buoyed by a jump of nearly 5 percent in the energy sector as oil prices bounced off multi-year

lows. Financial stocks, meanwhile, have surged more than 3 percent this week.

In recent weeks, energy stocks have been tightly correlated to the price of crude at 0.95, which means they have moved in sync with each other, and financials have not been far behind. The 20-day correlation between the financial sector and US crude is 0.75. Should oil prices fail to stabilize and energy shares continue to fall, that could be reflected in the financials.

"The influx of money and capital into

the financials over the last six months in anticipation of this move by the Fed was justified, but boy, this oil trade has turned that upside down," Kenny said.

IN TANDEM, FOR NOW

The slump in oil prices has resulted in a drop of more than 20 percent in the energy sector this year, but while signs of stabilization in the commodity has helped the sector rally, it has also reduced its influence among the broader index.

According to Standard & Poor's, as of Nov. 30, the energy sector held a 7.1 percent weighting in the benchmark index. In contrast, financials hold a 16.6 percent weighting, second among the 10 major sectors and making them more influential in dictating the direction of the S&P 500.

Financials have a forward price-to-earnings ratio of 13.7, according to Thomson Reuters data, making them relatively cheap compared to the 16.5 for the broad S&P 500.

Meanwhile, as major US banks have raised the rates they charge borrowers in the wake of the Fed hike, that could bump up earnings for the sector. Even

if financials manage to decouple from oil, some market participants are not expecting any outsized benefits for the sector from the change in Fed policy, which is expected to be a gradual tightening of interest rates.

"Interest rates are going to stay here and this trade that led people to believe the banks were going to be substantially helped is just not going to happen," said Stephen Massocca, Chief Investment Officer, Wedbush Equity Management LLC in San Francisco.

"They are probably fairly valued here and they are very disinteresting."

With a shorter trading week ahead as well due to a holiday for New Year's, the economic calendar is light and trading volume is expected to be muted, which could result in exaggerated moves in equities. "Due to the holiday week, attendance will be light," said Andre Bakhos, managing director at Janlyn Capital LLC in Bernardsville, New Jersey. "But the ability to move things around is easier at times like this, so while we normally think that nothing is going to happen, it is easier to make things happen." — Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report, Sunday 27 December 2015. Includes tables for Index, Price Index, Weighted Index, KXS 15, Trades, Security, and various market categories like Real Estate, Kinship, etc.

Global Stock Indices table showing previous close, last price, change, and performance metrics for various indices like Dow Jones, NASDAQ, S&P 500, etc.

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. Includes a line chart and report title.

MENA Stock Indices table listing indices for Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia.

Global Currencies Exchange Rate table showing exchange rates for Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, US Dollar, Euro, etc.

MENA Currencies Exchange Rate table showing exchange rates for US Dollar, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, Bahraini Dinar, etc.

Global Interest Rates table showing interest rates for 1-Week, 1-Month, 3-Month, 6-Month, and 1-Year for various currencies.

Global Bond Yields table showing yields for 2-Year, 5-Year, 10-Year, and 30-Year for United States, Europe, and United Kingdom.

Commodities table showing prices and changes for Kuwait Oil, Brent, West Texas, Gold, and Silver.





## MOHAMED NASER AL-SAYER, LEXUS INTRODUCE IS 200T SEDAN WITH INNOVATIVE 2.0-LITRE TURBO ENGINE AND SUPERB DRIVING DYNAMICS

**KUWAIT:** Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer and Lexus announced the launch of the new IS 200t model in the region to unveil a sedan which not only turns heads on the road, but also refuses to go unnoticed while parked. The new 2.0-litre petrol turbo engine provides more power along with innovative D-4ST fuel injection technology for both fuel economy and instantaneous torque.

The IS 200t also stands out with its aggressive yet elegant presence and the brand's unmistakable spindle grille, L-theme LED daytime running lights and dynamic bodylines. It combines multi-link rear suspension with finely tuned electronic power steering to deliver a rousing driving experience. The IS line also includes the IS 350 while the IS 200t is a replacement for the original IS 250 model which has been discontinued.

"The IS 200t sets a new benchmark for driving pleasure, with an irresistible blend of heightened performance, contemporary luxury and breathtaking design," said Takayuki Yoshitsugu, Chief Representative, Middle East and North Africa Representative Office, TOYOTA Motor Corporation. "The 2.0-litre turbocharged engine combined with the 8-speed Sport Direct Shift transmission will allow the driver to enjoy the exhilarating ride of the IS 200t in line with our efforts to always provide a 'fun to drive' experience. We appreciate the support of our customers in the region and look forward to providing them with yet another unique driving experience from Lexus in the form of the new IS 200t."

Simon Firth, Business Director Lexus Kuwait said "The amazing story of a progressive luxury brand continues. Lexus has been the market leader in Kuwait since 2002. We are extremely proud to represent Lexus in Kuwait as a world class luxury brand. Through the Lexus ethos of Amazing in Motion, the team at Lexus continue to pushing the boundaries of design, technology and craftsmanship."

The 2016 Lexus IS' engine variants include the 3.5-liter V6 engine with D-4S direct and port fuel injection producing 312 hp at 6,400 rpm and a maximum torque of 38.5 kg-m/4800 rpm. The sec-

ond engine variant is a 2.0-liter 4-cylinder with a maximum output of 241 hp/5800 rpm and a maximum torque of 35.7 kg-m/1650-4400 rpm.

Bader Musaed Al-Sayer, Deputy Business Director Lexus Kuwait said "During the past 25 years Lexus brand has transformed to become an icon of true luxury. Lexus cars are a true expression of the highest level of creativity combining absolute luxury and exhilarating performance."

### Powerful engine

The IS 200t's innovative combination of engine technologies has been designed to provide a high level of responsiveness with minimal turbo lag



and enhanced low speed torque. The 2.0-liter 4-cylinder engine delivers 241 hp with a maximum torque of 35.7 kg-m. The four-into-two exhaust manifold system pairs cylinders according to their expansion or compression stroke. Acting in conjunction with the highly-efficient, twin-scroll turbocharger, this innovative manifold structure prevents interference between the exhaust gasses from each cylinder, generating high torque across the widest possible rev range. The engine further employs an air-to-liquid intercooler mounted directly to the engine to significantly reduce the intake volume downstream of the turbocharger, minimizing turbo lag for a highly responsive performance. The water-cooled intercooler provides

strong advantages in starting off acceleration over an air-to-air type alternative. The acceleration curve prioritizes torque delivery at low speeds. The new 2.0-litre turbo engine is also remarkably light and compact. It is cast with low nickel content heat resistant steel, and featuring a resin cylinder head cover, intake manifold and intake pipes.

The IS 200t also received the 8-speed Sport Direct Shift transmission with paddle shifts. The transmission automatically downshifts during hard braking before a corner then holds a lower gear through the corner for best control, and then selects the most suitable gear on corner exit to give the driver greater throttle response. The rear wheel drive

### Enhanced fuel efficiency

The IS 200t is available with an advanced fuel injection system -D-4ST (Direct injection 4-stroke gasoline engine Superior version with Turbo)- which combines a high pressure fuel system for injection directly into the cylinders with a low pressure system for injection into the ports. Injection is split between the direct and port injectors according to the engine load, optimizing fuel combustion in all driving situations to enhance both low-speed torque and fuel economy.

This advanced fuel injection system works in combination with turbocharging technology to create a high level of compatibility by optimizing the shape



of the cylinder head intake ports and the piston tops, and turbo 'boost control'.

Optimizing torque throughout the engine rev range and allowing the engine to start in the Otto cycle and yet run in the more fuel efficient Atkinson cycle, the new Lexus Turbo features innovative dual variable valve timing technology which adopts VVT-i to the exhaust valves and VVT-iW to the intake valves, but also delivers wide open throttle performance. The late intake valve closing of the Atkinson cycle reduces pumping losses and boosts fuel economy. VVT-iW incorporates a mid-position lock which enables the Atkinson cycle to be maintained without sacrificing starting performance.

### Bold design

The power of design to create an emotional reaction has never been more apparent than in the IS 200t. The exquisitely crafted form of this exceptional vehicle will evoke feelings of desire, anticipation and adrenaline-charged excitement. The IS 200t looks fast and powerful, even standing still. From the front, the unique trademark spindle grille is elegant but aggressive and powerful. From the side, the lines of the car flow smoothly from the door sill up to the taillights in the rear which are angled down and out, with the rear spoiler integrated into the trunk lid's trailing edge.

The L-shaped LED daytime running lights are positioned just underneath the headlamp cluster drawing the eye to the side and rearwards in a subtle but sophisticated way.

Drivers will love the interior with its exciting cockpit-like design. The multi-way adjustable front seats are supportive and secure. The dashboard has an operation zone and a display zone, reducing visual clutter and allowing drivers better situational awareness and control. The cabin's contemporary lighting, premium materials, and other features suggest the highest quality and luxury. The long wheelbase allows for more rear seat space and luggage capacity. A unique and very stylish Electrostatic Temperature Control Switch enables quick, intuitive operation of air conditioning. The Electro Multi Vision Navigation (EMVN) system with Remote Touch Interface (RTI) features Speed Limit Display and Route Trace Registration.

### F SPORT - The ultimate performance machine

Customers can now turn the excitement up another level and get behind the wheel of the race-inspired F SPORT version of the IS 200t and the IS 350. From the aggressive F SPORT front mask to the unique interior attributes, the soul of the Lexus LFA Supercar can clearly be felt.

Its exclusive spindle grille is eye-catchingly bolder. The bottom corners of the front bumpers feature aerodynamic intakes that not only look great but enhance brake cooling. The unique 18-inch wheels' Y-spoke design recalls the LFA. Interior trim detailing includes an F SPORT steering wheel and shift knob, and aluminum pedals and scuff plates with the Lexus logo. Both the front and rear suspension systems and the Electric Power Steering (EPS) are exclusively tuned. Optional Variable Gear Ratio Steering (VGRS) controls steering angle in accordance with vehicle speed and driver operation to realize better control at all speeds and improve driving feel during lane-changing and navigating winding roads.

# JITTERS OVER FED PATH IN 2016 HIT DOLLAR

## NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

**KUWAIT:** Last week, trading in the FX markets remained subdued on the back of diminishing liquidity as investors unwind their positions heading into the year-end. With the first US rate hike since 2006 out of the way, the focus is now on the pace of future rate increases. The Fed, from its forecasts, is anticipating four rate hikes next year. However, the Fed funds futures currently suggests that there will be just two rate increases, in June and December. Additionally, mixed data combined with lower inflation expectations helped drive the odds of a Fed rate hike in the first quarter of 2016 below 50 percent. Nevertheless, analysts expect the greenback to appreciate in the upcoming year on the back of widening monetary policy divergences between the Fed and other major central banks.

Meanwhile, the US dollar Index closed the week lower as investors turned their focus on the Fed's path toward normalizing its monetary policy. The Index opened the week at 99.27 only to gradually drop and close the week at 97.847.

The euro climbed against the US dollar last week as the market continues to digest the recent Fed decision to raise its benchmark rate. In a week that lacked any significant economic news and liquidity heading into year-end holidays, the single currency managed to close the week higher against the US dollar. The currency opened the week at 1.0868 and reached a high of 1.0984. The currency dropped dramatically to a low of 1.0848 on Thursday. The currency managed to regain most of its losses at the end of the week highlighting the thin trading environment. Finally the Euro closed the week at 1.0960.

In the UK, the sterling pound weakened against most of its counterparts amid a continuation of disappointing economic data. The currency also dropped amid speculation that the Bank of England will delay following the US central bank in raising rates on the back of lower inflation expectations. Cable opened the week at 1.4895 only to drop

to a low of 1.4806. The pound managed to gain most of its losses at the end of the week amid notable weakness in the US dollar and despite the disappointing UK GDP figure. The currency closed the week at 1.4813.

The Japanese yen also gained against the greenback last week as mixed data from the US economy continue to keep the dollar subdued. The pair opened the week at 121.16 and quickly reached a high of 121.51. However, data released from the US pushed investors to sell the US dollar, pushing it to a low of 120.25 against the Yen. The pair closed the week at 120.32.

Oil prices edged higher last week in thin, pre-holiday trading, sustained by a surprise drop in US crude inventories, but prices stayed near multi-year lows as global supplies remained abundant and OPEC lowered the demand outlook for its exports. Trading volumes are expected to remain light as many traders already closed their books before the end of the year, reducing liquidity in the market and increasing volatility. US crude opened the week at 36.06 and managed sizeable gains throughout the week to finally close at 38.10.

### Mixed housing data

New US single-family home sales in November rose less than expected and the prior month's increase was revised down, suggesting some loss of momentum in the housing market. The Commerce Department said on Wednesday sales increased 4.3 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 490,000 units. October's sales pace was revised down to 470,000 units from the previously reported 495,000 units. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast new home sales, which account for about 9.3 percent of the housing market, rising to a rate of 505,000 units last month. Sales were up 9.1 percent compared to November of last year.

Meanwhile, US existing home sales fell sharply in November to hit the lowest level in 19 months, dampening opti-

mism over the health of the housing market. Existing home sales fell 10.5 percent to a seasonally adjusted 4.76 million units last month from 5.32 million in October. Analysts had expected existing home sales to rise to 5.35 million units in November.

### US personal spending

US consumer spending rose in line with market expectations in November, underlining optimism over the health of the economy. In a report, the Commerce Department said that personal spending inched up by a seasonally adjusted 0.3 percent last month, meeting fore-



casts. Personal spending for October was revised down to a flat reading from a previously reported gain of 0.1 percent. Consumer spending is the single biggest source of US economic growth, accounting for as much as two-thirds of economic activity.

Meanwhile, US personal income in November rose for an eighth straight month on solid wage gains, signaling stronger consumer spending and bolstering economic growth expectations for next year. Personal income rose by a seasonally adjusted 0.3 percent in November, above forecasts for a 0.2 per-

cent gain and after rising 0.4 percent a month earlier.

### Durable goods unchanged

US durable goods orders were unchanged in November, while core orders dropped unexpectedly. The US Commerce Department stated that total durable goods orders, which include transportation items, were unchanged last month, compared to forecasts for a decline of 0.6 percent. Orders for durable goods in October rose 2.9 percent. Core durable goods orders, excluding volatile transportation items, fell by a seasonally adjusted 0.1 percent in

Applications are hovering close to the 255,000 level reached in July, the lowest since the 1970s.

A tighter labor market this year has put a premium on skilled and experienced workers, encouraging employers to forgo reductions in staff. The notable improvement in the labor market helped persuade Federal Reserve policy makers last week to raise their benchmark interest rate for the first time in almost 10 years.

### Europe & UK

The People's Party of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy won Spain's general election last week but failed to gain majority. The Socialists received the second-most votes, while the anti-austerity Podemos party, which was formed only last year, came in third. The country's next government is likely to be a coalition of parties from across the political field. That points to a stalemate that analysts agree would probably disrupt an economic reform program that has helped Spain out of recession and reduce its still high unemployment rate. Rajoy has implemented tough austerity measures, and was asking voters for a chance to see them through. Spain's economy grew by 3 percent this year, and unemployment had fallen from a historic 27 percent to 21 percent.

### German producer prices fall

German Producer prices in November 2015 fell by 2.5 percent compared with the corresponding month of the preceding year. In October 2015 the annual rate of change all over had been -2.3 percent. In November 2015 energy prices decreased by 7.1 percent compared with November 2014, prices of non-durable consumer goods by 0.1 percent and prices of intermediate goods by 2.2 percent.

The UK economy expanded less than previously estimated in the past two quarters in a sign growth is losing some momentum. Gross domestic product rose 0.4 percent between July and September instead of the 0.5 percent

previously estimated, the Office for National Statistics in London said on Wednesday. Growth in the second quarter was revised down by 0.2 percent to 0.5 percent.

The revisions indicate a loss of momentum in an economy that continues to rely heavily on consumers and domestic demand. While the economy is seen growing 2.3 percent next year, almost matching 2015's pace, investors are concerned that an exit from the European Union poses potential threat to the UK's economic outlook. The revisions left annual growth in third quarter at 2.1 percent, down from a previous estimate of 2.3 percent.

### Asia

Consumer Prices Slightly Higher  
Japan's core consumer prices edged up in November from a year earlier after three straight months of declines as broadening price increases for food and grocery items offset some of the pressure from slumping energy costs. However, household spending suffered its third straight month of annual declines, casting doubt on the Bank of Japan's argument that robust consumption will allow firms to keep raising prices and help accelerate inflation to its ambitious 2 percent target. The core consumer price index (CPI), which includes oil products but excludes volatile fresh food prices, rose 0.1 percent in November from a year earlier, against a median market forecast for a flat reading. The rise followed a 0.1 percent drop in October and came as higher food prices moderated the pressure from slumping energy costs. Meanwhile, household spending suffered the biggest annual fall in eight months, down 2.9 percent in November from a year earlier exceeding a median forecast for a 2.4 percent decline.

### Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30330  
The USDKWD opened at 0.30330 yesterday morning.



## AHLI UNITED BANK: LEADER IN BANKING SAFETY

A NEW MERIT: SECOND LOCALLY AND THE FIFTH REGIONALLY

**KUWAIT:** Ahli United Bank has embodied its leading role in the Islamic banking field both locally and regionally obtaining the second position locally and fifth in the GCC in 2015 on the "Global Finance" list of the most secure 50 international banks.

