

'Cry of Aleppo' drive shows humanitarian role of Kuwait



IMF chief Lagarde found guilty over tycoon payout



Zsa Zsa, US star famous for being famous, dead at 99



Suarez double, Messi magic hands Barca derby delight



## GUNMAN KILLS RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR IN ANKARA

ATTACKER SHOUTS 'DON'T FORGET ALEPPO' • AMIR CONDEMNS MURDER



Min 09°  
Max 17°  
High Tide 03:10 & 17:16  
Low Tide 10:33 & 22:53



150 FILLS  
40 PAGES  
NO: 17086

### IRAN RELEASES FOUR KUWAITIS HELD IN AHVAZ

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah yesterday said four Kuwaiti citizens detained in Iran's Ahvaz have been released. "The Kuwaiti citizens have been set free and handed over to the Kuwaiti Embassy in Iran. They are expected to return to the country (Kuwait) tomorrow (Tuesday)," Jarallah said in a press statement.

The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs had summoned the Iranian ambassador in Kuwait for a meeting with the ministry's officials over the fate of the detained citizens. Earlier on Saturday, Jarallah commended Iranian authorities' cooperation over the detention of the Kuwaitis.

An official source at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs also lauded Iranian authorities' cooperation over the release of the Kuwaitis. Iranian authorities have just handed over the four Kuwaiti citizens to the charge d'affaires at the Kuwaiti Embassy in Tehran, the source said in a press statement. The source assured that the released citizens are fine and would be sent back to Kuwait today by a Kuwait Airways plane.

Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Rai reported the four were on a fishing trip when they strayed into Iranian waters and were detained on Friday.

Continued on Page 13



ANKARA: Russian Ambassador to Turkey Andrei Karlov is seen on the floor after being shot by a gunman (right) during a public event in the Turkish capital. — AFP

ANKARA: A Turkish policeman crying "Aleppo" and "Allahu Akbar" shot dead Russia's ambassador to Turkey at an art exhibition in Ankara yesterday, in what Moscow termed a "terrorist act". Andrei Karlov died of his wounds after the shooting, which occurred on the eve of a key meeting between the Russian, Turkish and Iranian foreign ministers on the Syria conflict. Dramatic television footage showed the man - smartly dressed in a dark suit, white shirt and tie - waving a gun and gesturing in the air at the Ankara exhibition hall where the veteran diplomat was opening a show of Russian photographs.

The state-run Anadolu news agency said the gunman had been "neutralized" - apparently killed - in a police operation inside the hall after 15 minutes of clashes. "Today in Ankara as a result of an attack the Russian ambassador to Turkey Andrei Karlov received wounds that he died from," Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in televised comments. "We qualify what happened as a terrorist act," she added. "The murderers will be punished. Today this issue will be raised at the UN Security Council. Terrorism will not win out," she added.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah strongly condemned the killing of the Russian ambassador yesterday. The Amir, in a cable to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said this terrorist act contravened diplomatic norms and moral values. Kuwait strongly rejects all forms of terrorism, HH the Amir affirmed. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Continued on Page 13



A worker of Turkish NGO Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) Burak Karacaoglu takes a selfie with seven-year-old Bana Al-Abad in the Rashidin district in Syria after she was evacuated from Aleppo. — AFP

### THOUSANDS EVACUATED FROM ALEPPO AFTER DEAL

7-YR-OLD BLOGGER HEADS TO TURKEY

ALEPPO: Thousands of traumatized Syrians including children left the rebel enclave of Aleppo yesterday as the UN Security Council voted to deploy observers to the battered city to monitor the evacuations. Families had spent hours waiting in below-freezing temperatures, sheltering from the rain in bombed-out apartment blocks and waiting desperately for news on a new wave of departures. After an agonizing delay, the operation resumed yesterday under a complex agreement that will see regime forces exert full control over Syria's second city.

More than 7,000 people travelled in 100 buses out of Aleppo yesterday, while dozens more vehicles were preparing to leave, said Ingy Sedky, spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

"We will continue throughout the day - and however long it takes - to evacuate the thousands more who are still waiting," Sedky told AFP. The evacuees included seven-year-old Bana Al-Abad, whose Twitter account had offered a tragic account of Syria's nearly six-year war, as well as 47 children who had been trapped in an orphanage.

Ahmad Al-Dbis, who heads a team of doctors and volunteers coordinating evacuations, saw dozens of buses and ambulances arrive at the staging ground west of Aleppo. He said the evacuees were in "a very bad state after waiting for

more than 16 hours" at a regime checkpoint without being allowed off the buses. The government had suspended evacuations on Friday, insisting that people also be allowed to leave two north-western villages under rebel siege. According to the ICRC and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, around 500 people left in a dawn convoy out of Fuaa and Kafra.

The Observatory said at least 14,000 people, including 4,000 rebels, have left the opposition sector since the evacuations began on Thursday. At least 7,000 remain, according to the Britain-based monitor. A rebel representative said that hundreds of people would also be evacuated from Zabadani and Madaya, two army-besieged rebel towns near the border with Lebanon, as part of the deal. Dbis said the Aleppo evacuees' departure was delayed for hours in temperatures well below freezing, compounding their plight from months of siege and bombardment by the army.

"They hadn't eaten, they had nothing to drink, the children had caught colds, they were not even able to go to the toilet," he told AFP. He described families wrapped in several layers of coats getting off the buses, which then headed back to Aleppo to bring out more. A young boy bit into an apple as aid workers distributed bottled water to his family. The UN's children agency UNICEF said

Continued on Page 13

ELECTORAL COLLEGE MEETS TO CONFIRM TRUMP WIN

PAGE 9

YAHOO PROBLEMS STORY OF TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

PAGE 27

### GOVT VOWS TO RESOLVE SPORTS CRISIS

News

in brief

#### 9 dead as truck ploughs into Berlin Xmas market

BERLIN: A truck ploughed into a crowded Christmas market in the German capital Berlin yesterday evening, killing nine people and injuring up to 50 others, police said. German media, citing police at the scene, said first indications pointed to an attack on the market, situated at the foot of the ruined Kaiser Wilhelm memorial church, which was kept as a bombed-out ruin after World War Two. The truck careered into the Berlin market at what would have been one of the most crowded times for the Christmas market, when adults and children would be gathering in the traditional cluster of wooden huts that sell food and Christmas goods. Police cars and ambulances converged quickly on the scene as a huge security operation unfolded. The fate of the driver of the truck was not immediately clear, but Bild newspaper said he was on the run.

#### Three hurt in shooting at Zurich Muslim prayer hall

GENEVA: Three people were injured by gunfire in central Zurich yesterday, police said, with local media reporting the incident occurred in a Muslim prayer hall near the city's railway station. "I can only confirm that there was a shooting," a spokeswoman for Zurich police told AFP, adding a statement would be released later. Swiss media said the three wounded people, all adults, were found in the street where the prayer hall is located. The suspected assailant had fled the scene and police sealed off the area, they said.

#### Saudi officials call to open jobs for women

RIYADH: A senior Saudi cleric and a health ministry official said women should be allowed to work as paramedics and opticians, Saudi newspapers reported yesterday, part of a push to relax strict labor codes in the ultra-conservative kingdom. "It's fine (for a woman) to work as a paramedic, provided she's decent and in the lawful attire," a senior member of the state-appointed body of clerics, the ulama, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Manea told Okaz daily. Mohammad Bajbar, a senior health official in the Red Sea commercial hub of Jeddah, told the Saudi Gazette that women could work in opticians' shops as long as they do not mix with men. "If a complaint is received by the health affairs department about the mixed environment then the shop might be closed down," said Bajbar.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The government pledged yesterday to resolve the years-old sports crisis that led to international sanctions and vowed it will cooperate with the National Assembly to issue new sports legislation, MPs said. The government submitted a two-point solution aimed at lifting a 14-month suspension on Kuwaiti sports imposed by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the world football body FIFA for alleged government's interference in local sports.

ference in local sports.

In a letter sent to the Assembly yesterday, the public sport authority said it will issue a new sports law within six months that is in line with international sport charters and respects the country's sovereignty, the constitution and public funds. In the second point, the authority said it will invite the IOC and FIFA to Kuwait to discuss the sports situation with the government and the Assembly in order to reach a solution that is agreed by all sides.

Continued on Page 13

### MISS PUERTO RICO LANDS MISS WORLD 2016 CROWN

OXON HILL, Maryland: Stephanie del Valle of Puerto Rico was crowned Miss World 2016 on Sunday, edging out runners-up from the Dominican Republic and Indonesia, and beauties from around the globe. Del Valle, 19, is a brown-eyed brunette student who speaks Spanish, English and French, and hopes to get into the entertainment industry. Crowned by Miss World 2015 Mireia Lalaguna of Spain, del Valle called it an "honor and a great responsibility" to represent her Caribbean homeland.

First runner-up was Yaritza Miguelina Reyes Ramirez of the Dominican Republic, followed by Miss World Indonesia Natasha

Mannuela. Contestants from Kenya and Catriona Gray of the Philippines also were in the final five. Canada's Miss World representative, Chinese-born Anastasia Lin was embroiled in a controversy when pageant officials reportedly warned her against speaking to the press for three weeks about human rights abuses in China. She was given the green light again on Wednesday. Last year, China blocked Lin from attending the same contest when it was held in the city of Sanya. Contestants from more than 100 countries took part in the Miss World beauty pageant, held at National Harbor near Washington, DC. — Agencies



OXON HILL, Maryland: Miss Puerto Rico Stephanie del Valle reacts after being crowned Miss World during the Miss World 2016 pageant at the MGM National Harbor on Sunday. — AFP

## AMIR SENDS LETTER TO ALGERIAN PRESIDENT

**ALGIERS:** Kuwait's Minister of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivered a letter Sunday from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Sheikh Nasser, who arrived in the Algerian capital earlier, met with President Bouteflika and delivered the letter which dealt with Arab and regional developments, in addition to bilateral relations. Sheikh Nasser was received at the airport by Kuwait's Ambassador to Algeria Mohammad Al-Shabo.

During their meeting, Sheikh Nasser and President Bouteflika discussed bilateral economic and development cooperation. The meeting dealt with "friendship relations between the two countries, and other domains dealing with economy and development, in addition to discussing other issues like the situation in the Middle East," Sheikh Nasser said in a statement to Algerian state TV. Sheikh Nasser said the views of Kuwait and Algeria were "fully identical" over issues he discussed with President Bouteflika. — KUNA



**ALGIERS:** Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika (right) reads a letter from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, delivered by Kuwait's Minister of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

## FM IN CAIRO FOR ARAB MEETING ON SYRIA



**KUWAIT:** First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah prepares to leave to Egypt yesterday. — KUNA

**CAIRO:** Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah has arrived in Cairo yesterday to lead Kuwait's delegation partaking in an extraordinary meeting of Arab foreign ministers upon Kuwait's request. During their meeting, the Arab foreign ministers are set to discuss the current situation in Syria amid the tragic conditions in the Syrian city of Aleppo.

His delegation includes Ambassador to Egypt Saleh Al-Thuwaikh, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Arab World Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani, Deputy Assistant of the Foreign Minister for his bureau affairs Ambassador Saleh Salem Al-Loughani, Kuwait's Permanent Delegate to the Arab League Ambassador Ahmad Abdulrahman Al-Bakr and other ministry's officials. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Head of the National Security Bureau Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. — KUNA

## KUWAIT DISTRIBUTES SCHOOL BAGS TO DISPLACED IRAQIS

**IRBIL:** Kuwaiti Consulate General in Irbil has distributed some 1,000 school bags for displaced Iraqi students in Irbil. Kuwait's Consul General in Irbil Omar Al-Kandari said yesterday that Kuwait is keen on helping the displaced Iraqis in Kurdistan and it has chosen to concentrate on the educational side for its great

significance to building better generations. He added that the campaign includes the distribution of 20,000 bags and different supplies, noting that some 5,000 bags have so far been distributed. Meanwhile, Hazim Yaseen, a student, thanked the state of Kuwait for the humanitarian initia-

tive to provide school bags and various supplies. Kuwait has been offering humanitarian aid to the displaced Iraqis in the Kurdistan region, including an educational aid project, in addition to 3,000 heaters and food rations as part of an aid package earmarked for the war-torn nation. — KUNA



**IRBIL:** Kuwaiti General Consulate distributes school bags for displaced Iraqi students in Irbil. — KUNA



# 'CRY OF ALEPPO' DEPICTS KUWAIT'S MAJOR HUMANITARIAN ROLE: OFFICIALS



**KUWAIT:** Al-Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Malek Al-Sabah attends Kuwait Red Crescent Society's 'Cry of Aleppo' fundraising campaign. — KUNA

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Red Crescent Society's (KRCS) 'Cry of Aleppo' fundraising campaign depicts the State of Kuwait's major role at the international humanitarian relief levels, a number of officials said yesterday. The campaign, launched yesterday in Farwaniya, Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Ahmadi governorates in support of displaced Syrians from Aleppo, came as a reaction from the Kuwaiti people, renowned for good deeds, the officials said in separate interviews. They also underlined the key role played by the KRCS for those who need support worldwide.

This charitable-humanitarian campaign has been launched in line with religious and humanitarian duties, toward the "brothers in Aleppo, which aims to support them following the annihilation of their homeland," said Sheikh Faisal Al-Malek Al-Sabah, Al-Farwaniya Governor. He also noted the keenness in this respect to bolster the State of Kuwait's status as a global humanitarian center.

Kuwait has always been in the front ranks for "aiding every-one and erecting bridges of relief and offering aid and tackling the hardships of the stricken and needy nations; in line with guidelines of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah," the governor said. Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud lauded the substantial response from the citizens and residents to the campaign, "reflecting genuine traits of the Kuwaiti people and their devotion for giving and hurriedly aiding those in need at times of hardships."

### K-Net only

Ibrahim Al-Fodari, the director of the technical bureau in Al-Farwaniya, said the dona-

tions were solely given via the K-Net. He also expressed gratitude to the KRCS, the generous citizens, the Ministry of Information, the media and other contributors.

Yousef Al-Me'raj, in charge of the emergency and catastrophes' affairs at KRCS, confirmed that the nationwide effort aims at dispatching humanitarian and relief supplies to the Syrians.

The KRCS is conducting the campaign at malls, State departments and Kuwait University. A delegation from the society will travel to Syria to prepare the supplies that would be handed to Syrians in need and the



**Director of the technical bureau in Ahmadi Governorate Ibrahim Al-Fodari**

displaced. Two days ago, he added, a batch of supplies including winter clothes and other necessities reached some of the Syrians in the north of the country.

Abdullah Al-Mesbah, a donor, said that he had chosen the KRCS because it is a veteran and reliable association. Another donor, Mansour Al-Otaibi, said, "We are following the footsteps of His Highness the Amir to scramble for relieving the afflicted anywhere, particularly in Arab and Islamic States." Other donors also expressed strong confidence that the KRCS, as always, would secure delivery of the necessities to the needy in war-torn Syria.



**People participate in Kuwait Red Crescent Society's 'Cry of Aleppo' fundraising campaign.**

### Worst conditions

Earlier, KRCS' Vice chairman Anwar Al-Hasawi said that the campaign will cover the country's five governorates. He affirmed that it has been organized in solidarity with the people of Aleppo who have been afflicted with the worst conditions, adding that the KRCS has mustered all potential and voluntary cadres to secure its success.

The campaign will proceed for two days in each governorate, Hasawi added. He expressed gratitude to the governors who hurriedly responded to the philanthropic call and opened the doors of the governorates to

receive donors, both Kuwaitis and residents.

Meanwhile, Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah stressed in a press statement the need to join the regional and international efforts to stop the Aleppo tragedy, adding that KRCS is ever ready to enhance its leading role, fulfilling its human responsibility toward the displaced Syrians. Also, Secretary of the Board of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate Nabil Al-Hafith said that opening the doors of the governorate to receive donations came upon directions of the Governor Ahmad Al-Rujaib. — KUNA





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

## CABINET URGES UNSC TO STOP SYRIA 'GENOCIDES'

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet has called on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to intervene promptly and stop the "genocides perpetrated against the Syrian people." The cabinet, during its customary weekly meeting yesterday, also expressed gratitude to all those who have contributed to the relief campaigns for Syria, voiced relief at improvement of His Highness the Amir's health, condemned the terrorist attack in Jordan, the latest bombing in Turkey, congratulated Qatar on the National Day and Lebanon on the new government.

In a statement after the weekly session, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah stated that the ministers affirmed solidarity of the Kuwaiti people behind the sagacious leadership in facing injustice and the approach to end the hardships suffered by the Syrian people.

The Cabinet, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah said, called on the UN Security Council to intervene immediately to halt the "genocides perpetrated against the Syrian people." He stated, "The Cabinet has followed up with deep concern on the regretful situation in the Syrian city of Aleppo, condemning the brutal operations and the massacres committed by the regime against the unarmed residents and the innocents.

"The Cabinet expresses gratitude to the faithful Kuwaiti people for interacting with the fundraising campaigns, undertaken by the Ministry of Information, Kuwait Red Crescent Society and relief societies, as a contribution to ending the injustice suffered by the brotherly Syrian people.

"The Cabinet affirms necessity of the Kuwaiti people's solidarity, bolstering national unity and standing in one line behind the wise

leadership in facing the injustice and the hardships of the Syrian people... and the Council urges the Security Council to intervene immediately to halt the genocides against the brotherly Syrian people."

At start of the session, Minister Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah said, the ministers expressed relief at improvement of His Highness the Amir's health following the setback he suffered last week, imploring His Almighty to bestow upon him lasting health and long life so he may continue serving the country.

### Sustainable development

The Cabinet examined the government action plan for the 15th legislative term (2016-2017 and 2019-2020), themed "toward sustainable development." They were briefed by Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Subaih, who explained that the program was worked out in light of His Highness the Amir's Address at the parliament inauguration session. She noted that the government action plan is in harmony with sustainable development objectives, endorsed by the UN General Assembly for the coming 15 years.

Priorities outlined in the scheme, the minister said, include public finance sustainability, privatization program, role of the private sector, developing small and medium enterprise, organizing the labor market, setting up a social security system, revamping education, health services, infrastructure, informatics, communication, economic know-how, corporate governance, environment and renewable energy.

This strategy is to be executed, Minister Subaih added, in light of regional and international circumstances. Moreover, the govern-

ment will carry out full-scale reform schemes. Such an approach would require cooperation on part of the National Assembly, and the other "partners" in the development process; namely public and private entities and NGOs.

### Letters to Amir

The ministers, in the beginning of the session, examined letters addressed to His Highness the Amir from the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on his mandate's conclusion, expressing deep gratitude to the State of Kuwait for boosting the "partnership" with the international organization. Ban, in the second message, expressed eagerness to see greater role by Kuwait in technological sector.

They also examined a message to His Highness from the Australian premier, expressing desire to bolster ties and lauding the Government of Kuwait's donation to building a mosque and a center after the name of the late Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in Australian capital. They were briefed about a message from the Jordanian king to His Highness the Premier, inviting His Highness to partake in the world economic forum due in the Dead Sea in May, 2017.

Meanwhile, First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah informed the executives about the talks he held with the British Minister of Middle East and North African Affairs Tobias Ellwood during the latter's visit to the country-during which an agreement was for criminals' extradition was inked.

The Cabinet condemned the terrorist attack in Karak, Jordan, the bombing that targeted military troops in Turkey, congratulated Qatar on the National Day and Lebanon on forming a new government. —KUNA

## THREE STATE DEPARTMENTS DENY CONTAMINATED WATER ALLEGATIONS

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Three state department held a joint press conference yesterday to deny rumors that drinking water in various public schools in Kuwait was contaminated. "The Environment Public Authority (EPA), Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) and Ministry of Health (MOH) are cooperating together and with other relevant authorities that water supplies are safe and of good quality," said engineer Mohammed Al-Enezi EPA's deputy director for technical affairs during a press conference held at EPA's building. He stressed that contaminated water allegations first made by a citizen on his social media account are groundless.

### Water samples

"We periodically take water samples to analyze them," he stressed, noting that all other bodies take and analyze samples as well and transparently declare the results. He also noted that EPA invited the complainer twice to visit its building and present evidence to prove his allegations, but he never showed up. Meanwhile, MEW's, Dr Meshaan Al-Otaibi said that MEW follows standard procedures to make sure that water supplies are safe, saying that the complainer should have been more accurate before making his claims. Otaibi also stressed that water quality in Kuwait is one of the best worldwide and that 400 samples are taken monthly from 500 sites

to be examined and make sure the water pumped to consumers was bacteria-free. "MEW also used neutral international labs such as those of WHO to verify the results reached in our labs," he underlined. In the meantime, MOH's assistant undersecretary for general health affairs Dr Majida Al-Qattan expressed regret that an old rumor, which he said was first posted last year is being circulated again, and claiming that 90 percent of water in public schools is contaminated. "We investigated the matter and proved those claims wrong," she highlighted, noting that the same applies to the recent allegations as the water is periodically examined.

### Lawmaker hospitalized

In other news, MP Khaled Al-Otaibi was rushed to the chest diseases hospital yesterday due to pulmonary embolism, his brother posted on his Twitter account.

### Sentence overruled

Separately, the court of appeal yesterday suspended a previous verdict which sentenced two female citizens who worked for Ministry of Utilities (formerly Ministry of Communications) to seven years in prison with hard labor and dismissal from their jobs for embezzling KD 520,000. The court also ordered the defendants' release, banned them from traveling and postponed the hearing of the case until further witnesses are summoned.

## FIVE HELD FOR COLLECTING FUNDS FOR ISLAMC STATE

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: State security detectives arrested five Syrian nationals over accusations of illegally collecting donations and sending them to fund the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria, said security sources. The sources added state security authorities had received information from Western intelligence agencies about funds transferred from Kuwait to terrorist groups in Syria including IS, Fateh Al-Sham (formerly Nusra) and other banned organizations. "By tracing the information, investigations led to a Syrian living in Sulaibikhat who admitted to transferring large sums to these groups for months," explained the sources, noting that large amounts of money were also found in the suspect's house. The suspect confessed to transferring the funds through another Syrian and his three sons, who own an office in Jleeb Al-Shuyukh, who were also arrested. The father confessed that he used to send the money with his sons to Deir Ezzour, which is controlled by insurgents.

### Dismissal rumors

Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Faleh Al-Azab denied that his meeting with the Public Anti-Corruption Authority's board of trustees had resulted in dismissing the chairman, as claimed on social media. "This is absolutely untrue," he underlined, urging bloggers to

be more accurate. Azab added that he had met Chairman Abdul Rahman Al-Namash, his Deputy Riyadh Al-Hajri and Secretary General Ahmed Al-Rumaihi, and discussed bridging gaps. He added that he would accordingly report to the Prime Minister.

### Payments

MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri yesterday filed an inquiry with Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh asking about payments made by the Central Bank to the Prime Minister, previous or current Cabinet members, the speaker of the house and current or previous lawmakers other than their salaries and allowances since July 31, 2016.

### Social aid

MP Thamer Al-Sowait warned the minister of social affairs and labor against her decision to suspend social aid given to Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis. "We strongly reject violating female citizens' constitutionally guaranteed rights," he stressed, noting that according to records, 1,300 women received social aid according to law 12/2011 amended by law number 23/2013. Meanwhile, MP Saleh Ashour yesterday proposed a bill suggesting granting Kuwaiti women married to non-Kuwaitis social, children and rent allowances, in addition to paying allowances to those in social care homes until they are employed.

## MINISTRY TO SPONSORS: CHECK MAIDS' RESIDENCIES REGULARLY

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Relations and Security Information Department at the Interior Ministry released a statement yesterday in which they asked citizens and expatriates to check the validity of their domestic helpers' regularly passports and residencies to avoid legal liability. The department noticed an increase in the number of residency law violations lately, and found out that this happened due to sponsors forgetting to renew the residencies or because of the them being out of the country.

### Commercial fraud

Assistant undersecretary for commercial supervision and consumer protection sector at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Eid Al-Rashidi said Al-Siddiq area emergency team uncovered a major commercial fraud involving a liquid soap product used to clean kitchenware. The operation was carried out in cooperation with the interior ministry. Rashidi said that an inspector was placed in a store in Shuwaik that has been put under surveillance, and workers were seen placing liquid soap with unknown specifications and origin into bottles that carried the trademark of a famous and highly-popular brand. The team is preparing to take legal action against the warehouse officials.

### Motorist injured

Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) received a call about a vehicle crashing into a light post near Sabah Al-Ahmad area. Wafra



KUWAIT: A vehicle damaged following an accident reported near Sabah Al-Ahmad yesterday.

Fire station men responded and rescued the person. The driver sustained a broken femur and was taken to hospital for treatment. Meanwhile, Hawally, Salmiya and technical rescue centers responded to a fire in a Hawally apartment. The building was evacuated, and the fire was put out. No injuries were reported.

### Traffic campaigns

The Interior Ministry's Traffic Department carried out several surprise campaigns in six governorates resulting in issuing 35,795 tickets, impounding 52 vehicles and four motorcycles, detaining 26 people for committing grave violations, while seven expatriates were deported for driving without a license. Eighteen wanted vehicles were also caught.



KFSD workers prepare equipment at the site of the planned 'Shamel 3' exercise.



KFSD Director General Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad meets with a delegation from Al-Sharja information center.



Firefighters conduct a fire drill at Burgan Secondary School for Girls in Qurain.



Firefighters pose for a group photo with officials from Burgan Secondary School for Girls.

## THIRTEEN STATE DEPARTMENTS PARTICIPATE IN KFSD EXERCISE

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) is set to hold the Shamel 3 exercise, which will be one of the largest in Kuwait, on December 22 with the participation of 13 government bodies, Deputy Director General Maj Gen Jamal Al-Bulaihees said. A meeting of participants was held at the exercise's grounds, where a brief on

the exercise was given by Lt Col Muath Al-Hamadi.

### Fire drill

Meanwhile, KFSD's firefighting sector conducted a fire drill at Burgan Secondary School for Girls in Qurain, which imitated a fire in the school's laboratory. The scenario of the drill saw firefighters successfully evacuating the building and rescuing

two injured people, before tackling the blaze.

### Invitation

In other news, KFSD Director General Lt Gen Khalid Al-Mikrad received a delegation from Al-Sharja information center of the government of Sharja, the United Arab Emirates. The delegation invited KFSD to participate in the 4th Sharja award for governmental communications.



Smoke can be seen coming out of an apartment in Hawally.

In Brief

AMIR CONGRATULATES  
LEBANON'S NEW PM

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable to Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri, congratulating him on the formation of a new cabinet in the country. In the cable, His Highness the Amir wished that the new government would fulfill the expectations and hopes of the brotherly Lebanese people, and push forward good relations between both nations. —KUNA



CP PATRONIZES  
AWQAF FORUM

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will patronize the 23rd Awqaf Forum under the slogan 'Boosting Islamic Spirit through Awqaf Culture'. His Highness has deputized Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Mohammad Nasser Al-Jabri to attend the inauguration ceremony today at 9:30 am at Sheraton Hotel. — KUNA



INT'L CALLS TARIFFS

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Utilities (formerly the Ministry of Communications) recently approved new tariffs for international calls done from Kuwait using the ministry's landline phone service. The new fares, which became official after being published in the state's official gazette 'Al-Kuwait Al-Youm' December 11 issue, stipulate a 15 percent reduction for calls done to the majority of countries worldwide. The new fees become effective on January 2, 2017. The full list of countries and the new price rates can be found on Kuwait Times' website at [www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net).



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Sunset as viewed from a beach in Kuwait. — KUNA photo

KUWAIT'S TRADE  
SURPLUS WITH JAPAN  
DOWN FOR FIRST TIME  
IN THREE MONTHS

**TOKYO:** Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan shrank 6.6 percent from a year earlier to JPY 27.7 billion (\$236 million) in November, down for the first time in three months due to weak exports, the Japanese Finance Ministry said yesterday. But Kuwait maintained monthly black ink with Japan for eight years and 10 months, the ministry said in a preliminary report. Kuwaiti overall exports to Japan declined 17.5 percent year-on-year to JPY 43.5 billion (\$370 million) for the first drop in three months, while imports from Japan fell 31.5 percent to JPY 15.8 billion (\$134 million), down for the third month.

Middle East's trade surplus with Japan expanded by 2.7 percent to JPY 374.5 billion (\$3.2 billion) last month, although Japan-bound exports slid 11.0 percent from a year earlier. Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 95.7 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, declined 10.0 percent.

The region's overall imports from Japan tumbled 27.7 percent, chiefly due to weak shipments of automobile, steel and electric equipment. The world's third-biggest economy posted a global trade surplus of JPY 152.5 billion (\$1.3 billion) in November, marking a third straight month of black, reflecting lower energy prices and the yen's appreciation, though both exports and imports declined.

Exports edged down 0.4 percent from the year before due to sluggish shipment of such products as vehicles to Saudi Arabia and steel to Italy. Imports fell 8.8 percent, with value of crude oil falling 14.4 percent. Deficit with China, Japan's biggest trade partner, shrank 35.3 percent to JPY 384.2 billion (\$3.3 billion).

Japan's currency strengthened against the US dollar by 13.5 percent from a year earlier to an average JPY 104.94, according to the ministry. The yen's appreciation pushes down import prices, but it also harms exports by making Japanese products more expensive overseas and cuts the value of repatriated overseas earnings. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Ambassador of Japan to Kuwait Takashi Ashiki hosted a reception to celebrate the birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan at his residence over the weekend. Higher officials, diplomats, members of the Japanese community and media persons attended the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## OIL MINISTER CHAIRS 97TH OAPEC MEETING

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Minister of Electricity and Water, and Minister of Oil Essam Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq is set to preside over the 97th meeting of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), to be held in Cairo, Egypt on December 22, 2016, said OAPEC's Secretary General Abbas Ali Al-Naqi.

Ministers of oil and energy from the member states will attend the meeting that will discuss OAPEC's budget (the General Secretariat and the Judicial Board) for 2017, besides appointing an audit for the organization's 2017 accounts, Naqi said yesterday. The ministerial meeting will also review the 2016 activities of OAPEC's Secretariat, including



Minister Essam Al-Marzouq

environment affairs and climate change. The Secretariat, in line with directives from the OAPEC's Executive Bureau, is following up

developments of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the ensued legal mechanisms after the 2015 Paris Agreement.

In addition, the Cairo meeting will review the studies prepared by the General Secretariat during the second half of 2016, including one on the power mixture in the member states, the present and opportunities for diversification.

According to Naqi, the ministers will be briefed on a report on the 22nd Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 22) recently held in Morocco. Names of winners of the OAPEC scientific awards for 2016 will be announced during the meeting. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Alaa Toson, President of AbbVie Pharmaceuticals (center) speaks during a joint press conference with the Ministry of Health to launch an educational campaign on communicable Hepatitis C yesterday.

— Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## HEALTH MINISTRY EDUCATES PUBLIC ABOUT COMMUNICABLE HEPATITIS C

### 'BETTER TEST THAN REGRET'

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Health (MOH) launched an educational campaign on communicable Hepatitis C during a press conference yesterday, highlighting the event, which is sponsored by AbbVie Pharmaceuticals and held in conjunction with the National Committee for fighting communicable Hepatitis C. The press conference was attended by the sponsoring patrons and organizers as well as a large number of media representing various media sectors in Kuwait.

The campaign was aimed at educating the public about contagious and communicable Hepatitis C and ways of treating and preventing it. It also aims at rectifying public misconceptions about the disease and to confirm that the medication to fight the disease is readily available and the disease can be treated provided the initiative to start the treatment exists and visit to the government's health departments for testing is made.

#### Responsibility

Regarding the sponsorship by AbbVie Pharmaceuticals, Alaa Toson, President of AbbVie said, "Our sponsorship of the event represents our commitment and responsibility towards the Kuwaiti society and public entailing our responsibility to take part in educating the public about the prevention and cure." He added, "We hope that this informative campaign

represents the beginning of the eradication of this contagious disease in the State of Kuwait in line with WHO (World Health Organization) objectives, which aims to eliminate this virus worldwide by the year 2030."

Toson stressed the necessity of communicating facts about the disease to the Kuwaiti community in order to create awareness and to rectify misconceptions about the disease, bringing to light that the biggest barrier between the patient and seeking the treatment lies in the fact that many patients are not aware that they have the disease. He said, "It was time we helped change the public outlook towards communicable Hepatitis C because diagnosis is now available within minutes due to the ministry's care to ensure the most advanced and state-of-the-art diagnosis and treatment tools available to fight contagious diseases.

#### Important step

To this effect, Dr Ghalia Al-Mutairi, President of Communication Committee at MOH, said, "Educating the public about the disease is deemed a fundamental and important step in preventing communicable Hepatitis C as there has so far been no vaccination available for the virus. Also, promoting awareness about the virus, its dangers and the ways it is communicated is so impor-

tant to encourage people to undergo the necessary tests and treatment until complete recovery." He further added that, with regards to the diagnostic aspect of the disease, it has now become easily accessible and available by simple tools which only take a few minutes to obtain highly accurate results, making it possible to detect the disease. This is an integral part of our educational campaign about communicable Hepatitis C.

It is worth noting that the 'Better Test than Regret' campaign involves a number of promotional and educational functions which also include health exhibitions covering 15 basic care centers, major and main government hospitals, as well as addiction rehabilitation hospitals, prison hospitals, government institutions and commercial complexes. Educational bulletins and circulars will also be distributed. This is in addition to giving health guidelines and information about prevention and treatment by using modern health educational means. A film to educate the public and to raise awareness about the disease has been made and will be aired and shown on the Ministry of Health's YouTube channel, TV and displays at clinics and hospitals. Furthermore, educational messages about the disease will be communicated through the Ministry's social media accounts.

## KUWAIT'S EXPORTS DECREASED 9.5 PERCENT IN JULY-SEPT: CSB

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's exports reached KD 3.624 billion for the third quarter of 2016, a decrease of 9.5 percent compared with the same period of 2015, said Central Statistical Bureau (CSB). Imports were KD 2.239 billion in the third quarter of 2016 with a one percent decrease compared with July-September 2015, the bureau added in a press statement yesterday.

In July-September 2016, balance of trade was KD 1.385 billion, while it was KD 1.741 billion in July-September 2015 with a 20.5 percent decrease, the statement showed. In the same period, volume of trade decreased 6.4 percent compared with the third quarter of 2015. Trade was KD 5.862 billion in July-September 2016, while it was KD 6.265 billion in July-September 2015, it said.

Coverage rate was 161.9 percent in July-September 2016, while it was 177 percent in July-September 2015. In the third quarter of 2016, coverage rate (excluding oil) was 16.1 percent compared with 17.8 percent in the third quarter of 2015, it made clear.

For July-September 2016, the top categories for exports were "Mineral fuels and oils" (KD 3.263 billion) with share of 90 percent and then "Organic chemicals" (KD 105.9 million) 2.9 percent, it noted.

In July-September 2016, the main partner country for non-oil exports was India, reaching KD 58.1 million. For exports, India was followed by Saudi Arabia (KD 43.7 billion), UAE (KD 41 million) and China (KD 40.1 million), it explained. The top country for Kuwait's imports was China (KD 336.8

million), records for imports range from United States of America (KD 227.2 million), UAE (KD 180 million) and Japan (KD 147.2 million), the statement said.

As compared with the same quarter of the previous year, exports to the GCC countries were KD 110.9 million, while it was KD 123.1 million, and decreased by 9.9 percent, it said. The share of the GCC countries was 3.1 percent in July-September 2016, while it was also 3.1 percent in July-September 2015. During the same period, 27.7 percent of imports products were Industrial supplies. As compared with the same period of the previous year; Industrial supplies increased 5.7 percent and Capital goods increased by 19.9 percent, the statement concluded. — KUNA

## KUWAIT AGRICULTURE COMPANY JOINS HORECA

**KUWAIT:** Preparations for the Horeca Kuwait 2017 exhibition are steadily progressing, and the event is attracting more companies to take part, since it is an event which provides a golden opportunity to exchange expertise to meet the local market's needs and future expansion plans.

In this regard, Kuwait Agriculture Company's Chairman Jawad Nasser Al-Arbash announced his company's intention to take part in the exhibition, stressing that it has been taking part as an exclusive agent for so many famous international brands.

Arbash added that since its inception in 1968 as a poultry and restaurants' producer, Kuwait Agriculture Company has been working on expanding its operation as a major importer and distributor of food stuff, relying on its large fleet of readily available and fully equipped delivery trucks.

Further, Arbash stressed that Kuwait Agriculture Company has specialized sale sections to cover all commercial channels and provide quality products with reasonable prices. "This strategy had a great



Jawad Al-Arbash

role in increasing our annual sales to over \$180 million-worth of food, non-food and retail products, as well as hotel and restaurant food services and many others," he underlined. Arbash concluded by highlighting his company's participation in Horeca 2017, noting that it targets enhancing its status and expanding its work through acquiring more international franchises.

Horeca Kuwait 2017 has so far attracted over 70 companies due to display their products in the presence of a group of international experts and chefs and a large group of company and hotel owners. The exhibition is organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Company at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref on January 16-18, 2017.

## ARAB OFFICIALS DISCUSS HOUSING

**RIYADH:** Arab housing and construction ministers will hold their 33rd session in the Saudi capital today for talks on revamping the housing sector in the Arab countries, according to a press release issued yesterday. The ministers, during the meeting to be chaired by Saudi Housing Minister Majid Al-Hogail, will discuss mutual cooperation for developing the sector.

They will also discuss issues that have been followed up by the Arab Housing Council's Executive Bureau, partly related to managing housing complexes, celebrating the Arab Housing Day, the Council's website service as well as following up on housing-related resolutions of Arab summits.

The agenda includes other topics, such as cooperation with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), coordination in the field with regional and international organizations, boosting joint Arab action at this level and realty funding.

Furthermore, the conferees will examine information swap on pioneering housing ventures, matters related to the Arab center for protection against earthquakes and natural catastrophes, amending some of the Council's constituent law, to be in tandem with the Arab League reforms. — KUNA

## MINISTRY TO INTEGRATE HUMAN RIGHTS PRINCIPLES WITH POLICIES

**KUWAIT:** Health Minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi stressed yesterday the ministry's keenness on integrating human rights principles with its health care programs and policies on all medical levels, including precautionary, therapeutic, and rehabilitant. Harbi made his remarks in his speech at the opening of the Islamic Organization for Medical Sciences (IOMS) conference, billed as "health rights and duties for patients from an Islamic perspective."

The four-day conference coincides with Human Rights Day and Kuwait's ongoing celebrations after being chosen as the Islamic Culture Capital 2016, he said, indicating that the conference's axes and events are in line with the ministry's priorities and vision.

The conference's discussions will lead to recommendations that would support health and development plans, programs, and strategies, transferring the link between health and human rights from just ambitions and hopes into a tangible reality, said Harbi.

The ministry has laid a clear roadmap for integrating human rights principles and measures with all its health policies, procedures, and care programs in accordance with the 2030 sustainable development plan, Harbi said. He also affirmed that IOMS is the ministry's strategic partner in solidifying human rights principles and measures in health and awareness programs and policies. — KUNA



Dr. Jamal Al-Harbi

BOOK A ROOM AT 65 KWD  
TO RECEIVE A 30% DISCOUNT  
IN ALL OUR OUTLETS!

Plan your winter holiday stay in Kuwait's leading beachfront resort. Relax in the comfort of luxuriously appointed rooms and signature amenities with remarkable views.  
Book a Deluxe Room for a special rate of KWD 65 + ISK including a delectable breakfast buffet for two.  
For more information, visit [jumeirah.com](http://jumeirah.com) or call +965 222 69 600.  
\*Terms and conditions apply.

**Jumeirah**  
MESSILAH BEACH  
HOTEL & SPA

Facebook: [JumeirahMessilahBeach](https://www.facebook.com/JumeirahMessilahBeach) | Twitter: [JumeirahMessilahBeach](https://twitter.com/JumeirahMessilahBeach) | Instagram: [JumeirahMessilahBeach](https://www.instagram.com/JumeirahMessilahBeach)

Crime

Report

## YOGA TRAINER'S VEHICLE STOLEN

**KUWAIT:** A man who works as a yoga trainer reported his vehicle stolen. In his statements to Maidan Hawally police, the Indian man explained that he was approached by a woman who accused him of blocking her car and threatened to call the cops. Soon afterwards, a man approached him, identified himself as a police officer and asked to step outside of his vehicle and hand over his car keys. He gave him the keys, only to stand and watch that person jump into the vehicle with the woman and drive away. A case was filed and investigations are in progress.

### Attackers arrested

Ahmedi detectives identified two out of five persons who reportedly attacked four citizens in their camp, in a case reported recently. One of the victims had told Ahmedi police that five men in dishdashas attacked them inside their camp, leaving them injured, and also damaged their cars. Police managed to arrest two of the suspects, Jordanian and bedoon (stateless), and are searching for the rest.

### Sexual assault

A Filipina woman accused her Egyptian sponsor of raping her in his apartment. In her statement to police, the victim said that three men lured her into an apartment and raped her there. She could not identify the suspects, but gave police the phone number of the person who contacted her. Police identified the man and attempted to call him several times but he failed to answer their calls. An investigation was opened in search for the suspects.

### Cousin stabbed

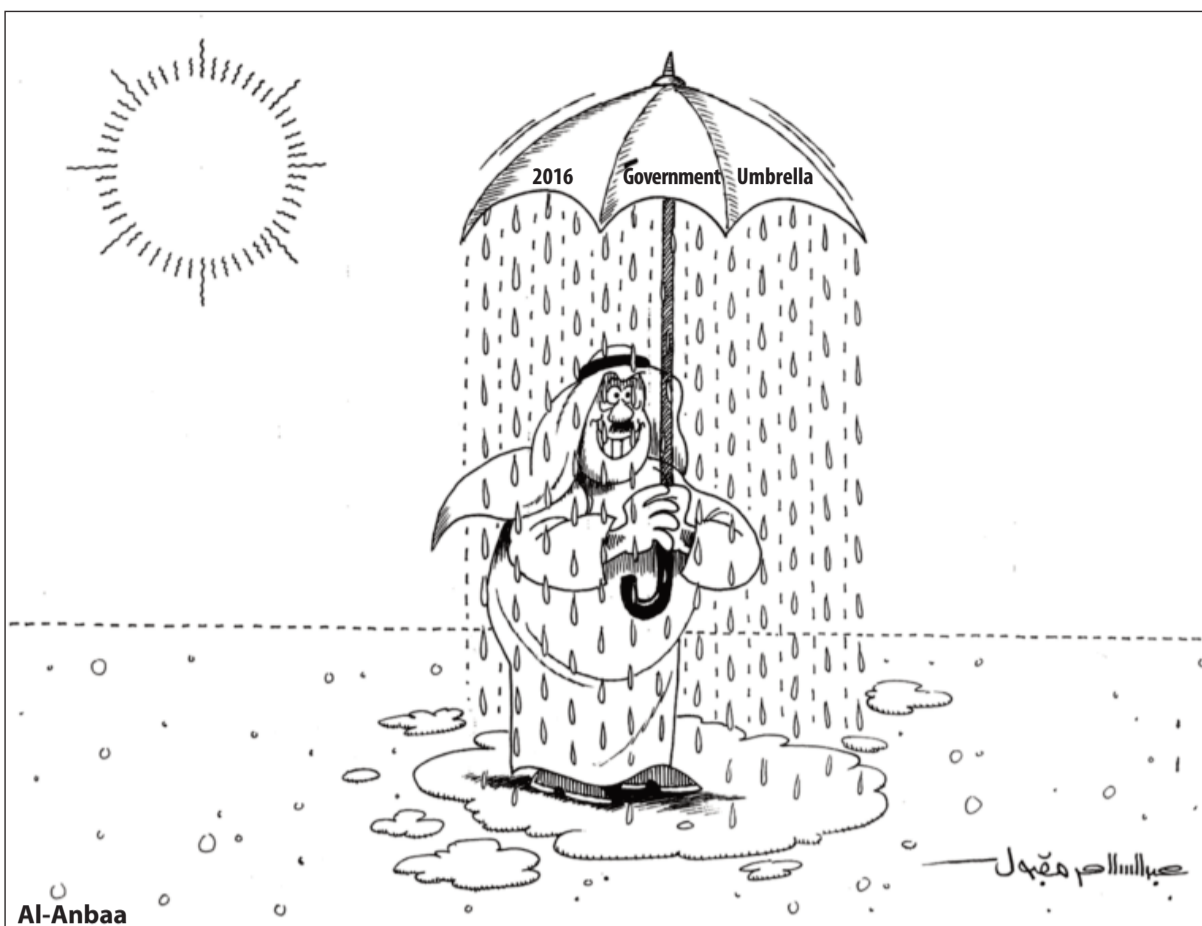
A bedoon (stateless) man stabbed his cousin over a dispute. Police and paramedics rushed to the area and took the stabbed man to Jahra hospital, where he was admitted inside the intensive care unit. The runaway suspect was charged with attempted murder and is wanted by detectives.

### Smuggling foiled

A passenger was caught trying to smuggle six pieces of hashish through Nuwaiseeb border outlet. The Pakistani man concealed the contraband in an oil shipment, according to the police report. He was sent to the Drug Control General Department to face charges.

### Murder investigation

Salwa police held an Indian man on suspicion of killing a Sri Lankan national following a dispute over liquor brewing and sale. The victim's body was recovered by the coroner. —Al-Rai, Al-Anbaa



Al-Anbaa



Al-Anbaa

## ESCAPING A MADHOUSE

By Thaar Al-Rasheedi

The never-ending problem in this country is that the majority demand for law enforcement, full democracy and freedom of expression as long as those laws do not affect them. Otherwise, they are pro-democracy and are political and legal activists. "Impose the law on others. I will criticize you until your law comes near me, if it does then you are being abusive with me," that is how they perceive law and democracy. In short, this is our dilemma not only in Kuwait, but throughout the Arab world where people use double measures and view the same situations with two different perspectives according to the side they are on, rather than judging it on the basis of fixed principles. They are all legal and constitutional experts. They are human right activists until they themselves violate the law and when it is imposed on them, they no longer see any laws or constitution.

At some point of time we have to get rid of double measures in dealing with the law, or else all elections will still give the same results and we will eventually end up asking about who voted for whom, who gave up the cause and why our country does not develop and stay just like a crippled turtle. As long as we are enslaved by our double-measured ways of thinking, the same problems will exist,

creating additional ones. Such double-measured mentality only produces emotional and impulsive decisions, making this political madness go on forever, and the results we had in the 2016 elections will be the same as those we will get in 2116. After all this, we still wonder why we are so sectarian, racial and always taking sides. Some believe that with its injustice, the state has forced some to take refuge under sects, tribes or doctrines.

Well, this is partially true, but the main reason is that the people themselves use double measures and thus, smaller tribes and sects were born. The solution to this problem is being realistic. Any solutions presuming that we live in an ideal society will only make things worse. We have to realize that it will take us a long time to get rid of this, and only then we can develop and have a parliament that truly represents the nation. Only then we will stop asking voters for whom they have voted. Anybody who claims to be ideal or living in a utopia under our current political situation is either a liar or has managed to escape from this madhouse. We do have so many liars, especially those calling themselves 'political activists.' We still have some politically sane people but those wisely prefer to remain silent.

—Translated by Kuwait Times

الجريدة

Al-Jarida

## EXPPELLING THE RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR AND PARLIAMENTARY RECKLESSNESS

By Hamad Al-Derbas

Things are getting very complicated in Syria, and the crisis seems to be insolvable in the short term. The Assad regime used to have chemical weapons that helped him negotiate, especially after the failure of forming a national Syrian opposition alliance before radical Islamists flocked to Syria.

In 2012, Assad managed to impose himself as a main player that could be spared on grounds that keeping chemical weapons under his control would ensure the international community's observation, while deposing him might lead to a vacuum and those weapons might end up in the hands of uncontrollable and unobservable radical militias, especially since those groups have so far exceeded 100 according to Syrian affairs expert Charles Lister. What even helped Assad maintain his position is that he got rid of over 90 percent of these chemical weapons over the past four years, although he did retain some in secret.

With all such complications, and in the absence of a national civilian opposition that melted and faded away into foreign radical elements, it is becoming futile to consider toppling Assad, especially since the countries demanding this are incapable of imposing their vision on the international community, namely on the Russians, whose influence covers such a large part of the world that Germany and entire Europe are incapable of confronting the Russian bear in Ukraine, because Germany gets 30 percent of its natural gas from Russia. Russian-Syrian relations are historical and go back to when the former Russian president Yuri Andropov said Syria is a 'red line'!

In view of the magnitude of the Syrian tragedy, demands to expel the Russian ambassador in Kuwait made by some citizens sympathizing with the Syrians are reckless and irresponsible. Unfortunately, those demands were made by law-makers who are supposed to wisely assess the problem and realize the impact of such demands on Kuwait that could not bear with Saddam Hussein's regime's aggression and will not tolerate possible Russian and Iranian ravages at a time when US foreign policy is retreating.