This evaluation is based on the long-term credit ratings of foreign currencies by international rating institutions such as: Fitch, Moody's, and Standard & Poor's. This reemphasizes the Bank's strength and financial solvency as well as the success of its conservative strategy plus its desire to provide the best banking services and solutions that conform to the Islamic Sharia principles.

On this occasion, Moataz Al-Rafie, the Senior Deputy CEO - Banking Group at Ahli United Bank, clarified: The Bank's achievement of the second position in Kuwait and the fifth position in the GCC proves the good financial performance of the Bank which is very satisfactory and excellent recognition for our role and as a leading bank in this country.

Al-Rafie added: This evaluation reflects the tangible development of the Bank in its various departments which was lately crowned by the Interest-Free Loan campaign launched by the Bank to assist its clients to achieve a better standard of liv-

ing through the largest interest-free loan obtainable in the local market. The Bank is also unique in offering the Al-Hassad Islamic Saving Program which offers prizes with the highest value that amounts to KD 3.4 million per year in addition to 26 weekly prizes. It is the only prize program in Kuwait which is compatible to Islamic Sharia.

These successive accomplishments of the Bank double the Ahli United Bank's commitment to intensify efforts to streamline the services and banking procedures to its clients, Al-Rafie asserted. Its services and products combine the latest banking technologies with conformity to Islamic Sharia principles through its network comprising 37 branches built and designed according to highest standards of technology and service. 90 ATM machines throughout Kuwait also provide uninterrupted service to its clients.

Al-Rafie expressed deep appreciation to the Bank's clients for their confidence and loyalty as well as to the Bank's personnel whose dedication represents the backbone of the Bank's distinguished achievements year after year. Global Finance adopts a number of criteria in its selection of world banks from among 500 banks for this award including: credit rating, assets volume and financial indexes.

## BRAZILIAN IMPORTS OF MINERAL, FUEL AND FERTILIZERS FROM GCC WITNESS GROWTH

UPWARD TREND REFLECTS PIVOTAL ROLE OF ABCC

**ABU DHABI:** The GCC region continues to display its strong ties with Brazil as reflected in the \$2,544.14 billion worth of imports from the Gulf recorded between Q1 and Q3 of 2015, according to the recent reviews of the Brazilian Arab-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce (ABCC). In the same period, mineral fuel and oil were noted as the top imports amounting to a total of \$1,751.03 billion. The positive trend showcases the steady trade relations between the two regions as well as Brazil and the Gulf's vibrant and dynamic business landscape.

To date, Saudi Arabia takes the top rank over other Arab countries for having the highest share in at 43.71 per cent with \$1,112.08 billion worth of imports, followed by Qatar with 26.30 per cent at \$666.54 million. The UAE comes third at 14.63 per cent with \$372.08 million, while Kuwait has 11.51 per cent at \$292.93 million. The UAE showcased marked growth compared to the previous year, recording an increase of 10.37 per cent, while Qatar experi-



**Dr Michel Alaby, Secretary General and CEO of ABCC.**

enced a 55.11 per cent growth.

Dr Michael Alaby, Secretary General and CEO, ABCC, said: "Brazil and the Arab region have

always enjoyed strong bilateral relations, and the impressive numbers recorded within the first three quarters of the year underscore the immense trust and confidence placed by Brazilian Arab countries. In addition, it also highlights the Arab regions' eagerness to address the demand for products from Brazil and offer high-quality commodities."

Brazil has imported mostly mineral fuel and oil which recorded a 68.83 per cent share of the overall recorded imports for the Gulf. This was followed by fertilizers with an 18 per cent share of the total amount at \$458.13 million and plastic at 5.70 per cent with \$145.04 million worth of imports between January and September of 2015. These three were ranked as the top commodities in demand within the region.

The efficient operations and transactions that come as a result of open communication channels streamline business operations, create more opportunity for investors in Brazil and the Arab region to explore more prospects in the horizon.

## SAMIR CHERFAN AWARDED AS 'MAN OF THE YEAR'

**DUBAI:** In recognition of his leadership achievements in the region, Samir Cherfan, Managing Director of Nissan Middle East was honored with a prestigious 'Man of the Year' Award in the automotive sector of the yearly ranking "100 Most Innovative Business Leaders in 2015", by Amwal magazine.

Since 2007, the editorial board of Amwal magazine identifies the men and women of the business community who, through their activities, create new horizons and open new frontiers for the Middle East.

Nissan Motor Co, Ltd, Japan's second-largest

automotive company, is headquartered in Yokohama, Japan, and is part of the Renault-Nissan Alliance.

Operating with more than 247,500 employees globally, Nissan sold 5.32 million vehicles and generated revenue of 11.38 trillion yen (USD 103.6 billion) in fiscal year 2014. Nissan delivers a comprehensive range of more than 60 models under the Nissan, Infiniti and Datsun brands. Nissan leads the world in zero-emission mobility, dominated by sales of the LEAF, the first mass-market, pure-electric vehicle and the best-selling EV in history.



**Samir Cherfan**

## EMERGING MARKETS CAUGHT BETWEEN DIVERGING MONETARY POLICIES

Asiya Capital Investments Company Report

By Camille Accad and Jordi Rof

**KUWAIT:** After seven years of ultra-loose monetary policy, the United States increased interest rates this month. The easing cycle started in mid-2007 when the benchmark rate was lowered from 5.25 percent to 4.75 percent in a context of financial instability and tightening credit conditions until reaching 0.25 percent. Since then, macroeconomic conditions have improved markedly: real GDP has been growing consistently above 2 percent YoY in the last year and a half, the unemployment rate fell from 10 percent in 2010 to 5 percent this year and wage growth has stabilized at more than 4 percent YoY in the last two years. Nevertheless, the American economy still faces substantial threats, mainly on the external front as global demand remains fragile and the USD strengthens. These headwinds, together with low inflation and the Federal Reserve's prudent approach towards tightening, suggest that rate increases will be gradual and that policy will remain relatively loose for the time being.

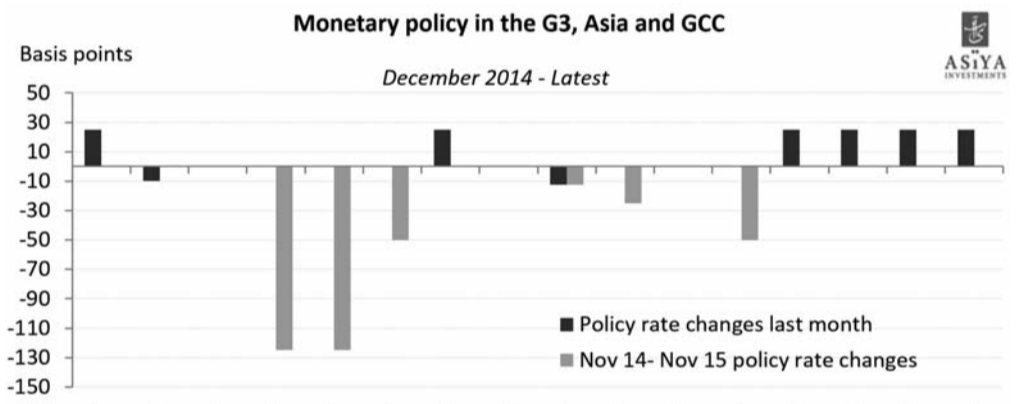
Interest rate changes in the US matter to emerging markets. In Asia, the majority of currencies are under floating regimes, hence not pegged to the USD. These currencies are likely to experience downwards pressure when the Federal Reserve hikes interest rates. USD-denominated assets become more attractive with respect to their equivalents in Asia due to higher returns, resulting in money outflows and depreciation of the currencies.

Asian central banks can try to offset the effects of US monetary policy by raising interest rates, but this would squeeze growth and potentially fuel deflationary expectations in a region already facing a deceleration and disinflationary trends. The US hiking cycle under Alan Greenspan in the mid-1990s caused massive outflows from Asia, but the region's macroeconomic conditions are substantially better: the current account is in surplus (+4 percent vs. -2 percent of GDP), external short term debt halved from around 30 percent of GDP, currencies are not pegged and reserves more than doubled to 140 percent of GDP. Overall, the effect of the gradual US tightening cycle on Asian monetary policy will not be as considerable as in 1997.

The currency framework in the GCC is radically different than in most Asian countries. Gulf currencies are pegged to the USD, with either a nominal anchor or a softer peg to a basket of currencies such as in Kuwait.

A peg implies a loss of policy independence: follow the policy rates of the reference currency or risk capital outflows. In fact, Gulf countries have already adapted to the new situation. For instance, the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA) already hiked its reverse repo rate by 25 basis points to 0.5 percent and Kuwait, UAE and Bahrain also reacted to the Fed's decision. At the same time, the GCC is highly exposed to the deteriorating energy market, which accounts for half of the economy and 85 percent of public revenue. The combination of low oil prices and tighter credit conditions could be the perfect storm for the GCC. Apart from the downside risk on growth, the whole currency system could face substantial pressure if current conditions persist as the Gulf continues to spend from its reserves.

Emerging markets are split between two magnetic poles. The first element is the gradual tightening of US monetary policy, which will add pressure on US-pegged countries to raise interest rates. The other element is the ultra-loose policies of the European and Japanese central banks, which are hurting emerging markets' competitiveness. Today, monetary policy trends in main economies diverge. Despite low oil prices, the GCC will maintain its peg with the US and gradually increase interest rates. In Asia, given the current economic dynamics, Asian central banks will attempt to track more closely European and Japanese monetary policy - to the extent it is possible.



Source: Asiya Research on national central banks, 2015.

www.asiyainvestments.com/research

## TRINIDAD FIRES BANK CHIEF WHO NAMED FOREX BUYERS

**PORT-OF-SPAIN, Trinidad:** The governor of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago has been fired after releasing the names of companies that have bought one-third of the foreign exchange sold in the last three years, officials said.

Finance Minister Colm Imbert accused former Central Bank Governor Jwala Rambarran of violating several laws when he took the unprecedented action of naming the companies nearly a month ago.

"Cabinet took the decision after very careful deliberations," Imbert said. The companies had written Imbert to complain about Rambarran's actions and have pledged to take legal action.

Rambarran has said local laws gave him the authority to release the names, adding that people had a right to know that a large part of the foreign exchange was being used in the import and distribution trade.

Rambarran also had announced that the economy of this oil- and gas-rich island nation had fallen into a recession with four straight quarters of economic decline. Both Imbert and Prime Minister Keith Rowley said Rambarran did not back up his claim with government data.

Rambarran was fired following other complaints, including shortages of hard currency in commercial banks to pay for imports following several operational changes at the Central Bank.

Former Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar appointed Rambarran three years ago amid criticism that he was chosen over officials with better qualifications. Former bank deputy governor Alvin Hilaire has been named the bank's new governor. He has worked at the Central Bank for 20 years and spent 11 years at the International Monetary Fund as a senior economist. —AP

## GULF BANK AWARDED 'BEST BRANCH EXPERIENCE' FROM ETHOS INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank announced yesterday that it has been awarded the 'Best Branch Experience' award from Ethos Integrated Solutions (Ethos) at the 11th Annual Customer Experience Benchmarking Index (CEBI) for retail banks and exchange houses throughout the GCC.

The CEBI award recognized the efforts of 12 GCC banks for their contribution to continuous customer experience improvement, and is considered to be the most extensive customer experience benchmarking study in the GCC.

Vikram Issar, General Manager - Consumer Banking at Gulf Bank, said: "We are proud to receive this prestigious award. It is a testament of our hard work and dedication in presenting our customers with the best service possible, as well as providing them with exceptional products and operating at the highest standards of quality and excellence. We look forward to maintaining our commitment towards our customers with energy and enthusiasm."

During the 2015 study, Ethos professional researchers conducted over 1,300 branch visits, 780 call centre calls and 520 website interactions, providing a total of 68,000 answers of what customers are experiencing in GCC banks. Researchers focused on real life scenarios of a prospective customer using the bank services, evaluating four key variables of service provision, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

In 2015, Gulf Bank won the 'Best Customer Service (Retail)', 'Best Car Loan', and 'Best Cash Management' awards from Banker Middle East Kuwait Product Awards 2015; 'Best Cash Management Bank in Kuwait' by The Asian Banker; 'Best Retail Bank in Kuwait' by The Asian Banker; 'Best Retail Bank in Kuwait' and

"Best Retail Customer Service Bank in Kuwait" from International Finance Magazine (IFM); "Best Commercial Bank" and "Best Innovation in Retail Banking" from International Banker; and "Best Customer Experience Overall Branch" from Ethos Integrated Solutions.



The Annual Bank Benchmarking Index by Ethos Integrated Solutions has matured into one of the most anticipated reports in the retail banking industry in the GCC.

Every year for the past 11 years it has been conducting a Bank Benchmarking Index which measures the Customer Experience of 23 banks in UAE across 3 major delivery channels. For this year, it has also included banks in all GCC countries thereby a total of 65 banks benchmarking in 2015.

The purpose of the study is to provide the GCC banking industry with service quality market intelligence. The GCC banking industry is highly competitive and a great customer experience can dramatically improve customer loyalty as well as serve as a magnet for new customers, making a customer service oriented culture a very powerful tool.

## BURGAN BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF YAWMI ACCOUNT DRAW

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the lucky winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners for the daily draws took home a cash-prize of KD 5,000 each, and they are:

1. EMAD NAJEEB WAHBA
2. NASER AJEEL MOHAMMAD SUDAN ALENEZI
3. WALEED KHALED NASER
4. ALI FARAJ ABDULLAH ALKHU-DAIRI

To further add to the anticipation of Yawmi account customers, Burgan Bank now offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, entitling one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account now offers Daily and quarterly Draws, the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their

account for 2 months prior to draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account, will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances to becoming a winner. The more customers deposit, the higher the chances they receive of winning.

For more information on opening a Yawmi account or about the new quarterly draw, customers are urged to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch and receive all the details, or simply call the bank's Call Center at 1804080 where customer service representatives will be delighted to assist with any questions on the Yawmi account or any of the bank's products and services.



**ZURICH:** A Swiss flag flutters beside the logo of UBS bank in Zurich, Switzerland. Switzerland's market supervisor has banned six former managers and traders at UBS AG from working in the sector for up to five years, punishment for their involvement in the manipulation of currency markets. The Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority said that the former heads of global foreign exchange trading and foreign exchange spot trading who were not identified were banned for four and five years respectively from senior management positions at institutions it oversees. —AP

# TOP THREE HOTTEST TRENDS FOR 2016

## HONOR VP CHRIS SUNBAIGONG LOOKS TO 2016

### 1. Living Online

2016 is the year when consumers in the Middle East will turn to digital more and more as they choose to live their everyday lives online - and why is that? The UAE and KSA come out as one of the highest internet usage penetration rates in the world. According to the Consumer Barometer with Google, more than seven in ten smartphone owners in the UAE and KSA would choose to complete a task digitally if possible and more than half of those in Saudi who don't own a smartphone prefer the same, highlighting the reality that the internet not only serves as a vital tool in people's everyday lives but that they literally live and breathe online. Nearly everything in real time is now available in the online world and so it is no surprise that this most convenient tool is now the major platform in which we manage our everyday lives. As Dubai is focusing on becoming a Smart City, this

will support the growth trend, and as cutting edge technology meets a growing consumer need and desire for more online, this is only going to get bigger and better in 2016.

### 2. E and M-Commerce

The Middle East is still the fastest growing e-commerce market in the world and as consumers are living online more and more, brands are quickly responding by providing online platforms that offer convenient, value for money shopping experiences, including honor which has just launched its new e-commerce platform www.honorarabia.com. In the UAE, the internet was used in 24% of recent purchase journeys; in Saudi, the number is higher, at 33% and with more consumers shopping online each year this number is predicted to triple in the next four years. Why are we seeing such a swell in this sector within the Middle East and particularly KSA and UAE? An explosive

combination of factors are driving this mega trend in the region - the Middle East is a youth dominated population, particularly Saudi where 75% are under 25 years old. These digital natives are driving e-commerce adoption as well as the growing awareness of its huge benefits. As more consumers have access to high quality smartphones through the growing factory to consumer business model, the region is experiencing the highest mobile penetration rate in the world. This is also aiding the drive toward m-commerce which is being used for up to 50% of online shopping. These exciting factors combined with excited consumers who are looking to get connected and explore the possibilities, indicate a huge incremental growth over the next year and beyond.

### 3. Netizen Power

As consumers live online, so do their thoughts, opinions and most important-

ly feedback. Communication has become far more transparent and the consumer has more power and influence than ever. 'Adapt or die' has never been truer in the digital age as the power of citizens on the net has meant that the brands that listen, react and adapt accordingly are more likely to succeed in producing products that suit consumer lifestyles and create seamless and enjoyable experiences. With six out of ten people more likely to make a purchase if the website has consumer reviews, the netizen power is ever present. Being present online allows brands to get closer to the end-user and react to feedback more efficiently and communicate directly in real-time. The effect of this power will certainly continue to grow over the next year across the digital world in all sectors, as online becomes even more important to people and their brands, as well as brands and their consumers.



## 2015 MARKET WINNERS, LOSERS

### TECH SOARS, OLD GUARD STUMBLES

**NEW YORK:** In a flat year overall for stocks, there was still plenty of excitement to be enjoyed - or endured - by 2015's biggest winners and losers. It was a year to make old guard companies shudder.

New media companies like Netflix, which rose 142 percent to notch the biggest gain in the S&P 500, became more valuable than established media companies like CBS. Amazon eviscerated traditional retailers like Macy's and Walmart. And energy and materials companies were flattened by weak demand at a time of abundant supplies. The biggest loser was Chesapeake Energy, down almost 80 percent in 2015. The Dow Jones industrial average, dominated by long-established companies in traditional industries, is down 1.2 percent for the year through Wednesday. The Nasdaq composite, with its heavy concentration of technology companies, is up a respectable 6.5 percent.

Here are the stories behind some of the stock markets biggest winners and losers for 2015.

#### ANOTHER STAR TURN FOR NETFLIX

Netflix has enjoyed top billing before: it was the biggest gainer in the S&P 500 in 2010 and 2013, and it more than tripled in value both years. But another big year in 2015 pushed the company's value past established media rivals like CBS and made it about the same as Time Warner. The streaming entertainment service had 69 million subscribers at the end of the third quarter, and almost a quarter of those signed up in the last year.

Netflix also continued to win fans for shows like "Orange is the New Black" and "Narcos." The company says its service will be available in 200 countries by the end of the year.

#### AMAZONIAN PROPORTIONS

E-commerce giant Amazon celebrated its 20th anniversary with results that sent investors into a buying frenzy. Amazon was the second biggest gainer in the S&P 500 for the year, up 114 percent through Wednesday. The company is on track to report more than \$100 billion in revenue in 2015 and it has started to turn in higher profits more frequently despite a loss in the first quarter.

Its stock surge pushed the company's market value past that of longtime competitor Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart stock fell 29 percent in 2015, which made this Wal-Mart's worst year since 1974, when it had fewer than 100 stores. Wal-Mart was the Dow's biggest loser. "This year seemed to mark an inflection point for Amazon," wrote Christine Short, an analyst at Estimize, who said Amazon was "almost solely responsible for the downfall of big box giant Wal-Mart."

Macy's and Staples also were among the 20 biggest losers as fewer shoppers trekked to stores and bought more goods online instead. Amazon is now in a battle with the other high-flying stock of 2015: Amazon and Netflix are rivals in creating original entertainment for subscribers.

This year the two snagged almost 50 Primetime Emmy nominations between them. Netflix shows received far more nominations but Amazon's shows won five Emmys to Netflix's four.

#### WARCRAFT GETS A CANDY CRUSH

The third biggest gainer in the S&P 500 was Activision Blizzard, the video game maker behind "Call of Duty" and "World of Warcraft." It rose 93 percent as it moved to expand into the sweeter side of games. In November the company agreed to buy King Entertainment, the maker of the smartphone hit "Candy Crush Saga," to strengthen its mobile games business. It is also working on a "World of Warcraft" movie and a TV show adapted from its kid-focused "Skylanders" game.

The rest of the top ten winners in the index were a mix of companies representing several industries, including the video graphics chip maker NVIDIA, the payments processor Total System

Services, the website domain name company VeriSign, and Spam maker Hormel Foods. First Solar also made the top 10, getting a major boost when Congress extended tax breaks for solar installations in December.

#### THE BIGGEST LOSERS

Six of the 10 biggest losers in the S&P 500 were energy companies, led by Chesapeake Energy, Southwestern Energy and Consol Energy. All three are dependent on the price of natural gas and all fell between 75 percent and 80 percent this year. Nine energy companies in the index lost at least half their value.

A big reason: Mother Nature. An extraordinarily warm fall and early winter in the US is slashing demand for heating, and half the nation uses natural gas to heat their homes. Natural gas supplies were already high coming into the winter. That combined with low demand pushed natural gas prices to their lowest levels since 1999 in mid-December.

The rout in crude oil prices that began in mid-2014 deepened in 2015, pulling down the value of oil company shares and the performance of the overall stock market. All this pain for energy companies is good for consumers, who are now enjoying low prices for gasoline and shrinking heating bills.

There were four non-energy losers in the S&P's bottom 10.

● Mining company Freeport-McMoRan fell 68 percent, hurt by slowing economic growth in China that reduced demand for raw materials. Watchmaker Fossil Group lost nearly two-thirds of its value as fitness trackers grew more popular and the Apple Watch was launched.

● Chipmaker Micron Technology fell 59 percent as consumers continued to turn away from personal computers. Casino operator Wynn Resorts fell 54 percent because a corruption crackdown in China has dampened the enthusiasm of high-rolling gamblers in Macau, an important location for Wynn. —AP

## PHISHING MESSAGES DELIVER CHAOS TO CONSUMERS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

**DUBAI:** Delivery notifications could dampen the festive mood this holiday as cybercriminals exploit users' online shopping sprees with phishing messages masquerading as genuine emails from big name delivery brands. Research from Kaspersky Lab finds that DHL and FedEx users are being heavily targeted by scammers during the holiday period.

The fraudsters aim is clear: to trick unwitting users to either download a malicious program or enter their confidential data on a phishing site. In one example identified by Kaspersky Lab, an email suggests that the customer's shipment is at a DHL office but that the recipient needs to follow a link within 48 hours and enter details on the tracking page; otherwise it will be returned to the sender.

However, instead of leading to a DHL site the link takes the user to a phishing page made to look like DHL, where they are prompted to type in their personal information. What

makes this scam more convincing and seemingly legitimate to the user is that they are then re-directed to the official DHL website once their details have been gleaned by the scammer. Similar messages have been sent in the name of FedEx, where the victim is directed to a phishing site to enter their account credentials.

"Whilst there is nothing new about these types of scams, they are still proving a successful way for cybercriminals to access user accounts as efforts to dupe unsuspecting victims become more convincing. Amid the chaos and shopping frenzy of the holidays, Internet shoppers receive a vast number of emails from retailers about their purchases. This makes them less likely to spot or scrutinize suspicious emails, increasing the risk of unwittingly giving away their details and access to their account which could ultimately result in monetary theft or worse," comments Andrey Kostin Senior Web

Content Analyst at Kaspersky Lab.

To ensure you don't fall foul of phishing messages, Kaspersky Lab advises Internet users to remain attentive and vigilant, especially during the holiday period when the risk increases. Never click directly on links in email messages but manually type and visit the URL of the site to ensure the request is genuine. If a page prompts you to enter confidential data, always check the URL in the address bar first and if anything looks suspicious, think twice before entering your details.

To add an additional layer of security and peace of mind, ensure your security software is up to date and includes an anti-phishing tool, such as one in Kaspersky Internet Security - multi-device, to help keep your personal details safe and your money secure, to ensure you have a happy holiday.

Read more about holiday phishing scams on Securelist.com.

## PALANTIR RAISES \$880M IN NEW FUNDING ROUND

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Secretive software company Palantir Technologies raised nearly \$880 million in a new funding round, according to a regulatory filing available. The investment round came with a valuation of approximately \$20 billion, according to US media reports.

The California company specializes in data analysis and counts among early investors an In-Q-Tel venture capital firm that focuses on "innovative technology solutions to support the missions of the Central Intelligence Agency and broader US Intelligence Community."

The privately held firm's services are used for financial fraud investigations as well as in counterterrorism efforts. A form filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission indicated the funding round was launched in July but did not disclose the identities of the eight investors taking part.

The amount of money raised was reported to be \$879,829 million. Palantir, based in the Silicon Valley city of Palo Alto, did not respond to an AFP request for comment.

The reported valuation puts Palantir behind only ride-sharing firm Uber and lodging service Airbnb in the herd of 'unicorn' privately-funded startups valued at more than a billion dollars based on investment rounds. —AFP



A North Carolina Air National Guard C-130 cargo plane fitted with the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System, a device for deploying fire retardant against wildfires, is prepared for another training flight at the Cheyenne airport. Colorado's investment in a new wildfire prediction system is on track to be tested in 2016. Researchers say the technology has the potential to make firefighters safer. That's because it combines two models: One that predicts weather and another that predicts fire. —AP

## FACEBOOK TO ENABLE VIEWING OF APPLE'S ANIMATED PHOTOS

**NEW YORK:** The latest iPhones come with the ability to turn still images into video - just like magic - but sharing options had been limited to other Apple apps.

That's changing as Facebook, one of the leading forums for photo sharing, adds Apple's Live Photos feature to Facebook's iPhone and iPad app. Facebook will start offering it Monday to a limited

number of users initially, with a broader rollout planned in the coming weeks. Facebook's support follows a similar move by Yahoo's Tumblr service.

With Live Photos on the iPhone 6s and 6s Plus, every still shot is accompanied by a three-second video, with sound. For instance, you can snap a shot of your kid blowing out birthday candles - and get video showing the flame going out as

everyone sings "Happy Birthday."

The phone automatically records video in the background when the camera app is open. The recording is immediately discarded if you do nothing. When you snap a shot, the phone saves a second and a half of video leading to that shot and continues recording until you get three seconds in all.

Why not just take video? You might not know ahead of time when you'll encounter a scene lending itself to video. With Live Photos, you always get the video option - unless you turn the feature off.

But sharing had been limited to certain Apple apps - such as the texting app Messages, but not Mail. With tools Apple is making available to third parties, sharing can now be done through Facebook and Tumblr, too. Your friend merely needs to tap and hold the photo to watch the image animate. The iPhone 6s models are required for creating Live Photos, but viewing can also be done on older iPhones and iPads with the latest operating system. On Android and Web browsers, you get only the still images.

Besides Facebook and Tumblr, Getty Images is also offering a selection of Live Photos through its app. It's a curated selection, though, rather than a mechanism for sharing photos with friends. —AP



## MOM CONTINUES LEGAL FIGHT TO RESCIND DAUGHTER'S DEATH RULING

**SAN FRANCISCO:** A Northern California mother's two-year quest to have her brain-dead daughter declared legally alive moved to federal court Wednesday after attempts to secure an order from a state judge ended in failure. Lawyers for the mother of 13-year-old Jahi McMath filed a lawsuit in San Francisco federal court asking that the girl be declared alive after state courts have refused to rescind the teen's death certificate. McMath suffered cardiac arrest in December 2013 after a routine operation to remove her tonsils to cure her sleep apnea. Doctors say she suffered irreversible brain damage from lack of oxygen and declared her brain dead.

The Alameda County coroner in Oakland, California, signed Jahi McMath's death certificate a few weeks later, but McMath's family sought a state court ruling declaring the teen is still alive. A state court judge earlier this year refused the family's request and upheld the death certificate after a respected Stanford University neurologist and two other medical experts concluded the girl was dead. Jahi's family is now asking a federal judge to declare Jahi alive and invalidate the death certificate. If that happens, insurance companies will be required to pay for her medical treatment, says lawyer Chris Dolan, who represents Jahi's family.

Dolan says insurance companies are

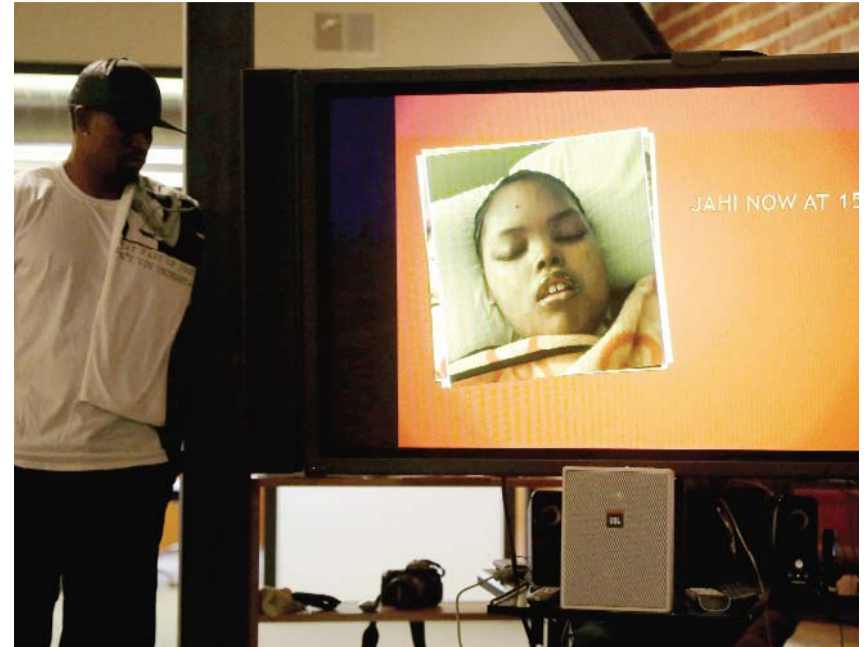


**SAN FRANCISCO:** Nailah Winkfield, left, the mother of Jahi McMath, wipes a tear while speaking on a video conference next to attorney Christopher Dolan at a news conference in San Francisco. — AP photos

paying for Jahi's nursing care and around-the-clock treatment with a ventilator in New Jersey, the only state in the country that requires medical treatment of patients like McMath who are declared dead but show minimal brain

function. McMath's family, led by her mother Nailah Winkfield, want a federal court to invalidate the death certificate so they can care for her in their home in Oakland.

"I want her to have the same rights as



**SAN FRANCISCO:** A recent photo of Jahi McMath is shown on a video screen next to her uncle Timothy Whisenton at a news conference.

any other disabled kid," Winkfield said. McMath's mother says her daughter show some signs of life, including the twitching of fingers and toes. Medical experts said those movements could be spasms and reflexes commonly seen in corpses. They say McMath shows hardly

any brain activity and is clinically dead. But her mother isn't ready to give up. Winfield said she recently sold her Oakland home and is living off those rapidly dwindling proceeds. "I won't give up on Jahi, because I'm her mother," Winkfield said. — AP



**BUCHAREST, Romania:** Children salute the public after performing during a Christmas party for children affected by the Down Syndrome, organized by the Angels Down Friends association in Bucharest, Romania. — AP photos

## EVENT CHALLENGES DOWN SYNDROME STIGMA IN ROMANIA

'A STEP TO CHANGE MENTALITIES, ATTITUDES, PRECONCEIVED IDEAS'

**BUCHAREST, Romania:** Dozens of children with Down syndrome dressed in Romanian folk costumes and sang carols to celebrate Christmas in an event meant to banish prejudices and change attitudes. Angels Down Friends, founded in 2013 by the parents of a child with Down syndrome, organized the event to encourage parents and

with the long-term goal of more fully integrating children with Down syndrome into society.

There is a stigma attached to Down syndrome in Romania, combined with a lack of facilities. Most women who discover that their unborn babies are at risk of developing Down, or other disabilities, choose to have abortions, said Dr

Adrian Toma, an obstetrician with 20 years of experience. "This is one step to change mentalities, attitudes, preconceived ideas," the association said in a statement. "We hope to give these wonderful children a chance, and develop programs, advice, recuperation and integration."

Last week, more than 50 children

ages 1 to 14, together with their brothers and sisters, dressed in traditional costumes, recited poems and sung carols at a Bucharest high school. Government statistics say 30,000 people have Down syndrome in Romania, but non-governmental groups such as Angels Down Friends believe there are as many as 50,000. — AP



**BUCHAREST, Romania:** Eight year-old Maia, left, hugs David, during a Christmas party for children.



**BUCHAREST, Romania:** David laughs as he receives presents from a man dressed as Santa Claus during a Christmas party.

## NEW EQUIPMENT RULES TIED TO FEWER INJURIES FOR WORLD CUP SKIERS

**NEW YORK:** New restrictions on "aggressive" design for Alpine skis appear to have reduced injuries among World Cup skiers in recent years, according to a new study. The International Ski Federation Alpine Skiing World Cup is the top international circuit of Alpine skiing competitions. Starting with the 2012-2013 season, organizers restricted deeply-curved ski designs associated with better performance in some technical competitions but also tied to knee injuries.

About one-third of World Cup ski racers are injured during the five-month winter season, Dr Lars Nordsetten and colleagues at the Oslo Sports Trauma Research Center and Oslo University Hospital in Norway write in the British Journal of Sports Medicine. The most common injury is to the knee, especially the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL), the authors note. To see if the new regulations had any impact on injuries, the study team interviewed skiers and coaches and analyzed rates and types of injuries in the six World Cup seasons before the new rules took effect and in the three seasons afterward. They also analyzed International Ski Federation data for those years on the number of started runs during

World Cup, World Skiing Championship and Olympic Winter Games competitions for each athlete.

### More of ski time

During the 9-year period there were a total of 794 injuries (314 among female skiers and 480 among males). Almost all, 84 percent, were "time-loss" injuries, meaning skiers had to miss at least a day of competition because of the injury. More than a third of skiers suffered an injury that caused them to miss a month or more of ski time. Injury rates decreased significantly after the new rules went into effect. The rate of injuries per 100 athletes - a measure of risk across the whole season - fell by 26 percent, and the rate of injuries per 1,000 ski runs - a measure of risk during competitions - fell 24 percent, according to the study. Overall, skiers had twice as many injuries to the lower body versus the upper body. But after the new rules took effect, upper body injuries fell by 44 percent while lower-body injury rates changed very little.

There was no difference in rates of severe injuries, but there was a drop in time-loss injuries. The researchers speculate that the change in upper body

injuries was due to fewer falls, which is also supported by an increase in the number of completed runs after the new rules took effect. The study also found that most of the decrease in injuries was seen among men, but that might simply be a result of having fewer women in the competitions, so a change in risk was not as readily apparent for females. There were 1058 females and 1344 males, Nordsetten noted in an email to Reuters Health. To see a significant reduction for women, he explained, the study would have needed to include two to three times more female athletes.