Therefore, any activity against Russia ought to be part of an international movement, especially since regional and international parliamentary organizations are accessible to these lawmakers, and thus they have a greater chance to play a major role rather than playing that of a sympathizer with impulsive public opinion.

—Translated by Kuwait Times



## BURGAN BANK INVITES PREMIER CUSTOMERS TO 'STAR WARS' SCREENING AT GRAND CINEMAS

**KUWAIT:** Stemming from its wide range of valuable privileges specially designated to its Premier Account holders, Burgan Bank, in collaboration with Grand Cinemas, recently invited its Premier Banking customers to watch the first screening of 'Star Wars - Rouge One' movie for free, at the most luxurious VIP movie theatre - Grand Class VIP in Al Hamra Luxury Center, on Thursday December 15th, 2016.

Each premier customer was entitled to

two free seats whereby they had the choice of reserving to any of the three shows that were exclusively available for them on that day at the "Grand Class VIP" lounge. Burgan Bank is committed to rewarding its Premier Banking customers with exclusive offers that are tailor-made for their own lifestyle and aspirations, and will continue accommodating optimal customer convenience with the provision of added value benefits inside and outside Kuwait.



## GULF BANK SPONSORS FIRST ANNUAL EXHIBITION ON NUTRITION AND HEALTH

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank was pleased to be the gold sponsor for the First Annual Exhibition on Nutrition and Health entitled 'Your life is your health, and your health is your nutrition.' The exhibition was held under the auspices of the Ministry of Health, on December 18-19 2016, at the Marina Hotel in Kuwait.

With the participation of specialized companies in Kuwait and Europe, this exhibition on health and nutrition for the people with special needs is considered the first of its kind. Its main objectives is to highlight the importance of a healthy nutri-

tion for those with special needs, raise awareness on ways and means for their nutrition, and to define the role of a healthy lifestyle to combat obesity amongst the new generation.

Gulf Bank is strongly committed to giving back to Kuwait and society through its corporate social responsibility program. The Bank supports numerous events focusing on youth, education, health and fitness, helping the underprivileged, women's empowerment, as well as promoting Kuwait's heritage and culture.



## GUST, EQUATE AWARD WINNERS IN MEGLOBAL CASE STUDY 2016

**KUWAIT:** Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) and EQUATE Petrochemical Company, a global producer of petrochemicals, awarded the winners of the annual MEGlobal Case Writing Competition 2016 to develop the academic and scientific competencies of students. MEGlobal is a wholly owned subsidiary of EQUATE and the competition is part of EQUATE's Sustainability Program. This is the fourth time this competition has been conducted with GUST.

The judging panel included EQUATE Senior VP and MEGlobal President Dr Ramesh Ramachandran, MEGlobal Vice President of Projects Dr Salman Al-Ajmi, as well as GUST's Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr Salah Al-Sharhan and Head of Mass Media Department Dr Fahed Al-Sumait.

Dr Ramachandran said, "Education and professional development are key elements in EQUATE's Sustainability Program. This competition is an opportunity for the students to analyze hypothetical cases that reflect potential challenges they will face in industry and put theories and ideas into real-life practices. Every year, the students have displayed their analytical abilities, strategic abilities and creative thinking. EQUATE and MEGlobal are proud to be associated with GUST and have always been impressed by the quality and the abilities of students in Kuwait."

Meanwhile, Assistant Professor at GUST College of Business Administration Dr John Hayes said, "Strategic thinking and the ability to apply it are key competencies within the corporate world. As evident from the high number of participants in this competition, the students are enthusiastic about applying their theoretical knowledge to devise real-life solutions for actual enterprise-based challenges. GUST firmly believes in encouraging and nurturing the strategic direction and original thinking in our students, which are key elements for pioneering corporations, such as EQUATE and MEGlobal."

The competition included the participation of a number of teams from GUST. Five teams, consisting of under-graduate and MBA students,



were selected for the finals and developed the case studies. At the beginning of the competition, MEGlobal provided a number of cases for the students to use in the competition. The case studies covered marketing/sales, finance, human resources and management. The students were guided by Dr Hayes, who is a renowned author and researcher, to provide innovation-based strategic business solutions to actual challenges. The participants competed for financial prizes

totaling KD 6,000 that were awarded to the five teams. The awards were KD 3,000 for first place to one team, KD 2,000 for second place split between two teams and KD 1,000 for third place divided between two teams. The winning teams were awarded by Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) CEO Mohammad Al-Farhoud, EQUATE Chairperson and PIC Deputy CEO for Olefins and Aromatics Hosnia Hashim, as well as Dr Ramachandran.



**Hopeless Afghan struggle to rescue boy sex slaves**

## DRONE SEIZURE A SIGN OF TOUGHER TIMES BETWEEN US, CHINA



**AMMAN:** Members of the Jordanian Gendarmerie line the road ahead of the funeral of their killed colleague Lieutenant Colonel Saed Al-Maaytah. — AP

## SUICIDE BELTS AT JORDAN TOURIST ATTACK SPOT

### TOURISTS WERE FOUND HIDING INSIDE CRUSADER CASTLE

**AMMAN:** Jordanian police said yesterday they found suicide belts and other explosives in the hideout of suspected Islamic State group jihadists behind an attack that killed 10 people including a Canadian tourist. The shooting spree in Karak, home to one of the region's biggest Crusader castles, is another blow to tourism in a country already grappling with the spillover of the wars in neighboring Syria and Iraq.

Another 34 people including a second Canadian were wounded in Sunday's assault in the city around 120 kilometers south of the capital Amman. Four gunmen were shot dead by police during the course of a siege lasting several hours. "The four dead militants are Jordanian members of a terrorist cell suspected of belonging to IS," a security source told AFP.

Interior Minister Salama Hammad told reporters there was no information about any militants still at large and there had been no arrests. He refused to give the nationality of the gunmen. Prime Minister Hani Al-Malki, who was addressing parliament at the time of the shootings, had spoken of as many as 10 gunmen.

Jordan is a leading member of the US-led coalition fighting IS jihadists in Iraq and Syria. It has carried out air strikes targeting IS, and also hosts coalition troops on its territory. Maaz Al-Kassasbeh, a Jordanian fighter pilot, was captured by the jihadists when his plane went down in Syria in December 2014, and he was later burned alive in a cage. Karak is Kassasbeh's hometown. In June, a suicide bombing claimed by IS killed seven border guards near the Syrian frontier.

#### Hit to tourism

According to sources close to Islamists, almost 4,000 Jordanians have joined jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria, and an estimated 420 have been killed since 2011. King Abdullah II said in a statement Jordan would stand up "to anyone who tries to attack or violate the security and safety of its citizens".

"Jordan is strong and able to stamp out terrorism and its criminal gangs," he said. But Mohammed Abu Rumman, of the Centre of Strategic Studies at the University of Jordan, was less optimistic. "No security measures can take on this kind of terrorism

without heavy losses," he said. "A year ago we were talking about a current of sympathy in Jordan for the jihadists." But "today that current has turned into groups of youth who feel they're an integral part of Daesh", Abu Rumman said, using an Arabic acronym for IS. Jordan has struggled to revive a tourism sector dampened by the 2011 uprisings across the Arab world, as well as conflict in Iraq and Syria. The Karak citadel, described by Jordan's Tourism Board as a "maze of stone-vaulted halls and endless passageways", dates back to the 12th century and has withstood many sieges.

Shaher Hamdan, the head of Jordan's association for tourist and travel agencies, said Sunday's attack "will certainly have negative consequences" on tourism. Jordan's tourism sector "is already affected by any event in the world or in the region, so imagine a terrorist event inside the country", he said.

Tourism accounts for 14 percent of Jordan's gross domestic product (GDP) and is its second highest source of foreign exchange earnings after remittances. Revenues from the sector dropped from

more than \$4 billion in October 2015 to \$3.1 billion in the same month this year.

Tourists from Canada, Britain and Malaysia were hiding inside a Crusader castle during armed clashes between Jordan troops and gunmen at the site, Jordan's interior minister said Monday, denying that foreigners had been held hostage at any point. "Inside the castle, there was a group of tourists," he said, adding that he did not believe the attackers were aware of the presence of the tourists during the standoff. "There were some foreigners that we can't say were taken hostage, but they were hiding," he said.

Hammad did explain how the Canadian woman, later identified as 62-year-old retired elementary school teacher Linda Vatcher, was killed.

Vatcher's adult son, Chris, was injured in the jaw and is being treated at a hospital in the Jordanian capital of Amman, the minister said. The minister said a Malaysian tourist was able to escape the castle during the standoff, while two British tourists got out after the four gunmen were killed by Jordanian security forces. — Agencies

## PAKISTAN CINEMAS QUIETLY SHOW INDIAN FILMS AS TENSIONS EASE

**KARACHI:** Pakistani movie theatres began screening Bollywood films again yesterday, ending an 11-week boycott in response to political and military tensions with India, theatre officials said. Some theatre owners said the restoration was because tension was easing, but others said it was because audiences had dropped so sharply since the boycott that began on Sept 30.

In Karachi, the Atrium Cinema started with a screening of the Indian sports romantic comedy "Freaky Ali". Still, the screenings were kept low key, with no publicity posters and scant attendance in the theatres visited by Reuters.

Relations between the nuclear-armed neighbors and foes have been more fraught than usual since a crackdown by Indian security forces on dissent in Indian-controlled Kashmir began in July. — Reuters

## TROOPS DEPLOY IN TENSE DR CONGO

**KINSHASA:** People stayed home across Democratic Republic of Congo yesterday, leaving troops to patrol ghost cities as tension peaked hours before President Joseph Kabila's mandate ends, but with no election in sight. Kabila's second term expires at midday on December 20, but he has shown no sign of stepping down and talks on a pre-election transition have failed, sparking fears of fresh political violence in the mineral-rich but unstable nation.

Normally teeming Kinshasa, the megacity capital of 10 million people, was a shadow of itself yesterday, with barely any traffic on the main roads, public transport at a minimum, and soldiers and police outnumbering passers-by. Shops were shuttered in the main square and there were tense scenes at Kinshasa University, where dozens of police and troops held back hundreds of students, AFP journalists said.

In the volatile east, torn by two decades of armed conflict, five rebels, a South African peacekeeper and a Congolese police officer were killed when militia fighters attacked several buildings in Butembo, including the prison. Kabila, who has been in power for 15 years, is constitutionally barred from seeking a third term but under a recent constitutional court order he may stay on until a successor is chosen.

The ruling party and some opposition leaders have agreed to schedule an election in April 2018, leaving Kabila in office until the vote. But the main opposition bloc rejects this. In Kinshasa, journalists were prevented from entering the university grounds by security forces and irate students, but students reached by telephone said they had been planning "to march peacefully" to parliament to demand Kabila step down. Security was also tight in the

second city, Lubumbashi, in the southeast, with most shops closed and very little traffic. Social networks have been cut or filtered since midnight Sunday on orders from the authorities and police at the weekend banned gatherings of more than 10 people.

#### Talks to resume

An AFP journalist saw police disperse a group of eight young people chatting on the street in Goma, in the east, where business too was at a standstill. In a last-ditch bid to achieve a peaceful transfer of power, talks took place last week between the ruling party and fringe opposition groups allied against a mainstream opposition coalition led by 84-year-old Etienne Tshisekedi. But despite more than a week of mediation they broke up on Saturday, with no progress on the main issues that

divide the two sides.

Negotiations are due to resume on Wednesday when Catholic bishops acting as mediators return from a long-planned trip to Rome a day after the 45-year-old Kabila's term ends. A democratic handover would break ground for Congo's 70 million people who since independence from Belgium in 1960 have never witnessed political change at the ballot box.

And in the last few years hundreds of people have died in political violence in the capital, Kinshasa, including 53 in anti-Kabila protests in September. The president has been in power since his father Laurent Kabila was assassinated in 2001. He was elected in 2006, and again in 2011, in a poll the opposition decried as rigged. Tshisekedi's opposition grouping has threatened to bring people into the streets from Monday if the talks failed. — AFP



## The Delegation of the European Union in Riyadh is pleased to announce that the Winner of the Chaillot Prize for the Promotion of Human Rights in the GCC region in 2016 is Abolish 153 Campaign.

The Chaillot Prize is awarded to this organisation in order to acknowledge and further encourage their remarkable efforts and work for the promotion and protection of human rights in the State of Kuwait. The awarding ceremony will take place in Kuwait, in January 2017.

The Chaillot Prize is presented annually by the Delegation of the European Union in Riyadh (responsible for relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kingdom of Bahrain, State of Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman and State of Qatar), in co-operation with the Delegation of the European Union to the United Arab Emirates and the Embassies of the European Union Member States to GCC countries, to civil society organisations and public or private institutions for actions, campaigns and projects which support human rights awareness, promotion and protection in the GCC region. The Prize is named after the Palais de Chaillot in Paris where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted on 10 December 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly.

## IRAQIS CREATE MARKET IN MUD OF DISPLACED CAMP

**KHAZIR:** Mobile phones, cartons of cigarettes and fresh mutton are all on sale inside a camp for Iraqi civilians displaced

in the battle to recapture Mosul-if they have the money. In the Khazir camp, buyers trudge in the mud, skidding around in

flimsy shoes and examining improvised market stalls on the ground between tents that shelter thousands of people.

Behind his makeshift display of mobile phones and USB cables, 28-year-old Waad Khalaf grins. Buyers are permanently flocking to his stall, he says. Under the Islamic State jihadist group, "having a mobile meant prison so now everybody needs to buy one," he says, his hands stuffed into the pockets of his fake leather jacket to warm them. The former laborer escaped his home town of Gogjali on the outskirts of Mosul in northern Iraq in November as fighting raged there between Iraqi forces and IS fighters.

Selling phones for up to around 130,000 Iraqi dinars (\$100) each allows him to buy warm winter clothes and shoes for his daughter and son, says the father-of-two. Khalaf and his wife can then also afford to buy medicine from Arbil in Iraqi Kurdistan several dozen kilometers to the east, he says.

Not far away in the improvised market, Khalaf's clients can charge their new phone by plugging it in to a multi-socket extension cord linked to a generator. In a camp with just four hours of electricity a

day, savvy young entrepreneurs are asking for the equivalent of around 40 US cents for an hour of power from the roaring machine. Khalaf has only been selling his phones for three days but Farhan Yassin says he was one of the first salesmen at the improvised market. It happened "just like that," he says. "We never spoke to each other but somehow we all ended up here."

### Snipping skills

For 12 days, Yassin has been selling cigarettes as a way of returning to normality after living under the jihadists. He lost his shop in Mosul after IS closed it down and made him pay the equivalent of around \$1,300 for selling cigarettes, he says, which were just as sinful as mobile phones under their ultra-conservative rule. He now sells each packet of cigarettes for around 500 dinars (around 40 US cents) after buying them in bulk in Arbil. Ammar, a barber, also left Mosul last month when anti-IS forces arrived at the gates of Iraq's jihadist-held second city.

He was only able to smuggle a pair of scissors into his bag as he fled and had to buy all the rest of his equipment in Arbil.

Seating his clients in front of a mirror, he uses his new gear to trim their beards or snip away at their hair. His customers "pay what they want as nobody has work", he says, plastic comb in hand, bags of vegetables left behind on his small table as payment.

The 26-year-old history graduate was unable to work as a teacher under IS as the group set up its own schools, says the young man, whose head is wrapped tightly in a scarf under a hood to keep out the bitter cold. When he could not find work at a camp school either, he again resorted to his snipping skills to support his young daughter "who needs diapers and powder milk".

Not far from where he cuts hair, powder milk is on sale next to sanitary pads, underwear, metal cutlery and fizzy drinks for those with money. Cash is in rare supply among the roughly three million people displaced by fighting in Iraq. But one couple has found a solution. They slip bags of rice and lentils they have received as aid through the fence surrounding the camp to people on the other side who buy them for a few precious bank notes. —AFP



**MOSUL:** In this Sunday, Dec 18, 2016 photo, Iraqi children look at the body of a half-buried Islamic State militant while talking to an Iraqi soldier in the Al-Barid district. —AP

## TURKEY BORDER CROSSING BECOMES CENTRAL HUB IN ALEPPO EVACUATION

ALREADY HOME TO SOME THREE MILLION REFUGEES

**CILVEGOZU:** Clogged daily by dozens of aid trucks, a Turkish border crossing has become a key hub in efforts to get help to those who have fled the devastation in the war-ravaged Syrian city of Aleppo. The Cilvegozu border crossing in Turkey's southern Hatay province just east of its main city Antakya is in a peaceful area, with little sign of the horror that lies just a few dozen kilometers beyond to the south.

Already home to some three mil-

Aleppo evacuated to the neighboring Idlib province.

Every day, dozens of aid trucks from the Turkish Red Crescent and the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) charity head into Syria, not to Aleppo itself but to camps that are accommodating thousands of people just inside the border. The Turkish Red Crescent has so far dispatched 216 trucks and the IHH 381 trucks, all loaded with humanitarian aid, since the start of the month.

province to accommodate up to 80,000 Syrian refugees fleeing Aleppo. According to Turkish officials, three possible sites have been identified in Idlib province.

"We are ready for any scenario," said a Turkish official. "Turkey in the past managed such humanitarian operations with success. There's no problem there." While Turkey is clearly keen to ensure most Syrians stay on their side of the border, it is also setting up a smaller 1,000-person tent city—the pre-

ferred official term rather than refugee camp—in its border town of Reyhanli. This will house "disadvantaged Syrians" including the injured, the disabled and their families.

### 'Demanding job'

Since the evacuations began last week, 131 injured Aleppo people — 46 of them children—have been taken to Turkey yesterday morning, a Turkish official told AFP. Five of them have died in hospital. Funeral cars from Turkey have also been seen bringing the dead back to the Turkish border. A vocal critic of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime, Turkey has championed itself as the broker with Russia of a ceasefire deal opening the way for civilians and rebel fighters to be evacuated from eastern sections of divided city of Aleppo in a stuttering but ongoing process.

Turkish trucks cannot cross into Syria directly but load their humanitarian aid to Syrian trucks on the border, IHH's board member Izzet Sahin said. "This is a demanding job," Sahin told AFP at the NGO's logistics centre at Bab Al-Hawa around 1 kilometer from the Turkish border. "The crossing of Turkish trucks into the Syrian territory is still considered a security problem," he said.

On Saturday, thousands arrived in bus and car convoys from across the country under the slogan "Open Road to Aleppo" close to the border gate. The IHH, a pro-government Islamic charity, is playing a large role in the transport of aid for Aleppo and pressing for greater access. It gained international prominence in 2010 when a ship it had chartered to break the blockade in Gaza was stormed by Israeli commandos in a raid that left 10 Turks dead and caused a crisis in relations that has only just been healed. —AFP



**JERUSALEM:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, center, attends the weekly cabinet meeting. —AP

## SURVEY: ISRAELIS INCREASINGLY LOSING FAITH IN GOVERNMENT

**JERUSALEM:** A leading Israeli think tank yesterday said it has found that Israelis are increasingly losing faith in their government and most Israeli public institutions - findings that mirror the global trend of dissatisfaction and cynicism that helped propel Britain's exit from the European Union and the victory of President-elect Donald Trump.

The Israel Democracy Institute also found a continuing nationalistic streak among the country's Jewish majority, with more than half of respondents in a nationwide survey opposed to allowing Arab political parties into the governing coalition. Tamar Hermann, an Israeli professor who led the research, said the study found a "value shift" away from Israel's traditional liberal democratic roots that should concern its leadership.

"Israelis are shifting away from the cosmopolitan point of view to a more communitarian, nationalistic, ethnic, religious point of view, much like is happening in other countries," said Hermann, academic director of the Guttman Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research, which compiles the annual Israeli Democracy Index. The study found a "significant drop" in the public's trust in Israeli political institutions. Trust in the Knesset, or parliament, fell to 26.5 percent from 35 percent last year. Similarly, trust in the government fell to 27 percent from 36 percent, and three quarters of respondents now feel their politicians are detached.

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin said the findings were troubling and required national soul searching, adding that "at this moment of trial for democracies, we have to make an effort so that our democracy will be vital, strong and committed to all its citizens." The only institution that maintained its

strong standing was the Israeli military, which is trusted by 90 percent of the Jewish public and 82 percent when the Arab minority is factored in.

### Global trends

While Hermann cited "global trends" for the sentiments in the poll, Israel has been undergoing its own process of rising nationalism in recent years, driven by failed peace efforts with the Palestinians, a yearlong wave of violence in Israel and the West Bank, three wars against Hamas militants in Gaza and the growing political power of religiously motivated West Bank settlers in the government.

The survey, for example, found that 71 percent of Jewish respondents believe that human rights groups, which have been harshly criticized by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition, cause damage to the state. That was up from 56 percent a year earlier. Likewise, it found that 59 percent of Jews oppose having Arab parties as part of governing coalitions, and 52.5 percent of Jews believe that those who refuse to accept Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people should be stripped of their right to vote.

Hermann said that Netanyahu should be "very worried" about the shrinking level of public trust in the government, but that overall he might be pleased by the growing nationalist tide in the country. "He's not going to cry over the result," she said. The Guttman Center is a division of the Israel Democracy Institute, an independent nonpartisan think tank. The survey interviewed 1,531 adults, broken down between Jewish and Arab respondents, last May and had a margin of error of 2.9 percentage points for the Jewish sample, and 6.6 points for its smaller Arab sample. —AP



**RASHIDIN:** A young Syrian child evacuated from the embattled Syrian city of Aleppo during the ceasefire arrives at a refugee camp. —AFP

lion mainly Syrian refugees, Turkey has in recent months focused efforts on looking after victims of the conflict inside Syria, rather than encouraging more to come in. But there is full mobilization at the Cilvegozu crossing that faces Syria's Bab Al-Hawa, with Turkish NGOs playing a key role in piling aid for desperate civilians from

### '80,000 person tent city'

"I have come all the way from Konya" in central Anatolia, a truck driver told AFP while waiting his turn to cross into the buffer zone. "I am carrying food, baby diapers and clothes to be delivered for Syrians," he said. Turkey has also stepped up efforts to set up a huge "tent city" in Idlib

Province to accommodate up to 80,000 Syrian refugees fleeing Aleppo. According to Turkish officials, three possible sites have been identified in Idlib province.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan since the start of the Syrian civil war championed an "open door" policy to allow all Syrians inside the country.

## IS SUICIDE BOMBER KILLS EIGHT LIBYA TROOPS NEAR BENGHAZI

**BENGHAZI:** A suicide bomber has killed eight Libyan army troops near the eastern city of Benghazi, an attack that showed the Islamic State group is still able to strike out in the North African country despite recent battlefield losses, Libyan security and health officials said yesterday.

The Sunday bombing in the besieged Ganfouda area was a counterattack on the advancing troops that also wounded another eight soldiers, the officials said, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media. IS claimed responsibility for the bombing in a statement circulated online, releasing images of an explosion hitting parked vehicles and buildings it said was taken from a drone.

"The fighting in Ganfouda is in its last stage, and terrorist group leaders are besieged inside," army spokesman Ahmed Al-Mosmari said. Ganfouda is one of the last two extremist-held areas in Libya's east, besieged by Libyan army troops that answer to Field Marshal Khalifa Hifter. Earlier this month, the Islamic State group lost control of the city of Sirte, the militants' main stronghold in Libya, essentially

ending any near-term ambitions to expand their self-styled caliphate.

But that victory has opened the door for multiple armed factions to potentially turn on each other in a scramble for control of Libya's vast oil wealth, the country's only source of real revenue. A UN-brokered peace deal was reached a year ago, trying to establish a unity government to end the chaos that has plagued Libya since the ouster and death of longtime strongman Moammar Gadhafi in a 2011 civil war. Instead, Libya remains divided between east and west, with no effective government and rival factions and militias - each side with backing from different foreign countries.

This month an escalation of violence between armed groups in the capital, Tripoli, prompted the UN Security Council to urge the parties to cease fighting, as fears grow that fresh conflict could erupt around the oil fields. Libya is split into two governments, with a parliament in the east that has refused to approve the UN-brokered government in Tripoli. Hifter backs Libya's last elected parliament, which is based in the east, against rival militias loyal to the Tripoli government. —AP

## MIDDLE EASTERN CHRISTIANS FACING 'TRAGEDY': CHURCH

**JERUSALEM:** A leading church figure in the Middle East said yesterday Christians across the region were facing a "tragedy," and accused the international community of failing to act. "The situation of Christians, especially in Syria and Iraq, is a tragedy," said Archbishop Pierbattista Pizzaballa, apostolic administrator of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, in a press conference ahead of the Christmas holidays.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem heads the Roman Catholic Church in the Holy Land. He said up to two-thirds of Christians have left in those two countries, citing in particular Aleppo—the previously mixed city in northern Syria which has been devastated by more than five years of civil war. "In Aleppo, before the war there were 300,000 (Christians)," he said. "Now it is about 50,000 maximum."

He accused world governments of failing to act to help stabilize the region, instead resorting to "slogans." "The international community now limit themselves to slogans and some economical support. Nothing more than that—it is very weak." While he said attacks on Christians killed specifically due to their religion were relatively rare, there have been examples of persecution by the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria.

Earlier this month 23 people were killed in a bombing at a Coptic Christian church in Egypt, while in September a prominent Christian writer was shot dead in Jordan. As a region, the Middle East has the highest levels of religious hostilities in the world, according to research this year by the Pew Research Center. Christians were harassed in 16 out of 20 countries in the region, Pew found. In Israel, Pizzaballa said he was opposed to a government-backed plan to force mosques to quieten their calls to prayer which is currently going through the Israeli parliament. "I think it is a dangerous precedent," he said. "I wish this bill won't proceed. There are other ways to solve the problem of acoustic pollution," he said. —AFP

## TURKEY DENIES CLAIMS OF A 'SYRIA BARGAIN' WITH RUSSIA

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey yesterday denied it had forged any secret "bargain" with Russia over the future of Syria ahead of a key ministerial meeting including Iran, despite improving cooperation that led to a deal for evacuations from war-wrecked Aleppo. Turkey and Russia saw relations plunge to their worst levels since the Cold War last year when a Turkish jet shot down a Russian war plane over Syria.

But a reconciliation deal was signed earlier this year and despite being on opposing sides in the Syria conflict—with Ankara backing rebels trying to topple Moscow ally President Bashar Al-Assad—the rhetoric has warmed considerably. This has led to suggestions that Turkey agreed to Russia helping Assad to retake all of Aleppo, while Moscow vowed not to interfere in Turkey's own military operation in northern Syria.

"That's not how we see it," a senior Turkish foreign ministry official said. "It is not like we make a kind of a bargain. We don't see any connection." In a military operation that began in August, Turkish forces and rebel allies are now pressing on the Syrian town of Al-Bab where they have encountered stiff resistance from jihadists. "People are

more impatient to see more results," said the official. "It is difficult but it will continue."

The comments came as Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif of Iran, Assad's other key ally, are due to hold unprecedented tripartite talks on the Syria conflict in Moscow on Tuesday. "The Russians suggested Turkey, Russia and Iran come together for a solution, initially over Aleppo, to be maybe further enlarged to the other parts of Syria," said the Turkish official, expressing hope the talks would provide an "impetus".

"It is not a miracle meeting," said the official. "It will give a good opportunity to understand what is happening." The official insisted that Ankara was sticking to its position that Assad must go for there to be a solution in Syria. "No way we can have any contact with the Syrian regime," said the official, denying there had been any secret talks with Assad representatives. "Someone who is the culprit in the death of 600,000 people cannot be the partner for a solution. With the Russians we agreed to disagree on this matter." —AFP



## US SCHOOL AN ANTIDOTE TO TRANSGENDER COMPLAINTS

**ATLANTA:** Inside a sunny classroom at a church decorated with rainbow flags, two transgender teenagers exploded into giggles during a dance break from math at Pride School Atlanta. They are among a handful of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) youth who have found a haven at the school, which opened this fall at a time when the number of discrimination complaints from transgender students has been soaring across the nation. The non-profit private Pride School Atlanta is seen as the first school in the American South focused on the LGBT community and one of few addressing similar concerns in the nation.

"They don't have to fight for the right to exist here," Christian Zsilavetz, the school's transgender co-founder and director, said in an interview. Court records and data reviewed by Reuters show a 12-fold surge in transgender student-related civil rights complaints lodged with the US Department of Education - from seven in 2014 to 84 in 2016. Many complaints involving bathroom and locker room access are going unaddressed following court developments, and there is uncertainty over the direction the administration of President-elect Donald Trump will take on the issue.

The inaction has shut down a process that increasingly had provided recourse to students fighting for access to facilities, names and pronouns matching their gender identities. In recent months,

federal authorities have suspended investigation or monitoring in 35 pending cases of alleged discrimination, court documents show. They are appealing restrictions that were imposed by a US judge in Texas amid building backlash to the Obama administration's policies promoting transgender bathroom rights. Amid the wrangling, a transgender high school student in Volusia County, Florida, has been failing a gym class, often late or improperly dressed due to complications about where he must change clothes.

Despite having a mustache and goatee, he cannot change alongside the other boys in the locker room, said his mother, Jennifer, who asked to be identified by only her first name to protect her son's identity. He is increasingly angry after already waiting for two years on a pending civil rights complaint. "It's hard to look at him and say, 'Yeah, what you are going through is unfair. But there's nothing we can do about it,'" she said.

### Safe haven school

At Pride School, where transgender students are the majority of its inaugural class, Josh Farabee, 14, feels comfortable showing off his spunky pink and lime hair and long mauve nails. Under the gender-neutral restroom policy students voted for, he prefers the men's restrooms but discovered he still frequents the women's. The transgender student's days at the

school are a far cry from his former public school, where classmates called him "tranny" and "fag." "I don't wake up scared to go to school," he said.

Still, Josh and his mother, Stacia Oberweis, said his public school was relatively accommodating, with teachers adapting to his new name and "he" and "him" pronouns. "The teachers can follow a policy but you can't make the kids get on board," Oberweis said. "And we all know kids are terrible to each other." Even opponents of transgender bathroom access see benefits in the Pride School model, which is serving a small group of full- and part-time students in a multi-age classroom. "We might disagree with the content but the notion of local solutions and school choice... is probably a good thing," said Gary McCaleb, senior counsel at the conservative Alliance Defending Freedom.

### Growing backlash

Stories like Josh's increasingly have alarmed officials at the US Department of Education. In court records, the department says its research of transgender issues led to a 2013 landmark resolution of a civil rights complaint out of Arcadia, California. The agreement recognized a transgender boy's right to use gender-specific facilities, including the boys' cabin on a class trip. The government soon saw an outpouring of complaints. The advocacy group Lambda Legal rewrote a

brochure once focused on bullying protection. "We have evolved to, 'You absolutely should not be sent to the nurse's bathroom,'" said Dru Levasseur, transgender rights project director for Lambda Legal, referring to the unisex bathrooms commonly offered in schools that block transgender students from their preferred bathroom. As of late October, there were 32 open civil rights investigations into transgender discrimination complaints at elementary and secondary schools in 21 states, Education Department data shows. The agency did not disclose details.

One involves the student in Florida who filed his complaint alleging discrimination in his school district, said his lawyer, Asaf Orr, at the National Center for Lesbian Rights. Now in his first year of high school, his mother says he feels stigmatized on the long walk to the media center to change clothes for physical education, which in his opinion was the best of the options offered to him. He once found himself locked out of the gym upon return. His school district said in a statement that its policies are not discriminatory under current law and that it works with transgender students on a case-by-case basis. "Things take time," said Thomas Krever, chief executive officer of the Hetrick-Martin Institute helping LGBT youth in New York City. "This is time that this current generation of young people just doesn't have." — Reuters



Senator John McCain

## MCCAIN SEES RUSSIA HACK AS THREAT, AT ODDS WITH TRUMP

**WASHINGTON:** President-elect Donald Trump is the business titan who has spoken appreciatively of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Republican Sen John McCain is the tough-talking national security hawk who warns that Russian interference in the US election threatens to "destroy democracy."

McCain, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, on Sunday joined Democrats in calling for a special select committee to investigate foreign cyberattacks, putting him at odds not only with the incoming GOP president but with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky, who favors allowing the Intelligence committee to take the lead on the inquiry.

"We need a select committee. We need to get to the bottom of this. We need to find out exactly what was done and what the implications of the attacks were, especially if they had an effect on our election," McCain said. "There's no doubt they were interfering and no doubt that it was cyberattacks. The question now is how much and what damage and what should the United States of America do? And so far, we have been totally paralyzed." Trump calls reports of Russian hacking "ridiculous" and his transition team dismissed the CIA assessment, saying it was the work of the same people who claimed Iraq had weapons of mass destruction.

CIA Director John Brennan has said the intelligence community is in agreement that Russia tried to interfere in the US presidential election, though there's no evidence Moscow succeeded in helping Trump win. But the charge, along with Trump's selection of a potential secretary of state with business ties to Russia, has divided a GOP riven by a fierce presidential primary and Trump's refusal to single out Moscow for criticism.

The fractures within the Republican Party will test longstanding GOP orthodoxy that

saw Russia as a threat and responded to Putin's annexation of Crimea with tough sanctions. "I think reality is going to intercede at one point or another," McCain said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union," on the eve of the Electoral College vote expected to formalize Trump's victory. Trump, McCain suggested, "will very quickly understand what the Russians are all about."

### Blue bird stays mute

The Twitter-loving Trump did not immediately respond to McCain's remarks. But the president-elect's incoming chief of staff refused Sunday to say that the president-elect trusts the CIA's conclusion that Russia hacked the Democratic National Committee in a bid to help the real estate mogul defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton. "They haven't been totally up front and transparent in their opinion as to who, what, where and how this all happened," Reince Priebus said of the intelligence community on "Fox News Sunday."

Republican Sen. Richard Burr of North Carolina said Friday that his Intelligence panel "will follow the intelligence wherever it leads." McCain at Armed Services and Sen. Bob Corker, chairman of Foreign Relations, also plan inquiries. McCain joined Republican Sen Lindsey Graham and Democratic Sens. Chuck Schumer and Jack Reed in pressing for a select committee in a letter released Sunday. An aide to McConnell said he would review the letter. McCain and Trump have clashed throughout the campaign. Trump bashed McCain as a "loser" and "not a war hero" because he was shot down and captured during the Vietnam War. McCain criticized Trump for making disparaging remarks about NATO, immigrants, Muslims and a "Gold Star" family that lost a son in Iraq - and for refusing to say he'd accept the presidential election results unless he won. — AP

## ELECTORAL COLLEGE MEETS AMONGST EFFORT TO DENY TRUMP PRESIDENCY

'THE LETTERS ARE ACTUALLY QUITE SAD'

**WASHINGTON:** And you thought Election Day was in November. Electors are set to gather in every state to formally elect Donald Trump president even as anti-Trump forces try one last time to deny him the White House. Protests are planned for state capitals, but they are unlikely to persuade the Electoral College to dump Trump. An Associated Press survey of electors found very little appetite to vote for alternative candidates. Republican electors say they have been deluged with emails, phone calls and letters urging them not to support Trump. Many of the emails are part of coordinated campaigns.

"The letters are actually quite sad," said Lee Green, a Republican elector from North Carolina. "They are generally freaked out. They honestly believe the propaganda. They believe our nation is being taken over by a dark and malevolent force." Wirt A Yergler Jr, a Republican elector in Mississippi, said, "I have gotten several thousand emails asking me not to vote for Trump. I threw them all away."

A joint session of Congress is scheduled for Jan 6 to certify the results of the Electoral College vote, with Vice President Joe Biden presiding as president of the Senate. Once the result is certified, the winner - likely Trump - will be sworn in on Jan 20. The Electoral College was devised at the Constitutional Convention in 1787. It was a compromise between those who wanted popular elections for president and those who wanted no public input.

The Electoral College has 538

members, with the number allocated to each state based on how many representatives it has in the House plus one for each senator. The District of Columbia gets three, despite the fact that the home to Congress has no vote in Congress. To be elected president, the winner must get at least half plus one - or 270 electoral votes. Most states give all their electoral votes to whichever candidate wins that state's popular vote. Maine and Nebraska award them by congressional district. The AP tried to reach all of the electors and interviewed more than 330 of them, finding widespread aggravation among Democrats with the electoral process, but little expectation Trump would be derailed.

### Democratically undemocratic

Some Democrats have argued that the Electoral College is undemocratic because it gives more weight to less populated states. That is how Hillary Clinton, who got more than 2.6 million more votes nationwide, lost the election to Trump. Some have also tried to dissuade Trump voters by arguing that he is unsuited to the job. Others cite the CIA's assessment that Russia engaged in computer hacking to sway the election in favor of the Republican. But despite the national group therapy session being conducted by some Democrats, only one Republican elector told the AP that he will not vote for Trump.

There is no constitutional provision or federal law that requires



PASADENA: Rex Teter, a member of the Electoral College, holds two days of delivered mail at his home. — AP

electors to vote for the candidate who won their state. Some states require their electors to vote for the winning candidate, either by law or through signed pledges. But no elector has ever been prosecuted for failing to vote as pledged, according to the National Archives.

Those laws are rarely tested. More than 99 percent of electors through U.S. history have voted for the candidate who won their state. Electors are selected by state parties, and so are often insiders who can be trusted to vote for the party's candidate. Many Republican electors said they feel duty-bound to honor

their pledge to vote for the candidate who won their state, regardless of how they feel about Trump.

Still, some anti-Trump activists have been getting creative in trying to persuade electors to dump Trump. In addition to thousands of emails, Republican elector Charlie Buckels of Louisiana said he received a FedEx package with a 50-page document that the sender said "had absolute proof that the Russians hacked the elections." "From the tenor of these emails, you would think these people are curled up in a corner in a fetal position with a thumb in their mouth," Buckels said. — AP



BEDMINSTER, New Jersey: In this Nov 20, 2016 file photo, President-elect Donald Trump talks to media as he stands with National Security Adviser-designate, retired Marine Gen John Kelly at the Trump National Golf Club Bedminster clubhouse. — AP

## CABINET SELECTIONS SIGNAL POINTED SHIFT POST OBAMA

**WASHINGTON:** Propelled by populist energy, President-elect Donald Trump's candidacy broke long-standing conventions and his incoming Cabinet embodies a sharp turn from the outgoing Obama administration. Trump, a Republican who pledged major changes after eight years of a Democratic White House, has assembled nominees for a Cabinet that includes many business executives who have never served in government, and military leaders are in line to oversee defense and homeland security. In one case, Trump has named someone who once called for dismantling the agency he'd lead.

A change of political parties at the White House almost always brings policy adjustments. But Trump's Cabinet expects to carry the outsider flair of his campaign, a role reversal compared with more conventional teams under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama that were heavy on former lawmakers, governors and veterans of past administrations. A look at the expected shift in the federal government:

### State department

Trump's decision to nominate Exxon Mobil

CEO Rex Tillerson as secretary of state means the department could be run by a lifelong oil executive with deep ties to Russia and no government experience. Outgoing Secretary of State John Kerry, a former senator who was chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, spent much of his tenure seeking agreements to fight climate change, restrain Iran's nuclear program and pressure foreign adversaries through financial penalties. But if Tillerson wins Senate confirmation, he would have a big say over whether the Trump administration withdraws from the Paris climate treaty and the Iran nuclear pact, along with the future of US relations with Russia.

### Defense department

James Mattis retired from the Marine Corps as a four-star general in 2013 and had been a battlefield commander for most of his career. Compare that with current Defense Secretary Ash Carter, who worked for years at the Pentagon and in academia but never served in uniform. To take the defense secretary job, Mattis needs Congress to pass a law allowing him to serve. Current law requires a Pentagon

chief to have been out of the military for at least seven years to uphold the commitment to civilian control of the military. The law was last waived for George Marshall in 1950. Trump has praised Mattis' effectiveness at "thank you" rallies around the country and has promised a major buildup of the country's defense capabilities.

### Treasury department

Obama's Treasury Department was in crisis mode from the moment he took office, dealing with massive job losses and the meltdown of the housing market. Eight years later, Trump has nominated Steven Mnuchin to lead the department, turning to a former Goldman Sachs executive who invested in a bank that foreclosed on thousands of homeowners after the housing crisis. Democrats are expected to press Mnuchin on his role in IndyMac, which was rebranded OneWest, and the deal that left the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation responsible for taking as much as 80 percent of the losses on former IndyMac assets. Mnuchin has promised "the most significant middle-income tax cut" since President Ronald Reagan. — AP

## TRUMP AIDES SAY DEMOCRATS' COMPLAINTS ARE SOUR GRAPES

**WASHINGTON:** Sour grapes. That's how Donald Trump's closest advisers see Democrats' complaints that Moscow hacked their private emails this election season in a bid to sow discord among their supporters and sway the election toward Republicans. The pushback comes ahead of the Electoral College vote, which was expected to make official Trump's election win and pave his way to take office on Jan 20.

"Let's assume it's true," Reince Priebus, Trump's incoming chief of staff, said Sunday of Russian interference in the election. "There's no evidence that shows that the outcome of the election was changed because of a couple dozen John Podesta emails that were out there." The number of leaked emails by Podesta, Hillary Clinton's campaign manager, was actually closer to tens of thousands. And it'd be difficult to prove exactly what influenced voters. But Democrats said it was a personal attack and a threat to democracy.

"The emails were weaponized," said Donna Brazile, interim chair of the Democratic National Committee. "The release of stolen, hacked emails caused a lot of confusion and of course it disrupted our daily campaign life." Foreign policy experts say part of Russia's calculation was likely a desire for payback for years of US criticism of its own elections and to paint

America as a flawed champion of democracy - potentially weakening it on the world stage.

"I would characterize it as a thinly disguised, covert operation intended to discredit the American election and to basically allow the Russians to communicate to the rest of the world that our elections are corrupt, incompetent, rigged, whatever - and therefore no more honest than anybody else's in the world including theirs," said Robert Gates, who was defense secretary under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

### Weakening Clinton

Gates, who is no longer in government but has met privately with Trump, said he couldn't confirm that Russia was trying to help Trump win. But "I think it clearly was aimed at discrediting our elections and I think it was aimed certainly at weakening Mrs Clinton," he said. Trump's transition team and loyalists on Capitol Hill weren't buying it - at least not on the eve of Monday's Electoral College vote. "Where's the evidence?" asked Kellyanne Conway, another close Trump adviser.

On Obama's vow to retaliate against the Russians for hacking, Conway said: "It seems like the president is under pressure from Team Hillary, who can't accept the election results." — AP

# ITALY'S TIRELESS COASTGUARD ON BUSIEST MIGRANT YEAR

'AS SOON AS SOMEONE CALLS FOR HELP, WE BECOME CONDUCTORS'

**ROME:** It has been a record year for Italy's coastguard, with nearly 180,000 people rescued in the Mediterranean, longer days than ever before and, despite their efforts, thousands of victims. In a small room in a soulless ministry building in the south of Rome, red telephones ring and operatives juggle with maps on giant screens on the walls as they coordinate all rescue operations off Libya. "As soon as someone calls for help, we become conductors," directing any nearby vessels—be they coastguard, military, private or commercial—to detour to the rescue zone, spokesman Filippo Marini told AFP.

In the gloom of the operations centre, SOS calls are reduced to little more than coordinates, handled with military precision. But the cries of desperate migrants, faces numbed by fear and hands outstretched for help as they slip off sinking dinghies, are not far off, with a

video of past rescues playing on a loop on a giant screen in the corridor.

Spread up and down the 8,000 kilometers of Italian coastline, the 11,000 members of the coastguard are charged with ensuring maritime safety, protecting the ecosystem and regulating the fishing industry. They traditionally survey an area of 500,000 square kilometers off Italy's shores. But an underperforming coastguard in crisis-hit Libya means the Rome Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) actually has authority over most of the international waters between both countries.

## More boats, fewer phones

The seas teem with activity. Around 170,000 people were rescued from migrant boats in 2014, with another 153,000 picked up in 2015 and nearly 180,000 this year—including 4,000 just last week, despite worsening weather

at sea. And the smugglers have upped their game, sending more of their smaller boats-and dinghies rather than wooden vessels-and dispatching lots at the same time. This year saw a 40-percent rise in the number of boats rescued.

"The smugglers used to send bigger boats, each with a satellite phone" to call for aid, said Sergio Liardo, the centre's head. "Now they set off four boats out with one phone." Patrolling vessels can easily find the dinghy with the phone but have to look out for the other three, which can deflate and take water quickly. Drowning is not the only killer here: overcrowding, hypothermia or fuel burns can also finish off in a few hours people weakened by terrible conditions endured trying to get this far.

As well as the thousands of migrants lost in seconds to the waves—sometimes as the rescue crews look helplessly on—the coastguard's near-daily press releases this year have provided a running tally of corpses discovered aboard dinghies.

## Stalwart duty

The NGO-led rescue vessels patrolling the area have testified to how difficult it can be to spot a dinghy in the immense blue and regularly warn some may be sinking without a trace. "We cannot rule that out," Liardo admits. And while in the past each day of calm seas would see a handful of boats set off, this year saw a series of mass departures. More than 13,000 people were rescued in one week at the end of May, some 14,000 others in five days of good weather in August—with a record hit with 7,000 people on 53 boats picked up in one day—and 6,000 more on October 3 alone.

In Italy, where reception centers are at bursting point, the figures have stirred up a storm, with the anti-establishment Five-Star Movement and anti-immigrant Northern League insisting it is not Rome's job to rescue foreigners off Libya and house them here. The government says rescue ops at sea will have cost 1.5 billion euros this year, with an extra 2.3 billion euros spent on reception. "We have a duty not to let these people die. If we ignored it, we would have to answer to the Italian justice system," Marini said. "It's also a question of human kindness," he added. — AFP



**ROME:** This file photo taken on May 28, 2015 shows Italian officer Gianluca D'Agostino of the Italian Coast Guard, looking at a map of the Mediterranean Sea, in the control center at the headquarter of Italian Coast Guard. — AFP



**ZAVIDOVICI:** A picture taken on December 2, 2016, shows Bosnian Roma, Redzo Seferovic posing with his firefighter uniform at the firefighter station. — AFP

## ROMA SHATTERS GLASS CEILING IN BOSNIA BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN

**ZAVIDOVICI:** Five years ago a bar owner refused to serve him but today Redzo Seferovic is the first Roma elected to head a municipal council in Bosnia. The October vote is an "historic event", said Predrag Prastalo, head of the Bosnian branch of the European Movement non-governmental organisation which tries to promote EU values. But the way ahead is long and the first session that Seferovic presided over in Zavidovici in central Bosnia was proof of that.

Lacking experience and ignorant of protocol, he had to be guided to open or close debates, prompting sarcasm and jibes. "I am asking you to help me. I am doing this for the first time, there will be mistakes," Seferovic, who is in his fifties, told the council. Some deputies posted videos of the session online to ridicule him. "That hurt me," Seferovic told AFP. "But I have learned to face such challenges in life." Human Rights Watch said in its 2016 annual report that "Roma remain the most vulnerable group in the country, facing widespread discrimination in employment, education, and political representation."

## 'No drinks for Roma'

Seferovic has had his share of insults like other Roma throughout the Balkans, Muslims. Seferovic said that it was in the Yugoslav army that he had learned how to tie a tie. "I knew that one day I would need it," Seferovic said at his fire station while changing into civilian clothes and tightening his tie. Seferovic's neighbor Saban Bajric recently returned to Zavidovici after spending three years in Germany with his wife and three children. He told AFP that his asylum request was rejected "like to the majority of some 30 families from the neighborhood." "Redzo is a good man. We gave him a chance by voting for him. We would like that he gives us a job," said Bajric.

Rejected by two courts, his complaint is now before a third, he said. Seferovic is an atypical Roma—he is a professional fireman while 95 percent of his fellow Roma in Bosnia are unemployed, according to a 2015 study of the Sarajevo-based Atlantic Initiative non-governmental organisation. His three sons are jobless. Seferovic said he was the only Roma in Zavidovici to have a job.

In 2009, the European Court of Human Rights condemned Bosnia for its discriminatory constitution that reserves the tripartite presidency only for Croats, Muslims and Serbs and has not yet been modified. In Zavidovici the discrimination is obvious. Poverty is endemic in this industrial town of some 36,000 residents where the unem-

ployment rate has hit 67 percent, according to mayor Hasim Mujanovic.

The town's 750 Roma are the poorest of the poor and live separately in three districts. In the area where Seferovic lives, children in rags play in the middle of iron scrapyard among small dilapidated houses, some made of wood. "Around 75 percent of Roma in Zavidovici have no social security and only 28 children go to school, compared to 127 in 2011," Seferovic said, saying the plummeting numbers were because the Roma had got increasingly poorer and could not afford to buy school books and educational material.

The HRW warned that due to lack of a free and universal birth registration system, many Roma do no figure on the national public registry that records births, deaths, and marriages. "This impedes their access to public services, including healthcare."