The authors also caution that because the total number of athletes in the study was small, it's hard to interpret the absence of a change in knee injuries after the new rules. Continued monitoring of injury rates during World Cup seasons is needed to determine the effect of the new regulations on knee and ACL injuries, they write. The equipment restrictions have not yet been implemented in other types of ski competitions, Nordsetten noted. "For now, these regulations have only been implemented at the World Cup level," he said. — AP

## UNHAPPINESS MAY LEAD TO BAD CHOICES, BUT IT PROBABLY WON'T KILL YOU

**NEW YORK:** Even though poor health is a known cause of unhappiness, and bad lifestyle choices often follow bad moods, misery alone probably won't kill you, a UK study suggests. "We found that after accounting for poor health and other lifestyle choices, being happier doesn't make you live longer, and being stressed doesn't increase your risk of death," lead study author Bette Liu of the University of New South Wales said by email.

To explore the connection between unhappiness and the likelihood of dying, Liu and her colleagues looked at data on more than 700,000 middle-aged women collected over more than a decade. At the start, when the women were around 59 years old, 17 percent reported being unhappy, and this was more likely in women who were in poor health. During the next ten years, about 31,500 women died, representing about 4 percent of the study population.

After researchers adjusted for a host of factors independently linked to mortality - like hypertension, diabetes, smoking, drinking, asthma, arthritis, depression and anxiety - mere unhappiness wasn't associated with increased mortality from all causes, or specifically from cancer or heart disease. The data was collected from 1996 to 2001. When they joined the study, and again every 3 to 5 years, women completed questionnaires asking about social and demographic factors, lifestyle choices and health.

At the start of the study, 39 percent said they were happy most of the time, and another 43 percent described themselves as usually happy. Researchers counted as "unhappy" the 16 percent of women who were happy only sometimes and the 1 percent who said this was a rare occurrence.

### Romantic relationships

Over time, few women changed their assessment of their own happiness levels, the researchers report in *The Lancet*. Generally, the happy women in the study were older, less likely to have advanced degrees and more likely to be nonsmokers as well as regular exercisers with steady romantic relationships who routinely participated in religious or other group activities. These happy women were also more likely to get eight hours of sleep each night. In contrast, the unhappy women were more likely to report only fair or poor general health and to be in treatment for depression or anxiety, the study found.

Women were 20 percent more likely to die during the study if they reported being in fair or poor health. There is no perfect way to measure happiness, the authors concede. Unhappiness might, however, lead people to do things known to hasten death like drink too much or exercise too little, they speculate. "Previous reports of reduced mortality associated with happiness could be due to the increased mortality of people who are unhappy because of their poor health," the study team points out.

It's also important to note that death isn't the only outcome that matters when assessing the benefits of happiness, noted Philippe Barreto a researcher at the University Hospital of Toulouse in France who wrote an accompanying editorial. Even if happiness won't impact life expectancy, it will probably be associated with quality of life, Barreto said by email. "In other words, even if happiness does not add years to life, it probably adds life to years," Barreto said. — Reuters

## NO NEED TO AVOID 'HAPPY BABY POSE' IN PRENATAL YOGA?

**NEW YORK:** Even though women are often advised to steer clear of certain yoga poses late in pregnancy, many of these moves might not be a problem for women or their babies, a small US study suggests. Yoga can have many benefits during pregnancy, including helping women maintain flexibility and muscle tone and develop breathing techniques that may be useful during labor. But late in pregnancy women are often warned against poses that require them to lie on their backs, such as "happy baby pose" or "corpse pose," and inversions such as "downward facing dog" that might reduce circulation to the fetus and contribute to a spike in fetal heart rate.

To see how much caution might be warranted, researchers monitored fetal heart rate while a group of 25 healthy women in the final weeks of pregnancy tried 26 common yoga poses. Fetal heart rate remained normal through all of the poses, and none of the women reported decreased fetal movement, contractions, fluid leakage or vaginal bleeding in the 24 hours after their yoga sessions, researchers report in the *Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*.

"Though this is a preliminary study, I found there were no adverse changes in maternal or fetal wellbeing in the 26 studied poses," said lead author Rachael Polis, who conducted the research at Jersey Shore University Medical Center and is currently with Kosair Children's Hospital Gynecology Specialists in Louisville, Kentucky. "Postures suspected to be contraindicated - eg downward facing dog, child's pose, happy baby and corpse pose - were also well tolerated," Polis added by email.

None of the women in the study had a history of hypertension or other complications during pregnancy, and none of them had any medical conditions that required them to avoid exercise. The women were near the end of their third trimester, at about 35 to 37 weeks pregnant. Ten of the 25 participants did yoga regularly, while eight were familiar with yoga and seven had never done it before.

Each woman completed a one-on-one yoga session with a certified yoga instructor,

with an obstetrician and a medical resident in the room. They had stress tests before going through the poses and again afterward. Given the size of their bellies, they didn't do any yoga poses lying on their stomachs. They also avoided complete inverted poses such as hand stands or head stands. To avoid falls or other injuries, they could modify poses by using blocks, chairs or the wall for support.

### Healthy weight

Beyond the small size of the study, other limitations include yoga sessions that might not match the duration or intensity of a typical community yoga class, the authors concede. The women in the study were typically of a normal healthy weight, too, while more than half of pregnant women tend to be overweight or obese.

It's also possible that women might encounter poses not covered by this experiment that could cause problems during pregnancy, noted Kathryn Curtis, a researcher at York University in Toronto who wasn't involved in the study. "I encourage pregnant women to seek out studios that offer specialized prenatal yoga classes that are taught by teachers who have prenatal yoga training," Curtis said by email.

"Women should practice hatha based, restorative practices with breath awareness components, rather than heated or strength focused practices, for safety precautions for both the mother and baby," Curtis added. In a separate study reported in the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 52 pregnant women who had never tried yoga were randomly assigned to either participate in a one-time, one-hour yoga class, or to attend a one-time, one-hour PowerPoint presentation about exercise, nutrition, and obesity in pregnancy. In this study too, there was no significant change in fetal blood flow immediately after the moms did yoga, according to Dr Shilpa Babbar of the University of Missouri Kansas City and colleagues. "Yoga can be recommended for low risk women to begin during pregnancy," Babbar's team concluded. — AP



**AL-SAYER MEDICAL LAUNCHES DENTAL NERVE TREATMENT SYSTEM 'TF ADAPTIVE' FROM SYBRONENDO**

**KUWAIT:** Al-Sayer Medical, one of Al-Sayer Group Holding Companies, the exclusive and sole agent of SybronEndo a world leading dental supplier has launched TF ADAPTIVE, the latest dental nerve treatment system in the world, in a major science conference held at Jumeirah Hotel. Dr Yasser Al-Assousi, dental nerve Consultant, delivered a lecture and supervised the workshop which was held during the event.

The lecture was highly appreciated by attending dentists from both private and government sectors as a most successful event, introducing latest dental nerve treatment products of high quality from a world dental leading manufacturer SybroEndo, and providing dentists with

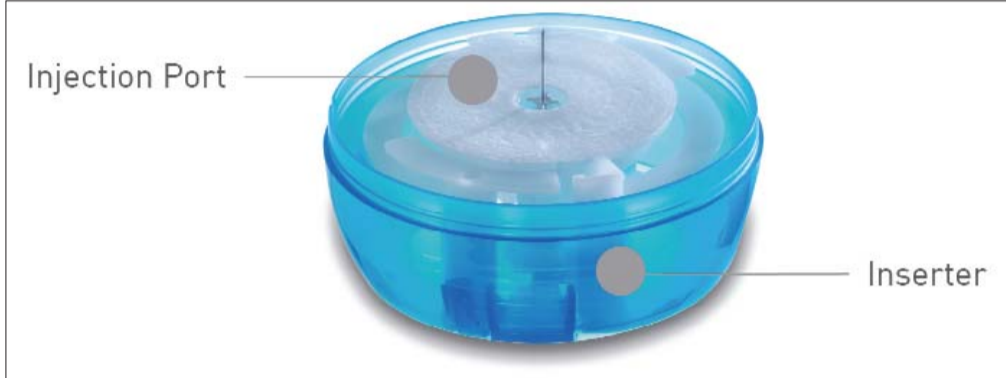
the opportunity to test and use the new system and latest dental nerve treatment platforms.

Dr Hossam Affy GM Al-Sayer Medical commented on this event: "We are proud to introduce such revolutionary unique TF ADAPTIVE System for treatment of dental nerve with its unique safety features preventing any dental complica-

tions during the treatment and filling process, and it's convenient and easy use, time saving and reasonable cost compared with other systems.

Al-Sayer Medical following in the footsteps of Al-Sayer Group Holding is most keen and committed to offer latest and most advanced medical products for the Kuwaiti market of highest quality, with

such exclusive representation of leading world principals. Our organization and sponsorship of such scientific events and workshops reflects our solid commitment to provide highest levels of customer care and the relentless efforts of ministry of health, and its steady commitment to promote and advance its services to both citizens and expats in Kuwait.



**NEEDLES MAKE TOP TEN OF KUWAIT'S RESIDENTS BIGGEST FEARS LIST**

**KUWAIT:** Needles top the list of Kuwait residents' biggest fears according to a recent nationwide survey where residents were asked to rank things people are commonly afraid of. Respondents listed having injections in sixth place behind a fear of snakes, sharks, heights, public speaking and spiders.

The survey also revealed that one-third of respondents said they would rather skydive from a plane if it meant being able to avoid needles every day, with over a quarter saying they would rather handle a python. Unfortunately, while most people only have

to brave the occasional needle throughout their lifetime it's a different story for the 23% of Kuwait's residents living with diabetes, many of whom will be faced with having to inject themselves up to four times per day. Pediatric Endocrinologist, Dr Fahad Al-Jasser from Amiri Hospital and Dasman Diabetes Institute said the survey results were not surprising and having to self-inject every day was an ordeal for many people with diabetes. "Taking injections before each meal can be a psychological and physical burden due to the associated pain. Missing an insulin dose

should not be an option when it comes to type one patients with diabetes. Adolescents sometimes skip a dose of insulin because they can't face another injection - and this can obviously have serious health consequences," Dr Fahad said.

"Using an injection aid may decrease the risk of future injection problems especially for younger patients and facilitate the use of multiple daily injections, which may contribute to a decreased risk of long-term complications. I would encourage all diabetics who face the burden of multiple daily injections to talk with their healthcare professional to seek advice on alternative solutions" he said.

The survey was commissioned by Medtronic, the global leader in medical technology, to coincide with its newly introduced injection aid, enabling patients to reduce injections directly to their skin from 120 times in a typical month, to only once every three days. Al-Jahra Hospital, Ministry of Health, Specialist Endocrinologist, Dr Ayed El-Enezy said Medtronic's injection aid solution is the i-Port Advance, a wearable technology used by people living with diabetes on injection therapy that provides a safe, effective, and easy way for patients to administer insulin.

"i-Port, which stands for injection port is a three-day-wearable device that people with diabetes inject into instead of injecting directly into the skin," he said. "i-Port Advance, which was released in the Kuwait in May means people with insulin-dependent diabetes may no longer have to suffer multiple skin punctures every day.

"With nearly half of all patients on daily injection therapy reporting bruising and more than one third reporting pain, the device is expected to be a game-changer in the treatment of diabetes. The i-Port will also help relieve those who experience anxiety from injecting their diabetes medications. "In fact, a prospective study, which involved 100 nurses and 100 patients in a community hospital revealed that the i-Port Advance decreased anxiety of needles in patients by 100%." Healthcare professionals and people with diabetes interested in learning more about the i-Port Advance can visit [www.medtronic-diabetes-mena.com](http://www.medtronic-diabetes-mena.com).

**COLOMBIA HOPING TO 'REPOPULATE THE SKIES' WITH CONDORS**

**MEDELLON, Colombia:** A pair of Chilean condors have been brought to a zoo in Medellin as part of an effort to reintroduce the majestic birds in Colombia, where they have become all but extinct. "Condors are a very endangered species," said Sandra Correa, director the Santa Fe Zoo in Medellin, who said the goal is to mate the birds to help replenish the population in Colombia, where only about 100 condors remain. Ornithologists from Chile and the United States since 2012 have been helping prepare for the arrival of the birds, providing Colombian keepers in conservation, breeding, artificial incubation and general care for the birds while in captivity.

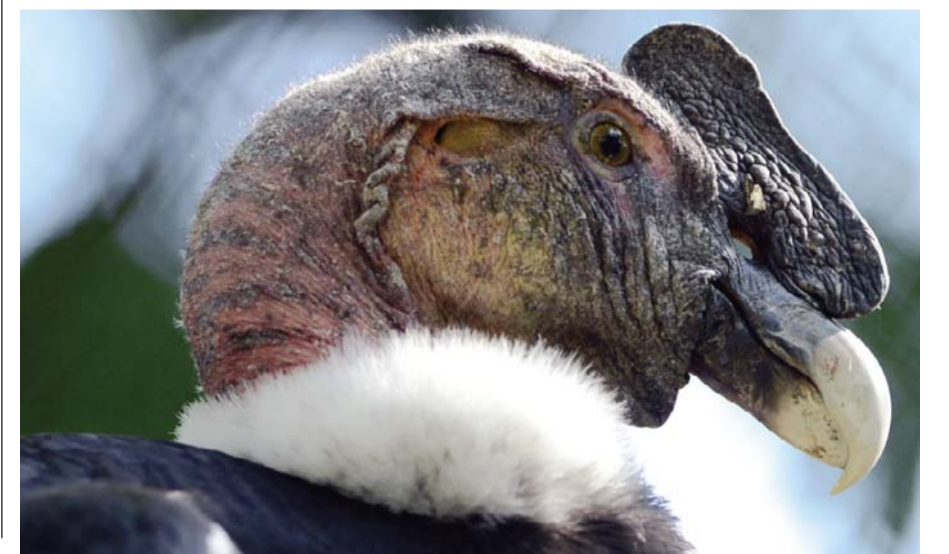
In addition to the condors in Medellin, two

other pairs have been taken to nature preserves in Colombia-in the coastal city of Cartagena and outside the capital of Bogota. The Andean condor, the world's largest non seabird, is native to Bolivia, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador.

The repopulation plan-dubbed the National Condor Breeding Program-which receives support from Colombia's Environment Ministry-aims to eventually release fledglings into the wild. But first, the complicated mating process has to take place. "Condors lay one egg per year," Correa explained. "There must be chemistry between the two birds before they mate, because they are monogamous," she said. "The idea is to repopulate the skies of Colombia with these guys," Correa said. — AFP



**ANTIOQUIA, Colombia:** This condor was brought to the Santa Fe zoo in Medellin, in the department of Antioquia. — AFP photos



**SOME CARDIAC ARREST VICTIMS IGNORE WARNING SYMPTOMS**

**WASHINGTON:** Sudden cardiac arrest may not always be so sudden: New research suggests a lot of people may ignore potentially life-saving warning signs hours, days, even a few weeks before they collapse. Cardiac arrest claims about 350,000 US lives a year. It's not a heart attack but worse: The heart abruptly stops beating, its electrical activity knocked out of rhythm. CPR can buy critical time, but so few patients survive that it's hard been to tell if the long-time medical belief is correct that it's a strike with little or no advance warning.

An unusual study that has closely tracked sudden cardiac arrest in Portland, Oregon, for over a decade got around that roadblock, using interviews with witnesses, family and friends after patients collapse and tracking down their medical records. About half of middle-aged patients for whom symptom information could be found had experienced warning signs, mostly chest pain or shortness of breath, in the month before suffering a cardiac arrest, researchers reported Monday. The research offers the possibility of one day preventing some cardiac arrests if doctors could figure out how to find and treat the people most at risk. "By the time the 911 call is made, it's much too late for at least 90 percent of people," said Dr. Sumeet Chugh of the Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute

in Los Angeles, who led the study reported in Annals of Internal Medicine. "There's this window of opportunity that we really didn't know existed."

Importantly, a fraction of patients considered their symptoms bad enough to call 911 before they collapsed, and they were most likely to survive. That's a reminder to the public not to ignore possible signs of heart trouble in hopes they're just indigestion, said University of Pittsburgh emergency medicine specialist Dr Clifton Callaway, who wasn't involved in Monday's study but praised it.

"Chest pain, shortness of breath - those are things you should come in the middle of the night to the emergency department and get checked out," said Callaway, who chairs the American Heart Association's emergency care committee. "We strongly recommend you don't try to ride it out at home." Previous heart attacks, coronary heart disease, and certain inherited disorders that affect heartbeat all can increase the risk of sudden cardiac arrest. People known to be at high risk may receive an implanted defibrillator to shock the heart back into rhythm. But cardiac arrest is such a public health problem that the Institute of Medicine last summer urged a national campaign to teach CPR, so more bystanders know how to help. — AP

**CLINIC PAGE**

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**Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem**  
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال  
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

**Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368**



## GUST PARTICIPATES IN A WORLDWIDE PROGRAMMING COMPETITION



**G**ulf University for Science and Technology's (GUST) Computer Science Department invited students and faculty last week, to participate for the first time in the Hour of Code worldwide programming competition to engage students and faculty, and raise awareness about the growing Computer Science program at the university. The event is part of the global competition organized by code.org, which took place in state of the art computer labs on campus.

The top three participants from GUST were awarded certificates and prizes by the CS Department. Winners of the student division

were: Sumana Abbas, Haya AlKhaled, and Ebrahim Buhendi, while the faculty and staff division winners were: Anwar AlZayer, Professor Ali Ansari, and Aisha Seixas.

Dr Taher Ali, Head of the Computer Science Department at GUST, said, "It is important for us to participate in this event, to give our students and faculty a look into the programming world. Computer Science impacts every industry, and we are proud to continuously strengthen our program, curriculum and to stay up-to-date with the latest worldwide developments." GUST's Computer Science program was the first in Kuwait to be accredited by international body ABET, in 2014.

The tutorial and competition session introduced the basics of computer programming for those with no prior knowledge and consisted of a series of activities and games, which ended with a competition utilizing what they learned in the tutorial. The entries were then submitted to code.org for a full roundup of participants from all over the world. Millions of people from over 180 countries participated in the movement. Code.org is a non-profit organization that aims to encourage people, particularly school students in the United States, to learn computer science as it helps nurture problem-solving skills, logic, and creativity.

## KALABHAVAN KUWAIT CELEBRATES ANNUAL DAY



**K**alabhavan Kuwait Annual Day - "Kalabhavan Fest'15" was celebrated in the Carmel School Auditorium on December 18. The celebration and was inaugurated by Mohammad Abdulla Abbas - Asst. manager of PAAET, in the presence of the Director of Kalabhavan R Gopakumar, felicitated by Dr Rashed Al Shatti and Ahmed Abdul Rahim Al-Kandari. Welcome speech was delivered by Sreeja Pillai. Josen P Joseph delivered the vote of thanks. More than 300 students of Kalabhavan showcased their talents through classical and light music, instrumental recitals, Indian and

western performing arts, and an art exhibition where the drawings and paintings of our students were exhibited. The show received wide acclaim and appreciation. Kalabhavan brings you the spirit of Indian culture, the tempo of Indian and western performing arts and the esoteric sounds of Indian and western musical instruments. The photo shows Kalabhavan Fest '15 being inaugurated by Mohammad Abdulla Abbas - Asst manager of PAAET, in the presence of the Director of Kalabhavan R Gopakumar, Dr Rashed Al Shatti and Ahmed Abdul Rahim Al-Kandari.

## MILLENNIUM HOTEL WELCOMES NEW FOOD & BEVERAGE DIRECTOR BARBARA FERNANDEZ

**M**illennium Hotel & Convention Centre Kuwait has announced the recruitment of seasoned industry figure, Barbara Fernandez, to oversee its fledgling Food & Beverage Department.

A native of Spain and fluent in four languages, Ms Fernandez brings with her an impressive 21-year resume characterized by extensive luxury hotel banqueting experience in Western Europe, North Africa and the GCC. She will play a key role in developing Millennium Hotel & Convention Centre Kuwait's blossoming Food & Beverage Department, which began attracting attention immediately following the hotel's opening earlier this year. Ms Fernandez began her career in hospitali-

ty in 1995 as Head Waiter at Michelin Star-recipient 'Restaurant Casa Solla' in Spain, which was followed by successive positions at 4 and 5-star hotels in the United Kingdom and France. In 2004, she ventured outside of Europe to join Intercontinental Muscat IH Group in Oman as Banquet and Conference Groups Manager. From there, she held Food and Beverage Management roles at 5-star properties in France, Spain and Colombia between 2006 and 2012. Afterwards, Ms Fernandez worked as Executive Assistant Manager at F&B Hotel Las Americas Resort in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia where she honed her broader strategic management skills before taking up a post at Orynx Rotana in Doha, Qatar as Food and

Beverage Director in 2013.

"I am delighted to take up this position at Millennium Hotel & Convention Centre Kuwait, a destination that I aim to ensure reaches its full potential as the premier dining & banqueting destination amongst 5-star hotels," said Ms Fernandez.

Mr Dani Saleh, Area General Manager of Millennium & Copthorne Hotels Kuwait, extended his warm welcome: "It brings me great pleasure to welcome Barbara, such a distinguished industry figure, to the Millennium & Convention Centre Kuwait. I very much look forward to her contribution towards the success of our Food & Beverage Department." Millennium Hotel & Convention Centre

Kuwait currently operates a restaurant and cafe as well as a five-star banqueting service to compliment the hotel's convention centre, the largest in Kuwait. Its restaurant, Lamar International Restaurant, is a prestigious destination that is quickly building a reputation for its ultra-modern decor, exciting live cooking stations and attractive selection of international cuisine throughout the day. Separately, the Library Cafe has created a unique atmosphere where guests may enjoy any of one the books on display while choosing from an array of beverages & light food. Moreover, it was recently revealed that a seafood restaurant is due to open its doors at the hotel in early 2016.



## ICAI HOSTS SEMINAR ON 'IFRS 15 - REVENUE FROM CONTRACTS WITH CUSTOMERS'

**T**he Kuwait Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) organized a Seminar on 14 December 2015 on the topic of "IFRS 15 - Revenue from Contracts with Customers" at the Holiday Inn Downtown. CA S Chandrasekaran, Partner, Assurance at RSM Al Bazie & Co, Kuwait was the main speaker at the event. CA Noel Cherian, Chairman of CPE Committee of the ICAI Kuwait Chapter, welcomed the members and introduced the speaker.

Chandrasekaran delivered an insightful session on the new International Financial Reporting Standard, IFRS 15 on Revenue from Contracts with Customers. The speaker provided insight about the requirements as per the new IFRS and a comparison with the existing accounting standards and interpretations relating to revenue recognition. The speaker also explained that one of the main purposes of the new IFRS 15 is to minimize differences between IFRS and US GAAP in relation

to revenue recognition and its accounting treatment.

CA. Hormuzda Davar, Chairman of the ICAI Kuwait Chapter extended the vote of thanks, on behalf of the Kuwait Chapter of the ICAI, to the speaker, sponsors and all those who assisted in putting together and publicizing the event. As a token of appreciation, a memento was presented to the speaker by CA Hormuzda Davar, Chairman of the Chapter. The session was followed by a sumptuous buffet dinner.

### Greetings



**D**aughters are like the sunlight that reflects on the raindrops of our lives to make beautiful rainbows. Belated birthday greetings to Neha Mathur who celebrated her birthday on December 25. From Suresh Mathur and Jisha Suresh.



The Children World Bilingual Nursery School celebrated the Prophet's (PBUH) Birthday and New Year with a ceremony organized at a park in Zahraa recently.



## FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON KUWAIT CELEBRATES 12TH ANNIVERSARY

Since 2003, every December the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait celebrates its anniversary. The event sparks a new candle of its continuous success story since its inauguration when it launched its brand name in Kuwait for the first time adjacent to the Sheraton Kuwait, the first hotel holding the Sheraton brand outside the United States of America. Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait rejoices and celebrates its 12 years in the market especially after its emergence from a transformative and extensive expansion in 2013. The brand offers a new feel with the desire to exceed and maintain all guests' expectations providing the most attentive service and hospitality which throughout the years has made it to be the paramount choice of businessmen, companies and governmental agencies and a major gateway to the world of business.

The Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait is situated in the heart of Kuwait City, the center of



Fahed Abushaar

the lively business district; close to prominent commercial hubs, governmental facilities, banks and just a short walk away from the charming shores of the Arabian Gulf. This makes it the closest destination to the guests' options, not to mention the superb and convenient service that distinguishes its 406 rooms and suites that define modernity in addition to integrated office services that meet the needs of the guests specially those of the businessmen category.

The hotel has allocated seven meeting rooms to satisfy different purposes of business meetings, workshops and others. In addition to offering the best fitness center located on the 39th floor with latest equipments under the supervision of qualified staff and the indoor swimming pool providing a panoramic view of the bustling Kuwait city, the enchanting waters of the Arabian Gulf and highlighting the beauty of the Liberation tower and the monumental Kuwait towers.



Mounir Amer

As for the best contemporary dining, the hotel provides an assortment of international buffet through Asseef restaurant and La Mamma Pizzeria offering a variety of antipasti, pasta and the very best taste of pizza baked in the wood fired oven to achieve the tastiest crispy crust ever.

On this joyous occasion, Mr Fahed Abushaar - General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait extended his most sincere gratitude and appreciation to each person who has contributed to the success of the hotels' highest standards of service throughout the years. In his turn Mr Mounir Amer - General Manager of Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait mentioned that Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait has been honored with the "Hotel of the Year" award for Europe, Africa and Middle East division for 5 consecutive years which gives us a sense of responsibility towards our guests and the hotel industry in Kuwait.

## OSN BAGS LIFETIME EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS FOR TURKISH HIT SERIES 'KOSEM SULTAN'

In a ground-breaking deal, OSN, the region's leading pay-TV network, announced its lifetime, exclusive broadcast and distribution rights of the much anticipated series, Kosem Sultan, which will mark its exclusive premiere on OSN Ya Hala HD on January 3, 2016. The long-term agreement underlines OSN's commitment to ensuring that its subscribers have first and exclusive access to the biggest shows.

Kosem Sultan is a spin-off of the popular Harem Al Sultan, which recorded the highest viewership among all Arabic and Turkish series since its premiere on OSN. The highly anticipated series is set in the early 17th century, 50 years after the death of Sultan Sulaiman in Harem Al Sultan.

Award winning actress Beren Saat plays the role of Kosem Sultan. Adored for her charm and radiance, she is known for her role in Ishq Mamnoua. Khulud Abu Homos, Executive Vice President - Programming & Creative Services of OSN, said: "This is a momentous partnership that gives OSN exclusive rights to one of the most-talked about series of all time, further reinforcing our primary commitment as the leading entertainment platform. We provide the best of Arabic and Turkish series and movies the region has to offer, highlighted by the success of Harem Al Sultan.

"The attention to details and a compelling story-line add up to make K'sem Sultan one of the most-awaited productions. The show will be

available with English subtitles owing to popular demand so everyone can enjoy this fantastic drama series."

Kosem Sultan, created by the makers of the acclaimed Harem Al Sultan, was produced after a year and a half long period of preparations, meticulous work on every detail from decors and costumes to music. It disentangles the life of Kosem with years spent in key positions of the dynasty and the state, while shedding light on her personal side - the love, power struggles, great victories and overwhelming defeats. Kosem Sultan will premiere on January 3, 2016, at 9pm KSA, only on OSN Ya Hala HD. Viewers can also watch the series 'On Demand' on OSN Plus HD, or catch up on OSN Play anytime, anywhere - subtitled in English.







# CLASSIFIEDS



## KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (24/12/2015 TO 30/12/2015)

SHARQIA-1	Time	Movie	SHARQIA-2	Time	Movie	SHARQIA-3	Time	Movie	MUHALAB-1	Time	Movie	MUHALAB-2	Time	Movie	MUHALAB-3	Time	Movie	FANAR-1	Time	Movie
THE PEANUTS MOVIE	11:45 AM		POINT BREAK	12:45 PM		KHANET EL YEK	1:00 PM		DILWALE - Hindi	11:45 AM		KHANET EL YEK	12:15 PM		POINT BREAK	12:30 AM		THE PEANUTS MOVIE	12:00 PM	
THE PEANUTS MOVIE	1:45 PM		POINT BREAK	3:00 PM		STOMPING GROUND	3:00 PM		NARCO POLIS	2:45 PM		KHANET EL YEK	2:15 PM		THE PEANUTS MOVIE	2:00 PM		THE PEANUTS MOVIE	2:00 PM	
THE PEANUTS MOVIE	4:00 PM		STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS	5:15 PM		THE GOOD DINOSAUR	4:45 PM		DILWALE - Hindi	4:45 PM		STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS	4:15 PM		POINT BREAK	3:00 PM		KHANET EL YEK	4:00 PM	
DILWALE - Hindi	6:00 PM		POINT BREAK	8:00 PM		STOMPING GROUND	9:00 PM		NARCO POLIS	7:45 PM		POINT BREAK	7:15 PM		POINT BREAK	5:00 PM		KHANET EL YEK	4:00 PM	
DILWALE - Hindi	9:00 PM		POINT BREAK	10:15 PM		KHANET EL YEK	10:45 PM		NARCO POLIS	10:45 PM		POINT BREAK	10:15 PM		POINT BREAK	7:00 PM		THE PEANUTS MOVIE	6:00 PM	
	12:05 AM		POINT BREAK	12:30 AM		STOMPING GROUND	12:45 AM		NARCO POLIS	12:45 AM		POINT BREAK	12:15 AM		POINT BREAK	9:30 PM		KHANET EL YEK	6:00 PM	

## JOB OPPURTUNITIES

A local company is in need of the following personnel for a KOC project:

- Mechanical Engineer** with minimum 8 years experience in piping and pipeline projects in Oil/ Gas Industry in Kuwait.
- Site Secretary (male)** with a minimum of 2 years experience in a construction firm.

Applicants must be fluent in English and hold both a valid drivers license and a transferable residency and capable of starting immediately.

Email cover letter and resume to [info@26febco-kw.com](mailto:info@26febco-kw.com)

### FOR SALE

Chevy Caprice, 1994 model, white, must test. KD 700. Tel: 99058260. (C 5104) 28-12-2015

### SITUATION VACANT

Professional cook for house, good experience all kinds of food, especially Arabic food, good salary, part time. Call: 23901053, 60064934. (C 5102) 21-12-2015

A single American-Lebanese male living in Salmiya needs a lady worker to help in cooking and cleaning. She must understand and speak English and her timing and salary are negotiable. Call 6641-7504. (C 5100) 19-12-2015

### CHANGE OF NAME

I Irfan Mohammed S/o Noor Jaman, Dist Banswara (Rajasthan) holder of Indian Passport No. F9295894, I

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Interested candidates are requested to send their detailed Curriculum Vitae (CV) to [alnour1999@yahoo.com](mailto:alnour1999@yahoo.com)

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**Kuwait Times**

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- Semi-commercial ads i.e. Baby-Sitting, Matrimonial, Tuition & Transport available will be accepted for **KD 5 for 3 days.**
- Ads must not exceed 25 words.

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## Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

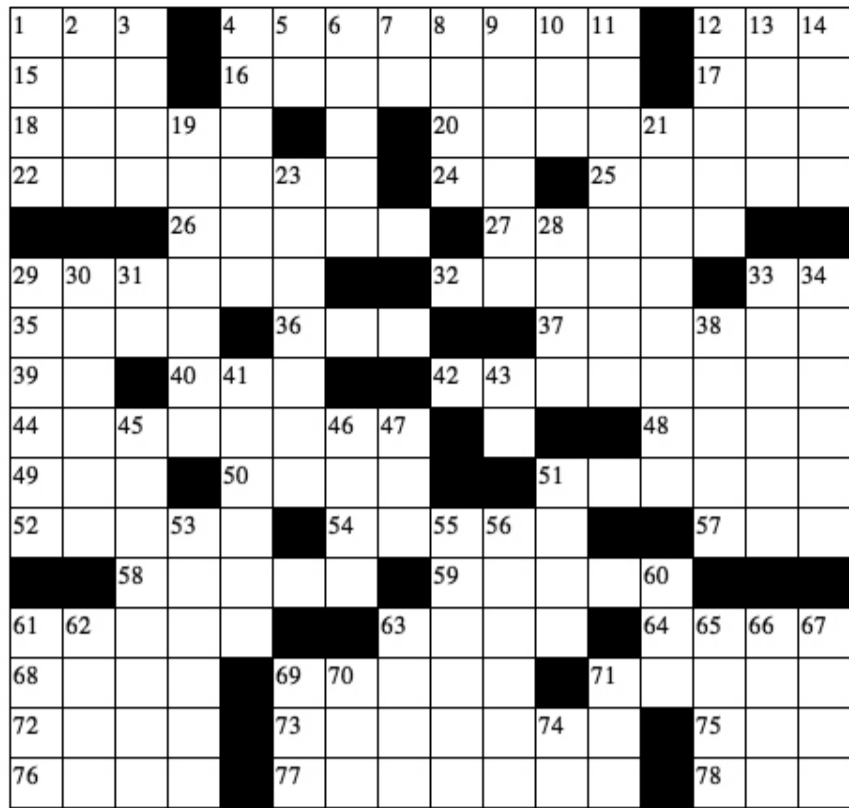
In case you are not travelling, your proper cancellation of bookings will help other passengers to use seats

## Flight Schedule

Arrival Flights on Monday 28/12/2015				Departure Flights on Monday 28/12/2015			
Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	Airlines	Fit	Route	Time
MSC	415	Sohag	00:05	KAC	537	Sohag	13:35
BBC	044	Dhaka/Dammam	00:05	JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
MSC	403	Asyut	00:15	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	KAC	617	Doha	14:45
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55	KNE	481	Taif	14:50
RJA	642	Amman	01:05	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
THY	772	Istanbul	01:05	KAC	513	Tehran	15:10
DLH	635	Doha	01:35	FDB	058	Dubai	15:10
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45	QTR	1079	Doha	15:10
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:45
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	773	Riyadh	15:50
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	613	Bahrain	15:50
FDB	067	Dubai	03:05	KNE	473	Jeddah	16:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:25
CEB	7694	Manila	03:15	OMA	646	Muscat	16:30
QTR	1076	Doha	03:15	JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
KKK	6507	Istanbul	03:20	JZR	238	Amman	17:30
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:25	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	17:30
JZR	503	Luxor	04:25	FDB	052	Dubai	17:35
DXH	170	Bahrain	05:40	QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55	JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
FDB	5061	Dubai	06:30	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
BAW	157	London	06:40	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
JZR	529	Asyut	06:50	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	07:20	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
QTR	1086	Doha	07:40	JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45	MSR	615	Cairo	18:50
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50	SYR	342	Damascus	19:05
KAC	206	Islamabad	08:25	JZR	124	Bahrain	19:10
KAC	352	Kochi	08:30	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40	ABY	124	Sharjah	19:25
KAC	362	Colombo	08:50	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:20	KAC	353	BLR	20:40
QTR	1070	Doha	09:25	KAC	361	Colombo	20:45
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	QTR	1081	Doha	20:50
IRA	667	Esfahan	10:00	KAC	351	Kochi	20:50
OMA	641	Muscat	10:05	KNE	461	Riyadh	21:10
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	331	Trivandrum	21:10
UAE	873	Dubai	11:05	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:15	FDB	062	Dubai	21:20
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	DLH	634	Doha	21:45
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	DXH	171	Bahrain	21:50
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25	JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30	JZR	502	Luxor	22:00
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	301	Mumbai	22:10
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
KAC	382	Delhi	13:50	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
KNE	460	Riyadh	13:50	FDB	5053	Dubai	22:30
KAC	672	Dubai	14:00	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
FDB	057	Dubai	14:10	QTR	1083	Doha	23:05
				KAC	205	Islamabad	23:10
				ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:15
				FDB	060	Dubai	23:35
				KAC	411	Bangkok/Manila	23:35