## Education is priority

"I always tell my Roma that education should be the foundation," Seferovic said, adding that he has always wanted "to be someone." He became a firefighter after completing military service in the Yugoslav army in 1988. During Bosnia's 1990s inter-ethnic war, Seferovic fought alongside Muslims.

## POLAND PRESIDENT IN CRISIS TALKS AS SIT-IN CONTINUES

**WARSAW:** Polish President Andrzej Duda scrambled yesterday to defuse a political crisis as opposition lawmakers occupied parliament for a fourth day to protest at an "illegal" budget vote and plans to restrict media access to the chamber. Thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets since Friday in Warsaw and other parts of the country in the latest popular action against moves deemed anti-democratic by the governing rightwing Law and Justice party (PiS) since it took office after October 2015 elections.

Dozens of opposition MPs seized parliament's main chamber and protesters blocked the exits to the building on Friday in a defiant show of anger against the government. Thousands of protesters-grouped in a popular movement called the Committee for the Defence of Democracy-rallied outside parliament in support of the opposition MPs until late Sunday.

A smaller pro-government rally took place outside the presidential palace. In Krakow on Sunday, police removed protesters who laid on the ground to block the car of influential PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski, who was visiting the grave of his twin brother, former president Lech

Kaczynski who died in a plane crash in Russia in 2010. Duda, who has appealed for calm, launched mediation talks with opposition leaders on Sunday. The president scheduled further meetings yesterday with Kaczynski and parliament speaker Marek Kuchcinski.

Opposition leaders told the media following the talks with Duda they had demanded the proposed media limits be dropped. Kaczynski has indicated that his party is ready to discuss the new rules with journalists, and the official news agency PAP quoted an unnamed member of the government as saying he is "not happy" with the measures.

## 'Illegal' budget vote

The opposition lawmakers also called for rerun of a parliament vote on next year's budget, which they claim was approved illegally when it was held in another area of parliament after the opposition takeover of the main chamber. Since taking office, the PiS has come under fire over a string of controversial measures including tightening its control over the media and pushing through changes to the constitutional court

which led to a standoff with the European Union.

Yesterday marks that last day in office of the outgoing president of the constitutional court, Andrzej Rzeplinski, a symbol of resistance to the government. The question of his successor has become another bone of contention between the court and the PiS-dominated parliament. The latest opposition outcry was triggered by PiS plans to grant access to the parliament's press gallery to only two journalists for every media outlet, and ban them from shooting still pictures or video.

The moves prevent the media from recording images of lawmakers when they break the rules, for example by voting for an absent colleague. The PiS has defended the measure, saying it was seeking to ensure a comfortable working environment for both lawmakers and journalists. Duda yesterday also approved a law lowering the retirement age to 65 for men and to 60 for women. The former centrist government had raised the limit for both sexes to 67. The new law—which the opposition says would harm the economy—was among the promises made by the PiS during its electoral campaign. — AFP



**WARSAW:** People attend the anti-government demonstration of opposition parties' supporters and Committee for the Defense of Democracy movement (KOD) the day after parliament crisis in front of building of Polish Parliament. — AFP

## 49 DEAD IN SIBERIA AFTER DRINKING BATH ESSENCE

**MOSCOW:** Forty-nine people have died in Siberia after drinking bath essence containing methanol, a toxic substance used in anti-freeze, Russian authorities said yesterday. The Investigative Committee has launched a probe into the deaths caused by drinking a liquid labeled as hawthorn-scented bath essence, and has detained two people.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev ordered his cabinet to "sort out" the counterfeit alcohol issue, calling the widespread sale of such liquids

through vending machines "an absolute disgrace". Fifty-four people were taken to hospital in the Siberian city of Irkutsk after consuming the toxic substance, and 49 died, a spokeswoman for the regional branch of the Investigative Committee told AFP. Authorities said the product contained methanol and carried a label warning that it was unsuitable for consumption, but the mixture was nonetheless "consumed like alcohol". Cheap perfumes and facial toners containing alcohol are sold without the same trading restric-

tions imposed on alcoholic drinks. Those who buy them to drink are usually the most socially disadvantaged. Searches were being conducted at markets where the deadly product was being sold, investigators said, and a total of 500 liters of the toxic liquid confiscated.

Homemade spirits and household products containing alcohol are popular throughout the former Soviet Union as a cheap alternative to standard brands but are also blamed for a large number of alcohol-related deaths. — AFP

## 25 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE BITTERSWEET FOR CEN ASIA

**ARKALYK, Kazakhstan:** In 1991, as one provincial Kazakh town embarked on a journey through independence that would see it transformed into a state-of-the-art capital, another hurtled towards collapse. Arkalyk, a Soviet-built mining town is a 13-hour train ride from Kazakhstan's glittering capital Astana, and the last stop on a spur of railway that burrows west and then south into the vast country's mineral-rich heartland.

As the Soviet Union crumbled, demand for the bauxite mined in Arkalyk that made up a fifth of the bloc's output plummeted. So too did the town's population, now less than half of its communist-era high of over 60,000 people. On Arkalyk's outskirts, abandoned apartment blocks spring up from the snow-sprinkled steppe that extends as far as the eye can see. The roads leading out of the town are deeply rutted.

Comparisons with glitzy Astana, whose population has roughly quadrupled since it replaced Almaty as Kazakhstan's capital in 1997, rattle with many Arkalyk inhabitants. "We see millions spent on the EXPO (international event Astana hosts in 2017) and sporting events, while our own town lacks qualified doctors," says Dana Zheksembayeva, a student in Astana who splits her time between the two cities. "Maybe for the country's image these events mean something but people living in towns like Arkalyk have other concerns."

## Stability and corruption

Energy-rich Kazakhstan is the wealthiest of the five ex-communist Central Asian countries and was the last to declare independence, on December 16, 1991. But complaints of an ever-widening gulf between capitalism's winners and losers and the mismanagement of state funds echo throughout the graft-riddled region.

In Kazakhstan's gas-rich neighbor Turkmenistan, international rights groups say the government is forcibly evicting citizens from their homes as it prepares to host the 2017 Asian Indoor Games in the capital Ashgabat. In Tajikistan, the region's poorest country, the capital Dushanbe stands as an ode to megalomaniac architecture, even as most of the country endures rolling winter power cuts.

Central Asia's secular governments have been quick to take credit for the majority-Muslim region's relative stability. But that achievement is at least partly due to "the astonishing effectiveness of Soviet state-building", says John Heathershaw, a Central Asia expert at the University of Exeter in Britain. Regimes in both Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have witnessed a stable transfer of power following the deaths of autocrats that began their reigns during the communist era.

Tajikistan endured a civil war, which cost tens and thousands of lives and ended with victory for the central government and leader Emomali Rakhmon in 1997. Comparatively democratic Kyrgyzstan is the only country in the region to have seen governments overthrown, in 2005 and 2010 respectively, and host genuinely competitive elections. "All these rulers preside over deeply corrupt systems of graft and many oversee security services that torture political opponents," Heathershaw told AFP.

## Uncertain future

Kazakhstan's leader Nursultan Nazarbayev, 76, is now the most senior across the five countries after Uzbek neighbor Islam Karimov died aged 78 in September. His popularity, resting in part on impressive economic growth that coincided with rising oil prices has been tested by their sudden collapse in 2014. In April and May this year, thousands took part in nationwide protests over a proposed land reform that Nazarbayev later shelved in order to quell the unrest.

But many analysts said popular dissatisfaction was rooted less in land and more in the economic slump in a country where freedoms are habitually restricted. "All the time we were told how great things were. Now things look less than great and questions have piled up for the government," Rinat Balgabayev, an Astana-based PR specialist famous for his political jokes on social media, told AFP. In the capital that a quarter of a century ago was just a provincial steppe town of 250,000 people, independence was celebrated with the pomp typical in countries of the region. On Friday Nazarbayev opened a 46-metre high white marble monument he said "symbolizes Kazakhstan's upward aspirations". — AFP

## DEATHS IN INDIAN POLICE CUSTODY GO UNPUNISHED: RIGHTS GROUP

**CHENNAI:** Senthil Kumar's mother saw him being dragged off by policemen on charges of extortion. Standing outside the Vadamadurai police station in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu, she heard him scream for mercy. The next day she was told her son was dead. "He didn't die, he was killed," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, recalling the events of April 2010. "And I know the name of every policeman who did it."

Kumar is one of the 591 people who have died in police custody in India since 2010, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said Monday, calling for the strict implementation of existing laws on arrest and detention. Citing government data, the report said 97 people died in police cus-

tody in 2015 alone, and there was not a single known case in the past five years in which a police official had been convicted for a custodial death.

"In almost all cases, the police passes off these deaths as suicide or a heart attack," said Jayshree Bajoria, author of HRW's report. "And the brotherhood kicks in to shield the guilty, who are their own colleagues. The entire system collaborates to protect the guilty policemen instead of taking action against them."

K S Dhatwalia, spokesman for the Ministry of Home Affairs in New Delhi, the government department responsible for police, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation on Monday the ministry would "look into the report and take nec-

essary action". The report examines investigations into 17 deaths in custody between 2009 and 2015. In each case, the police did not follow proper arrest procedures, making the suspect more vulnerable to abuse, Bajoria said.

### Forms of torture

Leonard Valdaris trusted the policemen who wanted to talk to his son about a theft in the neighborhood in April 2014. But when he walked into the Wadala railway police station in Mumbai the next day, the report said, his son was "crying bitterly" and told him the police had beaten him all night and would kill him. Three days later, Agnelo Valdaris, 25, died, HRW said.

"When I saw my son in the hospital, there everything changed," Valdaris was quoted as saying in the report. "There I saw the reality. He had been beaten black and blue with a belt." Forms of torture recorded in the report include severe beatings with boots and belts and sometimes suspending people from their wrists. Autopsy reports examined by HRW show injuries consistent with blunt force trauma. India has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and signed the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

According to the Indian Code of Criminal Procedure policemen are

expected to prepare a memo of arrest with the date and time of arrest, ensure a medical examination is carried out on the accused, inform the family of the arrest and present the suspect before a magistrate within 24 hours.

According to government records, in 67 of the 97 deaths in custody in 2015, police failed to present the suspect before a magistrate or the suspect died within 24 hours of arrest. "If police follow the rules designed to deter torture and mistreatment, deaths in custody could be prevented," said Meenakshi Ganguly of Human Rights Watch. "India can only boast of rule of law when those charged with enforcing it are held accountable." — Reuters



This photograph taken on October 31, 2016 shows an Afghan boy, who was held as a child sex slave, sitting at a restaurant in an unidentified location in Afghanistan. — AFP

## HOPELESS AFGHAN STRUGGLE TO RESCUE BOY SEX SLAVES

**LASHKAR GAH:** Quivering with quiet rage, Shirin holds a photo of his teenage brother-in-law, who now lives as the plaything of policemen, just one victim of a hidden epidemic of kidnappings of young boys for institutionalized sexual slavery in Afghanistan. Shirin is among 13 families AFP traced and interviewed across three Afghan provinces who said their children were taken for the pervasive practice of "bacha bazi", or pedophilic exploitation, in Western-backed security forces.

Their testimonies shine a rare spotlight on the anguished, solitary struggles to free sons, nephews and cousins from a tradition of culturally-sanctioned enslavement and rape. Shirin recalled how his 13-year-old brother-in-law screamed and writhed as he was taken from his home earlier this year by a police commander in southern Helmand. "When I begged for his release, his men pointed their guns and said: 'Do you want your family to die? Forget your boy,'" Shirin told AFP in Lashkar Gah.

"Our boys are openly abducted for bacha bazi. Where should we go for help? The Taliban?" The heart-wrenching stories, mostly from Helmand but also from neighboring Uruzgan and northern Baghlan, were revealed after AFP reported in June how the Taliban are exploiting bacha bazi in police ranks to mount deadly insider attacks. The report, denied by the insurgents, prompted an Afghan government investigation. AFP is withholding the names of the victims and the accused police commanders as many of the boys are still being held captive.

### 'Crazed with grief'

A common theme in the testimonies collected from stricken families was that of helplessness. Their boys were mostly abducted in broad daylight; from their homes, opium farms and playgrounds. Once taken captive, they can be shuffled among police checkpoints, complicating efforts to trace them.

Sometimes they emerge into the open as policemen flaunt their spoils. For fathers like Sardarwali, the crushed hope of such an encounter is almost too much to bear. After months of fruitless searching, he caught a glimpse of his kidnapped son in a crowded marketplace in Helmand's Gereshk district. The child—a slight boy who loved nothing better than playing with his siblings—was dressed in a fine embroidered tunic and

wore a bejewelled skull cap. Sardarwali was desperate to reach out to his son, to hold him—but did not dare approach the bevy of policemen that surrounded him.

"I watched him disappear into the distance," Sardarwali said. "His mother is crazed with grief. She cannot stop crying: 'We have lost our son forever.'" Parents' agony of losing a child to sexual slavery is compounded by concerns that in captivity their boys will become addicted to the opiates some are given to make them submissive. Worse still, many fear they could be taken to reinforce frontlines, where police are suffering record casualties in their fight against the Taliban. Or—as one Helmand family shockingly discovered—get killed in the crossfire as insurgents over-run the checkpoints where they are held. Still, some families take grim solace in the knowledge they are not alone. Their villages are full of bacha bazi victims, many discarded when their beards begin to show.

### 'Unconscionable'

Bacha bazi has seen a chilling resurgence in post-Taliban Afghanistan, where it is not widely perceived as homosexual or un-Islamic behavior. Young boys dressed effeminately have an ornamental value in a society where the genders are tightly corralled. Their possession is a mark of social status, power and masculinity. The practice has spurred a violent culture of one-upmanship within police ranks, as officers jealously compete to snatch the most beautiful boys, said a former top Helmand security official.

"Often the only escape for enslaved bachas is to make a deal with the Taliban: 'Liberate me and I will help you get my abuser's head and weapons,'" the official said, referring to insider attacks. The Afghan government has said it has zero tolerance for child abusers in security ranks. But Uruzgan government spokesman Dost Mohammad Nayab acknowledged nearly every provincial checkpoint had a bacha. He fears any move to extricate them could see angry policemen abandoning their posts, paving the way for the Taliban.

"It is difficult to separate policemen from their bachas in this security situation," Nayab said, explaining that police serve as a pivotal first line of defence against insurgents. But for campaigners like Charu Lata Hogg, a London-based fellow at the Chatham House think-tank, citing security as an excuse for inaction is unconscionable. —AFP

## MYANMAR PRESSURED OVER ROHINGYA CRISIS

'WIDESPREAD, SYSTEMATIC ATTACK ON A CIVILIAN POPULATION'

**YANGON:** Malaysia's top diplomat turned the screws on Aung San Suu Kyi at emergency talks in Myanmar yesterday, warning that an army crackdown on the Rohingya minority could spark a regional migrant crisis. More than 27,000 Muslim Rohingyas have fled northwestern Myanmar for Bangladesh since the start of November to escape a military counter-insurgency operation.

Myanmar's army says it is hunting militants behind deadly raids on police posts in October. But Rohingya survivors have described rape, murder and arson at the hands of soldiers—accounts that have raised global alarm and galvanized protests around Southeast Asia. The exodus has sparked a rare dispute within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the 10-member bloc that prides itself on consensus diplomacy and non-interference.

Yesterday, ASEAN foreign ministers held talks in Yangon on the crisis. Muslim-majority Malaysia called for an independent ASEAN-led investigation into the allegations of army abuse. Foreign Minister Anifah Aman also urged full humanitarian access to the locked-down area, where more than 130,000 people have been without aid for two months. He warned the crackdown could trigger a repeat of last year's boat crisis, when thousands of starving Rohingyas were abandoned at sea by traffickers as they tried to flee southwards to Malaysia.

"We believe that the situation is now of a regional concern and should be resolved together," he told the meeting, according to a statement from Kuala Lumpur. "Myanmar must do more in trying to address the root causes of this problem." Yesterday Amnesty International joined the condemnation, saying the army's "widespread and systematic attack on a civilian population" may amount to crimes against humanity. Myanmar's more than one million Rohingyas have been described as among the most persecuted people in the world. More than 120,000 were driven by bloody sectarian clashes in 2012 into displacement camps, where they live in conditions many have likened to apartheid.

### New wave of anger

The latest crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state has generated a fresh wave of public anger,



**YANGON:** Indonesia's Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi (L) and Myanmar State Counselor and Foreign Minister Aung San Suu Kyi (C) attend the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers' meeting. — AFP

particularly in Malaysia, where tens of thousands of Rohingyas eke out lives as undocumented workers. This month Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak accused Suu Kyi of allowing "genocide" on her watch—an unusually strong rebuke by one ASEAN state of another.

Myanmar, which has vehemently denied the allegations of abuse, angrily summoned Malaysia's ambassador and banned its workers from going to the country. Suu Kyi also held talks with mainly Muslim Indonesia this month after cancelling a visit following protests and an attempted attack on the Myanmar embassy.

At yesterday's talks ministers warned of the risk of a "spillover effect on Myanmar's neighbors in terms of security and stability" from the Rakhine violence, a diplomat told AFP. Ministers also took aim at Nobel laureate Suu Kyi for not doing more to rein in the military, which still has a quarter of parliament seats and controls key levers of power in her elected government. "Her

hands are tied because of the military, but she has to shoulder her responsibility as a leader of Myanmar," said the diplomat, who asked not to be named.

Suu Kyi has pleaded for time and international understanding over the incendiary issue. The Rohingyas are reviled in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, denied citizenship and widely tagged as "Bengalis"—or illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. In a statement after yesterday's meeting Suu Kyi said talks were "candid and transparent" but also "emphasized the importance of strengthening ASEAN unity and resolving the differences between ASEAN family members". Myanmar has faced a cascade of criticism from outside the region over the Rohingya crisis, including from the United States and the United Nations. Last week, UN rights commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein criticized the government's "callous" handling of the crisis, describing it as "a lesson in how to make a bad situation worse". — AFP



**ALLAHABAD:** In this photograph taken on December 14, 2016, Indian policemen stand as traffic passes through the Civil Lines area of Allahabad. According to local newspaper reports, the northern Indian cities of Varanasi and Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh state had zero good air quality days in 2015, said a report released by the Central Pollution Control Board's (CPCB) that uses the government's air quality data to conclude smaller cities have the most toxic air in India. — AFP

## INDIA CHARGES PAKISTAN-BASED MILITANTS OVER AIR BASE ATTACK

**NEW DELHI:** India's top counter-terrorism agency yesterday charged Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and its top leader, with perpetrating a deadly attack on an Indian air force base in January. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) stated that all four gunmen who stormed the air base on Jan 2 were Pakistani nationals and that Maulana Masood Azhar, the top leader of JeM, was the mastermind behind the attack. "All the terrorists are accused of waging war against India. This was a criminal conspiracy to attack our security infrastructure," said a senior official at the NIA in New Delhi.

The presentation of a charge-sheet to a trial court wraps up India's investigation into the 18-hour siege at the Pathankot air base in which seven Indian security personnel and the four assailants were killed. The attack, which came a week after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid an impromptu visit to his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, derailed a tentative thaw between the nuclear-armed rivals.

A joint investigation into the attack went nowhere and tension between the

neighbors has risen over the course of a year marked by protests and cross-border clashes in the disputed region of Kashmir. Investigators in New Delhi said the charge-sheet and evidence would be offered to Pakistani authorities to take action against the perpetrators of the attack. "We want Pakistan to arrest Maulana Masood Azhar and he should be deported to India," said a senior Indian home ministry official who is overseeing the investigation.

The charge-sheet cited DNA samples, food packets from Pakistan found in woodlands near the air base, a walkie-talkie set and a note found in a car used by the militants to drive to the base. India has long accused Pakistan of using Jaish-e-Mohammed as a proxy to mount attacks on Indian soil and had earlier given what it called "actionable intelligence" to Pakistan, including telephone intercepts. Pakistan briefly held Azhar, an Islamist hardliner who was blamed for a 2001 attack on India's parliament, after the air base attack. Its investigators later found no evidence against either Azhar or Jaish-e-Mohammed. — Reuters

## PAKISTAN'S NATIONAL CARRIER MOCKED FOR GOAT SACRIFICE

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan's embattled national carrier has been widely mocked for sacrificing a goat next to a plane to ward off bad luck, weeks after one of the country's worst air disasters. A Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) turboprop plane built by European manufacturer ATR plummeted into a mountain in a northern region on December 7, bursting into flames and killing all 47 people on board.

The animal slaughter, which took place on Sunday at Islamabad airport and was captured in a photograph which went viral, was met with derision by many social media users—who said

the carrier was forgoing safety standards in favor of superstition. "This is no joke: #Pakistan invents a new safety measure for its crashing air carrier #PIA," tweeted user Asim Yousafzai.

Another user Raahoon Rashid said: "(Black goats) don't keep the planes up and flying, efficiency does". Leading newspaper Dawn ran a front-page story yesterday headlined "PIA: on a wing and a prayer". The sacrifice was confirmed by PIA spokesman Danyal Gilani, who said it was a "gesture of gratitude" by some employees before the resumption of flights of the airline's ATR fleet. It was not sanctioned by management,

Gilani said. PIA grounded its 10 remaining ATR planes in the wake of the disaster pending detailed inspections. The airline's chairman Muhammad Azam Saigol last week tendered his resignation citing "personal reasons". Before December 7 PIA had been crash-free for 10 years, and received a 7 out of 7 rating on the highly-cited AirlineRatings.com, which launched its annual listing in 2013. But a 2014 analysis by US statistician Nate Silver based on data from 1985-2014, found the airline to have had a consistently high number of what he termed "near-misses"—an indicator of risk. — AFP

## EX-N KOREA DIPLOMAT FLED DUE TO 'REIGN OF TERROR'

**SEOUL:** A high-profile North Korean defector told South Korean lawmakers yesterday that he fled because of disillusionment with what he describes as a "tyrannical reign of terror" by leader Kim Jong Un, according to one of the lawmakers who attended their private meeting. Seoul announced in August that Thae Yong Ho, No 2 at the North's embassy in London, had come to South Korea with his family because of his disgust with North Korea.

Pyongyang later called him "human scum" who embezzled official funds and committed other crimes.

Thae, who has been under the protection of the National Intelligence Service, met with South Korean lawmakers yesterday together with NIS officers, according to Lee Cheol Woo, one of the lawmakers. The NIS, South Korea's main spy agency, said it couldn't confirm the meeting. Lee's office cited Thae as denying the North

Korean accusations and saying he decided to defect after realizing the North's "horrific" reality. He was quoted as saying he learned about South Korean democracy by watching South Korean dramas and movies.

He told lawmakers that North Koreans are suffering "slavery" under Kim's dictatorship and that higher-level officials are subject to more intense state surveillance. Thae, who is to be released into South Korean society on

Friday, said he'll try to publicly raise the North's situation, Lee's office said. South Korean media said that Thae will be under a police protection program after his release into society.

Thae is the most senior North Korean diplomat to defect to South Korea. In 1997, the North Korean ambassador to Egypt fled but resettled in the United States. Kim, believed to be in his early 30s, took power upon the death of his dictator father, Kim

Jong Il, in late 2011. He's since orchestrated a series of high-profile executions, purges and dismissals in what outside analysts have said was an attempt to bolster his grip on power. More than 30,000 North Koreans have defected to South Korea since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, according to the South Korean government. Many defectors have said they wanted to leave North Korea's harsh political system and poverty. — AP

## TRIAL STARTS FOR CONFIDANTE OF IMPEACHED KOREAN PRESIDENT

### FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE IN WEEKS

**SEOUL:** The jailed confidante of impeached South Korean President Park Geun-hye denied on the first day of her trial yesterday that she used her ties to Park to extort money from big companies. The hour-long hearing at the Seoul Central District Court was the first public appearance in weeks for the woman at the heart of a scandal that led to Park's impeachment after millions took to streets in protests.

by Choi. When directly asked by a judge about the extortion charges, she denied the charges. "I'm sorry for causing trouble. I'll faithfully engage in (my) trial," Choi said.

The court reviewed the charges against Choi, who prosecutors say manipulated state affairs and extorted businesses, and the arguments by her lawyer. The trial resumes again on Dec 29, but it's not clear how long it will last. Courts normally issue a verdict

the 2014 court appearance of the crew of a ferry that sank and killed more than 300 people, mostly teenagers. Choi last appeared in public on Oct 31, when, after losing a Prada shoe in a crush of journalists and protesters, she told reporters at the Seoul prosecutors' office that she had "committed a sin that deserves death."

**Abuse of power**  
Lee, Choi's lawyer, said yesterday

Jae-hwan. Before her arrest, Choi said that she received some of Park's speeches in advance, but that she didn't know if they included confidential information. She denied the other allegations.

Prosecutors allege that Choi helped pressure 16 companies to donate a total of 77.4 billion won (\$65.6 million) to create two non-profit foundations, Mir and K-Sports. According to the prosecution, Park first brought up the idea of launching the foundations and ordered her senior secretary for policy coordination at the time, Ahn Jong-beom, to ask companies to finance their establishment while letting Choi handle the appointment of foundation officials.

Another ex-presidential aide, Jung Ho-sung, has been charged with passing on confidential information to Choi. Jung didn't appear at Monday's hearing, but his lawyer said Jung has largely acknowledged that he transferred such documents at Park's instructions.

Park's representatives have questioned the legality of her impeachment by the country's parliament and said no serious crime was committed. The Constitutional Court is reviewing Park's impeachment. If it rules against her, she'll be formally unseated and must undergo a direct investigation. Choi, 60, is a daughter of the late Choi Tae-min, a purported cult leader who served as Park's mentor. Park, 64, is the daughter of Park Chung-hee, a dictator who ruled South Korea for 18 years until his 1979 assassination.

The two women became friends in the 1970s, around the time when Park Geun-hye began serving as first lady after her mother was killed during a failed 1974 assassination attempt on Park Chung-hee. Park Geun-hye once headed a patriotic group set up by the elder Choi, while Choi Soon-sil served as head of its college unit. Park has immunity from prosecution for most crimes while in office. She has acknowledged that she got help from Choi for editing speeches and unspecified "public relations" issues, but has denied any other legal wrongdoing. — AP



**SEOUL:** Choi Soon-sil (C), who has been dubbed Korea's "female Rasputin" for the influence she wielded over the now-impeached president Park Geun-hye, arrives at a courtroom for her trial. — AFP

Choi Soon-sil, Park's friend of 40 years, wore white prison clothes and bowed deeply to the three judges before her lawyer, Lee Kyoung-jae, denied that Choi conspired with Park and her presidential aide to pressure companies to donate tens of millions of dollars last year to foundations controlled

within six months of an indictment, so Choi will likely get a verdict by May if prosecutors don't bring new charges.

Ten other people swept up in the scandal also face trial. Choi is also known as Choi Seo-won, which is how she was referred to in court. It is South Korea's biggest trial since

that prosecutors violated Choi's rights by illegally investigating her after she had been indicted. Prosecutors denied that. Choi is charged with abuse of power, extortion and attempted fraud. If convicted on all charges, she could receive up to 15 years in prison, according to court spokesman Shin



**VANCOUVER:** In this June 27, 2016 file photo provided by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, members of the RCMP go through a decontamination procedure in Vancouver after intercepting a package containing approximately 1 kilogram of the powerful opioid carfentanil imported from China. — AP

## CHINA DISPUTES US CLAIM IT'S A TOP SOURCE OF SYNTHETIC DRUGS

**BEIJING:** US assertions that China is the top source of the synthetic opioids that have killed thousands of drug users in the US and Canada are unsubstantiated, Chinese officials told the Associated Press. Both the US Drug Enforcement Administration and the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy point to China as North America's main source of fentanyl, related drugs and the chemicals used to make them.

Such statements "lack the support of sufficient numbers of actual, confirmed cases," China's National Narcotics Control Commission told DEA's Beijing field office in a fax dated Friday. In its letter to the DEA, which the commission also sent to AP, Chinese officials urged the US to provide more evidence about China's role as a source country. It's a point the state-run China Daily newspaper drove home publicly in an article this month stating that made-in-China carfentanil was not the cause of overdose deaths in the US.

DEA officials said their casework and investigations consistently lead back to China. DEA data also shows that when China regulates synthetic drugs, US seizures plunge. "China is not the only source of the problem, but they are the dominant source

for fentanyls along with precursor chemicals and pill presses that are being exported from China to the US, Canada and Mexico," said Russell Baer, a DEA special agent in Washington.

Beijing is concerned enough about international perceptions of China's role in the opioid trade that after AP published investigations highlighting the easy availability of fentanyls online from Chinese suppliers, the narcotics commission made a rare invitation to a team of AP journalists to discuss the issue at the powerful Ministry of Public Security, a leafy complex just off Tiananmen Square at the historic and political heart of Beijing. They also provided responses, in writing, to AP's questions.

US-China cooperation is essential for mounting an effective global response to an epidemic of opioid abuse that has killed more than 300,000 Americans since 2000. The presence of fentanyl, a prescription painkiller up to 50 times stronger than heroin, and related compounds in the US drug supply began to rise in 2013, after dealers learned they could multiply profits by cutting the potent chemicals into heroin, cocaine and counterfeit prescription pills. — AP

## DRONE SEIZURE SIGN OF TOUGH TIMES BETWEEN US AND CHINA

**BEIJING:** China's seizure of an American underwater drone is the latest sign that the Pacific Ocean's dominant power and its rising Asian challenger are headed for more confrontation once US President-elect Donald Trump takes office, analysts said yesterday.

Chinese political experts said China seized the glider in the South China Sea last week to send a strong warning to Trump not to test Beijing's resolve over the sensitive issue of Taiwan, the self-ruled island Beijing considers part of its territory. Meanwhile, smaller countries in Southeast Asia are watching the back-and-forth closely for signs that US naval dominance might be diminishing, others said.

Trump's Dec 2 phone call with Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen was the first time an American president or president-elect has publicly spoken to Taiwan's leader since Washington broke off its formal diplomatic relationship in 1979 at China's behest. Trump later said he did not feel "bound by a one-China policy" unless the US could gain trade or other benefits from China.

Beijing regards any acknowledgement that Taiwan has its own head of state as a grave insult. The drone seizure "is a kind of response from China to Trump's recent provocations on the issue," said Ni Lexiong, a military expert at the Shanghai University of Political Science and Law. "It can be regarded as a warning to countries such as the US and Japan on their attempts to challenge China's core interests." The Pentagon said a Chinese ship seized the US drone Thursday afternoon in an area about 92 kilometers northwest of Subic Bay near the Philippines. Several US analysts say the seizure occurred inside the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines, which would appear to violate international law.

China's defense ministry said its navy seized the underwater glider to ensure the safety of passing ships and that it would turn over the device using unspecified "appropriate means." Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying on Monday reiterated the defense ministry's objections to what she called US "reconnaissance and surveys in Chinese waters."

### 'Unpresidential'

State media have continued to pointedly attack Trump, with the Communist Party-controlled Global Times publishing an editorial Monday headlined, "Unpresidential' Trump adds fuel to fire." "He seemed emotionally upset, but no one knows what he wanted to say," the

editorial said. "Trump is not behaving as a president who will become master of the White House in a month. He bears no sense of how to lead a superpower."

Trump had tweeted Saturday that despite China's assurances that it would return the drone, the US should "let them keep it!" Earlier in the day, he misspelled "unprecedented," saying: "China steals United States Navy research drone in international waters - rips it out of water and takes it to China in unpresidential act." He later sent a corrected tweet.

Editorials and tweets aside, Trump will confront as president an increasingly assertive China that wants to extend its reach in the South China Sea, a strategically vital area through which about \$5 trillion in global trade passes each year. Several of China's smaller neighbors have protested China's territorial claims there and are closely watching Trump's handling of the disputed sea.

"These are small countries that realize that the best way to survive and prosper is not to side with any of the great powers," said Richard Heydarian, an analyst and consultant in the Philippines. "They're all bracing not only for unpredictability, but also for stormy waters involving US and China primarily," he said. China claims almost the entire South China Sea as its own with a roughly drawn border known as the "nine-dash line" running along western Philippine islands. Even as an international tribunal in June largely rejected China's expansive claims, the Chinese military continues to run naval patrols and training flights over disputed islands in the area as well as the adjoining East China Sea.

Philippine Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana said yesterday that the drone incident, which happened near his country's territorial waters and within its internationally recognized Exclusive Economic Zone, "is very troubling." "I believe that the United States and China can reach an amicable resolution to prevent any further incidents from taking place," Lorenzana said in a statement.

Collin Koh, a research fellow on naval affairs at the S Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, said the drone incident was "not something that will be taken lightly by the international community." America's naval dominance was "slowly being undermined by China," Koh said, citing the growth in China's naval technology and its moves in disputed waters. "This is a symptom of a great power rivalry," he said. — AP



**BINH DINH:** This picture taken on December 18, 2016 shows a man wading through floodwaters in front of his home in the central province of Binh Dinh. — AFP

## FLOODS KILL 24 IN VIETNAM

**HANOI:** Days of unseasonably torrential rains have killed at least 24 people in central Vietnam, authorities said yesterday, inundating swathes of the region including the tourist draw town of Hoi An. Vietnam regularly experiences tropical storms and heavy downpours but it is unusual for the country to see so much rain in December, during the cooler dry season that is popular with tourists.

Coastal Binh Dinh province reported the

biggest death toll with 16 people killed since heavy rains began on December 12, according to an official online report from the national flood and storm control committee. At least two more are missing in the province with hundreds of houses in remote areas currently under water. The report said damage totaled \$32 million with more than 32,000 hectares of crops destroyed.

Parts of the central town of Hoi An, a World Heritage site that boasts picturesque pre-

colonial trading houses, were submerged under water.

"It is strange for our town to be hit with flooding in December," Nguyen Thi Hon, a restaurant owner in Hoi An, told AFP adding some tourists had taken to seeing the sights by boat. The floodwaters have receded in the last few days, she added. But local forecasters have warned of further rains to come in the region at the end of the week. — AFP



Extreme cold conditions cause ice accretions to cover the St Joseph lighthouse and pier, on the southeastern shoreline of Lake Michigan, yesterday in St. Joseph, Michigan. — AP

## THOUSANDS EVACUATED FROM ALEPPO...

Continued from Page 1

some of the children rescued from the orphanage had been in critical condition because of injuries and dehydration. "Many vulnerable children - including other orphans and children separated from their families - still remain in east Aleppo and need immediate protection," it said in a statement.

The Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH), a Turkish NGO working in Syria, said seven-year-old blogger Bana had arrived at a camp for displaced persons in the north-west province of Idlib. The Turkish news agency Anadolu later posted a short interview with Bana after her arrival, dressed in a warm coat and hat against the winter chill. "In Aleppo the shelling was all over the place. We got out from the ruins because our house was bombed," she said shyly in Arabic, before turning towards her mother.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu - who had already interacted with Bana on Twitter - said later that she would be brought to Turkey with her family, Anadolu said. For her 330,000 followers, Bana is a symbol of the tragedy unfolding in Syria, although Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's regime has slammed her and her mother's nearly daily tweets as propaganda. Bana's account has posted pictures of the destruction in Aleppo including her rubble-littered street, while people have tweeted messages of support and concern, notably fearing for her life when tweets became less frequent.

Tarakji Ahmad, president of Syrian American Medical Society, also posted a picture of Bana, with an aid worker. "@AlabedBana and many children arrived to #Aleppo countryside. @sams\_usa@UOSSM and partners are coordinating the response plan there." In her last tweet with her mother Fatemah before the evacuation, Bana made an appeal to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Cavusoglu to put a fragile ceasefire back on track after fre-

quent delays.

"Dear @MevlutCavusoglu & @RT\_Erdogan please please please make this ceasefire work & get us out now. We are so tired. - Fatemah #Aleppo." Responding in a tweet yesterday, Cavusoglu wrote: "Difficulties on the ground won't deter us sister. Rest assured that we are doing all to get you and thousands of others to safety." Cavusoglu said yesterday that a total of 20,000 people had been evacuated so far and efforts were continuing.

In an 11th-hour deal, regime ally Moscow and rebel supporter Ankara agreed on the evacuation of thousands of civilians and fighters from the last remaining opposition-held pocket in Aleppo. Moscow, which has carried out an air war in support of the Damascus regime since September last year, had threatened to veto a UN Security Council draft resolution calling for monitors to oversee the protection of civilians. But yesterday, the council unanimously adopted the French-drafted resolution in the first show of unity in months among world powers grappling with the Syria crisis.

The measure tasks the UN with carrying out "adequate, neutral monitoring and direct observation on evacuations from eastern Aleppo and other districts of the city". It remained uncertain, however, whether the Syrian government would give the observers access to the city and allow operations there to come under international scrutiny. The foreign and defense ministers of Russia, Turkey and Iran are due to meet in Moscow today to discuss Syria.

The measure tasks the UN with carrying out "adequate, neutral monitoring and direct observation on evacuations from eastern Aleppo and other districts of the city". It remained uncertain, however, whether the Syrian government would give the observers access to the city and allow operations there to come under international scrutiny. The foreign and defense ministers of Russia, Turkey and Iran are due to meet in Moscow today to discuss Syria. — Agencies

## IRAN RELEASES FOUR KUWAITIS HELD IN AHVAZ

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait recalled its ambassador from Tehran in January after relations were broken off between Saudi Arabia and

Iran following attacks on the kingdom's missions. A Kuwaiti and an Iranian were sentenced to death in January by a court in Kuwait for spying for Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah group. — Agencies

## GOVT VOWS TO RESOLVE SPORTS CRISIS

Continued from Page 1

The government however wants IOC and FIFA to lift the suspension temporarily to allow Kuwaiti athletes to participate in international events. MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain said the pledge was submitted yesterday by Minister of Information and Youth Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah in a meeting with Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.

Babtain said on his Twitter account that the minister said the Cabinet accepted a recommendation passed by the Assembly in its opening day calling on the government to do whatever is necessary to end the international

sanctions. The lawmaker said that based on the new developments, there will be no need for the emergency session demanded by opposition MPs tomorrow.

Babtain said the government's pledge will be sent to international sports organizations in order for them to lift the suspensions on a temporary basis until the new legislation is issued within the stipulated six months. The lawmaker said the Assembly will cooperate with the government, and warned that if it does not fulfill its pledges, MPs will use their constitutional tools. As a result of the international sanctions, Kuwaiti athletes were barred from taking part in the Rio Olympics earlier this year under the Kuwait flag and participated under the Olympic flag.

## DUTERTE EYES DAILY EXECUTIONS, CRITICS SLAM PLAN AS 'BARBARIC'

MANILA: Philippine Catholic leaders and rights groups yesterday condemned as "barbaric" President Rodrigo Duterte's plan to restore the death penalty and execute "five or six" criminals daily. Duterte, 71, has made reviving the death penalty in the mainly Catholic nation his top legislative priority as part of a brutal war on crime that has killed 5,300 people. "There was death penalty before but nothing happened. Return that to me and I would do it every day: five or six (criminals). That's for real," Duterte said Saturday.

An official at the influential Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines said the Church "totally opposed" Duterte's plan. "The Philippines will be viewed as very barbaric," Father Jerome Secillano, executive secretary at its public affairs office, told AFP. "It's going to make the Philippines the capital of death penalty in the world."

The Philippines abolished the death penalty in 2006 following fierce opposition to the penalty from the Catholic Church, the religion of 80 percent of Filipinos. Before assuming office in June, Duterte vowed to introduce executions by hanging, saying he did not want to waste bullets and believed snapping the spinal cord was more humane than a firing squad. Duterte said he viewed the death penalty not as a means to deter crime but for retribution. His allies in the House of Representatives quickly pushed for the bill and said they would vote on it by January.

The United Nations' human rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, said in a letter to the Philippine congress this month that reviving the death penalty would violate the country's international obligations. But on Saturday Duterte insisted executions were necessary to fight the drug scourge which he said was "destroying" the nation. While his aides dismiss his incendiary statements as hyperbole, rights advocates said Duterte's remarks were alarming.

"Setting a quota for executions is just too much. One death is too much because we are talking about lives," Amnesty International Philippines vice chairman Romeo Cabarde told AFP. Catholic leaders and rights defenders have instead urged the government to reform a slow and corrupt justice system which they said was likely to send innocent people to death row. Secillano said bishops planned to dissuade lawmakers from voting for the death penalty and would attend congressional debates next month.

Duterte's crime war has drawn international criticism from the United States and United Nations over concerns about alleged extrajudicial killings and a breakdown in the rule of law. Duterte won May elections in a landslide on a promise to eradicate drugs in society - a mandate he often cited to defend his controversial campaign. A survey by Social Weather Stations released yesterday showed while a majority backed Duterte's drug war, 78 percent of Filipinos were worried that they or someone in their family would be a victim of extrajudicial killings.

The survey also showed 71 percent said it was "very important" that police keep drug suspects they arrested alive. Police have repeatedly said they only shot at criminals who fought back but the nation's rights agency has questioned this argument and has begun investigating cases. Yesterday, Philippine National Police chief Ronald dela Rosa apologized for police killings of criminal suspects but insisted these were done in self-defense.

"Lord, I hope you forgive us even if the ones we kill are bad people," Dela Rosa said during the police's Christmas party. "If the life of a policeman will be lost just to preserve the life of a criminal, that's a great injustice." Dela Rosa added Duterte gave police hefty bonuses for leading the crime war. — AFP

## GUNMAN KILLS RUSSIAN AMBASSADOR...

Continued from Page 1

The mayor of Ankara Melih Gokcek identified the attacker as a Turkish policeman. The Yeni Safak daily said on its website that the attacker - named as M M A - worked with anti-riot police in Ankara. Gokcek, known for his outspoken comments, speculated on his official Twitter account that the policeman may be linked to the group of Fethullah Gulen blamed for the July 15 coup aimed at toppling Erdogan.

The incident came after days of protests in Turkey over Russia's role in Syria, although Moscow and Ankara are now working closely together to evacuate citizens from the battered city of Aleppo. The United States condemned the attack, while British ambassador Richard Moore paid tribute to a "quietly spoken, hospitable professional". Erdogan phoned Putin to brief him about the attack, presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said.

The shooting took place at the Cagdas Sanatlar Merkezi, a major art exhibition hall in the Cankaya district of Ankara where most foreign embassies are located including Russia's mission. Karlov was several minutes into his speech at the embassy-sponsored exhibition when the gunman fired at least eight shots, according to an AP photographer in the audience. The attacker also smashed several of the photos hung for the exhibition. There was panic as people ran for cover.

"It happened during the opening of an exhibition," Hurriyet correspondent Hasim Kilic, who was at the scene, told AFP. "When the ambassador was delivering a speech, a tall man wearing a suit, fired into the air first and then took aim at the ambassador," said Kilic. "He said something about Aleppo and 'revenge'. He ordered the civilians to leave the room. When people were fleeing, he fired again," he added.

Images showed the ambassador standing up to speak at a lectern at the opening of the photo exhibition called "Russia from Kaliningrad to Kamchatka" showing images from Russia's far west to its far east.

He stumbles and then crashes to the ground after being shot, lying flat on his back as the besuited attacker brandishes the gun at terrified onlookers. The man shouts "Allahu Akbar" ("God is Greatest") and then talks about pledging allegiance to jihad in Arabic, the images showed. Switching to Turkish, he then says: "Don't forget about Syria, don't forget about Aleppo. All those who participate in this tyranny will be held accountable".

Protesters in Turkey have held Moscow responsible for human rights violations in Aleppo with thousands turning out for protests outside the Russian consulate in Istanbul. But political relations have warmed, with intense contacts between the two sides in recent days to ease the situation in Aleppo. Turkey and Russia saw relations plunge to their worst levels since the Cold War last year when a Turkish jet shot down a Russian war plane over Syria. They stand on opposite sides of the Syria conflict with Ankara backing rebels trying to topple Moscow ally President Bashar Al-Assad.

But the rhetoric has warmed considerably since a reconciliation deal was signed earlier this year and a Russian and Turkish-brokered accord has helped the evacuation of citizens from Aleppo in the last days. The attack comes a day before Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif of Iran, Assad's other key ally, were to hold unprecedented tripartite talks on the Syria conflict in Moscow.

The Syrian foreign ministry in Damascus denounced the murder as a "despicable crime", state news agency SANA said. Cavusoglu learned of the news while on the plane to Moscow, Turkish television said. A Turkish official yesterday denied Ankara had forged any secret "bargain" with Moscow over the future of Syria, despite the improving cooperation that led to the deal for evacuations from Aleppo. Born in 1954 in Moscow, Karlov was a career diplomat who began his career under the USSR in 1976. He was Russian ambassador to North Korea from 2001-2006. — Agencies

Kuwait Times

# Premier Brands

To see your ad here, call:

**+965 248 35 616 / 617**

E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net  
ads@kuwaittimes.net  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

GRAND YEAR END SALE

**12** KD .500

• 1000 - 2000 Watt  
• For rooms up to 60 m<sup>3</sup>

**13** KD .500

• 2000 Watts  
• Bathroom type

**15** KD .500

• 2000W  
• Ceramic  
• 3 power settings

**16** KD .500

• 2000W  
• 3 power settings  
• Summer ventilation.

2017/01/13 - 2016/12/05

**best** بست  
AL-YOUSIFI اليوسفي

Credit: Start from 5KD • Up to 48 month • Instant approval

Shop Online: [www.best.com.kw](http://www.best.com.kw) Free Delivery

# 1809 809

• Kuwait 1 (the New str.) • Kuwait 2 (Panasonic Tower) • Hawalli 1 (Tunis str.) • Hawalli 2 ( Bin Khalid str.) • Shuwaikh (4th Ring road) • Al-Rai (4th Ring road) • Salmiya (Salem Al-Mubarak str.) • Farwaniya ( Behind police Station) • Fahaheel (Opp. General Parking) • Jahra ( Opp. Main Co-op.) • Airport (Departure Hall)

## Kuwait Times

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher  
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief  
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432  
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7  
FAX : 24835620/1  
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163  
ACCOUNTS : 24835619  
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.  
E MAIL : info@kuwaittimes.net  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

## Focus

## TO RUSSIA WITH LOVE: TRUMP'S DREAMS OF KREMLIN MIGHT

In 2013, Donald Trump appeared poised to conquer a new frontier: Russia. His Miss Universe beauty contest was taking place in Russia's capital and he thought it would seal a connection with its president, Vladimir Putin. "Do you think Putin will be going to The Miss Universe Pageant in November in Moscow - if so, will he become my new best friend?" the now US-president elect tweeted. The meeting never took place, though Putin sent a close aide with a gift for the American.

It was just another false start in three decades of efforts by Trump to crystallize ties with a country that has long captivated him - for its real estate development potential, but also for its steady, no-nonsense leaders. Trump recalled, "The Art of the Deal", that his attraction to the then-Soviet Union began in 1986, when a lunch with Soviet ambassador Yuri Dubinin turned into an investment opportunity.

"Dubinin's daughter, it turned out, had read about Trump Tower and knew all about it," Trump recalled. "One thing led to another and now I'm talking about building a large luxury hotel, across the street from the Kremlin." He traveled with his then-wife Ivana to view potential sites in Moscow the following year. "It was an extraordinary experience," he wrote. "I was impressed with the ambition of the Soviet officials to make a deal."

### 'Tough and cold'

Nothing came of it, and over the next decade Trump was bogged down in the bankruptcies of his Atlantic City casinos. But by 1997, he was back on the Russia file, bonding with rising political star General Alexander Lebed. The two met at Trump Tower, where, according to a New Yorker article, Lebed lauded Trump's Moscow hotel plans as "a litmus testing paper" for American capital flowing to Russia. Basking in the praise, Trump gave Lebed, a former boxer, a copy of his book. After the meeting, the New York tycoon said what he really liked about the Russian. "Does he look as tough and cold as you've ever seen? This is not like your average real-estate guy who's rough and mean," Trump said. "This guy's beyond that. You see it in the eyes."

Trump's trip to Moscow that year again came up dry, but he was smitten with the country and its hard-nosed leaders more than ever. Entertaining his first White House run in 2000, he wrote in a new book of his fascination with Russian power. "What I don't understand is why American policymakers are always so timid in dealing with Russia on issues that directly involve our own survival," he said, pointing to his experience of Lebed, "a really tough guy" who he predicted would one day lead Russia. Trump backed out of the 2000 race, and Lebed died in 2002 in a helicopter crash. By then, ex-KGB officer Putin was the country's president, and Trump's eyes turned to the vast sums of money newly rich Russians were moving out of the country.

### 'Look at Putin'

In 2005, he went into business with New York developer Bayrock Group, led by two immigrants from the former Soviet Union. They signed a deal to develop a Trump Tower in the Russian capital that went nowhere. Meanwhile, they built the 46-floor Trump Soho luxury apartment tower in New York City, and other Trump-brand developments in Florida. The primary financing source and the marketing target, were both Russian money, including an Iceland-registered investment firm identified in later lawsuits as "in favor" with Putin.

Trump was not implicated in the lawsuits, but in a deposition he bared his view of the situation. "Russia is one of the hottest places in the world for investment. We will be in Moscow at some point," he said. Again eyeing the White House in 2007, Trump began singing Putin's praises. "Look at Putin - what he's doing with Russia," he told CNN. "Whether you like him or don't like him - he's doing a great job in rebuilding the image of Russia and also rebuilding Russia, period. Forget about image." After Trump sold the Palm Beach, Florida estate Maison de L'Amite to Russian billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev for a record \$95 million in 2008, his name became bigger inside Russia, and he entertained journalists from Moscow. "I really like Vladimir Putin. I respect him. He does his work well. Much better than our Bush," Trump told them. By 2011, Trump began planning a serious White House challenge. For him, comparing President Barack Obama to Putin was a way of standing out.

### 'So weak'

In his new political tract, "Time to Get Tough: Making America #1 Again," he praised Putin for "his intelligence and no-nonsense way." "I respect Putin and the Russians, but cannot believe our leader allows them to get away with so much," he wrote. "Hats off to the Russians." By 2013, the year of the Miss Universe contest in Moscow, Trump had another deal to build a Trump Tower by the Kremlin. It didn't happen, but his praise of Putin stepped up. He lauded Putin's op-ed in The New York Times telling Washington how to make peace in Syria. "He is lecturing to our President. Never has our Country looked so weak," Trump tweeted. —AFP

All articles appearing on these pages are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein. Kuwait Times invites readers to voice their opinions. Please send submissions via email to: [opinion@kuwaittimes.net](mailto:opinion@kuwaittimes.net) or via snail mail to PO Box 1301 Safat, Kuwait. The editor reserves the right to edit any submission as necessary.



## MODI SEEKS SUPPORT FROM MUSLIM WOMEN

When Narendra Modi stood before faithful followers in October, on a stage swathed in the saffron colors of his Hindu nationalist movement, the Indian leader made an unexpected overture. "It is the responsibility of the government and people of the country to give justice to Muslim women," the prime minister declared. Modi's public political career took off as chief minister of Gujarat state in 2001, just before rioters killed about 1,000 people, mostly Muslims, leading to accusations that he turned a blind eye to the murder and rape going on around him.

Modi denies involvement in the 2002 riots, but his rise to national power in 2014 was accompanied by groups of hardline Hindus attempting mass conversions of Muslims and cases of beating and whipping of Muslim men in broad daylight. Now, his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is challenging an Islamic practice, known as "triple talaq", that allows a man to divorce his wife simply by uttering the word "talaq" three times.

The proposal is a bold ploy to win approval and votes from Muslim women and chip away at an important bloc of voters - there are around 170 million Muslims in India - that has thus far viewed Modi with suspicion. The outreach could help decide the outcome of a bellwether state election early next year. Uttar Pradesh, with nearly 40 million Muslims out of 200 million people, is a key test of Modi's popularity as he prepares to seek a second term in 2019. Some Muslim women there have said they support Modi's proposal, although they are less sure about him. There is fierce opposition, meanwhile, from influential Muslim elders and teachers. "They are using this tactic to attack Islam, to attack Muslims," said Abul Qasim Nomanji, vice chancellor of the Darul Uloom Deoband madrasa, the largest Islamic seminary in India, located in Uttar Pradesh. "Muslim women are being used as showpieces to fight a battle against Islam," added the 70-year-old, his face framed by a white beard and prayer cap. A madrasa official sitting beside him muttered: "This is like a wolf advocating for the rights of goats."

### Mixed Reactions

Triple talaq is banned in some Muslim countries, including India's neighbor and rival Pakistan, but is allowed under Indian rules designed to protect religious communities. The BJP and its ideological surrogates are betting that by confronting divisions within India's Muslim population about

those traditional divorce practices, they can win in two ways. The move will appeal to the Hindu majority, by emphasizing the need to counter Islamic influence in society, while at the same time splintering off Muslim voters.

That may help Modi curb electoral damage from another big political gambit - the recent abolition of high value banknotes that has led to cash shortages and dented key sectors of the economy. It is difficult to tell on the streets of Uttar Pradesh, a poor state where water buffalos trudge through wheat fields and traffic alike, how much traction Modi and his Hindu supporters will get from the initiative.

His coalition won 10 percent of the Muslim vote in Uttar Pradesh during 2014 national elections, according to a post-election survey by the non-partisan Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. A separate survey covering 10 other states found last year that 92 percent of Muslim women supported a ban on the immediate triple talaq divorce, raising the possibility that some, in the moment of pushing a voting machine button, might defy their community and choose the space next to the BJP's lotus flower.

The chairwoman of the Muslim women's advocacy group that did the national survey, Zakia Soman, ran children's schools in the relief camps for victims of the 2002 riots in Gujarat. "It is true that Muslims can't trust him (Modi) after the Gujarat riots, but triple talaq is a separate issue," Soman said in a telephone interview. "Muslims will have to compartmentalize each issue for their own wellbeing... if the prime minister does the correct thing and thinks of (the) greater good, then it is natural for him to win votes from Muslim women."

### 'Don't Interfere With Quran'

The idea of expanding an existing article of the nation's constitution that calls for a "uniform civil code" to one that explicitly bans polygamy and the use of triple talaq in the Muslim community has been debated for decades. As it stands now, that section of the constitution says a code should exist but does not describe its parameters. Modi's government, though, has signalled that it wants to change the status quo. A senior BJP leader in Uttar Pradesh said the party planned to highlight triple talaq during election campaigning there. The government filed a motion in support of a Supreme Court case this year in which a Muslim woman opposed triple talaq. —Reuters

## MULTIPLE CRISES PROMISE STORMY 2017 FOR BRAZIL

A power struggle coupled with the most far-reaching corruption probe Brazil has ever seen means the country's democracy is in for a stormy 2017. One side of the increasingly complex crisis in Latin America's biggest economy pits the corruption-riddled political class in Brasilia against aggressive prosecutors running the so-called Carwash probe of embezzlement at state oil company Petrobras. Another sees the Supreme Court fighting with members of Congress who are trying to hobble what they view as a threatening judiciary.

The mostly under-the-carpet struggle has started to erupt into the open. This month, one Supreme Court justice tried to force the scandal-tainted Senate president, Renan Calheiros, to step down, only to be rebuffed by Calheiros and eventually overruled by the rest of the court. Congress, meanwhile, is trying to push through laws that would target prosecutors and judges for "abuse of authority" and even to grant themselves immunity for past crimes of corruption. Ivar Hartmann, a law professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation in Rio de Janeiro, calls this "pure revenge."

### 'Lynch mob' atmosphere

Underlying the crisis is the Carwash probe, which has uncovered extensive, high-level involvement in a scheme that saw politicians take bribes to help contractors win inflated contracts from Petrobras. Big names have already fallen, including the once-powerful speaker of the lower house of Congress, Eduardo Cunha, who is in jail awaiting trial for allegedly taking millions of dollars in bribes. And there is no end in sight. "Carwash has a life of its own. No one can control it," said Marcos Cepik, a foreign affairs specialist at the University of Rio Grande do Sul.

Plea bargains by 77 executives at

Odebrecht, the huge construction company at the heart of the Petrobras embezzlement scheme, have been completed and leaks from the testimony indicate that scores more politicians will be accused of corruption. President Michel Temer, who took over this year after the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, has reportedly been named as having received suspicious donations. So have several of his closest allies and advisers.

But powerful voices are arrayed against the Carwash prosecutors. Romero Juca, a Temer confidant who represents the government in Congress and is also a suspect in the Carwash probe, lashed out at media leaks of the sealed testimony in the plea bargains. "These leaks will weaken the country's stability. In this atmosphere of unrest, the lynch mob, of a French Revolution, we'll never attract investors," he said in the newspaper Estado de Sao Paulo.

On the other side of the political aisle, former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who likely will face trial in 2017 as part of the Carwash prosecution, claims he is the victim of persecution. Cepik, the foreign affairs specialist, says that the turmoil could lead to a new Brazil "with low tolerance for corruption." But if opponents of Carwash succeed in closing down the investigation, it will be "the end of Brazil."

### A sharper memory

Meanwhile, Brazil's leaders have a long to-do list if the country is to escape a profound economic recession. Temer is supposed to rule to the end of 2018 and has a goal of reversing more than a decade of leftist policies, using austerity measures to restore fiscal responsibility. Congress has approved the first part of the program, a 20-year spending cap, but has yet to vote on pension and other reforms. Recent polls show Temer has rock-bottom popularity. —AFP

## JET MAKERS EYE CHINA, BUT OBSTACLES LOOM

New rules governing Chinese airline startups are fueling hopes at Embraer SA, Bombardier Inc and other regional jet makers for a spike in orders next year, but local competition and doubts about size restrictions still loom as major obstacles. The new policy is aimed at encouraging fledgling carriers to boost domestic flights serving secondary markets in China rather than focusing exclusively on big cities. The three-month old policy has still not been published in its entirety, leaving the industry guessing on some key details.

But provisions include scaling back access to major hubs and a requirement that new regional carriers operate at least 25 smaller city-hopper jets before graduating to bigger aircraft, according to three industry sources familiar with the policy. That could translate into Chinese demand for more than 250 new regional jets in the next two years, said one source familiar with a planemaker's outlook, providing a shot in the arm for a new generation of aircraft that has suffered a string of setbacks. Another source familiar with the market called the prospects more limited.

China is seen as anxious to prevent carriers from using niche markets as a back door to the main airline business by grabbing licenses to set up small regional or cargo airlines and then quickly defecting to the more lucrative big-city segment, dominated by Airbus and Boeing. On paper, that should boost demand for regional jets including China's delayed ARJ21, developed by the state-owned Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC).

The support for regional aviation in China should also encourage foreign market leaders such as Bombardier and Embraer, according to Yang Yang, a director at COMAC's Shanghai Aircraft Design Research Institute. "This will potentially give them a big market to target," he said. Regional jet makers have been recovering from development hitches in recent years, only to find that demand has now slowed in their main markets in the United States and Europe as predictions of robust orders from Asia have yet to materialize.

A spokesman for Canada's Bombardier said the new policy offers regional airlines "many new opportunities" and Brazil's

Embraer called it an "insightful... new policy to promote regional aviation." Russia's Sukhoi Civil Aircraft said the company started regular talks this year with potential Chinese customers for its recently introduced Superjet regional aircraft. Others, such as Japan's Mitsubishi Aircraft, are keeping a lid on expectations, wary of competition from the ARJ21, China's first homegrown passenger jet, which COMAC put into service this year.

"We think in general China has a huge potential," said Yugo Fukuhara, a vice president for sales of Mitsubishi Aircraft, a unit of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries Ltd, which is developing another newcomer to the regional jet market. "At the same time, we have competition from the ARJ21, developed by China themselves, and also some political barriers," Fukuhara said, alluding to diplomatic tensions between Japan and its neighbor across the East China Sea.

### Unclear Demand, Competition

Analysts say the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) wants to encourage a more diffuse network after most airlines launched in the past three years focused on busier mainline routes, leaving secondary markets underdeveloped. But the regulatory changes in the country may also make it harder for new airlines, as feeder routes are often less profitable and face stiff competition from China's fast expanding high-speed rail network.

China had 57 airlines at the end of 2015, only 12 of which were regional carriers, according to a report from the Shanghai Aircraft Design Research Institute. Embraer has made the most progress among foreign planemakers with those airlines, delivering 91 aircraft of 123 firm orders through September - about twice Bombardier's tally, according to the companies' latest quarterly reports. However, Chinese order books for both companies are dwarfed by the ARJ21, which has racked up more than 400 orders since the program was launched in 2002.

Comac says the ARJ21 holds advantages such as its domestic service network and performance standards tailored to the country's hot and high-altitude western plateau. But it has delivered

just two planes to launch customer Chengdu Airlines so far, leading analysts to question the feasibility of the Chinese regional jet. Development of the ARJ21 was delayed by nearly a decade, dogged by flawed designs for wings, wiring and computer systems, according to a 2012 Reuters investigation. The aircraft has yet to be certified by US authorities. "The ARJ21 is not a functioning aircraft," said Richard Aboulafia, vice president of analysis at aviation consultancy Teal Group, who publishes widely cited global aerospace forecasts.

### Size Limits

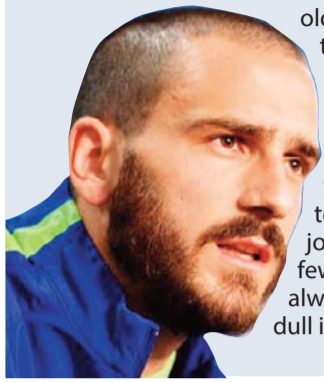
Regardless of the ARJ21's prospects, labor disputes in the world's largest regional market also have regional planemakers pinning bigger hopes on new Chinese demand. US pilots are resisting pressure to allow heavier aircraft to be outsourced to regional affiliates, effectively protecting jobs at the mainline operations of Delta Air Lines Inc, American Airlines Group Inc and United Continental Holdings Inc. The standoff could lock out Mitsubishi's MRJ90 and Embraer's next-generation E175 aircraft in coming years.

Those size limits, along with low fuel prices, have also slowed new orders to replace aging U.S. aircraft this year. The size issue could haunt manufacturers in China too. Aviation regulator CAAC has been slow to make public details of the new requirements, known as Rule 96. In particular, they are keeping mum on the specific seat count and weight limits for the loosely defined regional segment.

Embraer's head of commercial aviation, John Slattery, said at an industry event in October that Chinese size limits would prevent the company's 120-seat E195 and rival Bombardier's 110- to 130-seat C-Series from qualifying as regional jets. Bombardier disagrees. "We are confident that all aircraft with five-abreast seating or less qualify within the framework of CAAC Rule 96 and we are working with a number of Chinese carriers in that context," said public affairs director Bryan Tucker. CAAC did not respond to requests for comment on specific requirements for regional airlines. —Reuters

## JUVENTUS'S BONUCCI EXTENDS CONTRACT

**TURIN:** Looking to become "even more of a legend" at Juventus, Leonardo Bonucci extended his contract with the Italian club yesterday until 2021. The Italy defender joined Juventus from Bari in 2010 and has made 291 appearances - more than any other outfield player at Juventus in the past six years. "I am happy and proud of this decision to continue this glorious and ever more victorious journey until 2021," Bonucci said. The 29-year-old Bonucci has won five Serie A titles with Juventus, two Italian Cups and three Italian Super Cups. He was also a key part of the team which reached the Champions League final in 2015. "I feel an integral part of a great family," Bonucci said. "You achieve this by working hard and always being there for your teammates, helping out when the going gets tough and celebrating all together in moments of joy and happiness. "We've won so much in the past few years and we know that going forward it will be always more difficult to get results but life would be dull if you didn't have something to fight for." —AP

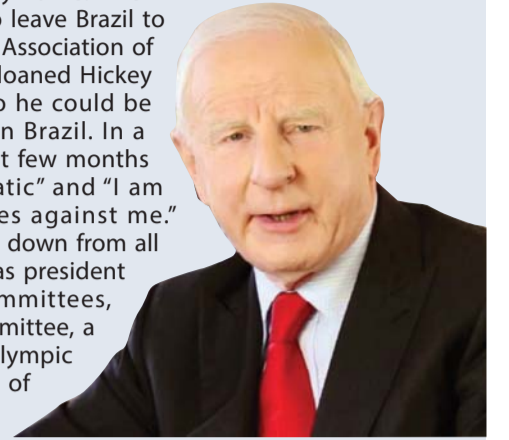


## NBC READY TO LAUNCH ALL-OLYMPIC CHANNEL

**NEW YORK:** NBC is bringing year-round Olympic programming to the United States. After years of trying, the US and International Olympic Committees have agreed with NBC on a package that will offer year-round Olympic programming, focused on US athletes, the parties announced Thursday. NBC will launch a new US television network branded "Olympic Channel: Home of Team USA" in the second half of 2017. Scott Blackmun, the CEO of the USOC, calls the partnership "a wonderful way to turbocharge one of fastest-growing fan bases that's out there." That channel will complement the IOC's Olympic Channel, which launched on a worldwide digital platform after the Rio Games. The programming will include archival footage and documentaries, along with original Team USA programming contributed by the USOC. Mark Parkman, general manager of the Olympic Channel, said the IOC is planning on producing 250 hours of original programming per year. That programming will be available to the NBC network, and the USOC will also produce US-focused content. —AP

## PATRICK HICKEY BACK IN IRELAND AFTER RIO ARREST

**DUBLIN:** Olympic official Patrick Hickey is back in Ireland, four months after being arrested in Brazil during the Rio de Janeiro Games on ticket scalping charges. Hickey, who returned to Dublin on Sunday night, says he "will do everything possible to clear my name." The 71-year-old Hickey was allowed to leave Brazil to receive medical treatment. The Association of National Olympic Committees loaned Hickey the \$430,000 in bail money so he could be released from legal custody in Brazil. In a statement, Hickey says the past few months have been "extremely traumatic" and "I am totally innocent of all charges against me." Hickey has temporarily stepped down from all of his Olympic positions. He was president of the European Olympic Committees, head of Ireland's Olympic Committee, a member of the International Olympic Committee, and vice president of ANOC. —AP



## REFEREEING ERROR 'HUGELY DISAPPOINTING': WASPS

**LONDON:** Wasps formally expressed their disappointment yesterday over the refereeing blunder that saw them beaten 20-18 by Connacht in the European Champions Cup at the weekend. Substitute referee Mathieu Raynal erroneously allowed Connacht to take a line-out after kicking to touch from a penalty awarded on full-time, from which the Irish province scored a decisive converted try. Competition organisers European Professional Club Rugby admitted Raynal had made an error after the match, but allowed the result to stand. "We all understand referees are only human and mistakes do occasionally happen," Wasps said in a statement. "However, for a referee and fourth official to get the laws of the game wrong at a crucial stage of a big match is hugely disappointing." The error made could have serious repercussions in terms of Wasps' qualification hopes or the prospect of securing a home quarter-final. Raynal took over in the 74th minute at Galway's Sportsground on Saturday, having started the match as an assistant, when referee Jerome Garces suffered a hamstring injury. It is thought Connacht captain John Muldoon told Raynal his team were allowed to kick for touch from the penalty and then take a line-out despite it being in overtime. But a trial permitting that rule change does not come into force until January 1 in the southern hemisphere and August 1 in the north. Naulia Dawai crossed from the line-out before Jack Carty's conversion secured a victory that left Connacht level with Wasps and Toulouse on 13 points in Pool Two. "Wasps' pitch-side officials immediately stressed to the fourth official that Connacht could not take the line-out, as the referee had indicated time had gone beyond 80 minutes," Wasps added. "Wasps' players on the pitch also emphasised to the referee that time was up. Despite several protests, the line-out was still allowed to be taken. "EPCR have stated that the result stands. We congratulate Connacht after a hard-fought contest and we will now move on to the final rounds, after tough Premiership games against Bath, Newcastle and Leicester Tigers." — AFP



PARIS: Denny Solomona fails to gather the ball cleanly under close attention from Saracens' Chris Wyles during his debut for Sale. — AP

## SARACENS EQUAL EUROPEAN CUP RECORD WITH SALE WIN

**PARIS:** Defending champions Saracens defeated Sale 24-10 for a record-equalling 13th consecutive European Cup victory on Sunday to virtually wrap-up a quarter-final spot. The English side have 18 points from four Pool 3 matches, eight ahead of three-time champions Toulon. They are the only unbeaten side left this year even if Sunday's win was nowhere near as convincing as their 50-3 rout of Sale in the teams' first meeting last weekend. The game's three tries all came in the last eight minutes with England fly-half Owen Farrell going over from close range after a one-handed offload by Will Skelton. Farrell also kicked 14 points although he uncharacteristically missed two straightforward penalties. Nathan Earle added Saracens' second try three minutes from time for a 24-3 lead before Bryn Evans scored a consolation try in the last minute for a Sale side who have lost all four games and remain without a point. The win allowed Saracens to equal the record of 13 wins in a row held by Munster since 2007 while Sale fans had the consolation of seeing Kiwi winger Denny Solomona make his debut after his controversial switch from Super League's Castleford. Sale's challenge wasn't helped by having three players sin-binned. "Across the board, it was the kind of game you can get frustrated-it seems to change from one week to the next," said Saracens coach Mark McCall. "I think we need referees to use judgement but you're relying on the opinion of the referee on the day. That's potentially a dangerous thing to do." Clermont took revenge on Ulster as a five-try, 38-19 win propelled the Top 14 leaders to the brink of the quarter-finals. The French side were beaten 39-32 in Belfast last week, but after surviving a scare in the second half on Sunday, they stretched their lead in Pool 5 to 17 points, eight ahead of Bordeaux and Ulster. Clermont scored three tries in the first 25 minutes through Isaia Toeva and a brace from English full-back Nick Abendanon.

their experience and history, too often," said Scarlets coach Wayne Pivac. "It would have been pretty cruel if we had lost it at the death." In Pool 4, Castres edged fellow French side Montpellier 29-23 in a game where the losing side had Paul Willemsse red-

carded for charging into a ruck. Three-time champions Leinster lead the pool, five points ahead of Montpellier and seven in front of Castres, after handing Northampton a record European Cup defeat in a nine-try, 60-13 demolition on Saturday. — AFP



## GULF INSURANCE JOINS FORCES WITH PRO-VISION SPORT MANAGEMENT FIRM

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Insurance Group, a leading company in the field of rendering the insurance services in Kuwait and the Middle East, has teamed up with a renowned company Pro-Vision Sport Management Co. Since 2007, Pro-Vision has specialized in organizing sporting events and their goal has been to raise the health awareness and sport practice among our society by creating various exciting events. This goal collaterates with Gulf Insurance's priority to promote and empower our society to establish a healthy lifestyle, especially for our youth. Over the years, Pro-Vision has participated in events like triathlons, marathons and F1 racing events that have gathered massive recognition and turnover. We match their admiration for innovation and advancing our country for the better, even through sports. Further, most recently we collaborated on the "Battle of the East" event host-

ed by Circuit +, one of Pro-Vision many reputable partners, which gathered athletes from around the Middle East to compete in a two-day Cross Fit sporting competition. We look forward to many more events that are as successful on our journey with Pro-Vision. Khaled Al Sanousi, Corporate Communications & Investor Relations Manager, said: "We are extremely hopeful for our future endeavors with Pro-Vision and have been pleased with our progress thus far." Ahmed Al Majed, Pro-Vision CEO, said: "Gulf Insurance Group has helped us to maintain international safety standards in sporting events." He also expressed his thanks for their efforts during the recent sporting events and including Flying Start Triathlon, Battle of the East, Gulf Bank 642 Marathon and Gulf Run Karting and the impact of their contribution to the success of these events.

## NIGERIA MINISTER ORDERS PROBE OF FA FINANCES

**ABUJA:** Nigerian Sports Minister Solomon Dalung has ordered a probe into the finances of the country's football federation after FIFA suspended further grants to the body. Dalung said at the weekend it was worrying that FIFA had halted development grants to Nigeria pending explanation on how a previous \$1.1 million (1.05 million euros) was utilised. "This is a very serious issue that must be given urgent attention to avoid another international embarrassment, more so that the present administration... has zero tolerance for any act of mis-appropriation, mis-application, embezzlement or fraud in any guise," said the minister. "To this end, the NFF is directed to immediately provide my office with detailed information of receipt, disbursement and application of the FIFA development grant accordingly." He called on the NFF to appoint a reputable audit firm to look into its books. "The audit report must be made public so as to

promote transparency, build credibility and enhance your market value," the minister told the NFF. The NFF however insisted its accounts were in order. "The audited account of the Federation for the year, as audited by PricewaterhouseCoopers, an internationally reputable audit firm, was presented and adopted at the General Assembly," it said. Dalung has always accused the NFF of poor planning ahead of major international events. He recalled how the government had to release 100 million naira (\$317,000, 304,000 euros) at the last minute to ensure the Super Eagles honour a 2018 World Cup qualifier in Zambia. "We must improve on the way we do things. We cannot be writing emergency memos to the President. Personally, I'm not too comfortable (with that)," he said. The national women's team, the Super Falcons, staged a two-week protest recently in Abuja before their bonuses for winning the women's Africa Cup of Nations were paid. — AFP

### HALFPENNY FALLS SHORT

The bonus point was assured just after the interval thanks to an interception try from fly-half Camille Lopez as Clermont swept to 28-0 lead. But Ulster rallied with three tries of their own through Tommy Bowe, who scored two, and Franco van der Merwe to cut the deficit to 28-19. Clermont steadied the ship with a Lopez penalty after 69 minutes before a penalty try was awarded three minutes from the end. "It's a good victory but at 28-0 ahead we should not have let them back in the game," admitted Clermont scrum-half Morgan Parra, who converted all five of his team's tries. Toulon suffered their second defeat in four games, going down 22-21 to the Scarlets. Welsh full-back Leigh Halfpenny kicked all of Toulon's points on his return to South Wales with seven penalties. However, his last-minute attempt from long distance missed the target as Scarlets kept their quarter-final hopes alive. Centre Scott Williams scored the only try of the match for the Welsh region in the first half with Rhys Patchell kicking the remainder of the Scarlets' points. "The boys will enjoy this. We don't get opportunities to play a side like Toulon, with

## PATIENCE RUNS OUT THIS TIME OF YEAR IN THE NFL

**LOS ANGELES:** The demise in less than a week of Jeff Fisher and Gus Bradley as coaches of their respective teams provided examples. Rams owner Stan Kroenke and Jaguars boss Shad Khan grew tired of waiting for the on-field product to match their successes away from football.

Those two firings, even though Fisher led the Rams through a difficult transition from St. Louis to Los Angeles and Bradley was well-liked by Khan and his organization, might be just the beginning. Consider some of these men in charge to be either in the endangered species class or approaching it: Marvin Lewis, Mike McCoy, Rex Ryan, Todd Bowles, John Fox and Chuck Pagano. It's not inconceivable that Chip Kelly and Hue Jackson could wind up on the cutting room floor, despite what their backers, uh, owners have said in recent weeks.

It might hardly seem fair for some of those men and, frankly, in many cases it isn't. Fox, Bowles and Ryan deserve more than two years at the helms of their current teams. Lewis and Pagano have brought consistent winning to their franchises at various times in their regimes and probably could do so again.

As a wise scribe once wrote, the most important position on any NFL team is owner. When that owner has the last name of Rooney, Mara, Allen, Kraft or Bisciotti, panic doesn't set in. They tend to choose the correct coach for their team and then let him coach.

The rewards have been Super Bowl trophies for all of them under coaches given the opportunity to build a team and help it grow into a champion.

Khan tried that approach with Bradley, who helped put together some great Seattle defenses under Pete Carroll. The arrangement flopped and the ugly end came Sunday when the Jaguars blew a 21-20 lead at Houston and fell to 2-12, with nine straight defeats. Bradley's 14-48 record was the worst winning percentage (.225) of any NFL coach with at least 60 games.

"I thanked Gus Bradley today for his commitment to the Jacksonville Jaguars over the past four seasons," Khan said in a statement. "As anyone close to our team knows, Gus gave his staff and players literally everything he had. Our players competed for Gus and I know they have great respect for him, as do I.

### REMARKABLE PATIENCE

"Gus also represented the Jaguars, the Jacksonville community and the NFL in nothing less than a first-class manner as our head coach. That counts for a lot. It is unfortunately evident that we must make a change. I

thought it would be best to do it immediately after today's result so Gus can step away, relax and regroup with his family during the Christmas and holiday season."

Thanks for the thinking of me so kindly, boss. In truth, though, Khan showed remarkable patience this season with Bradley, whom he considered firing in October. The Jags spent big money in free agency and thought they could contend for the weak AFC South's crown. Instead, they're ahead of only Kelly's lowly 49ers and Jackson's winless Browns in the entire league.

Khan's approach over the past four-plus years should be commended. He looked around at Mike Tomlin in Pittsburgh, Tom Coughlin in New York until the end of the 2015 season, and John Harbaugh in Baltimore and recognized the need for continuity.

But when that continuity manifests itself in so many losses, with hefty signs of regression, it's time to move on. That's why Jackson, a very popular coach in Cleveland, might not be back if the Browns match the 2008 Lions at 0-16. It's why Kelly, despite his massive contract and only minor rumblings about change even as his 49ers have lost 13 in a row, could go.

It must be remembered, though, that canning both of them after they were saddled with such undertalented rosters - and then hit hard by injuries - means starting over with a new coach. And still with a low number of high-level players in those two cities.

Owners contemplating coaching changes also should look at the standings first. The division leaders in half of the eight divisions have long-tenured coaches. Of the other teams in strong contention to get to the post-season, four more of those have guys who have been in place a while.

And just because their clubs are struggling this season doesn't mean Ron Rivera, Bruce Arians and Sean Payton don't know what they're doing. — AP



Shad Khan

## FOUR MONTHS AFTER OLYMPICS, ORGANIZERS UNABLE TO PAY SOME BILLS

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Almost four months after the Olympics ended, Rio de Janeiro organizers are unable to pay some of their bills, including \$3.7 million owed to the International Paralympic Committee.

IPC spokesman Craig Spence told The Associated Press yesterday that the money is owed for travel grants, which is part of the contractual agreement to host the Olympics and Paralympics.

"Never have we faced an issue like this with an organizing committee being so late paying travel grants," Spence told AP. The default is the latest for embattled Rio organizers, who have also been late paying hundreds of creditors and con-

tract employees. Spence said the unpaid travel expenses were damaging national Paralympic committees, particularly those with tiny budgets.

"Some of our smaller national Paralympic committees, who took out loans to pay for their travel for the Games, are now in serious danger of defaulting on their repayments," Spence said. Cash-flow problems, budget cuts and cost overruns dogged organizers in the run-up to South America's first Olympics. Despite this, International Olympic Committee officials last week described the Rio games as "the most perfect, imperfect games," discounting

empty seats, organizational setbacks, and pea-green water in a diving and swimming venue.

As the Olympics opened on Aug. 5, organizers needed millions in a bailout from the city and federal governments to fund the subsequent Paralympics. This broke a promise to use only private money to fund the \$2.8 billion operating budget. "We told everybody before the Paralympics that we were short for the Paralympic Games because of lack of sponsorship and ticket sales," Rio spokesman Mario Andrada said.

Spence said Rio CEO Sidney Levy shocked officials just four weeks before

the Paralympic opened, saying "there was no money to do the Paralympics."

The cash-flow problems continue, even as the committee is downsized and will cease to exist later next year - save for lawyers to handle lawsuits.

Spence said Rio organizers have told him that money that should have gone to pay the travel grants was seized by other creditors - through a lawsuit and court injunction - demanding payment.

Spence said he was told these creditors included security and cleaning companies. The issues have put the spotlight on Rio's city hall and out-going mayor Eduardo Paes. In the bailout pledge, the

city committed 150 million reals (\$45 million) with the federal government promising another 100 million reals (\$30 million). Andrada said the city had paid only 30 million reals (\$9 million) so far, though organizers have billed the city for at least twice that much.

Paes has been in the unwanted spotlight recently. A state court froze his assets last week as a public prosecutor investigates whether he failed to assess an environmental fee to the company that built the Olympic golf course. This adds to suspicion about overbilling and favoritism in infrastructure built for the Olympics and the 2014 World Cup. —AP

## BRITAIN'S MO FARAH HAS MARATHON IN HIS SIGHTS

**DUBAI:** Mo Farah has unfinished business with the marathon but accepts it will take time to master the distance when he steps away from the track after next season's world championships.

Farah's back-to-back Olympic 5,000 and 10,000 metres gold medals and five world titles make him one of the greatest distance runners of all time.

The Briton plans to bow out after the world championships in London next year and will then turn his attention to the roads. Farah ran a relatively disappointing 2 hours, eight minutes and 21 seconds in his only marathon, in London in 2014.

That time, still behind Steve Jones's 1985 British record of 2:07.13, is almost six minutes outside Dennis Kimetto's 2:02.57 world record and considerably slower than the times being run by the leading Africans to win the big-money Marathon Majors.

"I do have a lot of plans to run the marathon," Farah told Reuters on Monday. "My aim is to get the world champs out of the way then see what I can do on the road."

"I believe I have to learn about the event, I have to understand what it takes. "I'm good on the track but it's taken me

years to be able to get there. And same thing on the road.

"My first marathon was two hours eight, it was okay but it wasn't great. To be able to mix with the guys I'll need to run a lot faster than that."

By the time Farah, now 33, does turn his attention to the classic distance he might find that 2:02 is no longer enough.

Talk of a sub-two hour marathon has been a staple among athletics fans for years but gained new impetus last week with Nike's announcement of its "Breaking2" project for a focused attack on the mark, albeit in a controlled environment somewhat at odds with the traditional road race format.

Farah, a Nike ambassador, said he was intrigued to see what they might achieve.

"It's good in a way to see what they can do and that they're looking that far ahead because I believe that if you do get ready for it, it's possible," he said.

"I don't know how long it will take - a year, two years, three years, but if you try hard then it's possible and it's great that Nike have put a massive investment into it and let's see what they can do." — Reuters



**NEW YORK:** Jean-Gabriel Pageau #44 of the Ottawa Senators misses the net during the third period against Jean-Francois Berube #30 of the New York Islanders at the Barclays Center on Sunday in the Brooklyn borough of New York City. The Senators defeated the Islanders 6-2.—AFP

## JONES LEADS BLUE JACKETS PAST CANUCKS IN OT FOR 9TH IN A ROW

**VANCOUVER:** Seth Jones scored 46 seconds into overtime to lead Columbus to a 4-3 victory over the Vancouver Canucks on Sunday, giving the Blue Jackets their ninth straight win and coach John Tortorella the 500th of his NHL career. Brandon Saad had two goals and Cam Atkinson added a goal and an assist for Columbus, which has earned points in 11 straight games (10-0-1). Alexander Wennberg had two assists and Sergei Bobrovsky finished with 14 saves for his league-leading 19th win. Brandon Sutter, Daniel Sedin and Jannik Hansen scored for Vancouver, while Ryan Miller stopped 21 shots. Jones scored his fifth of the season on a 2-on-1 break with Atkinson in the extra period after Vancouver's Ben Hutton hit the post at the other end.

### SENATORS 6, ISLANDERS 2

Mark Stone had a goal and two assists, Zack Smith scored twice and Ottawa won its second straight. Bobby Ryan, Derrick Brassard and Tom Pyatt also scored for the Senators. Andrew Hammond started and stopped all seven shots he faced before leaving with 3:15 left in the first period due to injury. Mike Condon replaced him and had 18 saves the rest of the way. Anders Lee and Anthony Beauvillier scored for New York, which has lost five straight and sits in last place in the Eastern Conference at 11-14-6. Only Colorado (23) and Arizona (27) have fewer points. Jean-Francois Berube made 27 saves in his second straight start for the Islanders.

### RANGERS 3, DEVILS 2, SO

Kevin Hayes scored the deciding goal in the shootout, lifting New York past rival New Jersey. Henrik Lundqvist then stopped Damon Severson to secure the Rangers' sixth win in seven games and second against the Devils at home in eight days. Lundqvist finished with 29 saves through overtime and tied Dominik Hasek for the most wins by a European-born goalie. Mats Zuccarello also scored in the shootout, and Chris Kreider and Derek Stepan had goals in regulation. PA Parenteau and Miles Wood scored and Cory Schneider stopped 24 shots as the Devils lost their sixth straight. Michael Cammalleri had a shootout goal.

### BRUINS, 1, KINGS 0

Jimmy Hayes scored early in the first period and Tuukka Rask made 18 saves for his fourth shutout of the season to lead Boston. Hayes' goal was his first in seven games and only his second in 28 games this season. Rask recorded his 34th career shutout for the Bruins, who improved to .500 at home (8-8-0) after losing two straight games and five of six coming in. Boston was without leading scorer David Pastrnak, who had right elbow surgery Friday. Pastrnak's 19 goals rank second in the NHL behind Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby (21). Peter Budaj had 29 saves for the Kings, who won their previous two games.

### BLACKHAWKS 4, SHARKS 1

Ryan Hartman, Vinnie Hinostroza and

### NHL results/standings

NY Rangers 3, New Jersey 2 (SO); Chicago 4, San Jose 1; Ottawa 6, NY Islanders 2; Columbus 4, Vancouver 3 (OT); Winnipeg 4, Colorado 1; Boston 1, Los Angeles 0.

Western Conference							Eastern Conference						
Central Division							Atlantic Division						
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS		
Chicago	22	8	4	98	80	48	Montreal	20	7	4	96	69	
Minnesota	18	8	4	89	60	40							
St. Louis	17	11	4	91	93	38							
Winnipeg	15	16	3	90	100	33							
Dallas	13	14	6	84	101	32							
Nashville	13	12	5	87	88	31							
Colorado	11	18	1	65	97	23							
Pacific Division							Metropolitan Division						
San Jose	19	12	1	80	72	39	NY Rangers	23	10	1	113	75	
Anaheim	16	11	5	91	90	37	Pittsburgh	20	7	5	109	90	
Edmonton	16	12	5	97	90	37	Columbus	20	5	4	98	61	
Los Angeles	16	13	2	79	78	34	Washington	19	8	3	81	66	
Calgary	16	15	2	85	96	34	Philadelphia	19	11	3	106	100	
Vancouver	13	16	3	80	100	29	Carolina	13	11	7	82	87	
Arizona	11	15	5	70	97	27	New Jersey	12	12	7	74	93	
							NY Islanders	11	14	6	81	99	

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

Patrick Kane scored in the third period as Chicago won its fifth straight. The division leaders in the Western Conference were tied at 1 when Hinostroza won a faceoff for Chicago and Hartman whipped the puck right by Martin Jones on the stick side at 6:59. It was Hartman's first goal since Nov. 25 at Anaheim, ending an 11-game drought. Hinostroza then got his third of the season when he shot it through Jones' legs at 17:40 on a break with Marian Hossa. Hinostroza also scored in Chicago's 6-4 win at St. Louis on Saturday night. Kane added an empty-netter as Chicago improved to 13-2-3 at home. Duncan Keith scored his first goal of the season in the second, and Scott Darling made 33 saves.

### JETS 4, AVALANCHE 1

Nikolaj Ehlers scored twice to lead Winnipeg past Colorado. Patrik Laine had a goal and two assists and Blake Wheeler also scored for the Jets. Mark Scheifele had two assists and Connor Hellebuick stopped 27 shots to improve to 12-10-1 this season. Jarome Iginla had a power-play goal for Colorado, and Calvin Pickard had 26 saves while making his first career NHL start in his hometown. Laine got his 18th early in the second period, and Wheeler and Ehlers scored 1:09 apart early in the third to make it 3-0. After Iginla pulled the Avalanche within two with 2:01 remaining, Ehlers had an empty-netter with 30 seconds to go. — AP



**VANCOUVER:** Vancouver Canucks defenseman Alex Biega (55) looks on as Columbus Blue Jackets left wing Brandon Saad (20) celebrates his goal past Vancouver Canucks goalie Ryan Miller (30) with teammate Columbus Blue Jackets center Boone Jenner (38) during the second period of an NHL hockey game, Sunday, in Vancouver, British Columbia. — AP



Mo Farah

## WIGGINS PACKAGE WAS MEDICAL, CONFIRMS TEAM SKY'S SUTTON

**LONDON:** Team Sky coach Shane Sutton confirmed yesterday that a mysterious package delivered to Bradley Wiggins's doctor during the 2011 Dauphine Libere contained medical substances.

UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) is probing alleged wrongdoing at Team Sky and British Cycling, who share headquarters, and the package, delivered by British Cycling coach Simon Cope, forms part of its investigation.

Team Sky boss Dave Brailsford has refused to clarify exactly what the package contained, but Sutton confirmed it was medicine that would have been administered by team doctor Richard Freeman.

"I believe (Freeman) administered the medication," Sutton told the British government's Culture, Media and Sport committee during a hearing about doping in sport in central London.

"Obviously there was a medical supply he (Cope) delivered. I don't know what was in the package."

"Whatever it was, he (Freeman) would have administered. When the ingredients of the package comes out, everybody will be clear. I'm quite sure, 100 percent, there'll be no wrongdoing."

The Daily Mail has reported the package was delivered on the day Wiggins won the Dauphine Libere stage race in France, giving him the biggest victory of his career at that point. It has emerged Wiggins was granted therapeutic use exemptions (TUEs)

to take banned anti-inflammatory drug triamcinolone before the 2011 Tour de France, the 2012 Tour, which he won, and the 2013 Giro d'Italia.

Five-time Olympic champion Wiggins, Cope, Brailsford and British Cycling have all strongly denied breaking anti-doping rules.

Sutton, who stepped down from his role as British Cycling team director over sexism allegations earlier this year, said he had little contact with Team Sky's medical team. "My role in all of this was to be part of Brad's coaching team, not Brad's medical team," he said.

"Knowing the kid (Wiggins) for many, many years, as far I'm concerned he never worked outside any rules."

"Given the fact Dave Brailsford was probably the pioneer behind clean cycling and created what is probably the cleanest team in the world-he set up a zero-tolerance programme-there was no wrongdoing there. "I can't state strongly enough there was no wrongdoing on any part of Brad and Team Sky." Australian Sutton appeared to become frustrated as the session progressed and at one point said he was "quite upset" Team Sky's integrity was being questioned.

Earlier, British Cycling president Bob Howden said he did not know what was in the package in question. George Gilbert, chair of British Cycling's ethics commission, said the package might have contained "pedals" or "spare shoes". —AFP



Bradley Wiggins





CHENNAI: England's captain Jos Buttler (R) greets India's Karun Nair (C) after scoring a triple-century (300 runs) during the fourth day of the fifth and final Test cricket match between India and England. —AFP

## NAIR TRIPLE TON PUTS INDIA IN COMMAND AGAINST ENGLAND

CHENNAI: Karun Nair's scintillating triple century yesterday put India in command of the final Test as England faced the uphill task of surviving on a fifth day wicket in Chennai. Right-handed Nair, who finished on 303 not out, reached the landmark with a boundary before India declared their first innings on 759-7, their highest ever Test score.

India amassed a lead of 282 runs while England ended the day on 12 without loss, with skipper Alastair Cook (three) and Keaton Jennings (nine) at the crease.

"We are 3-0 up (in the five-match series), so I think they are, you know, already out of the game," an ecstatic Nair told reporters after his epic knock. "It (pitch) is slowly deteriorating. And there are footmarks there so I think we just have to bowl well and get the wickets. Good bowling does get you wickets on any surface," said Nair.

Nair, 25, was playing in just the third Test match of his career. He recorded his maiden century in the morning session before expertly converting it into a double and then a triple in the evening.

He became only the third batsman to convert a maiden Test hundred into a triple century, joining the elite company of West Indies' Garry Sobers (365 not out) and Australia's Bob Simpson (311).

Nair's knock came off 381 balls and was laced with 32 fours and four sixes. He reached the feat with a cut shot off Adil Rashid and raised his helmet to a standing ovation. The triple ton came a day after teammate Lokesh Rahul missed 200 by a single run after getting out to Rashid on 199 in the final moments of play on Sunday. Nair though survived two dropped chances-on 34 on Sunday and 216 on

Monday-during his marathon knock.

"After I crossed 250, the team management had certain plans of going after the bowling and declaring," said Nair, who became India's second triple century after batting great Virender Sehwag, who has hit two. "So I think within the space of five overs I got to 280-285, that's when I started thinking and Jaddu (Ravindra Jadeja) kept egging me on to not throw it away and get to 300 easily," he added.

His 181-run sixth-wicket partnership with Ravichandran Ashwin stood out as India registered their highest-ever Test score of 759, surpassing their 726 against Sri Lanka in December 2009.

### BAYLISS 'CONFIDENT'

The visitors have three sessions to survive and secure a draw. "It's never easy when it happens, you got to give credit to the Indian team and their batters. They played extremely well. We just weren't in the game today," said England coach Trevor Bayliss.

However Bayliss said he was confident that his batsmen would stand up to the challenge on the final day on a good batting wicket. "As confident as I can be. They are in a pretty good place. We have been in a tough position in the seven Tests (including two in Bangladesh) and have come out and played well the next day.

"We were out there to win this-the last couple of Test matches-so they (England players) don't want to get on the plane with a loss," said Bayliss. The Australian-born Bayliss also kept himself out of the England captaincy debate, saying the skipper Alastair Cook "deserves" to make his own decision. —AFP

**BRISBANE:** After a tense and lengthy innings that was shaping as one of the greatest chases in test cricket, Pakistan's bold bid to beat Australia in the series-opening day-night Test was wrapped up in five balls yesterday.

Asad Shafiq marshalled the Pakistan tail-enders from 173-5 to 449-8 in pursuit of the improbable target of 490, scoring 137 from 207 balls before he was caught at gully, fending off a Mitchell Starc short ball.

Four balls and one run later, skipper Steve Smith threw down the stumps from second slip to run out Yasir Shah for 33. That ensured Smith's young lineup held off Pakistan by 39 runs, maintained Australia's unbeaten at the Gabba since 1988 and avoided the embarrassment of losing the unlosable.

After frustrating Australia on an extended, rain-interrupted fourth day, Pakistan started day five needing 108 to win while Australia needed two wickets. Fewer than 1,000 people were in the crowd when play started under overcast skies, including a small but vocal group of expats cheering every run and chanting "Pakistan Zindabad" - or long live Pakistan.

Shafiq and Shah kept the pressure on Australia in a 71-run partnership that went close to giving Pakistan an unlikely world-record victory. After Shafiq's departure, the responsibility moved to Shah, who earlier had an lbw decision overturned on review. He dug out a yorker from Starc, steering it toward the slips, but moved out of his crease and Smith swooped. The Australian captain had dropped two catches at second slip, including Shafiq on 72, and admitted he was relieved he got to end the game.

### MORE RUTHLESS

New Zealand's 451 chasing 550 against England in Christchurch in 2002 remains the record for the highest fourth innings total to lose a test, but this was a closer call.

"The pleasing thing for me, first of all, is we got across the line and won the game," Smith said. "I'm very pleased with that. But I guess last night, sort of showed we're still not the finished product.

We've got to continue to work hard, and keep the foot on the throat when we've got them in that position. We've got to be a little more ruthless and get the job done."

Smith praised Pakistan's pluck, with Azhar Ali (71) and Younis Khan (65) contributing at the top of the order before Shafiq took charge to ensure no repeat of the collapse in the first innings, when the visitors lost 7-24 and were all out for 142 in reply to Australia's 429. "Things got a little bit close for my liking," said Smith, admitting he was nervous when Pakistan got within 60. "It was an amazing game of cricket. Credit to Pakistan, they scored 450 in the last innings of a pink ball test match - no doubt pink ball test cricket is here to stay."

Australia ended a five-test losing streak last month with a win over South Africa in a day-night test in Adelaide, narrowing the losing margin to 2-1 in that series. Smith then led Australia to a 3-0 sweep of New Zealand in a limited-overs series, before the opening test against Pakistan - the first-ever day-night test at the Gabba. Pakistan won the second ever day-night test - beating the West Indies in the United Arab Emirates in October - but the conditions were vastly different with more swing in humid, subtropical Brisbane.

Pakistan captain Misbah-ul-Haq praised his batsmen, particularly Shafiq, who equaled his highest test score with his 10th century. "It set the tone for the series. I can't explain how happy I am for all the guys, especially Asad," Misbah said. "That is one of

## CRICKET AUSTRALIA CALLS OFF PLAYER PAY TALKS UNTIL NEW YEAR

**SYDNEY:** Cricket Australia has broken off pay talks with its players, saying ongoing negotiations could be a distraction to players at a busy time of the season. Informal meetings between the governing body and the ACA were due to take place this week but Cricket Australia has called a postponement until the new year.

In a statement on Monday a spokesman said Cricket Australia "will not take part in a process which seeks to draw its players into a public dispute." It appeared to be referring to the ACA's move last week to make public its concerns about a pregnancy clause in contracts offered to female players.

Cricket Australia says the ACA misrepresented the nature of the clause, which requires players to declare they are not pregnant before they sign a contract.

The ACA described the clause as "outdated at best and rather condescending." Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland condemned the players' association stance on the clause, saying the current negotiation was a chance to develop a policy "that keeps the health and safety of women, and their babies, first and foremost."

In yesterday's statement Cricket Australia came close to suggesting the ACA was not negotiating in good faith. "Cricket Australia is committed to a negotiation that is conducted in good faith between the two parties, but will not take part in a process which seeks to draw its players into a public dispute," the spokesman said.

"Players deserve the opportunity to focus on the game rather than being distracted by a negotiation that should be conducted in a professional and confidential manner.

"In the period that will see tens of thousands of fans enjoy (Big Bash League) matches and the cricket community prepare for another Boxing Day test that cannot be assured if discussions continue under current arrangements with the ACA." — AP

# RUN OUT ENDS THRILLER AS AUSTRALIA BEAT PAKISTAN



BRISBANE: Pakistan's Asad Shafiq plays a shot during play on the final day of the first cricket Test between Australia and Pakistan in Brisbane, Australia, yesterday. — AP

## SCOREBOARD

**BRISBANE, Australia:** Scoreboard after the final day of the day-night first Test between Australia and Pakistan at the Gabba yesterday.