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

CROSSWORD 1121



ACROSS

1. Chiefly perennial grasses of cool temperate regions.
4. Being the exact same one.
12. A period of time spent sleeping.
15. The rate at which red blood cells settle out in a tube of blood under standardized conditions.
16. An extinct ancient language of unknown affinities.
17. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
18. A soft whitish calcite.
20. A professional person authorized to practice law.
22. Of or pertaining to Sabah or its people.
24. Being one more than fifty.
25. Property that is leased or rented out or let.
26. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
27. A block of wood used to prevent the sliding or rolling of a heavy object.
29. A member of the Indian people of northern California and southern Oregon.
32. A city in southeastern South Korea.
35. The 8th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
36. (used as a combining form) Recent or new.
37. A speaker who lisps.
39. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
40. (informal) Roused to anger.
42. Often cultivated for the decorative foliage.
44. A member of a North American Indian people of the Gila river valley in Arizona.
48. A lawman concerned with narcotics violations.
49. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
50. Type genus of the Anatidae.
52. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
54. God of wealth and love.
57. A digital display that uses liquid crystal cells that change reflectivity in an applied electric field.
58. Any plant of the genus Erica.
59. Russian country house.
61. A crime syndicate in the United States.
64. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
68. Wading birds of warm regions having long slender down-curved bills.
72. Being precisely fitting and right.
73. The main organ of photosynthesis and transpiration in higher plants.
75. A unit of electrical resistance equal to the resistance between two points on a conductor when a potential difference of one volt between them produces a current of one ampere.
76. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
77. An ancient city on the Nile in Egypt.
78. A reproach for some lapse or misdeed.

DOWN

1. Either of two large muscles of the chest.
2. A law passed by US Congress to prevent employees from being injured or contracting diseases in the course of their employment.
3. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
4. A lion-headed goddess.
5. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
6. A genus of Lamnidae.
7. Modulation of the frequency of the (radio) carrier wave.
8. The granite-like rocks that form the outermost layer of the earth's crust.
9. The territory of Athens in ancient Greece.
10. An engineering university in Cambridge.
11. Characterized by the interdependence of living organisms in an environment.
12. Indian religious leader who founded Sikhism (1469-1538).
13. (Greek mythology) Greek god of war.
14. The British system of withholding tax.
19. Goddess of fortune.
21. (of Catholics formerly) Refusing to attend services of the Church of England.
23. The trait of lacking restraint or control.
28. Goddess of the dead and queen of the underworld.
30. Sudanese sorghums having white seeds.
31. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
33. Small often spiny insectivorous mammal of Madagascar.
34. Positioned so as to be ready for confrontation or danger.
38. Relating to or resembling or made of or adorned with pearls or mother-of-pearl.
41. Any of various spiny trees or shrubs of the genus Acacia.
43. A substance produced by the hypothalamus that is capable of accelerating the secretion of a given hormone by the anterior pituitary gland.
45. Having low density.
46. A metabolic acid found in yeast and liver cells.
47. The residue that remains when something is burned.
51. (used of count nouns) Every one considered individually.
53. Bristlelike process near the tip of the antenna of certain flies.
55. (of tempo) Leisurely n.
56. Any of various rich and elaborate cakes.
60. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
62. In bed.
63. A master's degree in library science.
65. Little known Kamarupan languages.
66. A Loloish language.
67. An artificial source of visible illumination.
69. A city in the European part of Russia.
70. An internationally recognized distress signal in radio code.
71. (in Scotland or Ireland) A mountain or tall hill.
74. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You could hold such idealistic expectations today that nothing in the real world will satisfy your ambitions. Fortunately, your fate is in your own hands because you can change the game now by changing your mind about what you want. You don't have to settle for anything less if you simply re-frame your idea of what makes you happy. Touching people with your generous heart is more meaningful than making sure everything goes exactly as planned. Giving the gift of love will add the magic back into your life.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Putting on a winning performance for your friends or family seems like a wonderful way to continue the holiday festivities. But you might inadvertently create unnecessary waves by taking over and doing everything your way. Considering someone's preferences may not be enough to smooth over any ruffled feathers now. The real lesson is that this doesn't need to be a one-person show. Instead, involving others in the planning process from the start fosters the spirit of the season that's beyond the reach of any individual.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

People seem to enter your life today for the express purpose of encouraging you to take the next step on your journey. But this support may come with a mixed message because following someone else's advice isn't very straightforward now. You're tempted to impetuously rush ahead, but complicated logistics and unwieldy red tape are likely to hinder your progress. Slow down and tend to details that need handling one more time. One can't succeed on inspiration alone.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Spending lots of money is not the only way to show others how much you care. However, the demonstrative Leo Moon's presence in your 2nd House of Money might tempt you to spring for an extravagant display anyhow. Nevertheless, if you want to be taken seriously today, don't give in to an overly dramatic gesture of affection. Obviously, the bright lights could draw an extra round of applause, but acting thoughtfully will earn you the appreciation and respect you desire. The gifts that matter the most come from the heart.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your resolute follow-through is your ticket to success today because fantastic ideas about entertaining coworkers or celebrating with your family won't be sufficient unless you deliver something special. It's essential to plan every detail out in advance, since there are too many variables in the mix now. Of course, there will always be factors outside of your control; honestly, you are the only one who expects perfection. Luckily, if "Plan A" doesn't work, there are twenty-five more letters in the alphabet.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your cool ability to minimize the end-of-the-year excitement might make others wonder if your behavior is Scrooge-like. However, closer examination reveals that you're simply saving the best celebration for last. You're happy to ride a building wave of anticipation right into the New Year. Instead of talking about your intentions today, let your actions speak for themselves. Open up your heart and demonstrate your affection while you have the chance. Tomorrow is another day.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Hanging out with those you love is more fun than anything else now. However, it may be challenging to reconcile your desire to break free of some holiday traditions this year while still remaining open to what the rest of the group wants. Although you might not see a clear solution to your dilemma, remember there's no single correct path to take today. Being flexible enough to go along with the flow will probably make everyone happier in the long run.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

There may be an established schedule of events today and everyone is depending on you to adhere to the plan. Unfortunately, there's a small margin for error today because the fixed Leo Moon in your 10th House of Responsibility gives you a very specific notion of what you need to do. But even if you suddenly have a different impulse, it's wiser now to just let it pass. Save your ideas for another day when others will be more amenable to a radical point of view. In the meantime, demonstrating your ability to be a team player adds to everyone's satisfaction, including your own.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

There are many ways to ensure the holidays are a memorable experience for all, yet they will be over so fast that you need to fine-tune your options quickly. Fortunately, you are an instant inspiration to your friends and family because your joyful attitude is so contagious. Although you may have already handed out traditional tokens of affection, you can still create a positive impact by shifting your focus onto establishing lasting emotional connections. Gifts of emotional and spiritual intention are the ones that outlast the others.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You're weary of being the one who always takes charge when no one else steps up to the plate. But no one seems to realize how much this external pressure weighs on you. However, you almost don't care that others are relying on you. Instead of just burying your feelings, talk to someone you trust. Your anxiety will be less of a nuisance if you can get your concerns off your chest. Surrounding yourself with those who love you, rather than those who love what you do, is the best way to enjoy yourself today.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You may experience a perplexing series of conflicting desires today. The big-hearted Leo Moon is hanging out in your 7th House of Others, reflecting your need to be actively involved in your relationships now. But several planets in hardworking Capricorn are traveling through your 12th House of Secrets, urging you to stay out of sight. Although wanting to be seen and being invisible are mutually exclusive, you can still find clever ways to honor both extremes.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You don't mind jumping in and helping your family, friends, or community as long as you feel like you're a valuable member of a team. But you might not be as eager to contribute to the cause if you are sitting on the sidelines. Fortunately, others seem to go out of their way to include you today, making it more fun for you to participate. Focusing on an altruistic goal allows you to enjoy a true sense of camaraderie. Consider this a gentle cosmic reminder of how much you receive when you give.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Moods & Emotions 3

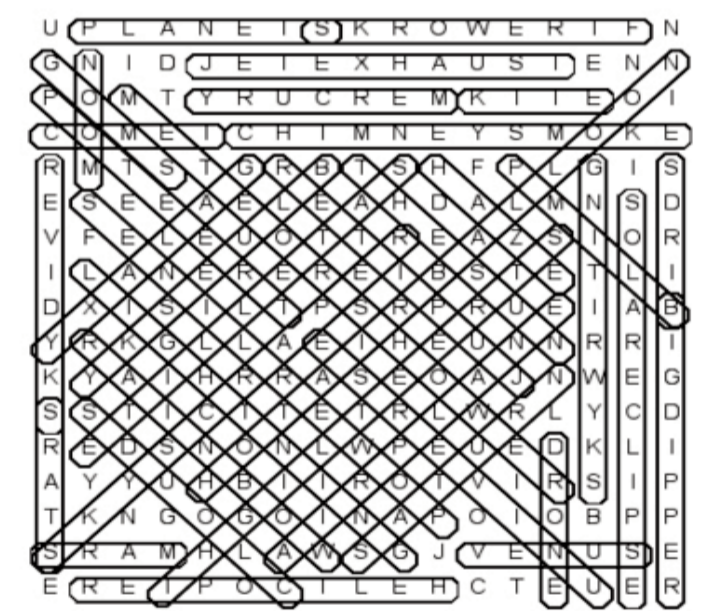
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 13 letters spell an additional word.

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

- |              |           |             |          |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|----------|
| ANGER        | EDGY      | GRUMPY      | OUTRAGE  |
| APPRECIATIVE | ENVIIOUS  | HAPPY       | PUZZLED  |
| ARROGANT     | EXUBERANT | HOPE        | REGRET   |
| BITTER       | FEAR      | INDIFFERENT | SADNESS  |
| CALM         | FRANTIC   | JEALOUS     | SCARED   |
| CHEERFUL     | FRETFUL   | JOLLY       | SCORNFUL |
| CONFIDENT    | GLAD      | JOYFUL      | SORRY    |
| CURIOUS      | GLEEFUL   | MOROSE      | SURPRISE |
| DISGUST      | GRATEFUL  | MOURNFUL    | TRANQUIL |
| DUBIOUS      | GRIEF     | NERVOUS     | WORRY    |

Yesterday's Solution

Look Up!



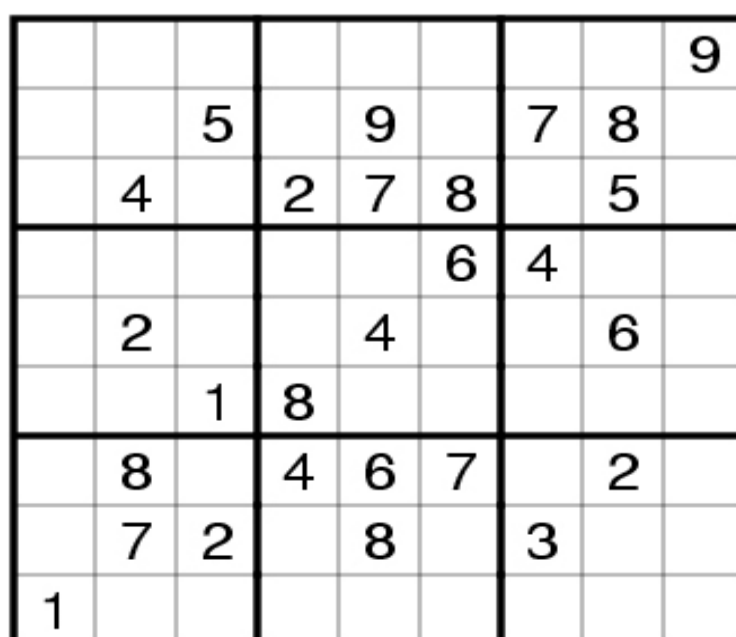
- |               |                 |               |               |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|
| AIRPLANE      | GALAXY          | METEOR SHOWER | SMOG          |
| BIG DIPPER    | HAZE            | MOON          | SOLAR ECLIPSE |
| BIRDS         | HELICOPTER      | PLANETS       | STARS         |
| BLIMP         | HOT AIR BALLOON | POWER LINES   | STREET LIGHT  |
| BLUE SKY      | JET EXHAUST     | RAINBOW       | THE SUN       |
| CHIMNEY SMOKE | JUPITER         | SATELLITE     | TREETOP       |
| CLOUDS        | KITE            | SATURN        | UNIVERSE      |
| COMET         | LIGHTNING       | SKYDIVER      | VENUS         |
| DRONE         | MARS            | SKYSCRAPER    |               |
| FIREWORKS     | MERCURY         | SKYWRITING    |               |

The hidden message is: UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



hard

Yesterday's Solution



medium



Gossip



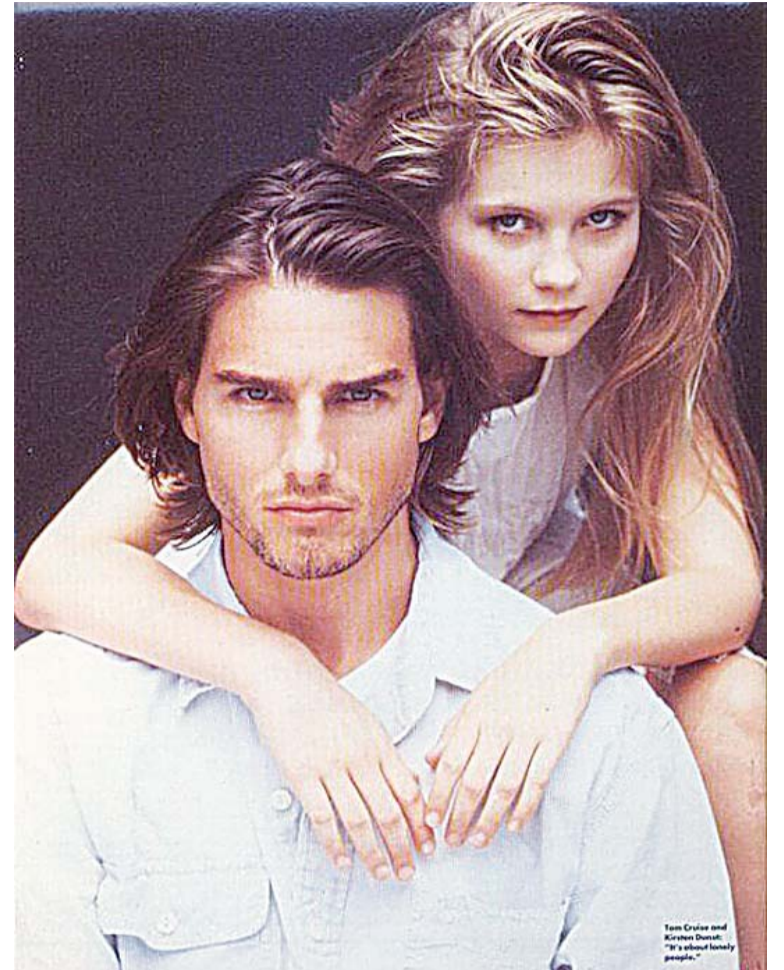
## Beckham splashes out £140,000 on a car

David Beckham has splashed out £140,000 on a car. The former soccer star - who has sons Brooklyn, 16, Romeo, 13, Cruz, 10 and four-year-old daughter Harper, with wife Victoria Beckham - is reportedly hoping to add a F-TYPE Project 7 Jaguar to his motor collection. A source told the Daily Mirror: "David loves his cars and these are something special. But it's not going to be used for family trips or for popping to the shops. It's an indulgence, something for a Sunday morning blast. "The car is sold out so anyone wanting one has to go on a waiting list. A lot of people ordered them while they were still on the drawing

board in development. But I don't think it will be a problem for David to get hold of one." And despite the huge amount of money spent on the motor for his Christmas present, the 40-year-old star - who already has a Cadillac Escalade, a Ferrari 612 Scaglietti as well as a Jeep, Audi, Bentley and Aston Martin - prefers a "traditional" festive celebration. He recently revealed: "I think like every other person's Christmas it will be very normal. We open presents, we enjoy ourselves, we have a traditional Christmas dinner. So we're exactly the same! We spend Christmas in London so we are very traditional."