<b>Australia first innings 429</b> (S. Smith 130, P. Handscomb 105; W. Riaz 4-89, M. Amir 4-97)	M. Amir c Wade b Bird 48
<b>Pakistan first innings 142</b> (S. Ahmed 59 not out; J. Hazlewood 3-22, J. Bird 3-23, M. Starc 3-63)	W. Riaz c Smith b Bird 30
<b>Australia second innings 202</b> for 5 declared (U. Khawaja 74, S. Smith 63; Rahat Ali 2-40)	Y. Shah run out (Smith) 33
<b>Pakistan second innings</b> (382 for 8 overnight)	R. Ali not out 1
S. Aslam c Renshaw b Starc 15	Extras (lb5, w2) 7
A. Ali c Wade b Starc 71	Total (all out, 145 overs) 450
B. Azam c Smith b Lyon 14	Fall of wickets: 1-31 (Aslam), 2-54 (Azam), 3-145 (Azhar), 4-165 (Misbah), 5-173 (Younis), 6-220 (Ahmed), 7-312 (Amir), 8-378 (Wahab), 9-449 (Shafiq), 10-450 (Yasir)
Y. Khan c Smith b Lyon 65	Bowling: Starc 38-10-119-4 (1w), Hazlewood 42-11-99-0, Bird 33-6-110-3 (1w), Lyon 29-3-108-2, Maddinson 3-0-9-0.
M. ul-Haq c Wade b Bird 5	Result: Australia won by 39 runs
A. Shafiq c Warner b Starc 137	Series: Australia 1-0
S. Ahmed b Starc 24	Man of the match: Asad Shafiq (PAK)

the classiest innings I have seen. In the context of the game, the way he handled the pressure playing with (the) tail, he made a match out of nothing."

Pakistan has lost 10 consecutive tests in

Australia since 1995 and has never won a test at the Gabba, where Australia is unbeaten since 1988, but Misbah said they'd travel to Melbourne full of confidence ahead of the second Test starting Dec 26. — AP

## KUMARA TAKES THREE WICKETS FOR SRI LANKA

**POTCHEFSTROOM:** Teenage fast bowler Lahiru Kumara took three wickets as Sri Lanka looked set to take a first innings lead on the second day of a three-day match against a South African Invitation XI at Senwes Park yesterday.

Kumara had figures of three for 36 as the Invitation team reached 285 for eight at the close, still 88 runs behind the tourists' first innings of 373. Left-hander Leus du Plooy was responsible for almost half the Invitation team's total, stroking 142 off 159 balls with 25 fours. Du Plooy, 21, is a product of the same Pretoria school that produced South African captains AB de Villiers and Faf du Plessis. He has made three first-class centuries but Monday's effort will not have first-class status

because the Sri Lankans were able to use all 15 members of their touring squad. Du Plooy eventually fell to Kumara, who earned his first two Test caps in a recent series in Zimbabwe.

Captain Angelo Mathews and off-spinner Dilruwan Perera both took two wickets. Du Plooy was the only South African batsman to shine, with no other player making more than 25.

Earlier, fast bowler Duanne Olivier took three of the last four wickets as the Sri Lankans could only add 45 runs to their overnight total of 328 for six. Olivier finished with four for 54. It is the only warm-up match for Sri Lanka, who start a three-Test series against South Africa in Port Elizabeth on December 26. — AFP

## SCOREBOARD

**CHENNAI, India:** Scoreboard at stumps on the fourth day of the fifth and final Test between India and England in Chennai yesterday.

<b>England 1st innings 477</b> (M. Ali 146, J. Root 88; R. Jadeja 3-106)	(Ashwin), 7-754 (Jadeja)
<b>India 1st innings</b> (overnight 391-4; K. Nair 71, M. Vijay 17)	Bowling: Broad 27-6-80-2, Ball 23-2-93-0, Ali 41-1-190-1, Stokes 20-2-76-1, Rashid 29.4-1-153-1, Dawson 43-4-129-2, Root 2-0-12-0, Jennings 5-1-20-0.
L. Rahul c Buttler b Rashid 199	Did not bat: A. Mishra, I. Sharma
P. Patel c Buttler b Ali 71	
C. Pujara c Cook b Stokes 16	
V. Kohli c Jennings b Broad 15	
K. Nair not out 303	<b>England 2nd innings</b>
M. Vijay lbw b Dawson 29	A. Cook not out 3
R. Ashwin c Buttler b Broad 67	K. Jennings not out 9
R. Jadeja c Ball b Dawson 51	Extras 0
U. Yadav not out 1	Total (0 wickets; 5 overs) 12
Extras (b2, lb4, w1) 7	Bowling: I. Sharma 1-0-2-0, R. Ashwin 2-0-7-0, R. Jadeja 2-0-3-0
Total (7 wickets dec; 190.4 overs) 759	To bat: J. Root, M. Ali, J. Bairstow, B. Stokes, J. Buttler, L. Dawson, A. Rashid, S. Broad, J. Ball.
Fall of wicket: 1-152 (Patel), 2-181 (Pujara), 3-211 (Kohli), 4-372 (Rahul), 5-435 (Vijay), 6-616	



CHENNAI: India's Karun Nair plays a shot during the fourth day of the fifth and final Test cricket match between India and England at The M.A. Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai yesterday. Karun Nair smashed an unbeaten 303 as India declared their first innings on 759 for seven on day four of the fifth and final Test against England. —AFP

## BRITISH TEAMS FINED FOR POPPY WAR TRIBUTE

ZURICH: FIFA fined England 45,000 Swiss francs (\$43,850, 42,000 euros) yesterday for wearing a poppy tribute to British war dead during their November 11 World Cup qualifier against Scotland.

Scotland were fined 20,000 Swiss francs, while Wales and Northern Ireland were given 20,000 and 15,000 Swiss francs respectively for making their own tributes. FIFA rules ban "political" symbols on shirts during official games, but the British nations denied they had breached the ban.

Both sets of players and England's manager Gareth Southgate wore black armbands bearing red poppy motifs at the Wembley game, which England

won 3-0. The qualifier was staged on Armistice Day, when Britain traditionally pays tribute to all of the country's war dead. England's Football Association has already said it will contest any fine and believes its "legal position is right and our moral position is right". FIFA disciplinary committee chairman Claudio Sulser stated it was not their "intention to judge or question specific commemorations as we fully respect the significance of such moments in the respective countries, each one of them with its own history and background".

But in a statement he explained they had issued the fines as "rules need to be applied in a neutral and fair man-

ner across FIFA's 211 member associations". He added: "The display, among others, of any political or religious symbol is strictly prohibited. In the stadium and on the pitch, there is only room for sport, nothing else."

FIFA rules ban "political, religious or personal slogans, statements or images" on player kits. Wales and Northern Ireland opted against allowing their players to wear black armbands with poppy symbols.

### IRISH 'DISAPPOINTED'

Instead, Wales laid a wreath beside the pitch and fans held up a poppy mosaic prior to their 1-1 World Cup qualifying draw with Serbia in Cardiff.

In Belfast, Northern Ireland held a minute's silence, laid wreaths and displayed a poppy mosaic ahead of their 4-0 win over Azerbaijan.

The Scottish Football Association said it was "disappointed" by FIFA's decision and would "await the written reasons from the committee before considering the appropriate next steps". The Irish Football Association, responsible for Northern Ireland, said it would seek legal advice on the matter. "The Irish FA is disappointed that the FIFA disciplinary committee has reprimanded the association and issued a fine," the IFA said in a statement.

"The Irish FA will examine the full written submission when it is released

and will take further legal advice before deciding on a future course of action." The Football Associations of England and Wales did not immediately respond to requests for comment from AFP. British Prime Minister Theresa May has branded FIFA's stance "outrageous". The Republic of Ireland, meanwhile, were fined 5,000 Swiss francs after their players wore symbols commemorating the Easter Rising on their shirts during a March friendly against Switzerland.

The Easter Rising, which took place in April 1916, was an Irish rebellion against British rule. The Football Association of Ireland is not expected to contest the fine. — AFP

## GUARDIOLA PINS HOPES ON CHELSEA WOBBLE

MANCHESTER: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola said his side will be ready to pounce if Premier League leaders Chelsea falter following their impressive 2-1 comeback victory over title rivals Arsenal.

Chelsea have streaked clear at the summit thanks to a storming run of 11 consecutive victories.

City trail Antonio Conte's side by seven points, having climbed to second place by coming from behind to beat Arsenal at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday, and Guardiola says the leaders are in their sights.

Asked if the win, secured by second-half goals from Leroy Sané and Raheem Sterling, would give City a psychological boost, Guardiola nodded and replied: "A lot. "Seven points is a huge distance and



Pep Guardiola

when a team can make 11 victories in a row, you just can say congratulations.

"But at least to be there as much possible, and waiting if the opponent fails sometimes, and waiting until the last part of the season to be there, to fight for the title."

Since Guardiola's arrival in England, following stellar stints at Barcelona and Bayern Munich, there has been huge interest in whether his passing principles will prevail in the pell-mell Premier League.

The City manager triggered his team's comeback by moving Kevin De Bruyne up front at half-time and switching Sterling to the right flank, but he played down the significance of the decision.

"Because we won, now the trainer is a genius!" said Guardiola, who faced criticism following recent one-sided losses to Chelsea and Leicester City.

Guardiola said he had apologised to John Stones after benching the centre-back, a £47.5 million (\$59.3 million, 56.8 million euros) recruit from Everton, for the second game running.

But he hailed Yaya Toure, who has become an increasingly vital cog in City's midfield despite Guardiola initially freezing him out.

Asked if Toure's form might earn the 33-year-old an extension to his contract, which expires at the end of the season, Guardiola replied: "No answer to that question."

"I know he finishes his contract. Now we have time to discuss about that.

What I am impressed most (by) is his huge quality. "He looks like a boy. He played awesome. It is not in terms of when he has the ball, it's the personality.

"When we are in trouble, he goes there, asks for the ball, pass, pass. When Yaya plays at that level, because he is fit and focused, he is an exceptional, exceptional player." — AFP



PHILADELPHIA: Brooklyn Nets' Brook Lopez, top, tries to dunk against Philadelphia 76ers' Robert Covington during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Sunday, in Philadelphia. — AP

## THE PREMIER LEAGUE'S LONGEST WINNING STREAKS

LONDON: Premier League leaders Chelsea set a new club record at the weekend by registering an 11th consecutive league win within the same season for the first time. Here are the longest winning streaks since England's top flight was relaunched as the Premier League in 1992:

### 11 wins: Chelsea (April-September 2009)

The 2008-09 season was a tumultuous one for Chelsea, with Luiz Felipe Scolari sacked as manager in February after only seven months in charge. But the team recovered form under interim manager Guus Hiddink and finished the season with a run of five successive wins. Scolari's permanent successor, Carlo Ancelotti, picked up where Hiddink had left off, overseeing six straight wins at the start of a season that would end with a free-scoring Chelsea team crowned league champions and FA Cup winners.

### 11 wins: Chelsea (September-December 2016)

The seeds for Chelsea's current run of wins were sown during a 3-0 defeat at Arsenal in late September, when new manager Antonio Conte switched to his preferred 3-4-3 formation. The west London club have since been unstoppable, notably beating Manchester United (4-0), Tottenham Hotspur (2-1) and Manchester City (3-1), moving seven points clear at the league summit.

### 11 wins: Manchester United (December 2008-March 2009)

Beginning with a 1-0 victory at Stoke City on Boxing Day, Alex Ferguson's United went on a run of 11 consecutive wins that shot them to the top of the table. They kept clean sheets in the first nine games, won six matches 1-0 and only conceded two goals over the entire run. The sequence came to a juddering halt in a 4-1 home defeat by Liverpool, which was followed by a 2-0 loss at Fulham. But a subsequent burst of seven wins carried Cristiano Ronaldo and his team-mates to a third consecutive title.

### 11 wins: Liverpool (February-April 2014)

Liverpool's 24-year wait for the

league title appeared destined to come to an end as a team spearheaded by Luis Suarez and Daniel Sturridge rattled off a series of thrilling victories in the English spring of 2014. Their victims included Arsenal (5-1), Manchester United (3-0) and title rivals Manchester City (3-2). But Brendan Rodgers's side were to come unstuck in a 2-0 home defeat against Chelsea, with Steven Gerrard's unfortunate slip gifting Demba Ba a goal that opened the door for City to claim the title.

### 11 wins: Manchester City (April-September 2015)

City lost their title to Chelsea the following season, but they finished that campaign like a train, winning their last six fixtures. Manuel Pellegrini's men began the subsequent campaign in equally impressive fashion, winning their first five games without conceding a goal, but would ultimately finish fourth.

### 12 wins: Manchester United (March-August 2000)

United roared to the finish line in the 1999-2000 title race, winning their final 11 games and ending the campaign with a record 18-point advantage over nearest rivals Arsenal. They scored 37 goals in the process, including seven in a 7-1 demolition of West Ham United in which Paul Scholes claimed a hat-trick. The following season began with a 2-0 win over Newcastle United and would once again end with United top of the pile.

### 14 wins: Arsenal (February-August 2002)

Arsenal set a record for the most wins within a single Premier League season (13) and the most successive wins in the history of the English top flight (14) as they romped to a second league and FA Cup double under Arsene Wenger. Fourth in the table in early February, Arsenal tore to the front with a run of 11 wins on the spin before securing the title with a 1-0 success at the home of title rivals Manchester United. They finished the season by beating Everton 4-3 at Highbury and opened their title defence with a 2-0 win over Birmingham City before drawing 2-2 at West Ham. — AFP

## BEAL'S 41 POINTS LEAD WIZARDS PAST CLIPPERS

WASHINGTON: Bradley Beal scored 41 points while Markieff Morris had 12 of his 23 points in the fourth quarter as the Washington Wizards beat the Los Angeles Clippers 117-110 in the NBA on Sunday. John Wall added 18 points and 11 assists for the Wizards. They closed with a 22-8 run to win their third straight game and fifth in six. Blake Griffin scored 26 points for the Clippers, but was held scoreless during a fourth quarter in which coach Doc Rivers was ejected. DeAndre Jordan added 13 points and 17 rebounds, and Chris Paul had 13 points and 12 assists. Los Angeles had won four in a row. Washington shot 80 percent (12 of 15) from the floor in the fourth after already coming back from an 11-point deficit in the third.

### 76ERS 108, NETS 107

Joel Embiid scored 17 of his career-high 33 points in the third quarter and hit a pair of free throws with 12.5 seconds left to lead Philadelphia over Brooklyn in a matchup of two of the league's worst teams. Embiid added 10 rebounds and Ersan Ilyasova had 22 points for the 76ers, who snapped an eight-game home losing streak while winning for the third time in 13 games. A leading Rookie of the Year candidate, Embiid was 12 for 17 from the field, including 2 for 3 from beyond the arc, and 7 for 8 from the free-throw line. Brook Lopez had 22 points, nine rebounds and eight assists for the Nets, who lost their ninth in a row on the road.

### JAZZ 82, GRIZZLIES 73

Gordon Hayward scored 22 points and Rudy Gobert had 21 points, 12 rebounds and three blocks, helping Utah win a defensive battle. The win -Utah's fourth straight and seventh in the last eight - came after the Jazz broke open a close game with about four minutes remaining. Boris Diaw, Hayward and Shelvin Mack connected on a trio of 3-pointers, turning a 66-all tie into a Jazz win. Diaw had 11 points and Mack had 10. Mike Conley led Memphis with 14 points, while Zach Randolph had 12 points and 11 rebounds. JaMychal Green added 10 points and 11 rebounds. Memphis managed only 30 percent shooting on the night against the aggressive Jazz defense. That included the Grizzlies converting only 2 of 23 shots from outside the arc.

### SPURS 113, PELICANS 100

LaMarcus Aldridge had 22 points and San

Antonio paid tribute to Tim Duncan on his jersey retirement night with a fundamentally strong performance. San Antonio won its fourth straight overall and fourth consecutive at home after a slow start at the AT&T Center. The Spurs retired Duncan's jersey after the game. The franchise cornerstone retired in the offseason after winning five championships and two MVPs in 19 seasons, all with San Antonio. Duncan's style of play led to the nickname "The Big Fundamental," and the Spurs honored him with their own rather seamless performance against the Pelicans.

### RAPTORS 109, MAGIC 79

DeMar DeRozan scored 31 points and Jonas Valanciunas added 16 points and 13 rebounds, helping Toronto beat Orlando. DeRozan has scored at least 30 points in four straight games and 15 times overall this season. Toronto exploded in the third quarter to open a 20-point lead and has scored 100 points in 14 consecutive games, the longest active streak in the NBA. Toronto outscored the Magic 29-13 in the third quarter to break open a four-point halftime advantage. Evan Fournier led the Magic with 15 points but was plagued by foul trouble trying to guard the more physical DeMarre Carroll.

### CELTICS 105, HEAT 75

Isaiah Thomas scored 23 points before getting ejected and Avery Bradley added 20 as

Boston built a huge early lead on the way to beating Miami. Al Horford had 17 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for the Celtics. They led by 22 in the first half and beat Miami for the fifth consecutive time. Miami turned the ball over 23 times, and Boston converted those into 24 points. And the Heat, the worst free-throw shooting team in the NBA, went 6 for 14 from the line in the fourth quarter. Goran Dragic led all scorers with 31 points for Miami. Hassan Whiteside finished with 23 points and 17 rebounds, all but one of those rebounds coming in the second half. Thomas was ejected with 3:02 left for elbowing Justise Winslow in the face, bloodying the Heat forward and being assessed with a flagrant-2 after a lengthy review.

### MAVERICKS 99, KINGS 79

Rookie Dorian Finney-Smith scored a season-high 17 points, leading six Dallas players in double figures. After losing to Sacramento by 31 points at home 11 days ago, the Mavericks started fast. They made 11 of their first 15 shots and never trailed. Deron Williams, Harrison Barnes and Wesley Matthews each scored 15 for Dallas. DeMarcus Cousins scored 33 for Sacramento. The Kings were minus second-leading scorer Rudy Gay, who missed his third consecutive game because of a strained right hip flexor. — AP

## NBA results/standings

San Antonio 113, New Orleans 100; Utah 82, Memphis 73; Philadelphia 108, Brooklyn 107; Toronto 109, Orlando 79; Boston 105, Miami 95; Dallas 99, Sacramento 79; Washington 117, LA Clippers 110.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference			
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division			
W	L	PCT	GB	W	L	PCT	GB
Toronto	19	8	.704	Utah	18	10	.643
Boston	15	12	.556	Oklahoma City	16	11	.593
NY Knicks	14	13	.519	Portland	13	16	.448
Brooklyn	7	19	.269	Denver	11	16	.407
Philadelphia	7	20	.259	Minnesota	7	19	.269
Central Division				Pacific Division			
Cleveland	19	6	.760	Golden State	24	4	.857
Milwaukee	13	12	.520	LA Clippers	20	8	.714
Indiana	14	14	.500	Sacramento	10	17	.370
Chicago	13	13	.500	LA Lakers	11	19	.367
Detroit	14	15	.483	Phoenix	8	19	.296
Southeast Division				Southwest Division			
Charlotte	15	13	.536	San Antonio	22	5	.815
Atlanta	13	14	.481	Houston	21	7	.750
Washington	12	14	.462	Memphis	18	11	.621
Orlando	12	17	.414	New Orleans	9	20	.310
Miami	9	19	.321	Dallas	7	20	.259

## 'FIFA ARE NOT WORLD DOPING POLICE': INFANTINO

**BERLIN:** FIFA president Gianni Infantino has ruled out taking the 2018 World Cup from Russia in the wake of the latest findings of the McLaren report.

"FIFA is not the world police and certainly not the world doping police," the head of world football's governing body told German magazine Der Spiegel.

"Our disciplinary bodies will take care of anything in the McLaren report which has anything to do with football. 'Boycotts and bans have never solved any problems,' Infantino added as he ruled out stripping Russia of the 2018 World Cup finals.

The McLaren report, the second part of which was announced ten days ago, revealed systematic doping in Russia between 2011 and 2015 which involved

more than 1,000 athletes in several sports, including football.

Infantino says FIFA are still waiting for the 'relevant information' from the McLaren reports which mentions 31 tampered doping samples from footballers. The Swiss says "if measures need to be taken, they will be", but he pointed to the work FIFA is already doing to combat doping. "Testing was not implemented by Brazil in 2014 or by South Africa in 2010 and won't be carried out by Russia in 2018, but by FIFA," he added. If something goes wrong, "that will be our responsibility, our fault," said Infantino, "but we are confident our anti-doping measures will work." When asked about the recent 'Football Leaks', reported by several publications including Der

Spiegel, which alleged tax evasion by high-profile stars including Cristiano Ronaldo and Jose Mourinho, Infantino said it's a matter for individual national federations.

"It is naive to believe that FIFA can know everything from Zurich which goes on during every transfer in the world," said Infantino.

"So it makes sense to give the responsibility to the unions and federations. 'They should check the transfers, which take place in their own country.' He added "when someone hasn't paid their taxes, drives too fast or is drunk behind the wheel, then FIFA is not responsible for that." Infantino also said FIFA will lead a meeting of football representative bodies early next year to discuss trans-

fers in the wake of last week's Football Leaks revelations.

"We need to start a huge job of reflection including all parties: players, clubs, intermediaries, but also the authorities, notably the European Commission," Infantino said in the same interview to a group of European media, including France's Mediapart.

"With that in mind we have, at FIFA, put in place a committee to gather all those interested parties. They will meet for the first time at the beginning of next year." Last week Mediapart published a report alleging that Doyen Sports, a major transfer market dealer, had ploughed funds into prostitution, kickbacks and tax evasion schemes.

"I generally believe that the majority

of people, and therefore also those involved in the transfer system, are honest," added Infantino.

"In any case, I hope that's the case. That being said, it's not a reason not to try, incessantly, to increase and improve the control mechanisms we have in place. 'But we are not an authority charged with enforcing the law... Although we must do more.'

The Football Leaks report claimed that Doyen Sports had attempted to facilitate the transfer of Frenchman Geoffrey Kondogbia to Real Madrid by offering prostitutes. The report also accused the Kazakh-Turkish owned company of transferring at least 10.8 million euros (\$12 million), earned through kickbacks, into tax havens. — AFP

## BAYERN UNDER PRESSURE FOR 'ELECTRIC' SHOWDOWN

**BERLIN:** Bayern Munich face an acid test of their status as Bundesliga leaders in tomorrow's crunch showdown when they host second-placed RB Leipzig, who know they have nothing to lose.

The Bavarian giants have won the Bundesliga title at a canter in each of the last four seasons, but Leipzig, who were only founded in 2009, have torn up the form book in their first season in Germany's top flight.

Just like Bayern, they have won 11 of their 15 league games, with three wins and a single defeat. Both clubs have 36 points, but Bayern are top on goal difference. A shock 1-0 defeat to Ingolstadt ten days ago is the only blot on Leipzig's record having so far beaten the likes of Dortmund, Leverkusen, Schalke and now Hertha Berlin, following Saturday's 2-0 home win.

"Quick, compact and greedy—they are the best opponent we have faced so far," was Hertha coach Pal Dardai's appraisal of Leipzig, who had gone a record 13 matches unbeaten at the start of their debut Bundesliga season.

The Bundesliga breaks for winter after this round of mid-week matches and the Allianz Arena showdown is the standout tie. Having led for three weeks until early December, Leipzig knocked Bayern off the summit for 24 hours after their impressive win over Hertha before Munich's 1-0 victory at bottom side Darmstadt put them top again on Sunday.

"We're proud to have a game on Wednesday against Bayern Munich which will electrify the whole of Germany and will certainly inspire across the borders," said Leipzig's Austrian coach Ralph Hasenhuettl.

Last month, Bayern's president Uli Hoeneß dubbed Leipzig their "second enemy" in Germany alongside Borussia Dortmund before withdrawing the comment, but the Bavarians clearly feel threatened by Leipzig. RB are one of the few German clubs who have deep pockets like Bayern with the financial weight of Austrian drinks giants Red Bull behind them.

Their team has an average age of just over 23 and there is little fear ahead of their historic first Bundesliga match against Bayern. "We want to, we can, but we don't have to," said defender Stefan Ilsanker when asked about the pressure to win in Munich.

Leipzig are set to be without injured defensive midfielder Naby Keita (thigh) and defender Marcel Halstenberg (hip), but Leipzig's young guns are relishing the test of their mettle.

"The anticipation is huge. We'll put everything into it and I can hardly wait," said centre-back Willi Orban, who scored against

Hertha. Centre-backs Orban and Ilsanker will be tasked with containing Bayern's Thomas Mueller and Robert Lewandowski, while Leipzig's top scorer Timo Werner, who has nine league goals, will face Germany's Mats Hummels. Bayern will be missing his centre-back partner Jerome Boateng, who needs a shoulder operation.

Head coach Carlo Ancelotti says he already knows his line-up and it's more than likely Arjen Robben and Franck Ribery will start on the flanks.

While Leipzig impressed against Hertha, Bayern were lacklustre in Sunday's 1-0 win at Darmstadt which was settled by a superb goal from Douglas Costa.

"We took three very important points, without which it would have been difficult on Wednesday against RB Leipzig," said Bayern goalkeeper Manuel Neuer.

"But we can't be satisfied with the performance—that wasn't FC Bayern today and Wednesday will be a duel between equals."

An unthinkable defeat would mean Bayern go into the winter break with the German media inevitably asking all sorts of uncomfortable questions of Ancelotti's star-studded squad.—AFP



**Matches on TV**  
(Local Timings)

### ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE SERIE

Atalanta v Empoli 22:45  
beIN SPORTS 4 HD

### GERMAN BUNDESLIGA 1ST DIV

Dortmund v Augsburg 22:00  
beIN SPORTS 5 HD

Eintracht Frankfurt v Mainz 22:00  
beIN SPORTS 6 HD

Hamburger v Schalke 22:00  
beIN SPORTS 10 HD

Monchengladbach v Wolfsburg 22:00  
beIN SPORTS 9 HD

### SPAIN COPA DEL REY

Villarreal v Toledo 21:00  
beIN SPORTS

Real Sociedad v Real Valladolid 22:00  
beIN SPORTS

Atletico de Madrid v Gujuelo 23:00  
beIN SPORTS 2 HD



**BARCELONA:** Barcelona's Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez (L) celebrates his goal during the Spanish league football match FC Barcelona vs RCD Espanyol at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Sunday. — AFP

## SUAREZ DOUBLE, MESSI MAGIC HANDS BARCA DERBY DELIGHT

**MADRID:** Lionel Messi put on a show in Barcelona's final Spanish league game of the year, scoring once and mesmerizing with his dribbling skills to set up two other goals in a 4-1 win against Espanyol in the city derby on Sunday. Luis Suarez struck the first two goals and Jordi Alba added another in a victory that left Barcelona three points behind leader Real Madrid ahead of the winter break. Madrid, which won FIFA's Club World Cup in Japan this weekend, has a game in hand.

Messi dazzled the crowd at Camp Nou for the first time when he cleared four defenders outside the area - including by rolling the ball between the legs of one of them - before having his shot parried. Suarez pounced on the loose ball to score his second goal in the 67th minute.

"That was a PlayStation play by Messi," Suarez said. "I wish he had ended it with the goal, it would have been one of the best in the last few years." A minute later, Messi used his pace and clever dribbles to get past four defenders again, and then passed for Alba to find the net from inside the area.

After nearly scoring following a neat feint that fooled two defenders inside the area, Messi finished the night in style by finding the net from close range after a pass by Suarez in the 90th. For the second time of the night, the crowd got to its feet and chanted "Messi, Messi." "In the second half we saw the most spectacular version of our players up front, especially Messi," Barcelona coach Luis Enrique said. "We shouldn't stop praising something just because it happens so many times that it looks routine. We shouldn't get used to it, it's unique." Suarez, the league's leading scorer with 12 goals along with Messi, had opened the scoring in the 18th, while David Lopez netted Espanyol's lone goal in the 79th.

Messi started the remarkable move that led to Suarez's second goal after a superb run by Andres Iniesta, who had to get past three defenders himself before being able to feed Messi outside the area. Iniesta had also unleashed a spectacular long-range pass to set up Suarez's first goal on the break. "When we are all playing well as a group, it makes it easier for the individual players to make things happen," Iniesta said. "Leo is crucial for us."

Neymar didn't find the net but was still impressive, creating scoring opportunities and entertaining the crowd with his play. The Brazil striker started the move that led to Barcelona's third goal. "We played well," Espanyol's Lopez said, "but when you make a small mistake and give them as much as a meter, they will score against you." The result ended Espanyol's nine-game unbeaten streak in the league, leaving it in ninth place after 16 rounds. It had defeated Barcelona's reserves 1-0 in October to win the Catalan Super Cup, a competition played by Catalonia's top two clubs.

Espanyol's starting goalkeeper Diego Lopez had to be substituted in the 53rd minute after sustaining a severe cut to his right when he collided with Suarez while making a sliding save inside the area.

### LEGANES 1, EIBAR 1

Portuguese substitute Tiago "Bebe" Correa scored six minutes after coming on to give Eibar a 1-1 draw at 10-man Leganes.

Bebe equalized in the 76th minute with a shot that deflected off a defender and fooled substitute goalkeeper Diego Barrios. Starting goalkeeper Iago Herrerin was sent off in the 26th for a bad foul outside the area while trying to stop a counterattack.

Playing in the first division for the first time, Leganes has drawn three in a row and hasn't won in four rounds.

Deportivo La Coruna defeated last-place Osasuna to move four points clear of the relegation zone ahead of the break. First-half goals by Florin Andone and Ryan Babel secured victory for the

hosts, which lie 15th in the 20-team standings. It was the sixth straight loss for promoted Osasuna, which stayed with only seven points from 16 games. — AP

## MERTENS HITS 4 AS NAPOLI WIN EIGHT-GOAL THRILLER

**MILAN:** Dries Mertens scored four goals, including a nine-minute first-half hat-trick, as Napoli forgot their scoring problems with a 5-3 win over Torino in Serie A on Sunday.

It was a second successive hat-trick for the Belgian, who is playing as an improvised centre-forward following Arkadiusz Milik's long-term knee injury, and took Napoli's goal tally to 13 in their last three league matches.

Napoli's win lifted them to third with 34 points, one behind AS Roma and eight adrift of leaders Juventus.

Lazio later pulled level on points with Napoli by beating Fiorentina 3-1 while Palermo ended a run of nine successive league defeats by scoring twice in the final three minutes to win 4-3 at Genoa. Mertens became the first Serie A player to score successive hat-tricks for 22 years and the first to score four times in a game since Sassuolo's Domenico Berardi in January 2014.

It was hard to believe that Napoli had struggled for goals immediately after Milik was injured playing for Poland in early October. Mertens opened his account in the 13th minute, sending his shot through a crowd of players following a corner, and added the second from a penalty five minutes later. Torino were all over the place and Mertens completed his hat-trick in the 22nd minute after Jose Callejon's shot was stopped by Joe Hart and the Belgian's first attempt was cleared off the line. The second half was a different story as Andrea Belotti pulled one back for the visitors just before the hour, Vlad Chiriches scored Napoli's fourth and Luca Rossetti replied for Torino after Pepe Reina failed to hold Adem Ljajic's free kick.

Mertens then produced his best goal of the game with a delightful chip past Hart before Iago Falque pulled another back for ninth-

placed Torino with a penalty.

Keita Balde and a Lucas Biglia penalty put Lazio 2-0 ahead at halftime against Fiorentina before the visitors hit back. Fiorentina's Josip Illicic missed a penalty before Mauro Zarate pulled one goal back only for Stefano Radu to wrap it up for Lazio in the final minute.

Two goals from Giovanni Simeone, the son of Atletico Madrid coach Diego, helped Genoa to take a 3-1 lead over Palermo before the Sicilians rallied to move off the bottom of the table. Edoardo Golaniga headed one goal back in the 69th minute, Andrea Rispoli levelled in the 88th minute and Aleksandar Trajkovski scored a last-minute winner.

Genoa's frustration boiled over when goalkeeper Mattia Perin was sent off for pushing an opponent. Antonio Candreva's second-half goal gave an unconvincing Inter Milan a 1-0 away win over Sassuolo, who had 10 players on the injured list. Seventh-placed Inter had midfielder Felipe Melo sent off in stoppage time for a second bookable offence.

Bottom club Pescara had Valerio Verre given a straight red card for a dangerous tackle after only 16 minutes as they slumped to a 3-0 home defeat against Bologna.

Bologna, already leading from Adam Masina's header, added further goals with a Berim Dzemali shot which took a huge deflection and a Ladislav Krecjic penalty.

Cyril Thereau scored twice to give Udinese a 2-0 win over lowly Crotona, their third win in a row, while the promoted side's unhappy afternoon was completed when goalkeeper Alex Cordaz was sent off in the 86th minute for handling outside the penalty area.

First-half goals from Riccardo Meggiorini and Sergio Pellissier set up a 2-1 win for Chievo over Sampdoria in Verona. — Reuters



**BOGOTA:** The players of Santa Fe celebrate with the trophy after winning their Colombian Football League final match against Deportes Tolima and becoming champions at Nemesio Camacho "El Campin" stadium in Bogota, on Sunday. — AFP

## STUART ARMSTRONG GOES FROM SUPPORTING ROLE TO CELTIC STAR

**GLASGOW:** Brendan Rodgers says Stuart Armstrong is a shining example for all the players in his squad for the way the midfielder has rejuvenated his Celtic career.

The 24-year-old enjoyed a good start to his time at Celtic Park after signing from Dundee United in February 2015, but then a dip in form saw him endure a torrid time last season under former manager Ronny Deila.

Following the arrival of Rodgers in the summer, Armstrong drifted in and out of the squad and it appeared as if his time at Celtic could be coming to a close.

However, the midfielder has now started the past 12 matches and has been a pivotal part of the side that has won 11 league matches in a row to hold an 11-point lead over Rangers at the top

of the Scottish Premiership.

His rebirth at Celtic was complete on Saturday when he was handed the captain's armband in the absence of the suspended Scott Brown for the win against Dundee.

Brown will return for the match against Partick Thistle today but Rodgers says handing Armstrong the temporary captaincy was reward for his efforts this season "I think it was a symbol for Stuart and the other players," Celtic manager Rodgers said.

"This was a guy who was one of the real stand-out players I felt when I was assessing the squad, yet when he came back in after the summer it probably was in doubt whether he would play for me. Early in the season, he wasn't even in a couple of my squads.—AFP



**GENOA:** Genoa's Armando Izzo, right, tackles Palermo's Robin Kwamina Quaison during the Serie A soccer match between Genoa and Palermo at the Luigi Ferraris Stadium in Genoa, Italy, Sunday. — AP

## Sports

Britain's Mo  
Farah has  
marathon  
in his sightsRun out ends  
thriller as  
Australia  
beat Pakistan

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2016

BRITISH TEAMS FINED FOR POPPY WAR TRIBUTE

Page 18



ARLINGTON: Dez Bryant #88 of the Dallas Cowboys runs after catching a pass during the second quarter against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers at AT&amp;T Stadium on Sunday in Arlington, Texas. — AFP

## ELLIOTT, COWBOYS BOUNCE BACK, TOP BUCS 26-20

ARLINGTON: Ezekiel Elliott celebrated a short touchdown run by jumping into an oversized Salvation Army red kettle and the Dallas Cowboys closed in on home-field advantage in the playoffs with a 26-20 victory over the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the NFL on Sunday night. The Cowboys (12-2) bounced back after their franchise-record 11-game winning streak ended, hanging on after what looked to be a festive night following Elliott's antics turned tense when Jameis Winston rallied the Bucs from a 17-3 deficit to a 20-17 lead. Making his debut in the Sunday night spotlight, Winston threw for 247 yards and two touchdowns but had four turnovers, including an interception that led to Dan Bailey's 38-yard field goal that gave Dallas a 23-20 lead early in the fourth quarter.

Tampa Bay (8-6) had its five-game winning streak snapped and fell a game behind Atlanta in the NFC South. Dallas stayed two games ahead of the New York Giants in the NFC East and needs a win without any help to clinch the home field throughout the NFC playoffs. Elliott, the NFL's rushing leader, had a career-high 159 yards, including a 42-yard run to set up Bailey's fourth field goal for the six-point lead.

Fellow rookie Dak Prescott bounced back from his worst game as a pro, going 32 of 36 for 279 yards a week after completing less than 50 percent of his passes in a 10-7 loss to the New York Giants. Elliott had NFL career rushing leader and former Dallas star Emmitt Smith and plenty of other people laughing when he jumped into the kettle and disappeared when he crouched down following a 2-yard touchdown in the second quarter. He drew a 15-yard penalty.

## TITANS 19, CHIEFS 17

Ryan Succop kicked a 53-yard field goal into the wind as time expired Sunday to give the Tennessee Titans a victory on a frigid afternoon at Arrowhead Stadium. Succop, who spent the first part of his career with Kansas City, came up short on his first try at the winner, but Chiefs coach Andy Reid had called a timeout just before the snap. Given a second chance, Succop knocked it through with a couple of feet to spare as the Titans poured off the bench to celebrate. Tennessee rallied from a 17-7 hole, and Derrick Henry's second touchdown got the Titans (8-6) within 17-16 with just over three minutes left. But Titans coach Mike Mularkey went for the 2-point conversion and the lead. Marcus Mariota was pressured immediately and his pass never reached the end zone. But the Chiefs (10-4), trying to clinch a playoff spot, were unable to run out the clock and Tennessee got the ball back with a minute left. With no timeouts, Mariota calmly found Rishard Matthews for 19 yards and Delanie Walker twice to set up Succop's field-goal attempt. Tennessee is tied for the AFC South lead with Houston.

## RAIDERS 19, CHARGERS 16

Sebastian Janikowski kicked a 44-yard field goal with 2:40 left, his fourth of the game, as the Raiders beat the Chargers in the Relocation Bowl to clinch a playoff berth for the first time since 2002. Playing before what looked like a home crowd at 70,000-seat Qualcomm Stadium, the visiting Raiders (11-3) earned a playoff nod on the same field where they made their last post-season appearance, an embarrassing 48-21 loss to Tampa Bay in the Super Bowl on Jan. 26, 2003. There was a surreal atmosphere to the game, which might be the Chargers' second-to-last in San Diego. Team chairman Dean Spanos seems almost certain to

move the Bolts (5-9) to the Los Angeles area after failing to get a big public subsidy to help him replace aging Qualcomm Stadium. The Raiders could be on the move, too, with owner Mark Davis eyeing Las Vegas, although they'd still play in Oakland until a new stadium is built in Sin City.

## TEXANS 21, JAGUARS 20

Tom Savage threw for 260 yards after Brock Osweiler was benched in the second quarter, and Lamar Miller scored Houston's only touchdown with less than three minutes remaining. The win was Houston's 10th straight in the division and left the Texans (8-6) tied with Tennessee for the AFC South lead. But Houston controls its playoff future with a 5-0 mark in the division. Osweiler threw interceptions on consecutive drives in the second quarter to help Jacksonville build a 13-0 lead. Coach Bill O'Brien had insisted all season he hadn't thought about benching Osweiler, but he'd seen enough after that and brought in Savage. The move was met with a huge ovation from the home fans, who'd been booing Osweiler most of the day. The Jaguars got the ball back twice after falling behind, but failed on a fourth-down conversion the first time and Blake Bortles was intercepted the second time. Bortles threw for 92 yards and ran for a touchdown for the Jaguars (2-12), who dropped their ninth straight.

## PATRIOTS 16, BRONCOS 3

Tom Brady overcame a slow start to lead the Patriots to a rare win in Denver, dealing a crushing blow to the Broncos' playoff hopes. Brady missed his first six passes for just the second time in his career; the first was way back on Oct. 12, 2003, against the Giants. But he came back to lead the Patriots (12-2) to a record eighth consecutive division title and a first-round bye. Brady returned to the site of his worst beating, a 20-18 loss in the AFC championship 11 months ago when he was hit a career-high 23 times. This time, he brought a power run game and a much-improved O-line with him. The result was just his third win in Denver in 10 tries, and it was the Broncos' hopes of defending their Super Bowl title that took a beating. The Broncos (8-6) lost for the third time in four games and were supplanted by the Dolphins for the sixth and final playoff spot in the AFC race with two weeks remaining.

## PACKERS 30, BEARS 27

Aaron Rodgers hit Jordy Nelson with a 60-yard pass to set up Mason Crosby's 32-yard field goal as time expired in one of the coldest games ever played in Chicago. Wide receiver-turned-running back Ty Montgomery ran for a career-high 162 yards and two touchdowns, and the Packers (8-6) earned their fourth straight victory despite blowing a 17-point lead in the fourth quarter. They also moved ahead of Minnesota for second place in the NFC North and pulled within a game of division leader Detroit. The Bears (3-11) tied it on a field goal by Connor Barth with 1:19 left. The Packers took over at their 27, and on third down at the 26, Rodgers unleashed a deep pass down the middle of the field to Nelson, who got behind Cre'Von LeBlanc. With no timeouts, the Packers downed the ball before Crosby booted his winner. The game-time temperature was 11 degrees with a minus-4 wind chill. Chicago hosted the Packers in 3-degree temperature and a minus-15 wind chill - the lowest ever for a Bears home game - on Dec. 18, 1983. The Bears' coldest home game, temperature-wise, was against Green Bay on Dec. 22, 2008,

when it was 2 degrees with a minus-13 wind chill. The Packers tied the NFL's oldest rivalry for the first time since 1933 at 94-94-6.

## BILLS 33, BROWNS 13

The bumbling Browns are two losses short of becoming the NFL's second team to go 0-16 in one season. LeSean McCoy had a season-best 153 yards rushing and scored twice, and the Bills kept their slim playoff hopes alive. The Browns dropped to 0-14, matching the second-worst start to a season set by the 1976 Tampa Bay Buccaneers and 1980 New Orleans Saints. The 2008 Detroit Lions are the NFL's only team to go without a win in a 16-game season. Cleveland has also lost 17 straight dating to last year, moving into a tie with the St. Louis Rams (2008-09) and Houston Oilers (1982-83) for the league's sixth-longest skid. The Browns have now gone a calendar year since their last win, a 24-10 victory over San Francisco on Dec. 13, 2015. The Browns have been so bad they haven't had a lead in 17-plus quarters, dating to a 7-6 edge in the third quarter of a 28-7 loss at Baltimore on Nov. 10.

## STEELERS 24, BENGALS 20

Chris Boswell tied the club record with six field goals, and Ben Roethlisberger threw a touchdown pass in the fourth quarter. The Steelers (9-5) have won five straight and can clinch the AFC North title with a victory at home next Sunday against Baltimore (8-6). As a first step, they rallied from a 14-point deficit - kick by kick - and eliminated Cincinnati at a place where they're right at home. They beat the Bengals (5-8-1) in the opening round of the playoffs 18-16 last January, getting the winning field goal with the help of penalties on Vontaze Burfict and Adam "Pacman" Jones. Burfict and Jones each got a personal foul on Sunday - Pittsburgh's Marcus Gilbert had one as well - as the animosity continued. So did the Steelers' dominance at Paul Brown Stadium, where they've won four in a row. Boswell accounted for Pittsburgh's first 15 points with kicks from 45, 49, 49, 40, 49 and 30 yards. In the end, there was another Bengals meltdown. They had penalties on four consecutive plays - including Pat Sims' personal foul - that set up Roethlisberger's 24-yard touchdown pass to Eli Rogers for a 24-20 lead.

## RAVENS 27, EAGLES 26

The Ravens survived a desperate comeback bid by the Eagles, stopping a 2-point conversion with 4 seconds left. On a wet and windy day, the Ravens maintained control of their playoff possibilities. If Baltimore defeats Pittsburgh on Christmas Day and Cincinnati in the regular-season finale, the Ravens will enter the postseason as AFC North champions. Baltimore (8-6) led 27-17 with just over six minutes left when Joe Flacco threw an interception inside the Philadelphia 10 to give the Eagles (5-9) another chance. Rookie Carson Wentz directed a drive that produced a field goal with 2:22 remaining. The Eagles got the ball back at their 41 with 1:39 to go. A 24-yard completion to Zach Ertz and a pass interference call against rookie Tavon Young set up a 4-yard touchdown run by Wentz that got Philadelphia within a point. First-year coach Doug Pederson went for the win. Wentz threw over the middle to Jordan Matthews, who couldn't get his hands on a ball that appeared to be tipped. Philadelphia has lost five straight and seven of eight.

## GIANTS 17, LIONS 6

Odell Beckham Jr. made another one-hand touchdown catch

to delight replay fanatics, the defense turned in another stifling performance and the Giants inched closer to their first playoff berth since 2011. NFC North-leading Detroit (9-5) had won five in a row. The win was the eighth in nine games for the Giants (10-4) and it gave them their best record through 14 games since 2008, when they were 11-3. The formula was the one the team has followed in Ben McAdoo's first season: just enough offense and a tough stingy, pass-rushing defense. That unit has come up with big back-to-back performances against two division leaders in Dallas (11-2) and Detroit, giving up 13 total points. Eli Manning (20 of 28 for 201 yards) threw a 6-yard touchdown pass to Sterling Shepard on a 75-yard opening drive. He then iced the game with a 4-yarder that Beckham caught with his left hand and then pranced into the end zone for an 11-point lead with 5:20 to play.

## FALCONS 41, 49ERS 13

Devonta Freeman ran for three touchdowns, Matt Ryan passed for two more and the Falcons clinched their first winning season since 2012. Freeman rushed for 139 yards and capped his big day with a 34-yard touchdown run. Ryan completed 17 of 23 passes for 286 yards, including a pair of 9-yard scoring tosses to Taylor Gabriel and Austin Hooper. Aldrick Robinson, stepping up with Atlanta star Julio Jones missing his second straight game with a toe injury, had a career-best 111 yards on four receptions. The Falcons (9-5) made sure they didn't overlook the 49ers (1-13), moving a step closer to getting back to the playoffs after a three-season absence.

The 49ers have fallen apart since that trip to the Super Bowl. They extended a franchise record with their 13th straight loss, keeping the heat on first-year coach Chip Kelly.

## SAINTS 48, CARDINALS 41

Drew Brees snapped out of a two-game funk to throw for 389 yards and four touchdowns in the highest-scoring game in the NFL this season. Brees, who had no TDs and six interceptions his previous two games, completed 37 of 48 with no picks. Brandin Cooks caught seven passes for a career-best 186 yards for the Saints (6-8), including touchdown plays of 65 and 45 yards. David Johnson rushed for 53 yards and caught four passes for 55 yards for Arizona (5-8-1). The second-year back became the first player in NFL history to have at least 100 yards from scrimmage in the first 14 games of a season. Johnson rushed for two touchdowns, giving him 17 TDs this season and 30 in the first 30 games as a pro. The teams amassed 913 yards, 488 by New Orleans, 425 by Arizona, which finished 4-3-1 at home.

## VIKINGS 34, COLTS 6

Andrew Luck threw for 250 yards and two touchdowns, Robert Turbin rushed for two touchdowns, Mike Adams forced a fumble and added an interception for the Colts (7-7). Frank Gore rushed for 101 yards and Indianapolis won on the road for the fourth time this season, dominating a Vikings defense that has been among the best in the league. Adrian Peterson had just 22 yards on six carries and lost a fumble in his first game back from a knee injury for the Vikings (7-7). The Vikings believed they needed to win the final three games to make the playoffs. Sam Bradford threw for 291 yards with one interception and one lost fumble for Minnesota. After a critical home loss to Houston last week, the Colts trail the Texans and Titans by one game in the AFC South. — AP



Mercedes-Benz V-250 AvantGarde displayed at The Avenues



PARIS: Patrick Maisonneuve (centre), lawyer of International Monetary Fund head Christine Lagarde (inset), speaks to journalists yesterday at the Court of Justice of the Republic in Paris following the decision in his client's trial for negligence over a massive state payout to a tycoon when she was French finance minister. — AFP

# IMF CHIEF FOUND GUILTY OVER TYCOON PAYMENT

## BOARD MEETS TO DISCUSS FALLOUT OF GUILTY VERDICT AGAINST LAGARDE

PARIS: A French court yesterday found IMF head Christine Lagarde guilty of negligence over a massive state payout to a tycoon when she was French finance minister but spared her a fine or prison sentence. The Court of Justice of the Republic found against Lagarde over her handling of a dispute between the state and flamboyant businessman Bernard Tapie, which ended in a 404-million-euro (\$422 million) award for Tapie.

The IMF was expected to meet shortly to discuss the implications of the guilty verdict against IMF chief Christine Lagarde in a French court, a spokesman for the organization said yesterday. "The Executive Board has met on previous occasions to consider developments related to the legal proceedings in France. It is expected that the Board will meet again shortly to consider the most recent developments," fund spokesman Gerry Rice said in a statement. Lagarde was put on trial over her 2007 decision to allow a dispute over sale of the Adidas sports brand to the state-owned Credit Lyonnais bank to be resolved by a private arbitration panel, and then failing to challenge the result. The court cleared her of negligence over her decision to refer the matter to arbitration but upheld the charge over her failure to contest the award.