## Cruise sends Dunst a festive cake

Tom Cruise sends Kirsten Dunst a cake every Christmas. The 33-year-old actress - who worked with the 'Mission: Impossible' star on 'Interview With a Vampire' when she was 11 years old - gets excited when the sweet treat arrives and admits it doesn't last very long. She said: "I run into Tom. He sends me a cake every Christmas. I call it the Cruise Cake. "It's so good - a coconut cake with white chocolate chips. It gets eaten within a day in my house. "When the Cruise Cake gets delivered, it's like, 'Cruise Cake's here!' My friends know what that means." The ' Fargo' actress bases her movie choices on what she thinks will be "fun" and though she turns down a lot of roles, she'll never admit which projects she snubbed. She said: "I choose movies like a kid would, 'What's fun?' Also, I say no a lot. "[What did I turn down?] I hate when actors do that in interviews, 'Dude I totally turned this down...' OK, no-one cares. You sound like a jerk. Ha! "I made mistakes, put it that way. Sometimes you read a script and it's bad."

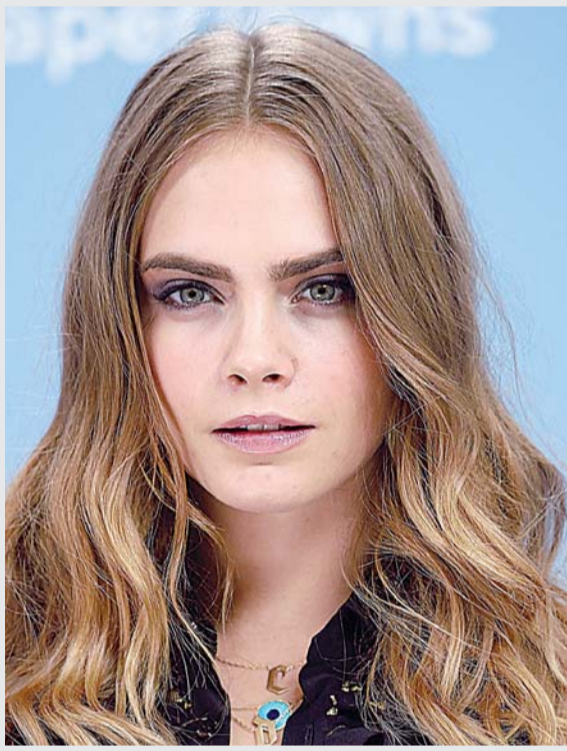


## Shirley Bassey's sleepy Christmas



Dame Shirley Bassey spent most of Christmas Day asleep. The 'Goldfinger' singer didn't spend the big day with her children Sharon and Mark because they have big families of their own, but caught up with them earlier in the month and enjoyed a quiet December 25 after a boozy meal with friends. Speaking before Christmas, she said: "Before Christmas I always take my family out for dinner at the Ritz. "I have grandsons who have girlfriends so there's no room at the inn for me and I'm not sleeping on the sofa. "I'm having Christmas lunch with my friends at the Hermitage in Monte Carlo and we'll drink a lot of pink champagne. "Then I go off to bed for the rest of the day, which is wonderful. I have very quiet Christmases now for my age." The 78-year-old singer has teamed up with classical crossover group Blake to release 'The Christmas Song' and admits the record is a long-held ambition for her. She said: "It's a first for me after 60-odd years in the business "I have to thank these boys because without them I would never have done a Christmas carol. "My record company would turn a deaf ear whenever I mentioned it. They couldn't imagine me singing 'Silent Night.'"

## Delevingne's treasures musical gifts



Cara Delevingne's best-ever Christmas gift was a guitar. The model-and-actress will always treasure the customized instrument she received from her family a few years ago. Asked her best gift, she said: "My family got me a customized guitar a few years ago, it was really special." The 23-year-old beauty "tries" to spend every festive season with her relatives and they always enjoy tucking into a traditional feast. She said: "I love a turkey roast." The 'Paper Towns' star - who is dating singer St Vincent aka Annie Clarke - recently revealed she starts every day by doing some writing as it makes her feel less "crazy". She said: "I wake up and write three pages of anything. "It's good to release a lot and somewhere in those pages, you'll find a song or an idea. "I start being like, I don't know what to write' and then I start writing and stuff like a character idea comes out. "You feel a lot less crazy after. It can be a bit hard to do sometimes though."

## Fernandez-Versini and her husband struggling with language barrier

Cheryl Fernandez-Versini and her husband are reportedly struggling with the language barrier. The 'I Don't Care' hitmaker's cousin Tony Tweedy claims Cheryl and Jean-Bernard Fernandez-Versini - who wed last year after a whirlwind romance - find it difficult to communicate because she speaks little French and he is not well versed in English. He told The Sun on Sunday: "The family think the marriage is over. When I asked if Cheryl was happy with him, they replied, 'Put it this way, I'll give it six months.' That was three months ago, and look what's happening. "Cheryl can't speak French. I'm told he speaks little English. What sort of relationship is it if she cannot speak French and he can't speak English? They may as well have a threesome with the interpreter." Whilst a source claims Cheryl hasn't talked to Tony in years, the 32-year-old beauty has been plagued by marriage rumors as of late. A source claimed previously: "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."



## Allen's splits from husband?

Lily Allen's husband has reportedly moved out of the family home. Sam Cooper, who wed the 'Air Balloon' hitmaker in 2011, has been seen without his wedding ring, prompting speculation the pair have gone their separate ways. A source said: "He's been socializing a lot and getting on with his life. "He's got the new place, but it's big enough to have the kids too. They've been to visit his new place, but not with Lily. "Lily has her flat she stays at in North London. For the last three months she's been there, Claridge's hotel or in Los Angeles." The 30-year-old singer is also said to have her own private profile on Instagram, which she refuses to show Sam. A source told The Sun on Sunday: "Lily has been keeping things from Sam - she even set up her own private Instagram where she puts pics of her crazy partying up and won't let Sam follow her." It is thought the couple - who have two daughters, Ethel, four and Marnie, two, together - have finally made the decision to split after trying to make things work whilst visiting a countryside retreat in Cornwall, southwest England a few months ago.



## Irina Shayk too lazy for make-up

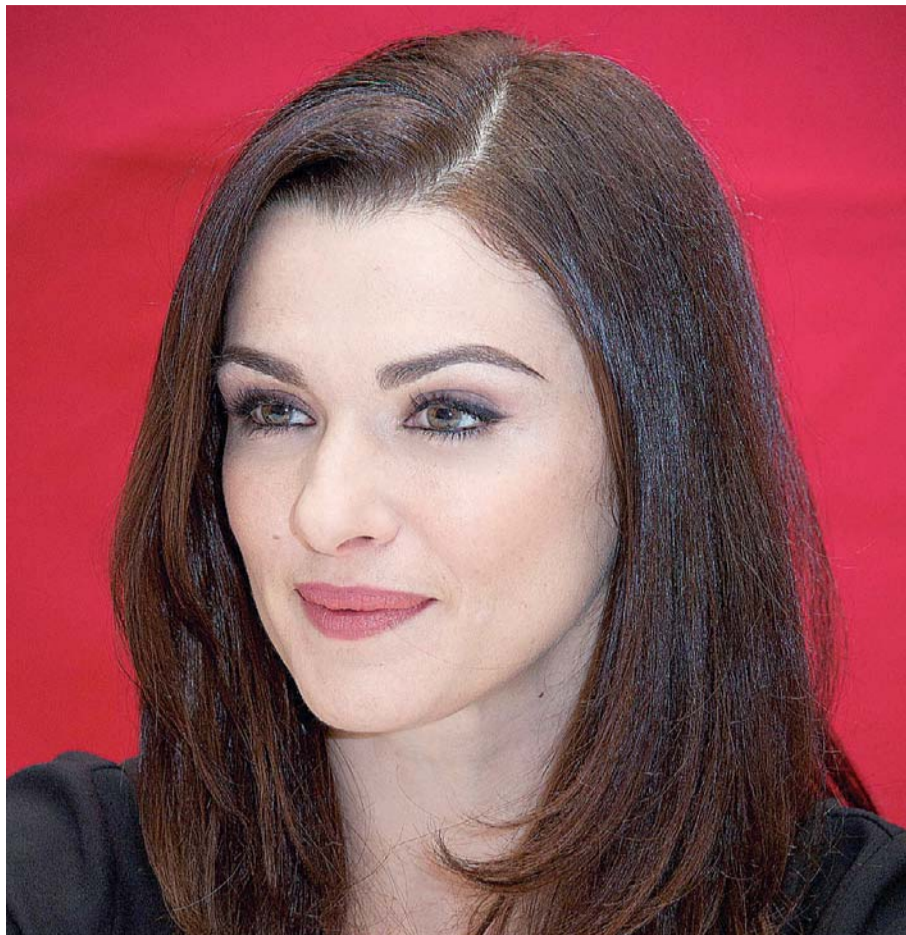
Irina Shayk doesn't wear make-up at home because she's "too lazy". The 29-year-old model admitted it takes so long to put on and take off make-up that she rarely bothers doing it at all and instead just conceals any signs of tiredness and glams up with some lipstick. She explained: "I rarely wear make-up in my 'normal' life - especially mascara, I'm too lazy to take it off at night. I'll just put cover up under my eyes and a swipe of dark red lipstick. I like Givenchy's Le Rouge Lipsticks." The Russian-born star - who is currently dating 'Burnt' actor Bradley Cooper - insists she's not as glamorous in her day-to-day life as she is while working as a model, and admitted her workout gear is her wardrobe essential. Asked about the item of clothing she couldn't live without, she said: "Replay's Hyperskin denim yoga pants look like regular jeans, but they're designed for working out, so they're made from this incredibly comfortable, stretchy fabric - they're like a second skin. They're great to wear when I'm travelling, too." And although she doesn't always dress up, she admires people who do and named Naomi Campbell as her style crush. She said: "Every time I see her she is on point. I admire how glamorous she is - even if she's wearing jeans and sneakers, she'll go all out with accessories and jewelry." —Bang Showbiz



## Perry's Christmases are not that fancy

The 31-year-old singer loves celebrating the festive season with her family and revealed it's much like other people's experience of the holiday despite her superstar status. She said: "We all make food together. My mother still does stockings, which is adorable - she still puts a toothbrush in my stocking and some extra socks. If we're in town, we like to go to the movie theatre. It's really not that fancy - it's cosy and onesies and sleeping in!" However, the family don't always stay at home and decide collectively whether to use the festive season to go on vacation. She explained: "We talk about it a few months in advance, and figure out if we want to be Christmassy with snow or soak up the sun - it's decided by committee." The brunette beauty - who is fronting a campaign for H&M and has even penned a song titled 'Every Day Is A Holiday' with Duke Dumont for the advert - enjoys making a special effort with her appearance over Christmas. On her seasonal style, she said: "Glittery, of course. Velvet sometimes. I like a faux fur. "I like putting an ornament in my hair - last year I had a little Christmas gnome. And I think red lipstick is super Christmassy. I wear a full tuxedo in one of the scenes in the commercial. I put it on and they were ready to pin it, but it didn't need one pin. I've worn beautiful, chic business suits, but I've always had to tailor them, and this was such a miracle."

Gossip



## Weisz's son hates her in her make-up

Rachel Weisz's son thinks she looks "awful" when she goes to red carpet events. The 45-year-old actress insists nine-year-old Henry - who she has with ex-fiance Darren Aronofsky - isn't "very interested" in her career and has never even seen one of her movies. She said: "He's really not very interested in that side of my life. I suppose he must be aware of it but as far as he's concerned, I'm just Mum. "He's never seen a film of mine. "If he sees me in make-up and a dress ready to go out to an event, he thinks I look awful. He doesn't like make-up. He's got good taste." And the 'Youth' star - who is married to James Bond actor Daniel Craig - is in awe of her son's imagination. She said: "He's got a wide and boundless imagination. "He's constantly building and drawing and creating stories. At the moment, it all features lots of battles between good guys and bad guys and I don't have to do anything to encourage it at all. It's just what he does."



## Upton's confidence kick

Kate Upton feels most confident when she has "good make-up on". The Sports Illustrated model admits she feels "powerful" when she's had her make-up done and has brushed her hair but insists confidence must come from within. She said: "When I first started modeling, it was hard on my hair because of all the hot irons used on it. Then I learned about a brand called Leonor Greyl, and since then I use its shampoo and hair mask as a conditioner every time I wash my hair. When I'm confident, I feel powerful, and I feel confident when I have good make-up on and my hair is brushed. "Confidence is being yourself. Women often get competitive with each other, when we should really be competitive with ourselves. It's more about improving yourself and becoming the best person you can possibly be." The 23-year-old beauty also revealed she works out three times a week and aims to eat "clean" as much as possible. She added to The Telegraph's Stella magazine: "In order to stay fit and healthy, I work out three times a week and I try to eat clean. It helps me have energy after long days and lots of travelling. "I'm lucky because I actually like the food I eat. I love fish or chicken, grilled vegetables, sautéed spinach with feta cheese, and a good juice. David Kirsch's Super Charged Greens Blend is my post-workout drink."



## Barbara Windsor to be made a Dame?

Barbara Windsor is reportedly set to be made a Dame in Britain's Queen Elizabeth's New Year's Honors List. The 'East Enders' legend - who starred as barmaid Peggy Mitchell in the BBC One soap for over two decades - will be handed the honor by the 89-year-old royal for her charity work. A source told The Sun newspaper: "The Queen was delighted when Barbara's name was put forward. "Like Her Majesty, she is someone who has been part of the fabric of the way of life in Britain for many years." The 78-year-old actress has been tireless with her charity work over the years, most recently lending her support to the NHS' Stay Well This Winter campaign. Of her involvement, she said: "It's the simplest things that we sometimes forget, and when remembered, they can make all the difference! "The Stay Well This Winter campaign is a great way of reminding people about the little things they can do to make sure they're protecting themselves as the cold weather sets in, whether that's staying warm, stocking up on prescription medicines or checking in on friends and neighbors to make sure they are keeping well."

## Mel B teases Spice Girls reunion

Mel B has teased that the Spice Girls could make a comeback "pretty soon". The 40-year-old singer thinks it would be "rude" if the 90s girl group did nothing to celebrate their 20th anniversary, and when quizzed further on the possibility, she appeared to confirm there would be some sort of reunion. Speaking on Alan Carr's New Year Spectacular, which airs on December 31, she said: "I think I'm the one putting all the rumors out there. To be serious, it is out twentieth anniversary this year and it would be rude not to celebrate so hopefully something will be happening pretty soon." When asked what it is, she added: "I can't tell you what it is yet!" Meanwhile, Mel - who was known as Scary Spice in the group - recently insisted the band are still "trying" to figure something out. She shared: "Once we sort everything out we make an announcement, but right now we're just figuring it all out. Next year is the 20th anniversary so we're really just trying to make sure something happens. "We're figuring stuff out. As soon as we figure it out we'll tell every detail, but until then there's not much to say. It's like when you're dating somebody and everyone is forcing you to get married. It's like, "We're getting married! Just give us a second to figure it out!"



## Tom Fletcher rescued an 'injured goose'

The 30-year-old singer was out on a walk yesterday when he spotted the wounded animal and immediately phoned the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) for help. He wrote on Twitter: "Well that was an eventful walk. Found an injured goose, nice @RSPCA\_official lady came to save the day. Fingers crossed for goosey! (sic)" Meanwhile, the 'Love Is Easy' hitmaker and his wife Giovanna Fletcher are looking forward to welcoming their new baby next year. Tom - who already has 21-month-old son Buzz - told BANG Showbiz: "At night one of us will do the bath and one will do bedtime reading. We always read stuff to Buzz. "Now we are getting more kicks and stuff from the bump it's amazing because when you sing to it or speak to it you get kicks back and it's an amazing thing to have. I definitely do all sorts of things with the bump and I read lots of different things to the bump. "As a dad reading to Buzz has almost become a bit of a competition between me and my wife. We both read him books but we both read differently. So it's who can outdo each other with reading the books to Buzz."

## 'Alan Carr's New Year Spectacular' Channel 4

'Alan Carr's New Year Spectacular' airs at 9pm on December 31 on Channel 4. Jackie Collins "always put other people" first. The late novelist's sister Dame Joan Collins insists her sibling - who passed away in September this year after a secret battle with breast cancer was always more concerned about others than herself and didn't want to tell people about her diagnosis as she didn't want to "saddle" those closest to her with grief. Joan said: "She always put other people, particularly her family, ahead of herself, and she had more concern for others than she did for herself, even to the end. She tried to keep her illness to herself for many years to avoid saddling people she cared for with grief. Anyone who knew Jackie would tell you how courageous and selfless she was. "This was one of the reasons for her great success, both in her personal and professional life, and why she was loved and admired by so many people. She was a strong, independent, loyal, caring, maternal, fun-loving, witty, generous woman." The 82-year-old actress also spoke of the "massive hole in [her] heart" since Jackie passed. She added to the Observer newspaper's New Review supplement: "The loss of Jackie has caused a massive hole in my heart. Like the Grand Canyon, I can't ignore it, walk around it or get over it. I must simply face its empty majesty and it will remind me of my beautiful, brave and ballsy sister."