The first woman to head the IMF, Lagarde presided over some of the worst of the fallout from the 2008 financial crisis and is in her second term as managing director after she was reappointed in February. If the board decides she must leave, it will create a race to search for a replacement, who according to an agreement should come from a developing nation.

In a blow to her otherwise stellar career, the court rapped Lagarde for failing to contest the massive payment. Crucially, however, the Paris court said exempted her from any penalty. It was not clear what impact the finding will have on her position at the International Monetary Fund, which has so far given Lagarde its full backing. The IMF board was to meet in Washington in the wake of the court's decision. The 60-year-old former corporate lawyer, who was the first ever female finance minister of a

Group of Eight country before becoming IMF chief in 2011, was not in court for the ruling. Her lawyer Patrick Maisonneuve told reporters she was in Washington. Maisonneuve welcomed the absence of a punishment but said he "would have preferred that she be simply cleared". Lagarde was put on trial over her 2007 decision to allow the dispute over Tapie's sale of the Adidas sports brand to the state-owned Credit Lyonnais bank to be resolved by a private arbitration panel, and then failing to challenge the result. The court cleared her of negligence over her decision to refer the matter to arbitration but upheld the charge over her failure to contest the award.

Lagarde told the court last week she had acted in good faith and that her sole aim had been "to defend the general interest". The Court of Justice of the Republic, which is staffed by judges and members of parliament, hears cases against ministers accused of wrongdoing in office. The punishment for negligence theoretically carries a one-year prison sentence and a 15,000-euro fine.

**Strain on family**  
 Lagarde's voice cracked with emotion on Friday as she said the trial had put her family—she is the mother of two sons—through a "testing" time. Prosecutor Jean-Claude Marin had said he believed the evidence was "very weak" and was opposed to convicting Lagarde. The payout to Tapie raised eyebrows, given his vocal support for Lagarde's then boss, ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy.

It was subsequently cancelled by the courts. Tapie sold Adidas to Credit Lyonnais for the equivalent of 315.5 million euros in 1993. The bank sold it on the following year for 701 million euros, prompting claims from Tapie that he had been cheated.

Lagarde told her trial she had trusted the advice of her subordinates in the process. Another of her lawyers, Bernard Grelon, said her fault was "not one of negligence. It is having taken a decision which turned out badly". As IMF chief, Lagarde has been a key player in bailout negotiations for Greece and has also worked to reform the US- and

Europe-dominated institution to reflect China's growing global leverage.

Lagarde succeeded her disgraced compatriot Dominique Strauss-Kahn as IMF managing director after he resigned to fight sexual assault charges.

Another former IMF head, Rodrigo Rato of Spain, is currently standing trial on charges of misusing funds when he was head of Spanish lender Bankia.

There is a longstanding agreement among the advanced economies after World War II that the head of the IMF is always a European-five of the 11 have been from France-while the leader of the World Bank is always an American.

However, in the early 2000s there was a move to increase representation in the so-called Bretton Woods institutions, especially the IMF, to give less weight to small European economies, and to select a leader from among the large emerging market economies like Mexico and the so-called BRICs countries—Brazil, Russia, India and China. — AFP

## IRAN TO LAND FIRST AIRBUS JET SOON UNDER NEW PACT

PARIS: Iran expects to get its first new jet within weeks under a multi-billion-dollar deal with Airbus for 100 planes, a senior official said yesterday, as Tehran and Western firms race to reopen trade almost a year after sanctions were lifted. The first of the Airbus jets should be delivered in mid-January, part of plans to buy or lease 200 planes to renew IranAir's decaying fleet, against a backdrop of conservative criticism in both Washington and Tehran of last year's international sanctions deal to allow such business.

Sanctions were lifted in January but were followed by months of regulatory delays, and Iran has only just finalised a deal to buy 80 jets from Airbus' US rival Boeing. "We have finalised negotiations with Airbus and any day we will be able to sign the deal in Tehran," Deputy Roads and Urban Development Minister Asghar Fakhrieh Kashan told Reuters in a telephone interview. "We are expecting some final clearances and expect to sign today or tomorrow." The first Airbus A321 can arrive before the Jan. 20 inauguration of US President-elect Donald Trump, who has opposed the deal to lift most sanctions on Iran in exchange for curbs on its nuclear activities, and well ahead of Iranian presidential elections in May next year.

That could provide a boost to the government of President Hassan Rouhani and allow Airbus to find a home for some jets abandoned or deferred by other customers due to economic problems in South America and elsewhere, analysts say. Airbus, which has revised up its forecasts for Iranian domestic demand, said it was still negotiating the IranAir deal. The airline sees itself as a future rival to Gulf-based super-carriers due to its geographical position.

Initial plans to buy a dozen A380 superjumbos were dropped after criticism from Iranian hardliners. Kashan said the deal with Airbus will be split roughly equally between narrow-body jets including the A320 and A321 and wide-body jets including the A330 and A350.

**Pact 'violation' warning**  
 Such deals are also under fire from US Republicans. President Barack Obama's outgoing administration has granted licences to allow the sales, a step required by both Airbus and Boeing due to the use of US parts, but analysts say completing them depends in part on Washington's new political climate.

Asked whether either deal could be derailed if Trump imposes new restrictions on trade with Iran, Kashan said: "We are not concerned, although we should not ignore such a possibility." "The fact is that Mr Trump may impose certain new sanctions, but we would consider that to be a violation of the JCPOA (nuclear accord), which explicitly provides for the possibility for the purchase of aircraft and their sale by manufacturers." — Reuters

## INDIA PUTS FRESH CURBS ON CASH, COMPOUNDING CRISIS

NEW DELHI: India's central bank yesterday imposed fresh restrictions on deposits of banned currency notes into bank accounts, days before the December 30 deadline to swap old rupee bills for new ones. Prime Minister Narendra Modi unleashed chaos last month with his shock move to withdraw high-denomination 500 (\$7.50) and 1,000 rupee notes from circulation, in an effort to tackle widespread corruption and tax evasion.

The decision triggered a cash crisis, with long queues materializing outside banks across the country as people tried to get rid of their old notes some 86 percent of all bills in circulation-ahead of next week's deadline.

Yesterday the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said that people would now only be allowed to make a single deposit amounting to more than 5000 rupees (\$75) before the deadline, and would be required to explain why they hadn't deposited the money earlier.

"Tenders of Specified Bank Notes (SBNs) in excess of rupees 5,000 into a bank account will be received for credit only once during the remaining period till December 30," the RBI said. Opposition parties attacked the move, which comes as many Indians are already facing a shortage of cash with ATMs running dry as thousands throng to them. "There are elderly, housewives, poor and students who were waiting for the long

queues to become smaller," the opposition Congress party spokesman Randeep S Surjewala told reporters in Delhi. "This new rule shows that Modi government has no direction or clear policy," he added. Modi has repeatedly defended the scheme, saying it will bring billions in so-called

"black", or undeclared, money back into the formal system. "I said this at the start, and will repeat again today, these difficulties that you have been facing will start easing after December 30," he said yesterday, addressing a political rally in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh. — AFP



NEW DELHI: An Indian man sits outside a cashless ATM machine in New Delhi Yesterday. — AFP

# AUSTRALIA WARDS OFF RATING DOWNGRADE

**SYDNEY:** Australia avoided a feared downgrade of its coveted AAA credit rating yesterday after sticking to its ambition of returning the budget to surplus in 2020-21 despite softer growth forecasts.

(US\$27 billion) in 2016-17 — as announced in the May budget-to-Aus\$36.5 billion. But it forecast widening deficits in the next three years before a return to surplus.

Standard and Poor's warned Australia's rating could be lowered if Canberra did not improve its budget balances and deliver on surplus plans.

It said Monday the update had no immediate effect on its stance but warned the "government's worsening forecast fiscal position... further pressures the rating".

S&P said it would continue to monitor the situation and was "pessimistic about the government's ability to close existing budget deficits and return to surplus by the year ending June 30, 2021". Australia is one of only a handful of countries to hold the top AAA rating from all three major agencies, having dodged a recession during the global financial crisis. Moody's and Fitch also kept their ratings on hold, for now. Generally, losing the AAA means the nation would be forced to pay higher interest on its debt.

Capital Economics' chief Australia economist Paul Dales said "it probably won't be long before one or two of the ratings agencies withdraw their AAA rating".

"The treasurer has admitted that in the four financial years starting 2016-17 the budget deficit will be around \$10 billion higher than forecast in May's budget," he said.

"The chances of the budget being balanced by 2020-21, which to balance remains on track," Treasurer Scott Morrison said in a statement.



**CANBERRA:** Australia's Treasurer Scott Morrison speaks to the media during a press conference at Parliament House in Canberra yesterday. — AP

economy has enjoyed more than 20 years of growth but it is now transitioning out of an unprecedented mining investment boom, and the going has been bumpy with revenues under pressure. In a mid-year fiscal update, the government revised down the nation's cash deficit of Aus\$37.1 billion



**SYDNEY:** Women sit on a bench in a park overlooking the city of Sydney yesterday. Australia avoided a feared downgrade of its coveted AAA credit rating on December 19 after sticking to its ambition of returning the budget to surplus in 2020-21 despite softer growth forecasts. — AFP

the rating agencies want, has become even less likely."

The conservative government does not have a majority in the upper house Senate, meaning it has struggled to pass some spending cuts. This has stymied efforts to rein in debt and deficits, undermining business and consumer confi-

dence with repercussions for the economy, which contracted 0.5 percent in the September quarter. Given the poor quarterly number, the update changed the government's forecast for annual growth to two percent in 2016-17 rather than 2.5 percent as previously predicted, before rebounding to 2.75

percent the following year.

Westpac chief economist Bill Evans called the revised forecasts "optimistic". "We see downside risks to these forecasts. Real GDP growth of 2.0 percent for 2016-17 looks a stretch and the medium-term projections err on the optimistic side," he said. — AFP

## News

in brief

### US dollar stable against KD at 0.306

**KUWAIT:** The exchange rate of the US dollar against the Kuwaiti dinar was stable at 0.306 while the euro went up to KD 0.320, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. The CBK said that the rate of the Sterling Pound was down to KD 0.381, whereas the Swiss Franc stabilized at KD 0.298. The Japanese Yen stood firm at KD 0.002.

### OPEC oil price up to \$51.29 pb

**VIENNA:** The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) daily basket price rose by 33 cents to \$51.96 per barrel (pb) last Friday, compared with \$50.96 pb on Thursday, the organization said yesterday. The OPEC bulletin added that the monthly rate of its basket price for November was \$43.22 pb, while October rate was 47.87. The bulletin also added that the annual rate of its basket price was \$49.49 pb. During a recent meeting, OPEC members agreed to cut down production by 1.2 million barrels per day as of early January 2017, while non-OPEC members vowed to curb their output by 600,000 bpd, including 300,000 bpd from Russia.

### Food prices push Saudi inflation down to year-low

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia's Central Department of Statistics released the following November consumer price data yesterday, showing inflation at its lowest level this year. Transport costs rose 7.7 percent from a year earlier in November after the government increased gasoline prices last December as an austerity measure. Prices of housing and utilities climbed 6.4 percent after utility fees were raised in December, but food and beverage prices fell 2.6 percent.

### Egypt's Banque Misr signs MOU with Chinese lender

**CAIRO:** Egypt's second-largest state-owned lender, Banque Misr, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC) for a \$500 million loan aimed at boosting dollar liquidity and financing joint Egyptian-Chinese projects, it said on Sunday. The bank also signed a framework agreement worth \$500 million with the China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation (SINOSURE), a state-funded insurance company that promotes China's foreign trade and economic cooperation. Banque Misr has received permission from the People's Bank of China to open an office representing it in China, it said. Egypt and China concluded an 18 billion yuan (\$2.6 billion) three-year bilateral currency swap earlier this month, a move that importers and economists said would facilitate trade and improve foreign currency liquidity in cash-strapped Egypt.

# OIL PRICES EDGE HIGHER ON MORE BALANCED MARKET

## OPEC, RIVALS ANNOUNCED CUTS OF ALMOST 1.8M BPD

**LONDON:** Oil prices rose yesterday as a weaker dollar and the delay of new Libyan oil exports boosted benchmarks, amid expectations of tighter crude supply going into 2017.

Brent crude futures traded at \$55.47 per barrel at 0946 GMT, up 26 cents from their last close. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were up 30 cents at \$52.20 a barrel. Analysts said the increases, which built on gains of around 2 percent on Friday, were driven by a delay in crude oil supplies from Libya. "It looks like the Libyan story and the weaker US dollar are counterbalancing" bearish factors, said Tamas Varga, analyst with PVM Oil Associates. "We should expect higher prices in the near-term future." Late last week, a group guarding oil infrastructure in Libya said it

had reopened a long-blockaded pipeline leading from the oilfields of Sharara and El Feel, but a separate group had prevented a production restart at El Feel. Additionally, the US dollar fell back against a basket of other currencies since hitting 2002 highs last week. A strong dollar makes oil more expensive for holders of other currencies.

Some expected the strength in oil prices to continue into early 2017 due to a deal between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other producers to cut almost 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) in oil output from January. "With investors now expecting a relatively high level of compliance with the production-cut agreements, prices should be well supported," ANZ bank said

yesterday. Despite this, there were factors that cast a shadow on markets, preventing prices from rising more.

In the United States, which did not participate in the output-reduction deal, drilling for new oil has increased for seven straight weeks. Drillers added 12 oil rigs in the week to Dec. 16, bringing the total count to 510, the highest since January, though still below 541 rigs a year ago, energy services firm Baker Hughes said on Friday.

"Since its trough on May 27, 2016, producers have added 194 oil rigs (+61 percent) in the US," US bank Goldman Sachs said. As a result, US oil production is edging up, rising from below 8.5 million bpd in July to almost 8.8 million bpd by mid-December. — Reuters

# SRI LANKA BANS FAKE CINNAMON TO PROTECT SPICE IMAGE

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka has banned the import of cinnamon substitutes in a bid to safeguard the reputation of its legendary spice "Ceylon cinnamon," a government minister said yesterday.

Primary industries minister Daya Gamage said the cabinet had ratified his proposal to outlaw the import of a cheaper variety known as "cassia cinnamon." He said he took the step after several container loads of the fake cinnamon that had been imported from Madagascar were found.

"Cassia looks similar to the real thing, but it is inferior in quality and cheaper than Ceylon cinnamon," the minister said in a statement. "When it is re-exported as real cinnamon, it damages our reputation." The aromatic spice-used in both savoury dishes and desserts-was native to Sri Lanka. Dutch invaders grew it on a commercial scale in the 17th century for export.

The commodity which brought in over \$150 million in the first 10 months of this year is known by the country's colonial era name "Ceylon." Sri Lanka's cinnamon industry, which supplies about 85 percent of the world market, is enjoying high earnings.



This file photograph taken on August 28, 2014, shows a bundle of cinnamon, ready for sale at a farm in Sri Lanka's Hikkaduwa region. — AFP

Top-grade cinnamon oil, extracted from the bark, fetches over \$510 a kilogram (\$232 a pound). Cinnamon oil is used in fizzy drinks as well as in the manufacture of high-end perfumes. — AFP

# MUBADALA TO HOLD ABU DHABI'S 2% STAKE IN BP

**DUBAI:** State investment fund Mubadala Development Co will control a 2 percent stake in BP sold to Abu Dhabi in exchange for a holding in Abu Dhabi Company for Onshore Petroleum Operations (ADCO), a spokesman said yesterday. The firm became the second Western oil major to renew a 40-year onshore concession in Abu Dhabi on Saturday after almost two years of negotiations to improve terms to help operate the United Arab Emirates' biggest oilfields.

In exchange for the 10 percent stake in ADCO, BP agreed to issue new ordinary shares to Abu Dhabi worth 1.76 billion pounds (\$2.20 billion). "The investment will sit within Mubadala and will be managed, as we have

with previous investments made by Abu Dhabi, for the strategic benefit of the emirate," Mubadala spokesman Brian Lott told Reuters.

When asked if Mubadala would seek representation on BP's board, Lott said it was "too early to say". The ADCO concession, including the Bab, Bu Hasa, Shah and Asab fields, has total resources of between 20 billion-30 billion barrels of oil equivalent over the term of the concession.

The fields produce 1.6 million barrels per day (bpd) and are expected to reach 1.8 million bpd from 2017. Mubadala is currently being merged with fellow state investment fund International Petroleum Investment Company. — Reuters

# EGYPT'S POUND WEAKENS TO AROUND 19 PER DOLLAR

**CAIRO:** The Egyptian pound weakened yesterday as demand for dollars spiked amid a shortage in banks, bankers told Reuters. The dollar was being bought for over 19 pounds at most banks, up from around 18.8 earlier in the day. Banks were paying clients up to 18.95 pounds per dollar. "There are plenty of dollar requests as the year comes to an end and companies are closing their books or seeking to repatriate prof-

its," said one banker. Banks in Egypt have been raising the price to buy dollars from clients in order to attract inflows and cover requests from other clients seeking to buy dollars.

Egypt's central bank abandoned its currency peg of 8.8 pounds to the US dollar on Nov 3, hoping to unlock currency inflows and bring back foreign investors who were driven away after a 2011 uprising. — Reuters

## EXCHANGE RATES

### AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

#### ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.657
Indian Rupees	4.541
Pakistani Rupees	2.919
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.062
Nepali Rupees	2.843
Singapore Dollar	215.490
Hongkong Dollar	39.453
Bangladesh Taka	3.831
Philippine Peso	6.150
Thai Baht	8.626

#### GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.654
Qatari Riyal	84.101
ani Riyal	795.218
Bahraini Dinar	813.070
UAE Dirham	83.356

#### ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.500
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	16.819
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.229
Tunisian Dinar	133.920
Jordanian Dinar	431.200
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.040
Syrian Lira	2.182
Morocco Dirham	30.909

#### EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	306.000
Euro	327.110
Sterling Pound	389.080

Canadian dollar	233.940
Turkish lira	88.310
Swiss Franc	304.480
Australian Dollar	231.030
US Dollar Buying	304.800

#### GOLD

20 Gram	238.39
10 Gram	122.12
5 Gram	61.90

### DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

US Dollar	306.550
Canadian Dolla	230.500
Sterling Pound	384.385
Euro	322.080
Swiss Franc	300.105
Bahraini Dinar	812.640
UAE Dirhams	83.855
Qatari Riyals	85.080
Saudi Riyals	82.675
Jordanian Dinar	433.540
Egyptian Pound	16.830
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.060
Indian Rupees	4.530
Pakistani Rupees	2.924
Bangladesh Taka	3.887
Philippines Peso	6.143
Cyprus pound	168.345
Japanese Yen	3.600
Syrian Pound	2.435
Nepalese Rupees	3.825

Malaysian Ringgit	69.340
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	31.240
Thai Bhat	9.535
Turkish Lira	87.725

### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

#### CURRENCY BUY EUROPE SELL

British Pound	0.377822	0.387822
Czech Korune	0.003881	0.015881
Danish Krone	0.039143	0.044143
Euro	0.315745	0.324745
Norwegian Krone	0.031458	0.036658
Romanian Leu	0.085058	0.085058
Slovakia	0.009215	0.019215
Swedish Krona	0.028798	0.033798
Swiss Franc	0.293170	0.304170
Turkish Lira	0.084259	0.094559

#### Australasia

Australian Dollar	0.216445	0.228445
New Zealand Dollar	0.208493	0.217993

#### America

Canadian Dollar	0.225053	0.234053
Georgina Lari	0.138615	0.138615
US Dollars	0.302800	0.307500
US Dollars Mint	0.303300	0.307500

#### Asia

Bangladesh Taka	0.003527	0.004111
Chinese Yuan	0.042685	0.046185
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037484	0.040234

Indian Rupee	0.000263	0.005519
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002527	0.002707
Kenyan Shilling	0.003157	0.003157
Korean Won	0.000248	0.000263
Malaysian Ringgit	0.064809	0.070809
Nepalese Rupee	0.002910	0.003080
Pakistan Rupee	0.002648	0.002938
Philippine Peso	0.006100	0.006400
Sierra Leone	0.000068	0.000074
Singapore Dollar	0.207639	0.217639
South African Rand	0.016354	0.024854
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001649	0.002229
Taiwan	0.009514	0.009694
Thai Baht	0.008258	0.008808

Bahraini Dinar	0.807488	0.815986
Egyptian Pound	0.013871	0.023124
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000181	0.000241
Jordanian Dinar	0.427814	0.436814
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000149	0.000249
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020232	0.044232
Nigerian Naira	0.001274	0.001909
Omani Riyal	0.790721	0.796401
Qatar Riyal	0.083486	0.084936
Saudi Riyal	0.080753	0.082053
Syrian Pound	0.001302	0.001522
Tunisian Dinar	0.128712	0.136712
Turkish Lira	0.084259	0.094559
UAE Dirhams	0.082133	0.083833
Yemeni Riyal	0.001016	0.001096

# AUB LAUNCHES PIN NUMBER ISSUANCE SERVICE VIA ATMS

**KUWAIT:** Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced today the launch of its new smart service for its telebanking platform, enabling all customers, including those with Special needs, to issue their telebanking PIN numbers through the Bank's ATMs. The new initiative adds more value to the already existing service the bank offers through its customer service 24/7.

AUB's latest service is part of its underlying efforts to consolidate electronic banking services to provide a comprehensive catalogue of services at all customer touchpoints in line with the Bank's commitment to delivering quality services using ground breaking, safe technology that facilitates customer's banking needs. Customers can now enter their ATM card, their secure PIN and issue their telebanking PIN through simple onscreen instructions. As with all electronic transactions, these transactions also have industry stan-

dard and robust security measures. This service is in line with the Bank's continuous effort to create secure, easy to use and efficient services across all alternative channels in order to serve all customers; including those with special needs. By thoughtfully applying a mix of technology including enhanced controls, the Bank is committed to serving all areas of society, especially those requiring special assistance ensuring always that they enjoy the same level of service and can benefit from all products and services.

The objective is to drive a strong technology based communications channel that delivers products and services for all customers while ensuring that speed, reliability and safety measures are never compromised.

Huda Al-Madani, AUB's Assistant General Manager- Alternative Distribution



Channels said, "We are committed to developing our products and services in line with enhancing the way how we conduct our banking transactions. The aim here is to provide the best possible service to our customers, one that satisfies their banking requirements and ensures the integrity and security of their transactions."

In addition, Huda Al-Madani while commenting on the ongoing efforts at the Bank said, "as an organization we are committed to serving all sectors of society, especially those that require special assistance and we are fully committed to this goal. This launch today is part of a comprehensive effort across technology, processes and people to ensure that all customers can fully enjoy our award winning line of products and services while maintaining the quality and integrity of transactions which are the hallmark of our business."



**MANILA:** A group of Metro Manila Development Authority (MMDA) employees washing dishes following a communal lunch as traffic is seen past Manila's financial district in the background. Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has tapped a China-backed multilateral lender to help fund his government's "unprecedented infrastructure buildup", the finance minister said yesterday. — AFP

## PHILIPPINES TAPS CHINA-BACKED AIIB TO FIX INFRASTRUCTURE

**MANILA:** Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has tapped a China-backed multilateral lender to help fund his government's "unprecedented infrastructure buildup", the finance minister said yesterday, as he seeks closer relations with Beijing.

The Beijing-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has been viewed by some as a rival to the World Bank and the Philippines-based Asian Development Bank (ADB). Duterte has vowed to boost spending to address crumbling infrastructure, saying he would seek funds from China as he pivots his nation's foreign policy away from traditional ally the United States.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez said he met with AIIB president Jin Lique in Manila last week, who confirmed the lender would fund two projects. "The Philippines' membership to the AIIB would provide the government another source of long-term funding ... for the Duterte administration's unprecedented infrastructure buildup," Dominguez said in a statement yesterday.

Duterte, 71, increasingly turned to China for loans and aid as he took exception to United States criticism of his drug war that has killed thousands. Over the weekend

Duterte attacked Washington for deferring aid because of human rights concerns over his anti-crime crackdown.

"Eat your aid and we will survive. I'll go to China," he said. Jin said the AIIB would provide loans for a Manila flood management project and a bus rapid transit system in the capital, according to the statement. The 23 billion peso (\$470 million) Manila flood control project would be co-financed with the World Bank, while the 37 billion peso (\$756 million) bus system, which includes construction of 63 stations, would be partly funded by the ADB, the statement added. "We are all very eager to finalise the infrastructure projects ... This time, we are very happy we can really talk about something to do in your country," the statement quoted Jin as saying. The Philippines under the government of then president Benigno Aquino joined the AIIB last year despite conflicting territorial claims with Beijing over the South China Sea.

Duterte signed the treaty in October and the Senate this month approved its ratification. The Philippines is among 57 members of the AIIB, with China the largest shareholder with 30 percent. — AFP

# UKRAINE LEADER URGES CALM AFTER BIG BANK NATIONALIZED

## GOT SEEKS TO AVERT RAPID FINANCIAL MELTDOWN

**KIEV:** Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko urged people not to panic yesterday after his government nationalized the country's largest private bank to try and avoid a rapid financial meltdown. The former Soviet republic's cabinet on Sunday took over PrivatBank-a lender that held one-third of Ukrainians' savings and had branches in the Baltic states.

The bank was owned by Poroshenko's political foe Igor Kolomoyskiy. The billionaire was reportedly heavily burdened by debt because of dubious loans the lender made to his cronies. Kiev's decision falls in line with the International Monetary Fund's demand for Ukraine to clean up and stabilise its murky financial sector and seek sustainable growth.

The IMF welcomed the government's action. But the nationalization has created public unease about people's holdings and whether the country might enter another economic crisis similar to when Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimea peninsula in March 2014.

A subsequent 31-month war with pro-Russia insurgents in the separatist east claimed nearly 10,000 lives and seen the economy shrink by about 17 percent in 2014-15. Inflation soared to just under 50 percent last year. Poroshenko, a pro-Western leader, said in a statement that the situation was under his full control.

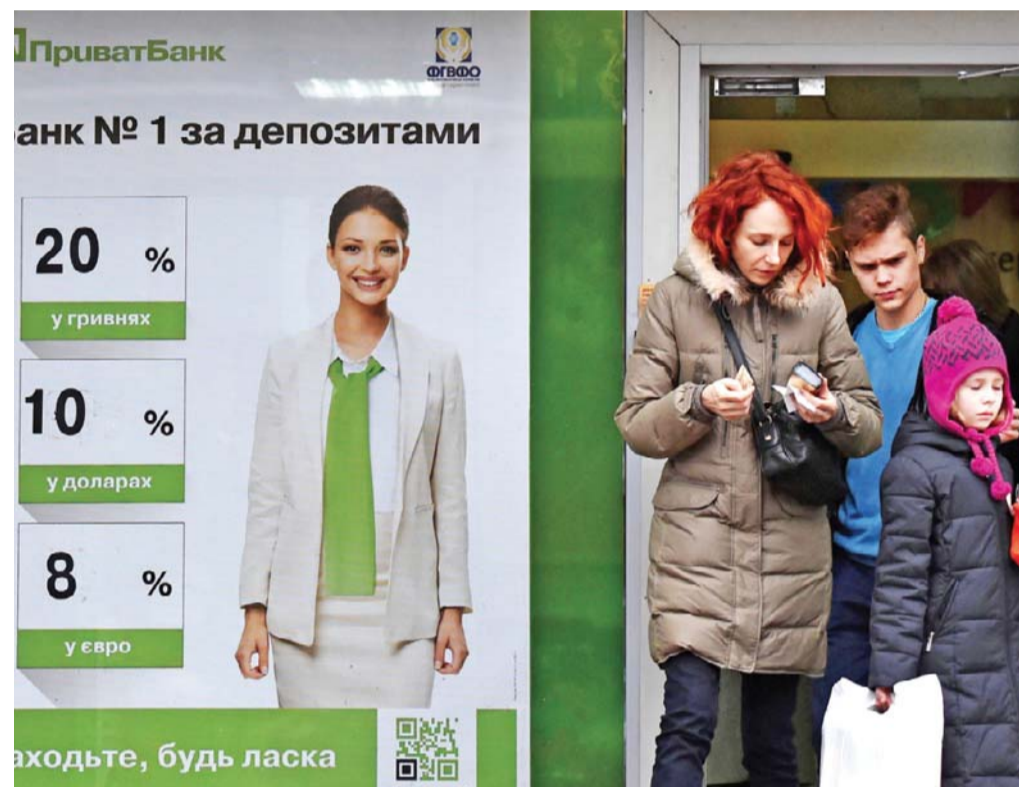
"I appeal to you, dear PrivatBank clients-keep calm," he said. "The new (state) administration is already taking over the levers of power right now, this very hour and minute."

**IMF heaps praise**

Ukraine's central bank had wanted Kolomoyskiy to refinance his bank with billions of dollars if he wanted to remain its owner. There were fears that PrivatBank's fall could have ignited a wider crisis in the financial system akin to the turbulence in the United States in 2008.

But the tycoon never came up with the money and Kiev's patience snapped on Sunday.

Finance Minister Oleksandr Danyuk said the government's decision "will help preserve the savings of nearly 20 million PrivatBank clients". "All of our international partners support this move, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, as well as the



**KIEV:** Clients walk out the office of the PrivatBank in the center of Kiev yesterday. — AFP

government of the United States," the finance minister said. IMF chief Christine Lagarde hailed the Ukrainian government's actions as "an important step in their efforts to safeguard financial stability". "This decision was taken to ensure the smooth operations of the bank given its systemic role in Ukraine's financial system," Lagarde said in a statement. Ukrainian Central Bank chief Valeria Gontareva told reporters that PrivatBank had miserably failed a series of stress tests and was in a \$4.2-billion (4.0-billion-euro) hole in April 2015. She said 97 percent of the bank's loans at the time had been issued by Kolomoyskiy to his business partners who might either have not paid them back or had done so on preferential conditions. Gontareva said the bank's debts grew to \$5.6 billion by December 1. Kolomoyskiy himself has yet to comment. But one PrivatBank manager on Sunday called the government's decision a consequence of "media attacks" led by political powerbrokers who opposed Kolomoyskiy. "The decision to voluntarily and peacefully hand over the bank to the government was taken at the very moment that we understood that these media attacks-which we could survive-could endanger our clients," its IT director wrote on Facebook.

But some political analysts hailed the government's step as an overdue show of power over tycoons who have wielded outsized influence in corruption-riddled Ukraine for decades.

"This may have been the very first time that the Ukrainian government took an actual hard decision," Dragon Capital investment bank's economist Sergiy Fursa wrote on Facebook. "Nationalization is a bad decision," he said. "But it is better than all the other alternatives." — AFP

## TRUMP'S INFRASTRUCTURE SPLURGE WOULD COLLIDE WITH US LABOR CRUNCH

**WASHINGTON:** President-elect Donald Trump's drive to rebuild US roads, bridges, ports and other public works projects with a \$1 trillion infrastructure investment plan would come as the country faces a shortage of skilled laborers. Before any dirt can be moved, Trump would have to get approval from Congress. But with Democratic support and a push from business groups, there is some optimism that Trump could win over skeptical Republicans who control Congress, if the plan does not add significantly to federal debt.

More than two-thirds of US roads are in less than good condition and nearly 143,000 bridges need repair or improvement, the Transportation Department estimates. At the same time, construction contractors have reported tight labor conditions in the South, Midwest and Southwest, causing project delays, the Federal Reserve noted last month.

Earlier this year, the National Association of Home Builders estimated there were around 200,000 unfilled construction jobs in the United States, an 81 percent increase in the last two years.

Infrastructure projects need highly trained workers, such as heavy equipment operators and iron specialists. But as a result of the 2007-2008 recession, which caused an estimated 25 percent of construction jobs to vanish, their ranks have thinned. Many of these workers went back to school, joined the military or got lower-paying jobs in retail, services and other sectors. Some just got too old for the rigors of construction. "They wandered off into other careers," said Leonard Toenjes, president of Associated General Contractors of Missouri, which represents contractors in the state.

Undocumented immigrants, who otherwise might help replenish those ranks, are unlikely candidates however, since companies do not want to invest in training people with an uncertain status, especially given Trump's anti-immigrant bent. The labor shortage is driving up construction costs, according to government and industry experts, which could cut into the scope of any new Washington investment scheme.

In response to the construction "skills gap," the US Department of Labor and Federal Highway Administration are aiming to expand help to localities training workers for road and bridge building, according to a FHWA spokesman. Even if the scope of work is not as grandiose as Trump originally envisioned, it would benefit a range of businesses, from steel maker Nucor Corp and concrete firm US Concrete Inc to construction machinery companies such as Caterpillar Inc.

More infrastructure spending would boost trade unions, too, which appeals to Democrats. — Reuters

# EGYPT STOCK INDEX RISES, GULF MARKETS DIVERGE

## MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

**DUBAI:** Egypt's stock index surged 3.1 percent in heavy trade yesterday as the Egyptian pound depreciated against the US dollar, prompting more buying by foreign funds, while Gulf bourses diverged. Twenty-seven of the 30 most liquid Egyptian shares rose, taking the index to a fresh eight-year high, with Telecom Egypt and Global Telecom Holding each jumping to their 10 percent daily limits. The Egyptian pound was being bought for 19 pounds per dollar against around 18.8 earlier in the day on the back of higher demand for the greenback amid a shortage at banks, bankers told Reuters.

Foreign investors were net buyers of Egyptian stocks by a modest margin, bourse data showed. Overall, many investors consider currency weakness a positive for the stock market in the short term because it makes prices more attractive for foreign investors, and may drive local funds into stocks as a hedge against inflation. "The dollar rate is keeping up the appetite" for stocks among foreign funds, said Waik Dawood, portfolio manager at Compass Capital. Also boosting sentiment was news that Banque Misr had signed a memorandum of understanding with Industrial and Commercial Bank of China for a \$500 million loan aimed at increasing dollar liquidity and financing joint Egyptian-Chinese projects.

Allen Sandeep, director of research at Cairo's Naeem Brokerage, said the International Monetary Fund's three-year, \$12 billion bailout program for Egypt, finalised in early November, was continuing to buoy the stock market. "Historically, any time an emerging market won an IMF bailout, stock markets soared - one case study could be India's bailout in 1991, because structural change on both the monetary and fiscal level will eventually be prosperous for the economy."

a public holiday on Sunday, rose 0.5 percent but finished well below its intra-day high. Qatari Investors Group was the top performer, jumping 9.9 percent. On Thursday Qatar published a 2017 state budget that projected a deficit of 28.3 billion riyals (\$7.8 billion), much smaller than the originally projected 2016 deficit, and total spending of 198.4 billion riyals, down from 202.5 billion. Although that is slightly contractionary, it is less so than the 2016 budget, and the government plans to increase capital spending next year. It did not announce any major new austerity measures; the budget's conservative oil price assumption of \$45 a barrel suggests the government has plenty of room to meet its targets next year.

In Saudi Arabia, the index was dragged 0.9 percent lower by a 3.7 percent drop in the largest listed stock, Saudi Basic Industries, after the company announced a lower cash dividend for the second half of this year compared to a year earlier. The negative sentiment spilled into some other blue chips, with National Commercial Bank declining 1.4 percent.

But builder Abdullah Al-Khodari was the top performer, surging 9.3 percent in unusually heavy trade. The company, which has many projects with the government, may benefit from increased work in the coming year if the kingdom's 2017 budget includes an increase in construction expenditure, as many analysts expect. Saudi Cable Co, which rose 2.5 percent on Sunday after saying its Turkish subsidiary had won a \$50 million order, climbed a further 3.3 percent.

Dubai's main index lost 0.6 percent to 3,532 points in a second consecutive day of thin trade, retreating further from technical resistance on the August peak of 3,624 points, which it tested and failed to break decisively last week. Emaar Properties lost 0.9 percent. Blue chips were weak in Abu Dhabi, where the index slipped 0.4 percent; telecommunications operator Etisalat lost 1.6 percent. — Reuters

**Gulf mixed**  
The index in Qatar, which was closed for

The Middle East trade show for metal working, metal manufacturing and steel fabrication

Download our Visitor MobileApp that's filled with loads of features for you...

Scan this QR Code or search for "Sharjah Expo Visitor" in your App Store

Scan this QR Code or search for "Sharjah Expo Visitor" in your Play Store

Organized by:

Tel: +971-6-5770000  
Fax: +971-6-5770111  
Email: steel@expo-centre.ae

WWW.STEELFABME.COM

Concurrent Event: **Fasteners & Fixing Technology Middle East**

Register Now to Visit [www.steeffabme.com](http://www.steeffabme.com)

Show Timings: 10 am to 7 pm daily (Admission for trade only)

FREE ENTRY AND PARKING

Supported by:







# MERCEDES-BENZ V-250 AVANTGARDE SHOWCASED AT THE AVENUES, KUWAIT

**KUWAIT:** Following its arrival in Kuwait, the Mercedes-Benz V 250 AvantGarde was displayed in Dome Three of the Avenues Mall on Thursday 15th and Friday 16th December, Abdul Rahman Albisher and Zaid Alkazemi Company, the Authorized General Distributor of Mercedes-Benz in Kuwait, have announced.

The largest member of the passenger car family from Stuttgart, the V-Class combines a flexible seating concept for up to eight people with comfort, exemplary functionality, advanced technology, efficient driving pleas-

ure and safety. Whether out and about with the family or travelling in style on business with a full complement of passengers, the multi-purpose vehicle offers a luxurious spaciousness without compromising on style.

"Since its launch, the V-Class has proved itself internationally successful, with people around the world appreciating its versatility and quality of design," said Michael Ruehle, Chief Executive Officer, Abdul Rahman Albisher and Zaid Alkazemi Company. "The V-250 AvantGarde offers unbridled luxury, pre-

mium touches, high-class appeal and an unparalleled comfort, and we encourage people to visit the display at The Avenues mall and experience the vehicle first-hand for themselves - premium people-moving doesn't come much better."

With several technical innovations on board, all components of the V-250 are optimally coordinated with each other and offer ride comfort, agility and efficiency at a high level. The driver sets the speed, and the engine does the rest. With the 7-speed

automatic 7G-TRONIC PLUS, the high-torque 4-cylinder petrol engine impresses with its superior handling characteristics, low consumption and supreme ride comfort. The AGLITY CONTROL suspension with selective damping system strikes the perfect balance between driving comfort and agility, while the combo of a powerful and economical 2 litre engine and seven-speed auto makes this large people mover equally enjoyable whether at the wheel or occupying the seats behind.

Sliding open the electrically-operated side doors reveals a classy and vast interior, with comfortable and supportive seats swathed in soft black nappa leather and an inviting atmosphere rounded off by subtle ambient lighting in three colours.

Sales consultants and promoters will be on site providing information, answering questions and offering visitors the opportunity to register for test drives. Visit Dome Three of the Avenues Mall, near Dean and Deluca from 15-16 December to see the V-250 AvantGarde.

Monday, December 19, 2016 (618730.1)			CURRENCY			WE BUY	WE SELL
1	US DOLLAR	4.43	4.47	1	NEW ZEALAND	3.12	3.20
1	STERLING POUNDS	5.67	5.68	1	CANADA DOLLAR	3.30	3.42
1	EURO	4.62	4.72	100	THAILAND BHAT	12.30	12.60
1	AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR	3.26	3.33	100	INDIAN RUPEES	00000	00000
1	SINGAPORE DOLLAR	3.06	3.11	100	SAUDI RIYALS	116	122
1000	JAPANESE YEN	37.70	38.80	100	NEW TAIWAN DOLLAR	14.30	14.60
100	CHINESE RENMINBI	63.40	64.20	1	SWISS FRANC	4.25	4.42
100	HONG KONG \$	57.40	58.00	100	PHILIPPINE PESO	8.80	9.30
1M	INDONESIA RUPIAH	330	336	1000	KOREA WON	3.78	3.88
100	UAE DIRHAMS	118	123	1M	VIETNAM DONG	175	200

**KUALA LUMPUR:** A screen displaying various foreign currency exchange rates including the US dollar (top L) against the Malaysian ringgit is seen at a money changer in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. —AFP

## MALYSIAN RINGGIT AT LOWEST SINCE ASIA FINANCIAL CRISIS

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's ringgit hit its lowest level against the dollar since the Asian financial crisis as emerging-market currencies are hammered by a flight of capital fuelled by an expected rise in US interest rates next year. The greenback has soared since Donald Trump won the US election last month, with traders betting his plans for big infrastructure spending and tax cuts will fan inflation, forcing the Federal Reserve to tighten monetary policy.

But while his plans have bets that the US economy will take off, there are fears over his protectionist rhetoric. This in turn has put trade-reliant nations under pressure with their currencies feeling the strain. In early trade yesterday the Malaysian ringgit fell to 4.4805 per dollar, its worst reading since 1998 during the Asian meltdown. The ringgit had already been among Asia's worst-performing currencies over the past two years owing to a plunge in oil prices and political upheaval stemming from a corruption scandal linked to Prime Minister Najib Razak.

The latest fall comes after the Fed raised rates, as expected, but indicated three more next year, rather than the two that traders had

priced in. "It is a confluence of the relative decline in cash metric, high foreign holding of bonds sold off, investors' trepidation about FX controls and the underlying political or headline risks," Vishnu Varathan, a senior economist at Mizuho Bank in Singapore, told Bloomberg News. Malaysia's central bank assistant governor Adnan Zaylani last month poured water on the possibility of capital controls similar to measures imposed during the financial crisis in the late 1990 — to shield the ringgit, calling speculation "baseless". The ringgit has weakened by around six percent since Trump's victory, while most other emerging market units have also tumbled, with India's rupee hitting a record low at the end of last month.

South Korea's won, the Thai baht and Indonesian rupiah have also suffered sharp selling, while even the Australian and New Zealand dollars are also under pressure. The country relies on energy exports and other trade to drive its economy but growth has been slowing steadily in recent years.

Economic growth came in at 4.3 percent in the third quarter, snapping a string of five straight quarters in which the pace of expansion slowed. —AFP

# GERMAN OUTLOOK CLOUDED BY TRUMP, GREECE, BREXIT

## UPBEAT BUSINESS MORALE SIGNALS Q4 REBOUND

**BERLIN:** German business morale rose in December, hitting its highest level since February 2014 and supporting expectations that Europe's largest economy will rebound in the fourth quarter.

The upbeat reading was welcomed by economists as a sign of economic resilience in the face of uncertainties that are clouding the outlook for Germany, including Britain's decision to leave the European Union, unpredictable US policy under president-elect Donald Trump, and financial concerns over Greece and Italy. The Munich-based Ifo economic institute said on Monday its business climate index, based on a monthly survey of some 7,000 firms, rose to 111.0 after from 110.4 in November.

The December reading compared with a Reuters consensus forecast for a value of 110.7. "The German economy is making a strong finish to the year," Ifo chief Clemens Fuest said in a statement. He added that both the manufacturing and wholesaling indices rose and manufacturers were planning to ramp up production in the months ahead.

The upbeat reading came after Ifo said on Friday the German economy will rebound more strongly than previously expected in the fourth quarter and this growth momentum will carry through into 2017. ING economist Carsten Brzeski said growth next year will be weaker than in 2016, as the three main economic drivers - construction, consumption



**BERLIN:** This file photo taken on June 6, 2016 shows a worker walking on a scaffolding at a construction site in Berlin. German businesses rounded off 2016 with a stronger-than-forecast increase in confidence, a closely-followed survey showed yesterday. —AFP

and government spending - will lose momentum because interest rates are unlikely to drop further, inflation will edge up and the unemployment rate stagnate.

"Unfortunately, as with so many good things, the current positive growth cycle is also coming to an end. Gradually, not abruptly," he wrote in a note to clients. He added: "Real risks to the German outlook mainly seem to stem from the outside. The still unknown impact from

President-elect Trump on trade and economic policies, the ongoing Brexit uncertainty and renewed political tensions in Europe due to several elections or a new flaring up of the Greek crisis are in our view the biggest risks for 2017."

The economy has been sending mixed signals. A jump in industrial orders and upbeat sentiment surveys have indicated a rebound in the last three months of the year. Ifo's current business

situation index reached its highest level since February 2012.

But exports and industrial output rose less than expected in October, tapering expectations for a strong rebound in the fourth quarter after the growth pace halved to 0.2 percent over the summer months. Ifo's business climate index for wholesaling rose to its highest level in almost three years, reflecting the economy's shift to consumption for growth. —Reuters

# JAPAN TO ENHANCE PAY FOR CONTRACT WORKERS

**TOKYO:** Japan's government has placed a high priority on narrowing the gap in pay and benefits between regular and contract employees as this will raise productivity and consumer spending, said Katsunobu Kato, minister for labor market reform. Companies can afford to narrow the pay gap without cutting salaries for regular workers, because companies have enough profits and reserves to increase labor's share of profits, Kato told Reuters.

The government will tackle Japan's notoriously-long working hours by setting limits on overtime that could be submitted to parlia-

ment sometime next year, he said. A panel that Kato leads will compile guidelines on narrowing the pay gap today, which is a central plan of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's labour reforms to end decades of stagnant growth and deflation.

"Wages are a big motivating factor. People want to feel they are being evaluated for their work and rewarded based on their work," Kato said. "On a macroeconomic level, improving pay gives more people the chance to work and improve their pay, which feeds into higher consumption."

The government, at the behest of large companies, began promoting contract and non-regular worker status in the 2000s as a way to lower personnel costs and preserve jobs during a prolonged economic slump. Since then, the number of contract workers has swelled to around 37 percent of the workforce, and critics say this has created a two-tiered labor market because contract employees receive considerably less pay and benefits.

Abe turned his attention to labor market reform earlier this year to revive his structural reform agenda, a move which economists

generally welcomed. The debate has taken on an added significance after the suicide of a recent college graduate who worked more than 100 hours of overtime at the country's top advertising agency preceding her death.

The government's minimum threshold for death by overwork is 80 hours of overtime per month, which is excessive and contributes to long working hours, Kato said.

It is too early to put an exact number on the overtime limits the government will set, but Kato hopes to reach a conclusion by March and said it is possible that limits could

differ per industry.

Improving working conditions has been a long-overdue task because the working-age population is shrinking and Japan's productivity in the services sector is low by most international comparisons.

Abe's labor reforms have already raised the minimum wage and made companies more accountable for improving conditions for working mothers. Abe is also looking at encouraging more telecommuting and at attracting more high-skilled foreign labor. —Reuters



## NISSAN INTRODUCES DRIVERLESS TOWING SYSTEM AT OPPAMA PLANT

**DUBAI:** Nissan Motor Co, Ltd has announced the introduction of Intelligent Vehicle Towing (IVT), a fully automated vehicle towing system, at its Oppama Plant.

Nissan has worked on making the relationship between people, cars and society more exciting under its Intelligent Mobility vision, a framework for how cars will be driven, powered, and integrated into society. This new project, which utilizes mapping and communication technologies to link an intelligent and all-electric car to infrastructure, is a step towards the realization of Nissan Intelligent Integration.

### About the technology

The IVT system uses a modified Nissan LEAF to autonomously tow trolleys carrying finished vehicles between designated loading and unloading points at the plant.

Unlike conventional automatic guided vehicle systems for transporting parts, which often require the installation of rails or extensive use of magnetic tape, this system does not need any special infrastructure to operate. The towing car is equipped with an array of cameras and laser scanners that detect lane

markings, curbs and potential obstacles or hazards around the vehicle. By cross-referencing this information with map data, the towing car calculates its own location, negotiating the route to its destination unaided. The towing car travels within the speed limits of the factory, and automatically stops if it detects an obstacle or hazard ahead, before setting off again when it has determined that the road



ahead is clear. The towing route can easily be altered to accommodate changes in production processes or vehicle transport routes. All driverless towing cars are connected to a cen-



tral traffic control system, which can monitor the location, driving speed, remaining battery and operational status of each vehicle. When two driverless towing cars meet at an intersection, the control system's algorithm determines which car should be given right-of-way, and in case of emergency, the system can stop the vehicles remotely.

### Background of development

The Oppama Plant's existing logistics system requires finished vehicles to be transported from the end of the production line to the facility's dedicated wharf by a team of drivers, at which point they are loaded onto ships. Introducing IVT will allow Nissan to improve production efficiency.

Since trial operations of the system began roughly a year ago, more than 1,600 test runs have been carried out at the plant. The data acquired has been utilized to ensure that the system can operate reliably within the plant's premises. A safety system and a fail-safe system have been developed to counter potential risks or unexpected conditions the IVT system may face during autonomous driving, including adverse weather and low light conditions. Nissan will continue to test the system at its Oppama Plant, and will examine the possibility of implementation at other manufacturing facilities both in and outside Japan.

Nissan has been developing autonomous driving technology for decades. In August, the company launched ProPILOT, an award-winning single-lane autonomous driving technology for highway use. IVT further showcases Nissan's holistic approach to mobility, expanding the advantages of driverless technologies beyond personal usage.

The data and know-how obtained through this project will help to enable broader adoption of autonomous driving technology, in order to provide new solutions to our customers, and to our society.

## AL NASSER WINTER SALE

**KUWAIT:** As always, Al Nasser is back in campaign with special amazing prize reductions on winter collection for men, women and kids apparel, footwear, accessories, sports wears, games, and gym equipments on a huge collections and unique variety.

Al Nasser offer is back this winter season, starting from December 15, 2016. Al Nasser, one of the leading companies in trading sectors of apparel and footwear, which fulfills all your needs, from everyday clothing, school uniform, sportswear, and

a wide variety of foot wears and accessories for everyone. A huge variety that fits for all ages and satisfies all your needs.

Al Nasser is always with you in all seasons throughout the year, and now don't miss the chance to avail our winter special offer with amazing prices and best styles. As always Al Nasser is creating and providing all the customer needs in different ways. Visit us, in your nearest branch (Al Nasser) to make your shopping an enjoyable experience. With your trust, we continue to grow.

## CHINA'S 2017 ECONOMIC GROWTH TO SLOW TO 6.5%

**BEIJING:** China's economic growth will slow to 6.5 percent next year and the yuan will continue falling against the dollar, a top Chinese think-tank said yesterday. The prediction follows a raft of positive data earlier this month that raised hopes of an end to the slowdown. But the economy-the world's second largest-still "faces increasing downward pressure", the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) warned, according to a transcript on the official china.org.cn website.

It also predicted that the yuan, currently hovering around eight-year lows would lose another three to five percent against the dollar. The government-linked think-tank made the forecasts at an annual press conference, three days after Chinese leaders wrapped up a key economic meeting known as the Central Economics Work Conference. At the conclave, attended by President Xi Jinping,

leaders vowed to fix the problems ailing the partially-planned economy, taking aim at sclerotic state-owned enterprises and property speculation that has raised fears of a massive bubble about to burst.

Last year CASS predicted the economy would grow at a rate of 6.7 percent. So far, that prediction has been spot on: the economy expanded 6.7 percent for three consecutive quarters this year, the slowest pace since the global financial crisis. This year's prediction of 6.5 percent plumbs the lower depths of the national goal of between 6.5-7.0 percent.

It would be the lowest annual figure since 1990 when it clocked in at 3.9 percent. The country's five-year plan for economic and social development pledged average growth of at least 6.5 percent a year over the 2016-2020 period-implying that at times it could be lower. — AP

## KPMG CONTINUES GROWTH MOMENTUM, INVESTS ACROSS MIDEAST, SOUTH ASIA

RECORDING DOUBLE DIGIT GROWTH FOR THIRD CONSECUTIVE YEAR

**KUWAIT:** KPMG in the Middle East & South Asia (MESA) region reported a 10.7 percent growth in aggregated revenues of member firms across the MESA region for the fiscal year ended 30 September 2016. This was the third consecutive year for the region to record double digit growth, placing it among the fastest growing regions within the KPMG network.

During the year, KPMG across the MESA region had over 2,500 new joiners including 12 new Partners. A further 15 Partners were appointed through internal promotions. By the year end, KPMG's resource pool within the region had expanded to nearly 7,000 professionals and associates with member firms present in 14 countries and covering 30 office locations.

"KPMG's strong FY16 results, in what remains a slow-growth global environment, are a testament to the passion and innovative thinking we bring to our work. In today's volatile business climate, our strategic investments in technology, alliances, and our people, are fuelling our growth across our geographies and service lines. In FY16, thousands of extraordinary people were hired across the KPMG network, and we continued our relentless focus on providing high-quality, excellent service," said John Veihmeyer, Chairman, KPMG International.

"We continued to prioritize strategic investments in new services and technologies in FY16, focusing on the areas where we see businesses facing the greatest challenge and disruption. We are also working closely with a number of the world's leading technology companies, in alliances that bring together world-class innovation, business expertise and leading edge technology," he added.

Commenting on developments across the region, Abdullah Al-Fozan, Chairman of KPMG



MESA and Member of KPMG's Global Board said: "Throughout FY16 we have continued to aggressively invest in areas such as strategy and operational consulting, digital and customer experience, oil & gas and chemical sector capabilities, indirect taxation with a specific focus on VAT as well as senior recruitments to enhance capabilities in transfer pricing, trade and customs, technology transformation, risk, cyber security, financial services sector capabilities and data & analytics among a broader set of regional growth initiatives."

"As part of our strategy, we have also increased investments in Audit with a number of Partner appointments and added more than 300 people to our audit teams across the region. By developing and empowering our people across all functions, we are better able to offer practical insight that assist our clients to operate more effectively in changing business environments," he added.

Highlighting the significance of KPMG's impact in the marketplace, KPMG member firms in the region received a number of accolades including the Best Audit Services Award at MENA Fund Manager Fund Services Awards and at the MENA

Insurance Review's Insurance Awards - 2016, the Accounting Firm of the Year at the CFO Middle East Awards earlier in the fiscal year and continued to be ranked as a 'Top Tier Firm' in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region according to the International Tax Review since 2015.

In addition, a number of KPMG's global initiatives took place in the MESA region during FY16 including KPMG's flagship global recruitment initiative - the KPMG International Case Competition, KPMG's Global Building, Construction & Real Estate Conference and KPMG's Europe, Middle East & Africa Partners' Conference. Abdullah Al-Fozan concluded his comments by saying: "Today, KPMG is one of the most resourced professional service networks in the region with a vast clientele comprising public sector institutions, multinationals, regional and local companies, enterprise businesses as well as other organizations. We also continue to work alongside some of the largest economic transformation programs, assisting the institutions driving these initiatives in working towards achieving macro level objectives."

In the wider Global context, KPMG International announced aggregated network revenues of US\$25.42 billion for the fiscal year ended 30 September 2016 (FY16), representing an 8.0 percent increase in local currency terms.

In FY16, more than 37,000 new graduates and other entry-level professionals joined KPMG member firms, and more than 300 new external partners and more than 600 promoted KPMG partners were welcomed into the leadership ranks. KPMG's global workforce grew by more than 8 percent to almost 189,000 partners and staff, the highest number of individuals ever employed across the network.

## RASAMEEL INVESTMENT HOUSE ARRANGES ACQUISITION OF \$41 MILLION PROPERTY IN US

**DUBAI:** Rasameel Investment House, a company supervised by Dubai Financial Services Authority, has announced that it has successfully arranged the acquisition of a multi-family residential property in the United States, in accordance with an Islamic Sharia compliant structure in a deal worth US\$ 41 million.



Shahid Feroz

The deal was structured through a joint venture between Rasameel Investment House and The Meter Group, an experience local operator with over 5,000 units under current management in nearby areas to the acquired property. Property Income Advisors, Inc. had been appointed to oversee the property in a supervisory asset management capacity.

Shahid Feroz, vice president of Alternative Investments at Rasameel Structured Finance Company said this

investment is expected to generate an annual net cash yield in excess of 8 percent, and an internal rate of return above 13 percent. During the five-year investment hold period, the return on investment is expected to exceed 80 percent. Furthermore, the deal is expected to attract an improved leveraged position following implementation of a \$5.2 million capital improvement program which is expected to result in investors receiving over 55 percent of their original capital back midway through their investment.

He added "We are very pleased with the success of this deal, which we were keen to conclude due to the favorable local market conditions, the property's proximity to major employment centers and the potential to drive up the property's investment and rental values through a carefully crafted and proven value-add strategy."

Feroz has also pointed out that the property's unique characteristics including, its unrivalled spacious unit sizes and its unobstructed southern panoramic view of Mount Rainer, gave it a competitive advantage in the market.

He said that the value-add strategy would also strive to create operational efficiencies, reduce operating costs and improve the property's net operating income in order to distribute higher dividends to investors.

Feroz stressed that despite the difficult economic condition, Rasameel would continue to look for attractive investment solutions for its clients.

## NISSAN AL BABBAIN CELEBRATES YEAR-END WITH 'PORT PRICES-BACK AGAIN' CAMPAIGN

PROMOTIONAL DISCOUNTS ACROSS ENTIRE NISSAN FLEET

**KUWAIT:** Wouldn't it be an amazing treat to start the new year with a fantastic deal on a new car? With the new year just around the corner, Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babbain Co (AABC), the authorized agent of Nissan vehicles in the State of Kuwait is all geared up to offer exciting year-end promotional discounts and attractive benefits on the entire Nissan fleet; sedans, sports cars, SUVs, and commercial vehicles.

Commencing on December 18 till December 21, the four-day year-end campaign, 'Port Prices-Back Again!' as the company calls it is being celebrated across the two Nissan Al Babbain showrooms presenting customers with a golden opportunity to strike unbeatable deals on their favorite Nissan models. The 'Port Prices-Back Again!' Nissan Al Babbain is always keen to deliver superior value to Nissan enthusiasts and continues to roll out offers that brings together privileges and benefits carefully chosen to reward and delight our customers." A new car purchase qualifies as an amazing New Year's gift that the entire family can enjoy and we urge all customers currently looking to buy a new vehicle to take advantage of the 'Port Prices-Back Again!' campaign and experience the brand's unparalleled Japanese engineering and Nissan Al Babbain's customer care service.

Nissan Al Babbain urges all customers to avail this wonderful opportunity as the campaign runs during a short four days and treat themselves to an unforgettable gift from Nissan Al Babbain. To learn more about the 'Port Prices-Back Again!'



Catch the end-of-year offer from Nissan Al Babbain

campaign please visit Nissan Al Babbain's showrooms located in Al-Rai and Al-Ahmadi.

Al Babbain Group was founded in 1948, to present a model of honesty, integrity and total dedication, gaining a solid reputation in the State of Kuwait and the Middle East area. Today, Al Babbain Group has licensing rights for some of the world's leading brands stretching the globe from the USA to the Far East. For more than 60

years, Al Babbain Group has experienced continued success and a large measure of this success came from the Group's advanced flexible management style and long-term vision. These astounding results were achieved due to a versatile strategic formula focusing on growth amongst its sphere of activities; including automotive, technology, investment, information technology, industrial and Finance.

# YAHOO SECURITY PROBLEMS A STORY OF TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE

**SAN FRANCISCO/BOSTON/WASHINGTON:** In the summer of 2013, Yahoo Inc launched a project to better secure the passwords of its customers, abandoning the use of a discredited technology for encrypting data known as MD5.

It was too late. In August of that year, hackers got hold of more than a billion Yahoo accounts, stealing the poorly encrypted passwords and other information in the biggest data breach on record. Yahoo only recently uncovered the hack and disclosed it last week.

The timing of the attack might seem like bad luck, but the weakness of MD5 had been known by hackers and security experts for more than a decade. MD5 can be cracked more easily than other so-called "hashing" algorithms, which are mathematical functions that convert data into seemingly random character strings.

In 2008, five years before Yahoo took action, Carnegie Mellon University's Software Engineering Institute issued a public warning to security professionals through a US government-funded vulnerability alert system: MD5 "should be considered cryptographically broken and unsuitable for further use."

Yahoo's failure to move away from MD5 in a timely fashion was an example of problems in Yahoo's security operations as it grappled with business challenges, according to five former employees and some outside security experts. Stronger hashing technology would have made it more difficult for the hackers to get into customer accounts after breaching Yahoo's network, making the attack far less damaging, they said.

"MD5 was considered dead long before 2013," said David Kennedy, chief executive of cyber firm TrustedSec LLC. "Most companies were using more secure hashing algorithms by then." He did not name specific firms.

Yahoo, which has confirmed it was still using MD5 at the time of the attack, disputed the notion that the company had skimped on security.

"Over the course of our more than 20-year history, Yahoo has focused on and invested in security programs and talent to protect our users," Yahoo said in a statement to Reuters. "We have invested more than \$250 million in security initiatives across the company since 2012."



### Competing priorities

The former Yahoo security staffers, however, told Reuters the security team was at times turned down when it requested new tools and features such as strengthened cryptography protections, on the grounds that the requests would cost too much money, were too complicated, or were simply too low a priority. Partly, that reflected the internet pioneer's long-running financial struggles: Yahoo's revenues and profits have fallen steadily since their 2008 peak while Alphabet Inc's Google, Facebook Inc and others have come to dominate the consumer internet business. "When business is good, it's easy to do things like security," said Jeremiah Grossman, who worked on Yahoo's security team

from 1999 to 2001. "When business is bad, you expect to see security get cut."

To be sure, no system is completely hack-proof. Hackers have managed to break into passwords that were encrypted using more advanced technologies than MD5. Other Internet companies, such as LinkedIn and AOL, have also suffered security breaches, though none nearly as large as Yahoo's. "This could happen to any large corporation," said Tom Kellermann, a former World Bank security manager and security industry executive.

Kellermann, now CEO of investment firm Strategic Cyber Ventures, said he was not surprised that it had taken Yahoo several years to identify the massive attacks. "Hackers often have a capac-

ity to burrow deeper than we thought into a system and remain for years," he said. Reuters could not determine how many companies besides Yahoo were using MD5 in 2013. Google, Facebook and Microsoft Corp did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

According to another former security veteran at Yahoo, even when the company was growing quickly, security sometimes took a back seat as the company focused on system performance to keep up with the growth. Then, when growth stalled, senior security staff left for other companies and the chances of getting approval for expensive upgrades dropped further, the person said.

"Any changes to the user database took forever because they were understaffed, and it's an ultra-critical system - everything depends on it," said the former Yahoo employee. Yahoo declined to comment on details of its security practices, but said it routinely conducted drills to test and improve its cyber defenses and highlighted campaigns such as a "bug bounty" program in which it pays hackers to find security flaws and report them to the company. — Reuters



Simon Howells



## XEROX APPOINTS NEW REGIONAL MANAGER

**DUBAI:** Xerox announced yesterday the appointment of Simon Howells as the Regional Manager for the Middle East region. Howells will oversee all Xerox Partner Operations and work with the Account Management Team, Sales and Technical Specialists to support a Partner network of over 300 across the region.

"I am excited to be leading a talented and dedicated team to drive our Go To Market (GTM) strategy for the Middle East. This coupled with the expertise and focus of our Partner network will deliver a winning partnership, leveraging a best in class value proposition," Howells said.

Simon Howells joined Xerox in 2003 at its UK operations as a Strategic Account Manager in the division responsible for Xerox's publishing and Graphic Arts business. In 2008, Howells moved to Dubai, UAE to build and drive the Managed Print

Services business for Xerox Middle East and enable organizations to transition from paper-based tasks to streamlined digital workflows. Most recently, Simon Howells was Head of Alliances and Managed Print Services for Xerox ME, expanding the company's Managed Print Services division to address the needs of all businesses in the Middle East, including partners across the region selling Xerox Partner Print Services.

In his new role, Howells will focus on maximizing coverage and the return of the Partner Operations in the Middle East, and grow the team to ensure that Xerox Partners are leveraging significant expertise and support to drive their business forward. Simon Howells will ensure that Xerox ME will continue to lead with Managed Print Services and Solutions, whilst also maximizing an exciting Ink Jet opportunity in the region.



**JACKSONVILLE:** In this Thursday, Dec 1, 2016, photo, University of North Florida students, Garrett Baumann, right, Chris Martin, center, and Jason Pavichall, work to customize a toy car so that it can be used by a girl with cerebral palsy at the university in Jacksonville, Florida. — AP

## HOLIDAY CHEER: STUDENTS BUILD HI-TECH TOYS FOR DISABLED KIDS

**JACKSONVILLE:** Because of her cerebral palsy, 4-year-old Scarlett Wilgis has trouble opening her hands and can't get around without help. Her parents have scoured store shelves and websites looking for toys for her, but have mostly been disappointed. "Finding the toys at Walmart or Target, they're pretty much non-existent," said mom Dezaraye Wilgis, sitting with Scarlett in front of their twinkling Christmas tree in St. Augustine. "Or if you get them through a medical supplier they're extremely expensive."

While major toy makers have changed with the times and sell dolls with wheelchairs and crutches, those designed to be used by children with severe disabilities like Scarlett are still difficult, if not impossible, to find. Because they have to be customized for each child, the cost can skyrocket.

This conundrum gave two University of North Florida professors an idea: mix engineering and physical therapy students in a lab with the goal of converting toys from store shelves into custom-made fun for disabled children. The Adaptive Toy Project is now in its third year, and has drawn a 5-year grant from the National Institutes of Health. It is helping families like Scarlett's while giving the students a dose of community service and real-world experience that will stick with them long after graduation.

Dr Alison Cernich, a neuropsychologist and director at the NIH's Eunice Kennedy

Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, said the agency funded the program because it forces students from different fields to collaborate and solve a problem in the community.

"This program is getting students in the early phases of their training thinking about ordinary objects, toys, and how to adapt those toys so that children with limitations can use and play with them like children without limitations," she said.

### Customized cars

On a recent day, the school's small lab buzzed with the sound of tools and chatter as students customized cars for their new owners. Chris Martin, an electrical engineering student, had removed the hood of Scarlett's car, exposing its wires. A large push button replaced the steering, and light sensors mounted underneath the car will allow it to follow a line of tape along the floor whenever Scarlett hits the button. Now, Scarlett's parents can design routes for the car with tape, or use a remote-control mode for family walks.

When Martin first met Scarlett's mother, "she actually cried, and it just made me want to work harder," Martin said. "I just want to make it as perfect as possible for her." The cars retail between \$250 and \$500; the customization makes them worth well over \$1,000. The families, about 18 so far, get the cars free. — AP

## BULWARK SIGNS DISTRIBUTION AGREEMENT WITH MIMICAST

EMAIL SECURITY, ARCHIVING CONTINUITY SERVICES ACROSS MIDDLE EAST

**DUBAI:** Bulwark, the UAE based and specialized value-added distributor, announced that they have signed a distribution agreement with Mimecast Limited, a recognized leader in enterprise email archiving, to provide one-stop shop for email archives and data security solutions across Middle East. According to the agreement, Bulwark will promote and distribute Mimecast's full portfolio of services in the GCC region.

Mimecast's cloud services deliver comprehensive email risk management in one-fully integrated subscription service. Mimecast reduces the risk, complexity and cost associated with on premise email management whilst providing business email continuity throughout the cloud adoption journey. The company's best-of-breed services protect the emails of millions of users worldwide against targeted attacks, data leaks, malware and spam. Securing customers' mailboxes is a core focus for Mimecast and being a cloud based business ensures that they are able to quickly and easily evolve their security services, like Targeted Threat Protection, to counter spear phishing and whaling cyberattacks.

"We are delighted to introduce Mimecast to our reseller channel and it complements and completes our existing product portfolio specializing in the Information Security domain. The Bulwark and Mimecast partnership will ensure that customers receive secure and compliant email archives and continuity cloud services and highly confidential business information. With a highly trained and competitive team of sales, marketing and technical experts, we aspire to deliver fast, consistent value-added services to our customers in the region," said Jose Thomas Menacherry, Managing Director, Bulwark Technologies.

Mimecast is a recognized leader in information email archiving. The company was named a "Leader" in the 2015 Gartner Magic Quadrant



Brandon Bekker - Mimecast MEA and Jose Thomas Menacherry - Bulwark Technologies.

for Enterprise Information Archiving. Speaking on the partnership, Brandon Bekker, Managing Director, Mimecast MEA, says, "Bulwark, being one of the pioneers in Security distribution in the Middle East, is a perfect partner for Mimecast in this region. By joining forces, we can deliver a complete and comprehensive value added proposition to the Middle East region. Our aim is to grow our reach across dif-

ferent verticals and market segments in this region, and we look to achieve this through a focused go-to-market strategy with Bulwark."

Bulwark has established an excellent track record in delivering world-class products and excellent customer service, and Value Addition has been at the very core of Bulwark's operations since its inception in 1999 resulting in the company growing from strength to strength.

## CALIFORNIA TRIES AGAIN TO THWART PRISON CELLPHONE SMUGGLING

**SACRAMENTO:** California is installing nearly 1,000 sophisticated metal detectors, scanners and secret security cameras at its prisons in its latest attempt to thwart the smuggling of cellphones, thousands of which continue to flood the prisons despite previous efforts.

Officials say the phones can be used to coordinate everything from attacks in prison to crimes on the street, yet they have thus far been unable to prevent even high-security inmates like cult killer Charles Manson from repeatedly getting the devices that are illegal behind bars.

Corrections officials told The Associated Press a year ago that they were halting the expansion of a now 5-year-old program designed to make unauthorized cellphones useless by capturing their signals before calls are connected. Officials fear the call-intercepting devices may not be able to keep up with increasingly sophisticated cellphones.

So Virginia-based Global Tel-Link, the nation's largest prison phone company, is heading a new approach funded by a projected \$17 million a year from California inmates and their families who use landlines to make phone calls that are monitored for security reasons. Those range from 10 cents per minute for local calls to 25 cents per minute for collect interstate calls, in keeping with rates set by the Federal Communications Commission. GTL has been accused by inmates and their families of charging exorbitant rates for phone calls, prompting some to join a class-action lawsuit against the company. The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is installing 272 more metal detectors, 68 X-ray machines to scan packages, 103 low-dose X-ray scanners, 170 hidden surveillance cameras, 34 devices to decrypt and analyze cellphones, and 272 scanners that detect magnetic signals.

Removing illegal cellphones can force inmates to use the prisons' phone system, said Jim Viscardi, vice president of global security for Illinois-based Metrasens, which is providing the magnetic-signal detectors. The sensitive scanners can detect tiny metal objects even if they are inside a body cavity, a common way of smuggling phones and weapons inside prisons.

### Unmonitored cellphone

The latest crackdown is unlikely to deter

inmates who want to conduct illegal activities using an unmonitored cellphone, said Mitch Volkart, a Global Tel-Link product manager. "There is no magic bullet," he said. "You can't try to address the demand because the demand is always going to be there."

So it's better to control the supply, Volkart said, not only by capturing illicit phones but analyzing their calls and contents. That analysis has at times led to investigators uncovering weapons or drugs within prisons, he said. The company has similar programs with other states including Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Oklahoma, he said. Smugglers are getting trickier: In April, they attempted to use a drone to fly two cellphones into Ironwood State Prison, 130 miles east of Los Angeles, though the drone crashed before it could deliver the goods.

And all the state's previous efforts haven't prevented Manson, the 82-year-old cult leader, from being caught with cellphones three times - most recently in February, but also in 2009 and 2011. Authorities say a visitor was thwarted in 2013 when he was caught trying to bring Manson a phone concealed in a boot heel. The new detection devices are expected to be used

on inmates, visitors and employees in all 35 adult prisons and three juvenile facilities by July.

### Too soon

Corrections department spokeswoman Vicky Waters said it is too soon to say if the scanners will replace body cavity searches or a controversial process known as contraband surveillance watches - or more informally, "potty watches." Inmates suspected of swallowing or concealing contraband in body cavities are isolated and their hands restrained for several days or until they complete at least three bowel movements.

"Why can't they do X-rays or something ... like the airports do to us now?" asked Irma Cooper, who had to leave her bra in the car when she went to visit her son because it contained metal. "I just think that's ridiculous in this day and age, when they can do those scans."

She was further dismayed when her son told her he had to undergo a digital rectal exam each time he left the visiting room at High Desert State Prison, to make sure he wasn't smuggling contraband. Waters said inmates are strip-searched and scanned with metal detectors, but are not routinely subjected to rectal exams. — AP



**VACAVILLE:** In this April 10, 2009, file photo, Correctional Officer Jose Sandoval inspects one of the more than 2,000 cell phones confiscated from inmates at California State Prison, Solano in Vacaville, California. — AP

## ANTI-ABORTIONISTS, BUOYED BY TRUMP, GET NEW WIND IN US

**WASHINGTON:** Emboldened by Donald Trump's imminent arrival at the White House, abortion opponents are mobilizing, taking severe measures that some say threaten constitutional freedoms.

Pro-choice activists, who support a woman's right to choose to use contraception or have a legal abortion, suffered setbacks in several US states in recent days. In Ohio, Republican Governor John Kasich signed Tuesday a law banning abortion after the 20th week of pregnancy, making no exception for rape, incest or fetal anomaly.

The bill makes only limited concessions in cases where the pregnancy could harm the woman's health. The move is a risky bet. The US Supreme Court has already ruled that states cannot prevent a woman from having an abortion before the fetus is viable—experts say that threshold occurs around 24 weeks of pregnancy. Just over one

percent of abortions in the US are currently carried out after 20 weeks, according to the pro-choice Guttmacher Institute. But available data does not seem conclusive on how many abortions after 20 weeks take place for birth defects or other reasons.

### 'Heartbeat bill'

As alarming as the measure may be for abortion backers, it could have been worse. A separate, so-called "heartbeat bill" would have banned abortions as early as six weeks into a pregnancy—even though women are often unaware they are pregnant at that time. But Kasich vetoed the measure.

In Tennessee, a woman who tried to abort her fetus at 24 weeks using a metal clothes hanger was recently slapped with bolstered criminal charges. For the pro-choice camp, the case illustrates the growing fear that women denied an

abortion may resort to desperate, clandestine measures that had not been prevalent for decades.

On the other side of the debate, anti-abortion activists feel wind in their wings with conservative Trump set to take power January 20. The Americans United for Life group published a report of more than 200 pages detailing the "horrific abortion clinic conditions," finding that 227 abortion providers in 32 states were cited for more than 1,400 health and safety "deficiencies" between 2008 and 2016, and had violated hundreds of state laws. The study aims to provide state lawmakers, ahead of 2017 legislative sessions, with "an important tool for explaining the critical need for enhanced health and safety standards," said Denise Burke, an AUL vice president and the report's author. Supporters are encouraged to help pass anti-abortion bills. Conservative Republicans and evangeli-

cal Christians opposed to abortion are holding out hopes for the kind of change they want to see under a Trump administration. Trump's Vice president-elect Mike Pence, and his pick to head the Justice Department, Jeff Sessions, both oppose abortion rights.

And incoming Health Secretary Tom Price is expected to lead a crusade against family planning and health care plan reimbursements for contraception.

Trump himself has vowed to nominate Supreme Court justices strongly opposed to abortion, which he claims would "automatically" overturn the high court's landmark Roe v. Wade decision of 1973.

There is nothing automatic about Supreme Court reversals, which are not common. But Trump stands a solid chance of pushing through a conservative agenda at the most powerful court in the land, with one seat on the nine-member panel currently left vacant and

one or more others likely to come due to the advanced age of some justices.

### Cremating, burying fetal remains

Ever since the Roe v. Wade decision was handed down in 1973, conservative activists have repeatedly sought to raise barriers for women seeking an abortion. Oklahoma state's high court on Tuesday rejected a new law that required abortion clinic doctors to have admission rights for their patients at a local hospital within 30 miles (48 kilometers). Earlier this month in Texas, a judge suspended a law that required abortion clinics to cremate or bury fetal remains after abortions. But the US Supreme Court had strongly reaffirmed in June women's rights to an abortion, a hot-button issue that has incessantly torn at the US social fabric. That ruling could be the last major victory for the pro-choice camp for a long time. —AFP

## PLANTS CLOSED, CARS STOPPED AS CHINA FACES SMOG 'RED ALERT'

### AIR POLLUTION SURPASSES WHO GUIDELINE BY 100 TIMES

**BEIJING:** Engulfed in choking smog, some northern Chinese cities limited the number of cars on roads and temporarily shut down factories yesterday to cut down pollution during a national "red alert."

More than 700 companies stopped production in Beijing and traffic police were restricting

illnesses. China's long-standing air pollution is blamed on its reliance on coal and emissions from older cars. "If you are tracking back to the first day of this episode, you can see that the layer of the smog (in Beijing) is moving slowly from the south to the urban area in Beijing and then to the north," said Dong Liansai, a climate cam-

Wednesday. Authorities in Jinan, south of Tianjin, raised that city's alert to the second-highest level Sunday after the city "basically disappeared" in the haze, the newspaper Jilu Evening News reported. Photos on its website showed downtown office towers as ghostly silhouettes at midday. Beijing and other cities have tried to improve air quality by switching power plants from coal to natural gas and rolling out fleets of electric buses and taxis.

### WHO limits

Concentrations of airborne pollutants in a major northern Chinese city exceeded a World Health Organization (WHO) guideline by 100 times yesterday as north China battled with poor air quality for the third straight day.

In Shijiazhuang, capital of northern Hebei province, levels of PM 2.5, fine particulate matter, soared to 1,000 micrograms per cubic metre, state-run Xinhua News Agency reported yesterday. That compares with a WHO guideline of an annual average of no more than 10 micrograms. In nearby Tianjin city, authorities grounded dozens of flights for the second day and closed all highways after severe smog blanketed the port city, one of more than 40 in China's northeast to issue pollution warnings.

PM 2.5 levels hit 334 micrograms per cubic metre in Tianjin as of 4 p.m. local time, according to local environmental protection authorities. In Beijing, PM 2.5 levels were at 212 micrograms per cubic metre. On Saturday, 22 cities issued red alerts, including top steelmaking city Tangshan city in Hebei and Jinan in coal-rich Shandong province. A red alert is the highest possible air pollution warning.

Red alerts are issued when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is forecast to exceed 200 for more than four days in succession, 300 for more than two days or 500 for at least 24 hours. The AQI is a different measure from the PM 2.5 gauge. Pollution alerts have become increasingly common in China's northern industrial heartland, especially during winter when energy demand - much of it met by coal - skyrockets.

AQI readings at some monitoring stations in seven cities in Hebei peaked above 400 yesterday, with Shijiazhuang and two other cities breaking above the 500 limit, Xinhua said. Anything above 300 is considered hazardous by the US Environmental Protection Agency. —Agencies



**BEIJING:** A woman puts on a mask for protection against air pollution while walking on a pedestrian overhead bridge in Beijing as the capital of China is shrouded by heavy smog yesterday. —AP

drivers by monitoring their license plate numbers, state media reported. Dozens of cities closed schools and took other emergency measures after a "red alert" was issued from Friday night to Wednesday for much of northern China. "The smog has serious repercussions on the lungs and the respiratory system, and it also influences the health of future generations, so under a red alert, it is safer to stay at home rather than go to school," said Li Jingren, a 15-year-old high school student in Beijing.

Authorities in the northern province of Hebei ordered coal and cement plants to temporarily shut down or reduce production. Elsewhere, hospitals prepared teams of doctors to handle an expected surge in cases of pollution-related

paigner with Greenpeace in Beijing. "You can easily find the large deployment (of smog) in the regions south of Beijing."

Dong said emissions from factories in nearby provinces were the main cause of the smog choking the capital. The smog had earlier grounded flights in some cities and closed highways due to low visibility. On Sunday, news websites said the number of children being taken to Beijing hospitals with breathing trouble soared. Photos showed waiting rooms crowded with parents carrying children who wore face masks.

Members of the public closely watch levels of PM2.5, particles measuring 2.5 microns across that are easily inhaled and damage lung tissue. The alert, this winter's first, lasts through



**MELBOURNE:** This handout from Snake Catcher Victoria taken yesterday shows a tiger snake attempting to disguise itself as tinsel on a Christmas tree in a Melbourne home. —AFP

## SNAKE DISGUISES ITSELF AS TINSEL ON AUSTRALIA CHRISTMAS TREE

**MELBOURNE:** It may be trying to disguise itself as tinsel, but look more closely and this is a deadly tiger snake which climbed up a Christmas tree in Australia. A woman called Cheryl noticed the uninvited and highly venomous guest in her Melbourne home on Sunday but kept her cool-making a cup of tea while she waited for a professional snake-catcher to arrive.

"It was a tiger snake. They are very deadly but only if you hurt them," snake-catcher

Barry Goldsmith, who removed the reptile, told AFP yesterday.

"It probably came in through an open door, but Cheryl was very sensible about it. She didn't panic, she just took a photo and sent it to the snake-catcher, me, and 20 minutes later I had the little bugger in a bag." Australia is home to 20 of the world's 25 most venomous snakes, including the tiger snake which can grow up to 2.9 metres (10 feet) and is usually found in coastal areas. —AFP

## AFRICA AT HIGHEST RISK OF MAJOR ECONOMIC BLOW FROM CLIMATE THREATS

**ROME:** Countries most dependent on agriculture are also at high risk of experiencing changes in climate over the next 30 years and face the biggest costs in dealing with the effects of extreme weather, according to a global climate index published yesterday. Sub-Saharan Africa is home to 17 of the 20 countries most economically reliant on agriculture in the world.

Of the 17, all but two are at "high" or "extreme" risk of experiencing changes in temperature and rainfall, and extremes such as drought and floods, according to the Climate Change Exposure Index.

These are typically countries whose governments lack the financial or technical resources to plan 20 or 30 years in advance, said Richard Hewston, principal environmental analyst at Verisk Maplecroft, a UK-based risk management company which compiled the index. "They're dealing with droughts now, they're dealing with food security issues now, they don't have that capacity to be looking 30 years down the line," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in a telephone interview.

The majority of farmers in these countries are smallholders using traditional farming methods, who do not have the financial safety nets to invest in new crops which may improve yields in years to come, Hewston said. They also lack the technology which allows farmers in northwestern Europe and North America to monitor temperature and even the chlorophyll in plants to decide when to plant, harvest or water their crops. Agriculture comprises 31 percent of the economy in east Africa and 22 percent of the west African economy - both regions rated "high risk", according to Verisk Maplecroft.

Central America is another region where farmers are at great risk of the impacts of climate change, but these economies are less dependent on agriculture. Globally, countries categorised as "high" or "extreme" risk in the index derive on average 16.7 percent of their economic output from agriculture. This figure is almost twice that of countries categorized as "medium" or "low" risk (8.9 percent).

Countries which are most exposed to climate change are also those projected to experience the greatest growth in population between 2015 and 2050, Verisk Maplecroft said. This year, for the first time, the index looked at seasonal changes in temperature and rainfall, as well as annual changes. — Reuters



**This handout from the WWF taken by Alexandre Teynie on May 11, 2013 and released on December 19, 2016 shows a new species of snake called parafimbrios lao in Laos. —AFP**



**This handout from the WWF taken by Jodi Rowley on October 3, 2013 and released yesterday shows a new species of frog called the leptolalax isos in Virachey National Park, Cambodia. —AFP**

## RAINBOW SNAKE AND TINY FROG AMONG NEW MEKONG SPECIES

**BANGKOK:** A rainbow-headed snake, a tiny frog and a lizard with dragon-like horns are among more than 150 new species confirmed by scientists last year in the ecologically diverse but threatened Mekong region, researchers said yesterday. Winding its way from the Tibetan plateau through the mountains and jungles of Southeast Asia, the Mekong river helps sustain one of the most diverse regions on the planet.

Each year scientists announce new species, after an often lengthy identification process, highlighting how much more there is to learn about the region. But there are fears many species may die out before even being discovered in an area of the world that is rapidly developing, where rule of law is notoriously shaky and wildlife smuggling rampant.

"The Greater Mekong region is a magnet for the world's conservation scientists because of the incredible diversity of species that continue to be discovered here," Jimmy Borah, from WWF's Greater Mekong team said. "They are racing against time to ensure that these newly discovered species are protected."

The Greater Mekong region—which includes southwestern China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Myanmar—is under intense pressure from dam and road building as well as a thriving illegal wildlife trade, much of it centred around the law-

less Golden Triangle area where the latter three meet.

"Many collectors are willing to pay thousands of dollars or more for the rarest, most unique and most endangered species," Borah said. In total, scientists described 163 new species in 2015 including nine amphibians, three mammals, 11 fish, 14 reptiles and 126 plants. Among the most eye-catching are parafimbrios lao, a snake found in the limestone karsts of northern Laos whose scales reflect rainbow-like colours around its head. On the Thai tourist island of Phuket, which has seen huge development in recent decades, scientists found a lizard (acanthosaura phuketensis) with a fearsome-looking ridge of horns down its head and back.

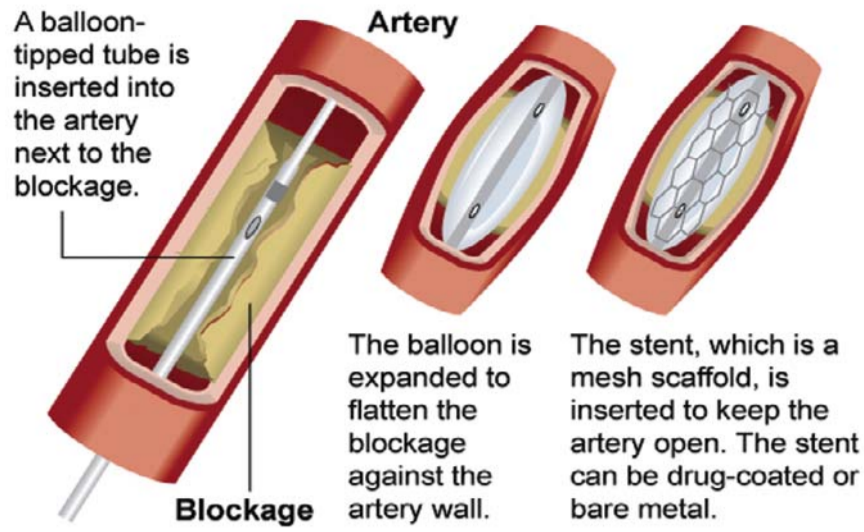
And in the country's northern Chiang Rai province researchers found a newt (tylotriton anguliceps) with dazzling red and black markings that they likened to a Klingon's head from the Star Trek franchise. In Cambodia and Vietnam, a new frog species that could fit on a fingertip was also discovered. At 3cm long, leptolalax isos, can fit on a fingertip. It was first spotted in 2006 but peer-reviewed confirmation that it was indeed a new species took nearly a decade. Between 1997 and 2015 there have been 2,409 new species described in the Greater Mekong, the equivalent of two new discoveries a week. — AFP



**KARACHI:** A Pakistani health worker administers polio vaccine drops to a child during a door-to-door polio campaign in Karachi yesterday. Pakistan is one of only two countries in the world where polio, a crippling childhood disease, remains endemic. — AFP

### Opening heart arteries with stents

Stents are mesh scaffoldings that help prop open arteries typically clogged by years of quiet cholesterol build-up. About half a million people receive stents each year.



SOURCE: National Institutes of Health

AP

**HEART STENT 121616:** Graphic shows the procedure for inserting an artery; 2c x 3 inches; with BC-US--Medicare-Billing; SC; ETA 6 p.m.

**AP**

**Editor's Note:** It is mandatory to include all sources that accompany this graphic when repurposing or editing it for publication

### MEDICARE OUTPATIENTS RISK HIGHER BILLS FOR PROCEDURES

**WASHINGTON:** You pay less for outpatient treatment than for a hospital admission, right? Not necessarily in the topsy-turvy world of Medicare billing, according to a government report.

People entitled to benefits under Medicare who had heart stents inserted as outpatients faced hospital bills that were \$645 higher on average than those who had the same kind of procedure as inpatients, the Health and Human Services inspector general has found. Stents are tiny mesh cages that prop open narrow or weakened arteries. They usually are inserted through a tube that's threaded through an artery in either the groin or the arm.

The beneficiary's share of costs averaged \$1,667 for an outpatient stent, compared with \$1,022 for an inpatient stent, the report found. Investigators looked at hospital billing for 2013-2014.

In a formal response to the report released yesterday, Medicare said it has taken steps to protect people from such disparities. Nonetheless, the inspector general is recommending that Medicare take another look at how its billing rules distinguish between inpatient and outpatient hospital stays. Overall, there's a gray area between short inpatient stays and long outpatient stays, a problem that the agency has been working on for years, with mixed results.

Not only do hospital billing decisions affect how much people pay for a procedure, they can also determine whether patients get Medicare coverage for inpatient rehabilitation. Generally, Medicare beneficiaries must stay in a hospital for at least three nights to qualify for inpatient rehab coverage. The report says Medicare should consider also counting the length of time someone spends as an outpatient. "An increased number of beneficiaries in outpatient stays pay more and have limited access to (inpatient rehab) services than they would as inpatients," the report concluded. "Medicare - and beneficiaries - may be paying differently for similar care," investigators added. Advocates say beneficiaries

should be aware that how their hospital stay is classified can affect what they pay and also their access to coverage for inpatient rehabilitation. But patients and families may not be able to do much to influence such clinical decisions.

As the government's premier health insurance program, Medicare serves an estimated 57 million older and disabled people. Most of the cases covered by the inspector general's report stemmed from emergency-room visits. The billing discrepancies stem partly from Medicare's complicated design. Beneficiaries pay a deductible for inpatient care, currently \$1,288 per stay. Outpatient care is billed differently, with beneficiaries responsible for 20 percent of the cost of services, after a small deductible.

Sometimes 20 percent of the cost of a battery of outpatient services can add up to more than the inpatient deductible. Many people purchase private "Medigap" insurance to deal with Medicare's out-of-pocket costs. For most of the procedures scrutinized by the inspector general, the Medicare program and beneficiaries both paid less when services were provided on an outpatient basis. But inserting a heart stent - a common procedure - was not the only kind of medical care for which outpatients wound up paying more. Investigators said the next three most common service categories for which outpatients wound up paying more were cardiovascular procedures without stents, cardiac defibrillator implants and cardiac pacemaker implants. Heart disease is still the nation's top killer.

In its written response to the report, Medicare agreed that the billing issue needs more work. The agency advises hospitals that stays spanning two midnights or longer should be billed as inpatient. Medicare said it is doing what it can within existing laws to protect people from paying more for similar services as outpatients. It has reclassified payment for many procedures to limit what outpatients can be billed. Stent procedures are on that list. — AP

## BEIJING DENIES US CLAIM THAT CHINA IS SYNTHETIC DRUG KING

### CONCERNS OVER EASY AVAILABILITY OF FENTANYLS ONLINE

**BEIJING:** US assertions that China is the top source of the synthetic opioids that have killed thousands of drug users in the US and Canada are unsubstantiated, Chinese officials told the Associated Press.

Both the US Drug Enforcement Administration and the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy point to China as North America's main source of fentanyl, related drugs and the chemicals used to make them. Such statements "lack the support of sufficient numbers of actual, confirmed cases," China's National Narcotics Control Commission told DEA's Beijing field office in a fax dated Friday.

In its letter to the DEA, which the commission also sent to AP, Chinese officials urged the US to provide more evidence about China's role as a source country. It's a point the state-run China Daily newspaper drove home publicly in an article this month stating that made-in-China carfentanyl was not the cause of overdose deaths in the US. DEA officials said their casework and investigations consistently lead back to China. DEA data also shows that when China regulates synthetic drugs, US seizures plunge.

"China is not the only source of the problem, but they are the dominant source for fentanyl along with precursor chemicals and pill presses that are being exported from China to the US, Canada and Mexico," said Russell Baer, a DEA special agent in Washington.

Beijing is concerned enough about international perceptions of China's role in the opioid trade that after AP published investigations highlighting the easy availability of fentanyl online from Chinese suppliers, the narcotics commission made a rare invitation to a team of AP journalists to discuss the issue at the powerful Ministry of Public Security, a leafy complex just off Tiananmen Square at the historic and political heart of Beijing. They also provided responses, in writing, to AP's questions.

US-China cooperation is essential for mounting an effective global response to an epidemic of opioid abuse that has killed more than 300,000 Americans since 2000. The presence of fentanyl, a prescription painkiller up to 50 times stronger than heroin, and related compounds in the US drug supply began to rise in 2013, after dealers learned they could multiply profits by cutting the potent chemicals into heroin, cocaine and counterfeit prescription pills.

Even as the US Congress considers legislation that would punish opioid source countries, no government agency has produced comprehensive data on seizures of fentanyl-related substances by country of origin. The national data-



**This June 2016 file photo provided by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police shows printer ink bottles containing carfentanyl imported from China, in Vancouver, Canada. US assertions that China is the top source of the synthetic opioids that have killed thousands of drug users in the US and Canada are unsubstantiated, Chinese officials told the Associated Press. —AP**

base on drug seizures overseen by DEA does not require reporting by source country and may not accurately reflect seizures of all fentanyl-related compounds. Baer said it didn't even have a "fentanyl" category until around two years ago.

It also takes time for forensic chemists to identify drugs seized from the field, which means fentanyl-related samples may get incorrectly logged as other drugs. "The field agent may not, and I think it's fair to say usually does not, revise or amend the initial seizure," Baer said. He added that DEA is trying to improve its data-collection methods.

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy declined to comment or to provide data that would back up the US assertions. US Customs and Border Protection said it had data on fentanyl seizures by country of origin only for 2015: Nearly two-thirds of the 61 kilograms (134 pounds) of fentanyl seized last year came from Mexico. The rest, 35 percent, came from China.

DEA officials say Mexican cartels are key bulk suppliers of fentanyl to the US, but portray Mexico primarily as a transshipment point. US authorities have tracked shipments of fentanyl precursors from China to Mexico and the US, but

many appear legitimate and are diverted to the black market upon arrival, Baer said. Mexican officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to be quoted, said fentanyl and its precursors were coming from China. Only two labs trying to produce fentanyl from scratch have been located in Mexico in recent years, with others apparently taking simpler steps to turn precursors into fentanyl, the officials said.

Mexican authorities did not immediately respond to requests for data on fentanyl and fentanyl precursor seizures by country of origin. Still, there is plenty of anecdotal evidence indicating that China plays an important role in the fentanyl trade and, despite disagreements about data, Chinese authorities have been proactive in trying to stop their manufacture and export.

It is easy to find Chinese companies online offering to export synthetic opioids, the AP found in investigations published in October and November. In response to that reporting, China's narcotics commission said it was scrutinizing 12 opioid vendors the AP identified, along with other companies that advertise fentanyl analogs. — AP

## POULTRY CULLED IN GERMANY AFTER BIRD FLU FOUND ON TWO FARMS

**HAMBURG:** About 30,000 turkeys and ducks were culled in Germany over the weekend after bird flu was found on two farms, authorities said yesterday.

Some 21,600 turkeys were culled on a farm in Soest in North Rhine Westfalia and 9,500 ducks were culled on a farm in Moeser in Saxony-Anhalt after the virulent H5N8 bird flu strain was discovered on both farms, regional authorities said. The contagious H5N8 strain has been found in about 540 wild birds in Germany in recent weeks but few cases were found on farms as the crucial Christmas season for poultry sales starts.

The German government has introduced tougher sanitary rules to prevent infection by wild birds including orders to keep poultry indoors in high-risk regions plus immediate culling of birds on infected farms. A series of European countries and Israel have found cases

of H5N8 bird flu in the past few weeks and some ordered poultry flocks be kept indoors to prevent the disease spreading. France has widened high-risk restrictions to the entire country after the detection of several cases of the H5N8 strain in farms. A case of H5N8 bird flu was also reported on a farm in Britain on Friday.

#### South Korea, Japan

South Korea and Japan have ordered fresh culls of poultry stocks to contain outbreaks of avian flu, authorities in the two countries said. The South Korean Agriculture Ministry said yesterday it had ordered the cull of an additional 2.4 million birds, taking the total number to a record 18.4 million since the first outbreak of avian flu was reported at a farm on Nov 18. It has called the outbreak of the highly pathogenic H5N6 strain of bird flu more severe than the H5N8 strain that spread across the country

in 2014 and 2015 before being brought under control. The ministry said H5N8 was also discovered this month in the faeces of migratory birds but has not been seen at poultry farms.

In Japan, authorities on the northern island of Hokkaido said at the weekend that about 210,000 chickens were being culled after bird flu was discovered at a poultry farm in the town of Shimizu. It is the fifth reported outbreak in the country since the end of November. Nearly 800,000 chickens have been culled since then. Parts of Europe and Israel have also been hit by the H5N8 virus. About 30,000 turkeys and ducks were culled in Germany over the weekend while France has widened high-risk restrictions to the entire country after the detection of several cases of the H5N8 strain in farms. A case of H5N8 bird flu was also reported on a farm in Britain on Friday. — Reuters

**CLINIC PAGE**



Kuwait Times  
248 33 199

Dr. Fabad Al-Mukhaizeem  
م. فهد علي المخيزيم  
استشاري أطفال  
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368



### SACGC HOLDS FRENCH-KUWAITI EXHIBITION

Female students from Sabah Al-Ahmed Center for Giftedness and Creativity (SACGC), of Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS), recently took part in the 11th French-Kuwaiti Exhibition held under the title of "What Do You Know About Ants?" at Roqayya Bint Mohammed school in Farwaniya from the 12th to the 15th of December. Gifted eight graders, Yara Mohammed Ameen Al-Sayegh and Fatima Mansour Al-Qarashi won the first place with a research titled 'A Journey Into An Ant', which was supervised by science teacher, Fatima Al-Jou'an.



### OMAYYA BINT AL-QAIS WORKSHOP

Science department at Omayya Bint Al-Qais intermediate School for girls, Ahmadi, recently organized a workshop that was attended by the school director, Hoda Al-Sadhan, the Science Supervisor general, Mariam Mansour and the head of the department, Manal Abul.