## Covato is 'grateful to be in recovery'

The 23-year-old singer - who sought treatment in rehab for an eating disorder, self-harming, alcohol and drug abuse in 2010 - took to Instagram to share an emotional message as she encouraged people to face their addictions. She wrote: "I am one of the 1 in 7 people who has faced addiction, and I am grateful to be in recovery today. It's time for us all to reflect, and start @facingaddiction. Let's stop ignoring the biggest problem in our country we often don't want to look at. We all are connected to this issue one way or another and we all need to be part of the solution. Together we can replace shame with support, hope, and healing. #FacingAddiction #selfie (sic)" Demi is taking part in non-profit Facing Addiction's new campaign to raise awareness of addiction and she, along with a number of other celebrities, posted a video of a black screen with the words: "Look Close. What do you see?". The campaign hopes that people will take a good look at their own reflection in their screens and the video ends with the words: "1 in 7 will see the face of addiction." Demi previously admitted she is a much more emotional person since conquering her addictions. She said: "When you are sober, you experience everything on a heightened level. If you are going through something stressful, you're extra stressed. I used to sit through a scary movie and not be scared once. At haunted houses, things would jump out at me, and I would sit there bored. "Then I got sober and I feel everything. I cry more. I laugh harder. Everything. You have to think, if you are chasing the next party your whole life and you always have to be numb, is that something to be proud of?" —Bang Showbiz



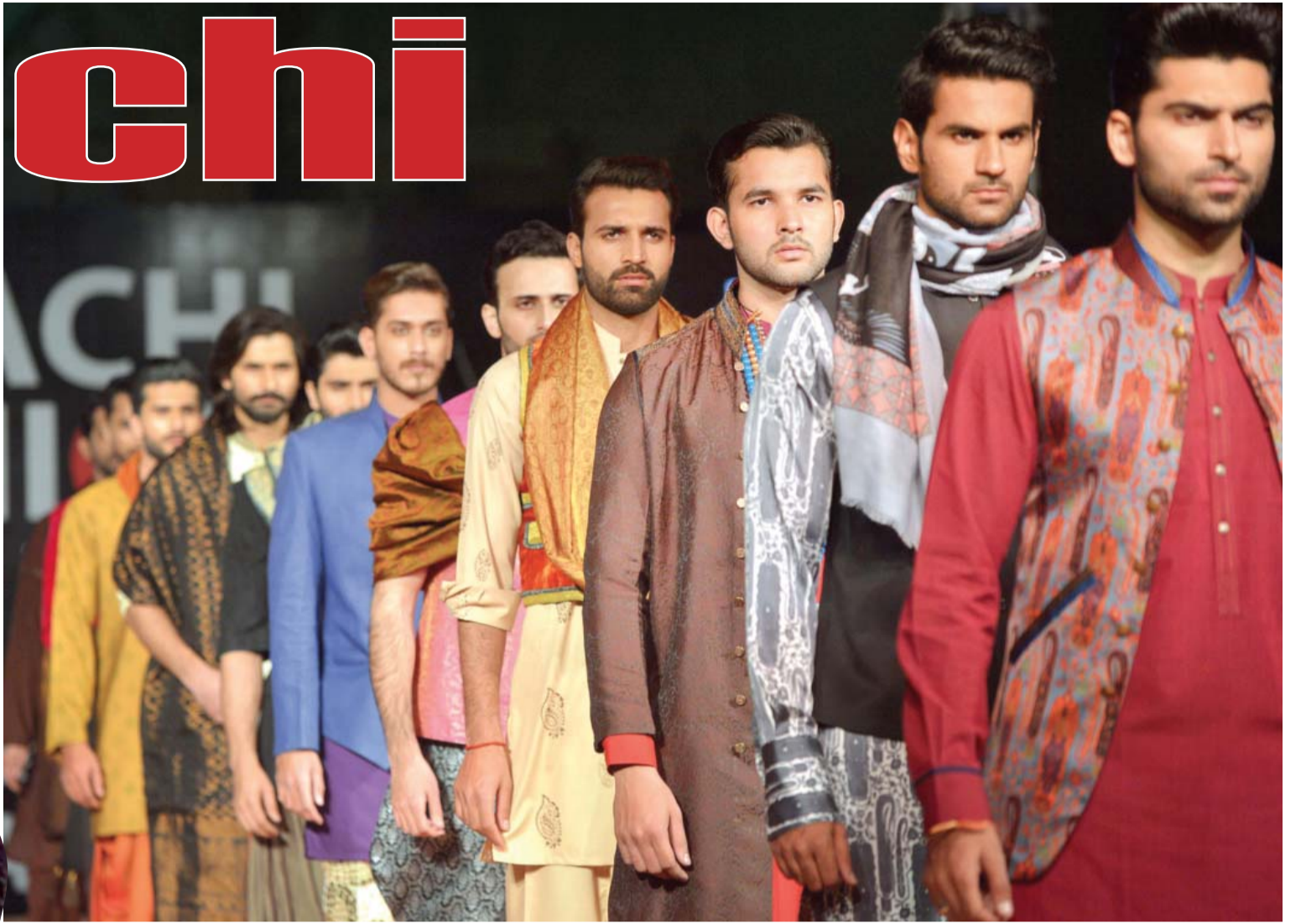
## Sasha Pieterse has got engaged

The 'Pretty Little Liars' actress is set to tie the knot with longterm boyfriend Hudson Sheaffer after he popped the question. Sasha, 19, and her 26-year-old fiance both took to Instagram to share the happy news, showing off photos taken by Jonnie + Garrett. Showing off her stunning ring, Sasha wrote: "The best day of my life. Thank you @jonnieandgarrett for capturing the moment." And Hudson posted a different picture, writing: "She said yes!!! Thank you @jonnieandgarrett for our amazing photos!" The photographers thought the couple were a "dream" to work with. They wrote: "Today's proposal in the clouds. These two are a dream." Sasha is likely to have lots of time to plan her wedding as it was recently revealed 'Pretty Little Liars' is to end after its seventh season. Actress Troian Bellisario said earlier this year: "It's only got a seventh season. Yeah, that's it, we're done after this." However, there could be a spin-off movie, but it won't happen for some time. Show boss Marlene King said: "We've got some really big ideas for a great PLL movie, but that won't happen right after the series ends. "I think we'll take a little break and let everybody go off and do a few things and hopefully we'll come back together again and do something really special."

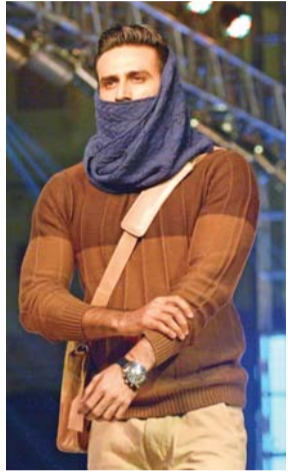


# Karachi

## Men's Fashion Week



Models present creations of designer Huma Adnan, Kapray, Maaz Jee and Royal Tag at the Karachi Fashion Week Men's in Karachi on December 26, 2015. — AFP photos



## Baron Cohen and wife give \$1m for Syrian refugees

British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen and his wife are donating \$1 million (900,000 euros) to help Syrian refugees, the charities receiving the money announced yesterday. The "Borat" star and actress wife Isla Fisher are giving \$500,000 to Save the Children to pay for measles vaccinations for children in northern Syria. They are also donating the same amount to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to help refugees in Syria and neighbouring countries, particularly women and children, with health care, shelter and sanitation. More than four million refugees have fled conflict in Syria for the relative safety of

the neighboring countries, according to the United Nations. Millions more have been forced to leave their homes for other parts of the country. Justin Forsyth, chief executive of Save the Children, said the money would "save many thousands of lives and protect some of the most vulnerable children".

"By allowing us to make their generous donation to Syrian children public, Sacha and Isla are helping highlight the tragedy of the issue today," he added. David Miliband, the ex-British foreign secretary who is president of the IRC, called their gift a "great expression of humanity." — AFP



Baron Cohen and Isla Fisher

Sri Lankan commuters journey past a billboard in Colombo yesterday, associated with a concert of the Latin pop star Enrique Iglesias. — AFP



## Organizers of 'sexy' Iglesias show should be whipped, says Sri Lanka President

Sri Lanka President Maithripala Sirisena yesterday said that organizers of a recent concert by pop star Enrique Iglesias in Colombo should be "whipped with toxic stingray tails" because it was "uncivilized." The December 20 concert in capital Colombo saw ecstatic local women running on stage to hug and kiss the "Hero" singer while others threw their underwear at him, Sirisena told a public meeting in the eastern district of Ampara. "This is most uncivilized behavior that goes against

our culture," the president said. "I don't advocate that these uncivilized women who removed their brassieres should be beaten with toxic stingray tails, but those who organized such an event should be," he added. Whipping with the tails of stingrays was reserved for hardened criminals in medieval Sri Lanka and is used as a popular idiom for extreme punishment of wrongdoing. There was no immediate comment from the local organizer, Live Events, a company co-owned by Sri Lankan cricket stars Kumar

Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene. In conservative Sri Lankan society, public displays of affection, even among married couples, is frowned upon. Police are known to have arrested courting couples for kissing in public parks or sea-front promenades. Enrique fans had paid prices ranging from 5,000 rupees to 50,000 rupees (\$350) to get to the live one-hour performance by the Latin pop star at a rugby stadium in Colombo which was part his world tour, "Love and Sex". — AFP

## Easa Husain Al-Yousifi & Sons Company Introduces the luxury ReFa beauty brand in the Kuwaiti market

Easa Husain Al-Yousifi & Sons Company and ReFa -Middle East announced the launch of the ReFa beauty masterpieces in Kuwait at an event hosted at the VIP Reham Gallery in Kuwait city, which was attended by a number of Society figures and Customers of Al-Yousifi Company in addition to the Directors & Management of Easa Husain Al-Yousifi & ReFa Middle East. The Movement of deep kneading picking up and making flow, tones up the female skin beautifully. The main features of this tool are the usage of the "Micro current" treatment which is also popular at esthetic salons.



Takes in the, light from the solar panel and generates a fine micro current. The rollers with its special shape cut into a diamond-like shape creates multiple pressure spots to gently tone up the female delicate skin. In order to replicate the "Kneading" technique that professionals use, this roller has 360 degrees

multi angle structure that combines the roller shape, incident angle, etc... This deeply picks up and makes flow complex body lines without being easily affected by the angle. Water-proof specifications that clears the Japanese industrial standards (JIS) (IPX7 or equivalent). It can also be used in your bathtub.

This photo provided by Disney/Lucasfilm shows stormtroopers in a scene from the new film, "Star Wars: The Force Awakens." Early screenings of the film begin Thursday night, Dec 17, 2015. — AP



## 'Star Wars' smashes Christmas Day box office record

The latest "Star Wars" film has smashed yet another box office record, raking in \$49.3 million on Christmas Day in North America—the highest total ever on the holiday, industry figures showed Saturday. "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" easily bested the previous Christmas Day record take of \$24.6 million set by "Sherlock Holmes" starring Robert Downey, Jr, which opened on December 25, 2009. "Star Wars" continues to be a bright, shining

beacon of light at the box office," Jeff Bock of industry tracker Exhibitor Relations told AFP by email. So far, "The Force Awakens"—the highly anticipated seventh installment in the blockbuster space saga—has taken in a whopping \$890.3 million worldwide, with \$440.4 million in the United States alone, Bock said. The film has received mostly glowing reviews, and is being credited with breathing new life into the Hollywood juggernaut franchise

launched by creator George Lucas in 1977. It had already set a number of other box office records—highest-grossing domestic opening night, biggest domestic single-day sales and biggest global opening weekend. As far as all-time box office sales, two films by James Cameron hold the record—"Avatar" (\$2.79 billion) and "Titanic" (\$2.19 billion) — and it is expected that "The Force Awakens" might upset both. — AFP

## ONTIME invites its customers to 'Mix and Match' their Fossil Interchangeable watches



ONTIME, the number one source for designer watches in the Middle East, is inviting its valuable customers to visit its stores around Kuwait to enjoy the 'Mix and Match' campaign for its newly introduced Fossil Interchangeable watches. The campaign was officially launched on 23 December 2015 and will run until 26 December 2016. The official launch event took place at its newly re-furnished Marina Mall store and was attended by ONTIME loyal customers, local influencers and media representatives. Event was interesting and guests enjoyed the exciting campaign launch in an entertaining and amusing atmosphere.

The event also witnessed the official launch of Fossil's winter 2015 collection with new designs and colors that matches the different tastes of customers. The Marina Mall branch has been developed to accommodate a larger number of customers and wider watches collection, as part of the company's commitment to excellent customer service, satisfaction and convenience. All ONTIME stores offer a watch for every occasion through the latest designs from more than 40 international fashion brands such as Fossil, Emporio Armani, Hugo Boss, Diesel, Michael Kors, Juicy Couture, Dici, Ferre Milano and Just Cavalli and many more.



# Lifestyle

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Lebanese Muslims pose for a photo with a man dressed as Santa Claus in front a Christmas tree in Downtown Beirut, Lebanon, Thursday. — AP

## Darkness begone! Lights ward off Nordic winter blues

Each year, Old Man Winter drops his curtain of darkness over the Nordic countries, not lifting it again until April when spring bathes the region in sunlight and nature comes back to life. At this time of year, when night falls as early as 2:00 pm (1300 GMT) and lasts until about 9:00 am (0800 GMT) in Oslo, Helsinki and Stockholm, people ward off the gloom by lighting up their lives as many ways as they can. Even daytime brings only a slightly lighter shade of grey during the darkest weeks before the winter solstice in December, when skies are often overcast in the three capitals.

Daylight is even more elusive farther north. In the Swedish mining town of Kiruna above the Arctic Circle, the sun never rises around the winter solstice. "Everything is grey, grey, grey! And so cold!" At 50, Birgitta Ohrling has never gotten used to Stockholm's long dark winters. Unable to do anything about the weather outside, the bubbly blonde started her own Nirvana wellness center in the Swedish capital, creating an artificial summer to chase away the winter doldrums. For 20 euros (\$22) an hour, visitors to the "sunroom" can bask in warming rays from special light therapy lamps, as the mercury hits a balmy 35 degrees C (95 F) — a far cry from the freezing temperatures outside.

The heat is only half of what you'd experi-

ence in a hot sauna, but the sunchairs, the wall mural of a sandy beach, and the sound of waves gently lapping the shores help create an aura of warmth and calm, and work wonders at fighting off the blues. Visitors leaving the center step outside looking a little dazed, rosy-cheeked as if waking from a long sleep yet invigorated and ready to face more of the dark winter. The high dosage of lux-a unit for measuring illumination-in the centre's special lamps help chase away the sleep hormone melatonin, giving people more energy. Up to 90 percent of Swedes suffer to some degree from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), also known as winter depression. The condition is characterized by sadness, lethargy, and increased alcohol and sweets consumption, according to Baba Pendse, a psychiatrist specialized in the disorder.

### City bathed in white lights

Many in the region try to counter the effects of the enveloping darkness with light therapy sessions or by taking cures of extra vitamin D, which is essential for growth and fighting off cardiovascular disease. In November, Stockholm registered only 46 hours of sunlight, just over half the amount in Paris but still nine times more than the paltry five hours registered in Stockholm in November last year. But not everyone needs a



This file photo taken on December 16, 2014 shows thousands of lights decorating moose statues in Stockholm. — AFP

special cure to combat the darkness: For most people, regular lunchtime strolls or weekend cross-country skiing sessions are enough to get their fill of light.

The Nordic passion for decorative white lights during Advent-the four Sundays leading up to Christmas-also helps most people charge their feel-good batteries. Starting in

late November, stars and special Advent candlesticks glow in almost every window in Stockholm homes, shops and offices, while facades, trees and even tree trunks are swept in strings of white electric lights. Large moose and reindeer light sculptures illuminate the city's central squares, as everyone waits for the first real snowfall to amplify the natural winter light. On December 13, Sweden's love affair with light reaches its pinnacle as the country celebrates Saint Lucia Day. The festival of light honors an Italian martyr whose name is derived from "Lux", the Latin word for light, and who was meant to chase away the dark spirits on the longest night of the year under the Julian calendar.

To this day, young girls across the country compete for the honor of being a "Lucia". Joined by their attendants, the Lucias rise early in the morning and, wearing a crown of candles in their hair and long white robes with a red sash, they sing Christmas carols at concerts and processions in churches, schools and public locations around the country. So it should come as no surprise that hordes of light-deprived Swedes each year choose to celebrate Christmas and New Year's Eve ... in sun-drenched spots like Thailand and the Canary Islands. More than 300,000 Swedes leave the country for the holidays each year. — AFP



Janet Hurley-Quackenbush waterskis on Christmas Day at Goodyear Lake in Colliersville, NY, during unseasonably warm weather Friday, Dec 25, 2015. The warmth sent people into the streets in T-shirts and shorts.

## Powder horn believed to be Alexander Hamilton's for auction



A horn believed to have been owned by Alexander Hamilton is photographed at Antique NJ in Closter, NJ. — AP photos



A gunpowder horn that a descendant and two experts believe was owned by Alexander Hamilton goes up for auction next month. The New Jersey dentist who acquired it from a patient in 1990 hopes the smash Broadway musical "Hamilton" will fuel interest in the object.

The musical has helped boost the number of visitors to New York City's Hamilton Grange National Memorial.

Dr Warren Richman believes the engraved cow horn symbolizes the American dream embodied by Hamilton. He was born out of wedlock in the Caribbean and later orphaned, and went on to play key roles in the founding of the United States. The powder horn auction will take place Jan. 11 at Sterling Associates in Closter (CLOH-ster), New Jersey. It would have been Hamilton's birthday. — AP