### RENOWNED GERMAN DUO PERFORM IN KUWAIT

Pianist Dagmar Hartmann and cellist Reinhard Armleder, known as Karlsruhe Concert Duo, renowned for its many international awards, performed in Kuwait for the third time after visits in 2008 and 2012. This event was made possible by the well-established cooperation between the Embassy and Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah.

The musical duo, famous far beyond the borders of Germany for its classical chamber music concerts and at home on stages all over the world since 1997, shone in front of a competent audience in an excellently equipped



### AIP MERITORIOUS AWARDS NITE 2016

Association of Indian Professionals (AIP), Kuwait will organize a mega event to honor meritorious Indian students on December 30, 2016 (Friday) at 5.30 pm at the Indian embassy auditorium, Kuwait. Awardees have been selected based on CBSE examinations results of class XII declared for the academic year 2015 - 2016 from all Indian schools in Kuwait which are affiliated to CBSE system of education of India. AIP awards have become a synonym of excellence and parents of meritorious students eagerly look forward to this event. Indian Ambassador Sunil Jain will be the chief guest.

AIP is a non-profit, non-religious, non-political and non-governmental organization in Kuwait engaged in service of the Indian community through many ways. AIP awardees are presented with gold, silver and bronze medallion each one with a certificate of merit. AIP started Running (rolling) trophy for the Best Performing School in 2010 for class X & XII in order to recognize the efforts and contributions of the teaching staff of the School. Best Performing School is calculated on the basis of Weighted Average System. All Indians are cordially invited to attend. Prior confirmation of attendance will help us to make suitable arrangements accordingly. You may register through AIP website [www.aipkuwait.com](http://www.aipkuwait.com).

### NEW LEADERSHIP FOR MAVELIKARA ASSOCIATION

Mavelikara Association Kuwait held the general body meeting on 16th December, 2016. The main agenda of the meeting was the election of new office-bearers for the year 2017. New office bearers are President Binoy Chandran, Vice President Pournami Sangeeth, General Secretary Ninan John, Joint Secretary Mathew Philip, Treasurer Sabu Mavelikara, Joint Treasurer Girish Kumar, Arts and Cultural Secretary Philip C V

Thomas and auditor Jerry John. 35 executive members were also elected. Dhanya Lekshmi as chairperson and Tiji mathew as general secretary for Ladies Wing were also elected. Association nominated Al Kurian as advisory board member. The meeting was presided over by the president Binoy Chandran. General secretary Biju Kandyoor presented the annual report while the treasurer Pramod Chellapan pre-

sented the financial report of the year 2016 respectively. The new office-bearers were elected unanimously among the members of Association. The election procedures for the year 2017 were controlled by Sunny Pathichira, Patron Mavelikara Association. Chandran stated that this financial year, association will focus more on charity, social, art and cultural activities and sought full cooperation from all the members.



**The Lighthouse Church**  
*Christmas Schedule*

<b>Dec 24</b>	6:00pm Bonfire Service	Courtyard
	9:00pm Candlelight Communion Service	Lighthouse
	11:00pm Candlelight Communion Service	Lighthouse
<b>Dec 25</b>	11:00am Christmas Day Service	Lighthouse
	6:00pm Regular Sunday Service	Sanctuary/Parish Hall
<b>Dec 31</b>	9:00pm New Year's Eve Service	Lighthouse
	11:00pm New Year's Eve Service	Lighthouse
<b>Jan 1</b>	11:00am New Year's Day Service	Lighthouse
	6:00pm Regular Sunday Service	Sanctuary/Parish Hall

**Location:** Qibla area, Al Shuhada Street, next to American Cultural center (Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah), Kuwait City.

**Contact:** 22407195 x 301/302

**Email:** [elcneck@lckuwait.com](mailto:elcneck@lckuwait.com)



## OOREDOO GIVES AID TO ALEPPO AT SOUQ MUROUJ

Ooredoo, the fastest network in Kuwait in 2016, held a number of humanitarian initiatives at Souq Murouj on Friday aimed to help the displaced people of Aleppo. The initiatives, organized in association with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Organization, included a donation box for winter clothes and blankets, in addition to the "Tree of Life" initiative, where visitors can tie a message with a ribbon to the branches of a tree, and Ooredoo donates KD 1 for each message to the cooperating charity organizations.

Commenting on these initiatives, Ooredoo's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub said: "Our strategy in Ooredoo is based on deep-rooted values of caring and connecting. We are always fortunate to be working with esteemed organizations such as the Kuwait Red Crescent Society and Abdullah Al-Nouri Organization, both of whom have welcomed the opportunity of collaboration and joined hands with us promptly. We pray for

the safety and wellbeing of our brothers and sisters affected by the crisis in Aleppo."

The Murouj Souq includes local farm produce, artisanal food products and crafts, with a 'street food' section aimed at highlighting the culinary diversity of Kuwait's local food community. The market also offers a section dedicated for children's activities. It will be held on weekends, once a month until March 2017.

In a statement about this participation, Ooredoo Kuwait stressed its commitment to supporting local businesses and entrepreneurs, especially through this engaging project. This sponsorship comes in tandem with the company's social responsibility strategy, which in turn is based on the core values of Ooredoo, of caring, connecting and challenging. Ooredoo is a strategic partner of this event. Updates about the market can be found on Murouj's official Instagram account @muroujkw as well as our Instagram account @OoredooKuwait



## KUWAIT CRICKET: IDP INAUGURATES JUNIORS TOURNAMENT IN GRAND STYLE

The rejuvenated and revamped Juniors and Schools Under-19 Cricket Tournament was inaugurated in spectacular style this Saturday December 10th by Kuwait Cricket, in partnership with IDP (official IELTS Test Centre) and MGA in association with indiansinkuwait.com.

Sandwiched between two league games on Saturday morning and blessed by the presence of the newly appointed chairman of the Kuwait Cricket Executive Council, Mr Mahmoud Bastaki; the inauguration and opening ceremony was conducted by Kuwait Crickets Director of Domestic & Marketing, Mr Sajid Ashraf, in the presence of KC patron and spon-

sors, Mr Mahmoud Abdullah of MGA and Mr Hafiz of Al Hafiz Printing & Design Centre.

The official controlling body of cricket in Kuwait, took to the fantastic Doha Entertainment City turf ground with four teams playing on the day and coaches from many teams present for the inauguration. The morning saw the return of a buzzing atmosphere around juniors cricket that has not been witnessed for many years and the festivities were contagious with the cold and windy morning doing nothing to dampen the spirits of all involved.

There was a refreshing spark around the ground as the day kicked off with

Salmiya Strikers securing an exciting finish to win the opening game against Young Stallions. The second game saw the clash of Maahas CC Vs Prosports Dark Knights, where Maahas showed great skill and discipline to gain a comfortable win by 8 wickets.

Harshith Vora, the newly appointed director of Junior Cricket and architect of the revamped tournament, has been brought in to reinvigorate the Juniors and Grass Roots setup and has been working backstage to bring the country's academies and youth teams to participate and expand the tournament's reach. The Early signs are encouraging; with this first edition kicking off with 10 teams, a number

that has not been seen in this competition for several years, and a general excitement that bodes well for the future of Kuwait Cricket.

With a huge amount of preparation going on behind the scenes to bring in live scoring, player profiles, statistics, scorecards and team standings now available on the KC website (www.kuwait-cricket.com); and with the finals expected to boast a guest DJ, food, music, fun festivities and a special guest appearance from a cricket celebrity; Grass Roots cricket in Kuwait looks set for a much needed boost.

Mr Mahmoud Bastaki addressing the clubs during the inauguration said: "The U-19 club format cricket will give

a real boost to the cricket of youngsters. Our aim is to build a tournament that will help the next generation benefit from the facilities we have these days. He also emphasized on the fitness and discipline which is must in making of a cricketer".

Mr Mahmoud Abdullah in his speech emphasized that "it is indeed a joy watching young clubs participating and showcasing their skills utilizing the best of facilities provided by Kuwait Cricket. Friendship through cricket is the clear message for the youngsters".

Mr Harshith Vora ensured full support to all the participating clubs as the Director of Juniors cricket and

coming from the grass roots himself under Kuwait Cricket U-15 levels, Mr Vora emphasized on the need of reviving juniors cricket like never before in order to assist Kuwait in performing better in international junior tournaments.

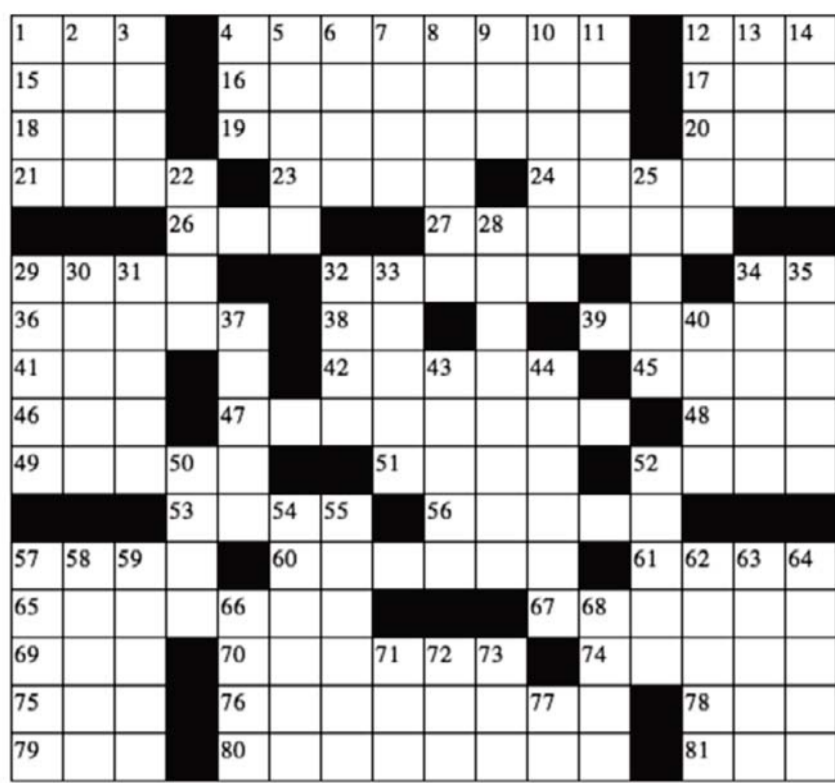
Mr Sajid Ashraf, Director Domestic and Marketing concluded the inauguration ceremony with an expectation of full focus on discipline from the juniors and thanked all council members and sponsors for their presence including the Manager of Logistics Mr. Robert Dsouza, match officials, tournament coordinator Mr. Ghayoor Ahmed for their hard work and sincere efforts.







CROSSWORD 1466



ACROSS

1. A bachelor's degree in naval science.
4. Type genus of the Coraciidae.
12. A health resort near a spring or at the sea-side.
15. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
16. Using a pronoun or other pro-word instead of repeating a word.
17. A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
18. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
19. Around the anus.
20. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
21. A small cake leavened with yeast.
23. Wild or seedling sweet cherry used as stock for grafting.
24. (India) Usually in combination.
26. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
27. Arranged in a sequence of grades or ranks.
29. A framework that holds the panes of a window in the window frame.
36. A name that has been assumed temporarily.
38. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
39. An iconic mental representation.
41. Small rounded bread either plain or sweet.
42. Having help.
45. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
46. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
47. A woman sahib.
48. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
49. A port in northwestern Israel on the Bay of Acre.
51. Highly excited.
53. Harsh or corrosive in tone.
56. Quietly in concealment.
57. German organist and contrapuntist (1685-1750).
60. Large bamboo having thick-walled culms.
61. A sudden short attack.
65. City recognized by the United States as the capital of the Ivory Coast.
67. Usually elongate cluster of flowers along the main stem in which the flowers at the base open first.
69. Above average in size or number or quantity or magnitude or extent.
70. Wild sheep of semidesert regions in central Asia.
74. Pertaining to or constituting a base or basis.
75. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
76. A mere wish, unaccompanied by effort to obtain.
78. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
79. An implement used to propel or steer a boat.
80. A drug (trade name Atabrine) used to treat certain worm infestations and once used to treat malaria.
81. (sports) The chief official (as in boxing or American football) who is expected to ensure fair play.

DOWN

1. Divulge information or secrets.
2. Kamarupan languages spoken in northeastern India and western Burma.
3. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
4. A tight-fitting headdress.
5. Lake in northwestern Russia near the border with Finland.
6. Not widely known.
7. The capital of Western Samoa.
8. An event that occurs when something passes from one state or phase to another.
9. An electrically charged particle.
10. A member of a widespread group of Amerindians living in northeastern South America.
11. Food mixtures either arranged on a plate or tossed and served with a moist dressing.
12. A burn cause by hot liquid or steam.
13. A metabolic acid found in yeast and liver cells.
14. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
22. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
25. A subsidiary proposition that is assumed to be true in order to prove another proposition.
28. A hooked hand tool used to prepare the seams of a boat for oakum.
30. Scale-like structure between the base of the wing and the halter of a two-winged fly.
31. A mountain peak in the southern Sinai Peninsula (7,500 feet high).
32. A fraudulent business scheme.
33. A fractional monetary unit in Bangladesh and India and Nepal and Pakistan.
34. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
35. Bar temporarily.
37. Wood of a sumac.
40. Wild sheep of northern Africa.
43. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
44. A laborer who digs.
50. King of Saudi Arabia since 1982 (born in 1922).
52. Spanish poet and dramatist (1898-1936).
54. A hostel for pilgrims in Turkey.
55. A Chadic language spoken in Chad.
58. A promontory in northern Morocco opposite the Rock of Gibraltar.
59. A roll of tobacco for smoking.
62. (Norse mythology) The chief race of gods living at Asgard.
63. Any of a class of organic compounds that contain the divalent radical -CONHCO-.
64. Coffee with the caffeine removed.
66. An island in Indonesia south of Borneo.
68. Make amends for.
71. A white linen liturgical vestment with sleeves.
72. (Irish) The sea personified.
73. Being one more than two.
77. A state in east central United States.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Gentleness is a very important asset that you present to others. This is almost a gracefulness that is regal. You may not seem disturbed by any difficult events that may occur around the office, but you could take a few frustrated feelings home with you. If you notice this happening, slow down, take a deep breath and direct your thinking to a most positive place. This positive place could be a memory of a vacation or the birth of a child. Then let go of the day and create a healing place for you and your family in your home. This is your castle against the slings and arrows of the world, so to speak; create a good place. Others should see you as rather elegant just now, especially in social circles. You are genuinely pleased to share what you know with others.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are most persuasive and can be quite charismatic in speech and your approach to things. You may find yourself lecturing or guiding others. You are a natural for self-expression. You enjoy guest appearances, or writing professionally or just simply a sales job-however, whatever you do, you go all the way. If you are in sales, you will soon find yourself in the competition for the best salesperson this year. An import or export business may be of interest-particularly if it allows you more time at home. Exercise is important to you and you may want to grab a friend or loved one and enjoy a bike ride near your home this afternoon. Tonight you may be asked to join a planning committee for the next celebration planning committee in your neighborhood.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Your ability to take action and get things accomplished is appreciated-as long as you are not too passionate in expressing yourself. Working out ways to organize projects and people is liable to become a topic of special interest-and a challenge. You will do well. Your health and work improve and profits are good. You are happy when you can live on a royal scale. However, your generous nature and your love of fine possessions could have you in trouble soon if financial plans are not made. You must put aside funds, building up the amount a little at a time in order to have a sense of security. Before you know it you will have a nice nest egg. Get your tax papers in order for next year. Any opportunity to work on this ahead of time is a good thing.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are great at coordinating events. Any entertainment group or business that depends on bookings would be at an advantage with you on staff. A business of your own will give you a different type of freedom and this is where you seem the happiest. Organizing projects and people is a high now. If you are not working for yourself, you could consider working for a hotel or a catering group or a theme park, etc. When organizing a lecture, have more material prepared than you can use in the time required. This will give you some sort of safety net. An elderly person in your life may need more attention than in the past. Remember that there is always enough time for the important things-if it is important, you will find time for it.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your feelings are much more reflective than expressive just now-but there are places to go, people to see and business over which to be productive. Your superiors praise your work and your keen eye for detail. Be realistic with your ideas for the length of time you think it will take you to finish a project. You and your team are feeling good about the accomplishments of late. You have already accomplished quite a lot and it will not be long before you will be able to enjoy a celebration of completion. The relationship between you and a boss or superior has improved. You discover that a personal checking or savings balance is starting to look good due to your efforts to keep the budget under control. Everything in your life is coming together well.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Besting others in the heat of competition and taking on a leadership role means more to you now than in the past-second best just will not cut it with you at this time. You may have been waiting for some time to take on a new job. The only thing standing between you and a new position at this time is your attention to a distraction. You have to decide the steps to success. This is where you find your ability to achieve and rise above the distraction. You do very well at remaining calm under fire. You are mentally strong. This afternoon you need to make an extra effort to hang on to your wallet; you watch the spending spree of a friend and may be tempted to follow along. Why not just offer to help hold the packages you won't have to make the payments.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Insight into your inner self or psychology could come to the surface today, and in a form that you can manage. You may find yourself in the mood for penetrating conversations or thoughts. Solving problems or making important decisions should be easy for you today. You will find a way around just about any obstacle that you might come across. You will, however, be in control and be able to guide yourself with ease. Your sense of inner direction is good and may lead to good opportunities. Wanting to expand your horizons and trying to be the very best that you can be could have you exploring some interesting places. This evening, your attention may be sparked in areas such as politics, education, travel, religion or law.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

There is a good possibility of a career turning point that may require some careful thought and good judgment on your part. The current flow of events may dictate a path that runs against your best talents and abilities. Do not sell yourself short. Hang in there. Appreciating things of value is easy for you now, even the idea of value itself. You may find yourself gaining materialistically at this time, as it is certainly a time when material things have a great deal of importance for you. Your practical side is showing and you could be recognized for your vision of ways to create a better business. Remember to add people to your holiday list that are easily forgotten. This is the season to show your appreciation to the people that bring you comfort: service people.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Going out and about to gather and exchange information becomes a more enlightened part of your life, a very educational experience. Neighbors or family have a big impact on your goals and make a big impression. This is a very socially active period. Emotional support comes from your good friends, ideals and social interaction now. Your life may be due for some important changes to take place. There is a need to break away from old-fashioned ideas that you may carry from your past, to something totally new, different and unique. Allowing yourself to trek into the future with new concepts and leaving some of the old patterns behind will benefit you in many exciting ways. Dare to be different and allow your aesthetic and perceptive side to emerge.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Your conservative mind should put you in a good position to take the responsibility for a special project requiring your talent. Being with others and working together should be a productive experience. Someone in authority may seek you out for a particular job. Your management ability should serve you well. Your power seems to be in your words and you do rather well today in persuading others to work toward your advantage. There are some monetary rewards marked for you now. Money matters are a problem for a relative. You provide patience, understanding and the names of several good accountants. You show a great deal of sensitivity, although you know this may be a repeat problem. A loved one may agree with you.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Things are really moving in the direction of helping you to bring out your unique and unusual qualities. You may find that someone close to you understands and is supportive of your eccentricities. Opportunities keep appearing mysteriously to aid in your climb up the corporate ladder. This could all be beneficial toward a better business program. You may find yourself inventive and enterprising. Everything suggests that you will be taking the initiative. You have been working very, very hard. Enjoy socializing or plan to socialize as a host or a guest this week in some fun gathering. This afternoon you can plan a proper and sophisticated gathering with people that enjoy the same things you enjoy. Keep a notepad handy to jot down a few ideas.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Others may see you as a bit reserved; it should, however, work to your advantage. Someone in authority recognizes your talent. You may want to attend some sort of schooling to fine-tune your craft. What is expressed by others today may be based on fact, but you seem determined to check the facts for yourself. This action may be necessary to your profession but harmful to the psyche of a co-worker, depending on your insight. Commit to a financial deal with a club, group or organization. Avoid being the one who does all the work by compromising with others. It may be your turn to cook this evening and if so, others will stay around to reap the benefits. If you walk with your sweetheart after the evening meal tonight, there will be rewards.

WORD SEARCH

Australia

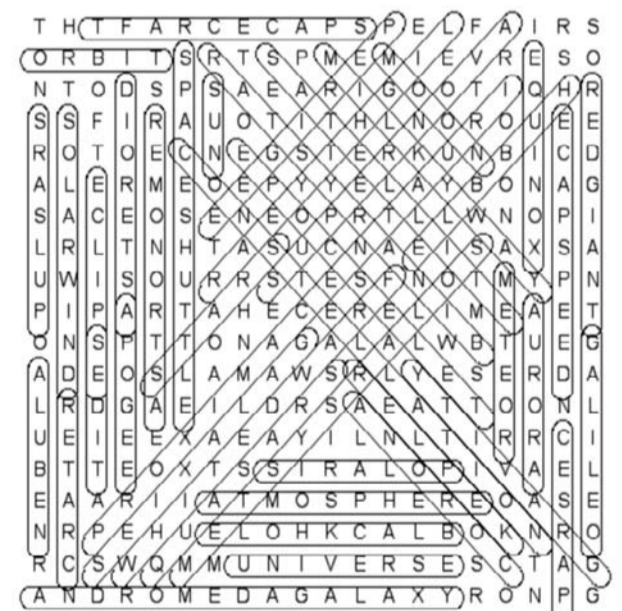
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 49 letters spell a secret message.



- |              |                  |                 |               |
|--------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| ADELAIDE     | DIDGERIDOO       | MARSUPIALS      | QUEENSLAND    |
| AUSSIE       | DINGO            | MELBOURNE       | RAINFORESTS   |
| BEACHES      | DOWN UNDER       | MONARCHY        | RUSSELL CROWE |
| BOOMERANG    | EMUS             | NEW SOUTH WALES | SEAFOOD       |
| BRISBANE     | EUCALYPTUS TREES | NICOLE KIDMAN   | SHRIMP        |
| CANBERRA     | HUGH JACKMAN     | OCEANS          | SURFING       |
| COMMONWEALTH | KANGAROO         | OUTBACK         | SYDNEY        |
| CONTINENT    | KEITH URBAN      | PARLIAMENT      | TASMANIA      |
| CORAL SEA    | KOALA            | PERTH           | VEGETITE      |
| CROCODILES   | KOOKABURRA       | PLATYPUS        | VICTORIA      |
| DESERTS      | KYLIE MINOGUE    | PRIME MINISTER  | WOMBAT        |

Yesterday Solution

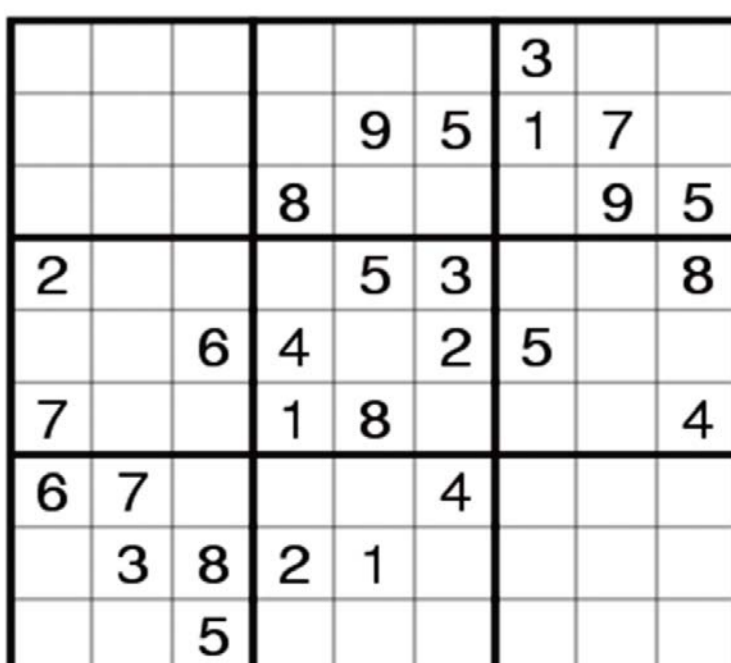
Astronomy



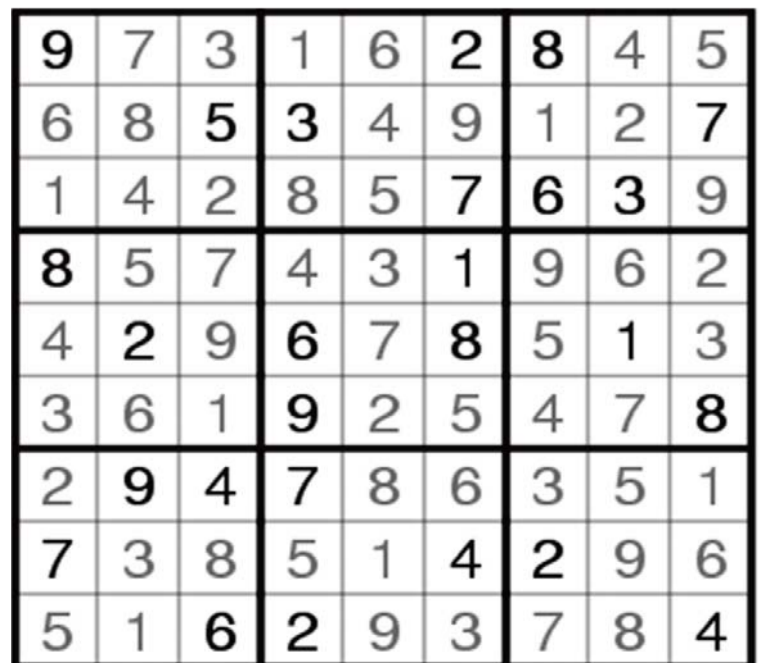
- |                  |            |                  |               |
|------------------|------------|------------------|---------------|
| ANDROMEDA GALAXY | DEEP SPACE | MOON             | SOLAR SYSTEM  |
| APOGEE           | ECLIPSE    | NEBULA           | SOLAR WIND    |
| ASTEROID         | EQUINOX    | ORBIT            | SPACE SHUTTLE |
| ASTRONOMER       | GALAXIES   | PARSEC           | SPACECRAFT    |
| ATMOSPHERE       | GALILEO    | PERIGEE          | STARS         |
| AURORA           | GRAVITY    | POLARIS          | SUN           |
| BINARY STAR      | HUBBLE     | PROXIMA CENTAURI | SUPERNOVA     |
| BLACK HOLE       | KEPLER     | PULSARS          | TELESCOPE     |
| CONSTELLATION    | LIGHT YEAR | QUASARS          | TIDES         |
| CORONA           | METEOR     | RED GIANT        | UNIVERSE      |
| CRATER           | MILKY WAY  | SATELLITE        | WHITE DWARF   |

Hidden sentence: THE FIRST PERSON TO SET FOOT ON THE MOON WAS NEIL ARMSTRONG

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution







# KATY PERRY TAKES ORLANDO BLOOM TO A KARAOKE PARTY

The raven-haired beauty and her Hollywood actor boyfriend attended her actress pal Shannon Woodward's bash, and the 'Lord of the Rings' star got fully involved with the singing, belting out a version of Avril Lavigne's 2002 hit 'Complicated'. Katy, 32, shared a Snapchat image of Orlando, 39, bellowing out the big pop tune complete with the caption: "This is what the holidays looks like. (sic)" Other stars at the event included Shannon's 'Raising Hope' co-star Kate Micucci and TV personality Ronan Farrow, who shared an Instagram video of Katy leading the group in a version of Alanis Morissette's 'You Outta Know.' He wrote: "@agreenersean and @katyperry killing it on the Alanis. (sic)" Ronan - the son of Woody

Allen and Mia Farrow - also posted pictures of the event. He captioned two photos of the group: "When your friends commit to the Karaoke. (sic)" Katy recently praised Orlando for being so "kind" and admitted he has taught her a lot about being a UNICEF ambassador. She said: "He's been a UNICEF ambassador for over 10 years and I've only been a few years so he's kind of shown me some of the ropes. "Everyone is a teacher in a relationship, that's how I see it now. We've taught each other a lot."

## Blac Chyna's mother thinks she and Rob will get back together

The couple - who have four-week-old daughter Dream together - were revealed to have split at the weekend, and though Tokyo Toni has branded the reclusive sock designer "Mr. Insecure", she still believes he and her daughter will be able to resolve their differences - if Rob seeks help. She wrote on Instagram: "I have spoken to Rob and asked him to get therapy he said that he would but yet he does not seek it yet. "At the end of the day they will still be together I promise you. Rob just have to get Mr. Insecure off of his back! Everything will be fine.(sic)" Toni also lashed out at fans who questioned the drama between her 28-year-old daughter - who also has four-year-old son King Cairo with ex-boyfriend Tyga - and her 29-year-old on/off partner, and insisted Chyna isn't a gold digger. She wrote: "Chyna had hers long before Rob K.. He is just emotionally disturbed by all means. "Chyna don't need to dig for gold (when) gold is given to her after every argument ! "Please, you should not be asking me why did Rob and Chyna break up or why Chyna leave Rob the question should be where is my daddy and why did he leave my mama!!! It's absolutely nothing about the relationship then I don't know!! (sic)"



## Tony Bennett thinks Lady Gaga has a 'gift'

The 90-year-old singer has praised the 'Million Reasons' hit maker for her unique talent. He told The Sunday Times' Culture magazine: "Gaga is different from anybody else I have met recently. She has the gift, she can do the whole thing - she can perform, she composes and plays piano, she had good personal training at NYU and Juilliard. Education makes a difference." Meanwhile, the 30-year-old singer - who has been close to Tony since they released their joint album 'Cheek To Cheek' in 2014 - previously admitted Tony "restored her passion" for music. She shared: "He restored my passion, my

life changed so much putting out those records. It was so hard to get a grasp on all of it. Yeah I took some time away from pop music but acting and singing jazz that stuff was like being a teenager again." And the blonde beauty is only happy to take Tony's advice after he encouraged her to give up smoking. She said: "I know it's terrible. I have been yelled at by Elton, Stevie Wonder, Tony Bennett, the list could go on of amazing, great people who are like, "You need to stop smoking." But I don't smoke cigarettes. I smoke clove cigars."



## Blake Shelton has been shopping for diamond jewelery for Gwen

The 40-year-old singer has sparked speculation he could pop the question to the 'Make Me Like You' hit maker over the festive period as he is said to be in the market for a ring for his lover. A source told HollywoodLife.com: "Blake is just as generous when it comes to Gwen. He really loves to spoil her. He won't say if he's going to propose or not, but he's definitely been shopping for diamond jewelery." There were also rumors the pair could be engaged back in May when Gwen was seen flaunting a diamond piece on her ring finger during her performance at the Wango Tango music festival. A source said: "As far as the ring is concerned that was worn at Wango Tango, it is not an engagement ring from Blake but it is Gwen's attempt at giving

Blake the hint that he should ask soon because she is more than ready for it to happen". While the blonde beauty may be hoping for a proposal soon, Gwen understands she could be waiting a while as the pair have busy work schedules. The source added: "During Wango Tango she didn't talk to anyone about actually being engaged because she is not yet, but she talked about how things were going great with Blake and how she was looking forward to the future. "She knows they both have their albums and their tour to worry about, and he has to deal with a few more weeks of The Voice but if he is ready to pop the question she is ready to say yes!"

## KATIE HOLMES AND JAMIE FOXX TAKE A PRIVATE TRIP

The 'Batman Begins' actress and the 49-year-old actor flew to the Mexican resort city on Friday for a "quick trip" to see in the brunette beauty's milestone. A source said of their trip: "Katie and Jamie took a private jet to Cabo on Friday morning from Van Nuys Airport. "It was a quick trip in honor of Katie's birthday. It was only them and two pilots on the plane." The pair - who have kept their relationship private - didn't do things by halves during their stay, as they then took a limousine to the resort where they were staying, the luxury Las Ventanas al Paraiso. The source added to Us Weekly magazine: "They stayed in one of the most private suites at the hotel, separate from other guests and entered by a small path. "They wanted to be very discreet and had everything delivered to their room and taken care of by a personal butler." The insider also claims that while the 'Dawson's Creek' star's birthday was not until Sunday, the pair jetted back to their home in Los Angeles on Saturday night. According to the source, Katie's 10-year-old daughter Suri - who she shares with ex-husband Tom Cruise - was not with them.



GOSSIP

## Rob Kardashian and Blac Chyna fought over 'ridiculous' things

The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star was left "heartbroken" after the 28-year-old model walked out with their one-month-old daughter Dream. A source said: "He has absolutely been the instigator in most of their past fights. His emotional problems takes over and he lashes out at Chyna over ridiculous stuff. Chyna just had a baby and he keeps fighting with her over ridiculous things. It's like he just can't help himself. "Whenever he gets along with Chyna, he finds a way to ruin it. He is crazy suspicious and doesn't trust her at all ... Now he keeps fighting with her over issues that his family had from the beginning. He doesn't trust that she actually loves him and that their relationship is only about money to her." And things are reportedly a "crazy mess" between Chyna and the 29-year-old sock designer at the moment. An insider added to People magazine: "But it just seems it's kind of too late to have these issues now. Rob is a dad and that should be his focus. "He cries now that he misses his baby, but he isn't mature enough to not start fights with Chyna in the first place. It's just a crazy mess. A very sad crazy mess. It's just sad that he treats the mother of his child like this. Rob and Chyna are like oil and water. They just bicker constantly. It's not healthy."



## Mariah Carey asks for endangered animals at her wedding

The 46-year-old singer jokingly pleaded with her agents to hire white tigers and elephants for her nuptials to James Packer - which didn't happen as they split before walking down the aisle - because she wanted to raise awareness of their plight. During a phone conversation with her people, she said: "I think that by really putting them up on a pedestal that way it will get more press for them and then more people will donate money. "The scientists are working hard, hard day and night trying to get them to not go extinct and all I'm trying to do is be involved. Can you help?" But it transpired the star was playing a prank on her agents and she eventually came clean. Speaking on the latest episode of her E! show 'Mariah's World', she said: "I

can't believe you guys thought I would do that. That's really sick!" During the episode, Mariah's rumored boyfriend Bryan Tanaka declared his love for the star and admitted she has been a huge help during his back-up dancing career. He said: "I love Mariah. She's been actually one of the most amazing, supportive people in my career. "Because I've worked with her for so long, I've been able to see the most real, authentic Mariah Carey. She is extremely thoughtful. She is extremely caring. "There's something so unique about her. This tour has been crazy. "I haven't even been able to talk to MC on a real conversation. I'm looking forward to that because we have a lot to catch up on."



## KIM KARDASHIAN WEST 'SEEMED HAPPY' ATTENDING A FAMILY PARTY

The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star seemed in good spirits as she attended Kourtney Kardashian's sons Mason, six, and Reign, two, 'Fast and Furious' birthday celebration but husband Kanye West was not present. A source told People magazine: "Kim spent several hours at the birthday party with her kids. She looked very pretty and also seemed happy. Kanye [West] was not with them." Meanwhile, the 36-year-old television personality is reportedly "very focused" on supporting Kanye after he was hospitalized last month with exhaustion. A source said: "Kanye and Kim had a stressful few months. It's been a tense time. But Kim is happy he's getting help. She's very focused on being supportive and managing the crisis that is going on. "She is super focused on him and is being the dutiful, responsible, loving spouse that one would expect. He has a huge support group. They are incredibly loyal to him and have been around him since day one. He has their sup-

port. It's not isolated to just him and Kim." And being a father to North, three, and Saint, 12 months, has "completely changed" Kanye. The insider added: "Being a father completely changed Kanye's life and who he was. He's an incredibly proud, dotting, involved and loving father. He loves playing with his kids, he loves teaching his kids. He and North have an amazing relationship. She's very attached to him, "If you really listen to what he says in interviews and from the stage, obviously he's got a lot to say and there's a lot to wade through, but a lot of the stuff he talks about is the future - for his kids. He wants to make a contribution through art to make the world a better place. He talks about education and how one day he wants the Yeezy brand to provide school uniforms. He's very focused on the future, in terms of economic and racial equality."

## Paul Rudd tells Jennifer Lawrence they 'would always be friends'

The 'Hunger Games' star quipped that she "changed" when the 'Ant-Man' actor said he thought they'd always be pals. Speaking to Chelsea Handler on 'Chelsea', she said: "When Paul Rudd told me he thought we would always be friends. "I was like, 'When people look back and wonder what happened, when she changed, when it all got destroyed', it will be right here, at this moment. Because I have always looked at Paul Rudd and thought we'd be friends." However, the 26-year-old beauty generally finds it awkward meeting new people and recently admitted she gets "really overwhelmed" at parties. She said: "I get really overwhelmed by the amount of people, then I find two people and I imprison them and I trap them and I'm like 'It's you and me.' ... "One year for the Oscars, I think it was the 'American Hustle' year, I juice cleansed and then got really, really wasted. Then something was smoking and then I barfed, at Guy Oseary's house. I vomited, cheers Guy. I remember going up to Ellen Page and saying, 'I need to get in my car', and she was like, 'Not my problem.' And I was like, 'Take me home Ellen!' And Jennifer - who is thought to be dating director Darren Aronofsky - previously admitted she "works very hard" to keep her life private.



## Lily-Rose Depp steals her mother's make-up

The 17-year-old model - whose parents are Vanessa Paradis and Johnny Depp - has confessed she nicks her mother's cosmetics and high heels. She said: "I love my mum's style. Everyone looks up to their mum and wants to dress like her, especially when they are growing up. I stole all her make-up, her shoes, her high heels, when I was a baby. I was the worst! ... "I love Jane Birkin, I love Brigitte Bardot ... But I don't try to dress like anybody. I think the best thing to do is wear what you are comfortable in. When I'm at home, I'll wear a T-shirt or a tank top and jeans and sneakers every single day. "But I also love statement stuff and the more out-there pieces that you don't see all the time. I love a lot of jewellery, especially rings, as you can

tell and hoop earrings. I wear hoops every day." And Lily has also admitted she steals her father Johnny Depp's hair ties. Asked if she ever borrows any of her father's make up, she told The Sunday Times' Style magazine: "I actually haven't, no. He hasn't asked. We'll borrow each other's hair ties, but that's it. No, I stick to my mum's make-up - it's what I trust." Lily-Rose previously confessed her parents were never that strict. She said: "My parents weren't very strict. They've always trusted me to be independent and make my own decisions. There wasn't really anything to rebel against." However, Lily-Rose finds it "delicate" growing up in the spotlight.



## Emma Stone enjoyed sharing her 'traumatic audition'

The 28-year-old actress was only happy to open up about some of the "horror stories" from her first few years in Hollywood with her co-stars in the romantic comedy film. She said: "With 'Birdman', my character was outside the actor's mind really - she was just his daughter, not totally involved in that world. But with 'La La Land', I had a little more trepidation playing an actress in Los Angeles who was auditioning over and over. It's pretty close to my exact appearance when I first moved there. It was scary - like, is this going to be too much? But then it quickly became fun because we were all sharing horror stories and dramatizing our little traumatic auditions." And whilst starring as Mia in 'La La Land' didn't remind Emma of one audition in particular, it did cast her mind

back to when she got the role in 'Super bad' and spoke of how the casting director helped her career progress. She told Canada's The Globe and Mail newspaper: "It didn't directly remind me of any single audition I went on where I was, 'Wow, that might be the one!' But what it did remind me of was the casting director who put me in 'Super bad'. "She just had a feeling about me, and she kept bringing me in for things over three years. If it weren't for her, I don't know what would've happened. But the audition for 'Super bad' was pretty different than here - I wasn't singing a ballad, but, well, there was improvising with Jonah [Hill]. I guess that's kind of similar."



In this file photo, Zsa Zsa Gabor, she appears in the Paquin's sequence in the role of Jane Avril in director John Huston's 1952 Technicolor production 'Moulin Rouge' — AP Photos



In this file photo, actress Zsa Zsa Gabor and Herbert Hutner arrive for the New York premier of the film 'The Ugly American.'



In this file photo, Zsa Zsa Gabor arrives at London Airport from Paris, in a crimson dress and a straw hat.

## Zsa Zsa Gabor: A rare, unforgettable celebrity

You didn't have to know exactly who she was to appreciate Zsa Zsa Gabor. She belonged to a rare, hard-to-catalog vintage of celebrity, not only the great-aunt of Paris Hilton, but a true ancestor of Hilton's jet-set flamboyance. For such a flashy member of the leisure class, she did plenty, appearing in a number of films, including Orson Welles' "Touch of Evil"; logging enough husbands to field a baseball team; and flaunting sex appeal, excess glamour and an exotic accent into her senior years. But none of this fully accounts for the enduring recognition she enjoyed and cultivated. Maybe she just knew how to work it. Maybe it happened above and beyond her control. It certainly helped that she was in on the joke.

She was a symbol, from the 1950s on, of European style and flair, of material and romantic extravagance. She was rich in more ways than one. She was playful and outspoken. She was blessed with a ritzy, come-hither name: Zsaahhhh Zsaahhhh! Some of the heavy lifting that helped sustain the Gabor brand was courtesy of Zsa Zsa's lookalike sister Eva, who shared the Gabor pizzazz. Eva's star turn in the 1960s as a sitcom socialite on "Green Acres" has guaranteed her immortality in the pop-culture pantheon — and, by association, given Zsa Zsa status beyond her own accomplishments.

But Zsa Zsa could be funny, too. In a TV commercial from 1963, a begowned, bejeweled Gabor extols the virtues of the

Studebaker Lark, kittenishly calling this midlevel compact "so nice, so chic." The car featured newfangled disc brakes, and in her fractured English, Gabor purrs to the audience, "My friend says I would be in jail from coast to coast if I wouldn't have them." In 1989, she hit the brakes and had a celebrated brush with the law while driving not a Lark, but her own Rolls-Royce Corniche convertible. She slapped the face of a Beverly Hills, California, police officer who had the effrontery to stop her for a traffic violation.

The officer was rude, she testified at the trial where she was subsequently found guilty of assault. Her arrest became just another sparkling career move. She spoofed the incident in

"Naked Gun 2 1-2" and various other cameo appearances. Dahling, the Zsa Zsa legend cannot die, even in a culture with short memories where attention-seekers jostle for camera time. She lives on, unchallenged, in the cultural ether. Meanwhile, it's not hard to imagine her in heaven right now, tricked out with wings and a Blackglama mink, advising St. Peter that the Pearly Gates clash with her diamonds. — AP



In this photo, a sign in front of a decorated house warns visitors to keep off the premises in the Dyker Heights neighborhood of New York.



In this photo, Dyker Heights resident Lucy Spata, whose elaborate Christmas decorations along with those of her neighbors, draw thousands of onlookers to the Brooklyn Borough neighborhood each holiday season, stands in front of her home in New York.



In this photo, a giant animatronic Santa Claus towers over tourists taking photos at the elaborately-decorated Polizotto mansion in Dyker Heights neighborhood in the Brooklyn Borough of New York. — AP Photos

## NYC Christmas displays draw some bah-humbugs

It's a neighborhood Christmas display with New York City attitude: Big, brash, loud and over-the-top. Blazing lights, giant toy soldiers, angels, snowmen, wise men, Santas and piped-in Sinatra caroling form an all-out barrage on the senses from nearly every house in the heart of Brooklyn's Dyker Heights neighborhood, an annual extravaganza that draws thousands of tourists every evening by the car and busload. But all of it has some residents just wishing for a silent night. "As pretty as it can be, it's difficult," says Linda Rebmann, 72, who has lived in Dyker Heights all her life and has only an unlit cranberry wreath on her home. "It's a little out of hand. It's gotten to be a bit much."

Nobody is talking about pulling the plug on the displays, which are still a source of neighborhood pride. But there has been extra grumbling this season, especially after some parking spots usually used by residents were blocked off for rows of tour buses. "This close to Christmas you can't walk. It's like Manhattan," says Joyce Arpino, 55, a resident for three decades. She says she stopped decorating inside her windows because gawkers would peer inside and rap the glass. Tourists used to park in front of her house or even in her driveway until

she set out some orange traffic cones. "I don't want to sound like a Scrooge," she says, "but it's horrible."

### 'Merry Christmas'

To that, residents like 30-year-old Vinny Privitelli respond: lighten up. This year, he spent all of November and thousands of dollars to install strings of red and white lights on his roof and around every window and adorn his lawn with reindeer, a trio of dancing elves and a nativity scene. Privitelli admits part of the fun is trying to outdo his neighbors, some of whom hire professionals to do their displays. And he has no problem with the throngs of visitors who come to check it out. "It's nice to see them enjoying it, that's what we get out of it," he says. "Everything in the news is negative, so at least we get one positive thing."

Around the corner, a crowd of 35 people stopped at another house, where every inch of the stoop and patio was packed with glowing nutcrackers, snowmen, reindeer and plastic angels. On another lawn, a 13-foot-tall, animatronics Santa Claus sat between a pair of giant toy soldiers and two carousels ablaze with lights. It was all so bright that the selfie-snapping crowds didn't need to

use a flash. "Let's go folks. You can't hold up traffic," an officer inside a police van shouted at drivers stopped in the street. "I like it when they take pictures," says Angela Peralta, whose display includes a candy cane arch over the driveway, a "Merry Christmas" banner and a waving, inflatable snowman.

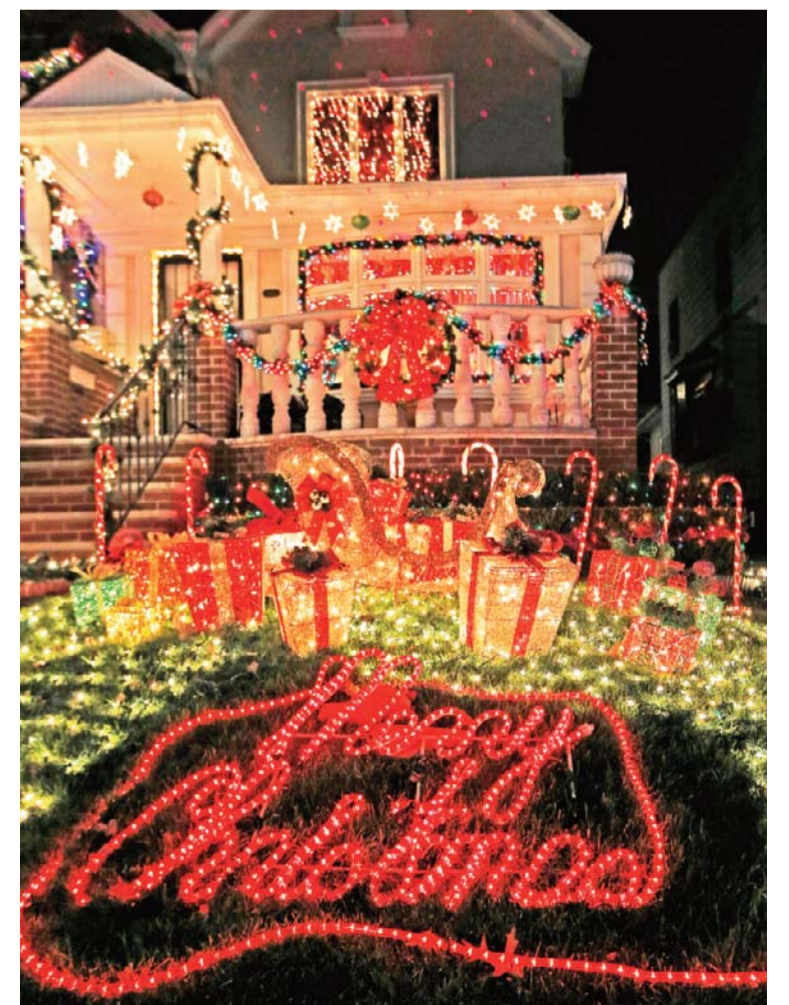
"People are very respectful. They say it's beautiful!" By most accounts, the light displays became a neighborhood activity in the 1980s, and buses began bringing in tourists from Manhattan about a decade ago. Some bus tours play up the area's Italian-American heritage, including stops at a nearby bakery for cannolis and hot chocolate. Among the bus visitors this year was Jeanne Andrews, 66, who traveled from Vincennes, Indiana, to experience Christmas in the Big Apple. She went to see the tree in Rockefeller Center and the windows at Macy's, but this was different. "I like this because it's so personal. Every family has something different," she says. "I love it. I just think it's spectacular." — AP



In this photo, visitors to the Dyker Heights neighborhood of the Brooklyn Borough of New York gather in front of Lucy Spata's house.



In this photo, a sign warning spectators not to come onto the property is hung in front of a lighted creche display in the Dyker Heights neighborhood of the Brooklyn Borough of New York.



In this photo, a private home in the Dyker Heights neighborhood of the Brooklyn borough of New York is elaborately decorated for Christmas.

# XXVII Cart festival



Participants in costumes go downhill in the XXVII Cart festival in a homemade cart in the Santa Elena Municipality, near Medellin, Antioquia department, Colombia. — AFP Photos



# Lifestyle

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2016

Zsa Zsa Gabor: A rare, unforgettable celebrity

38



A surfer dressed in a Santa Claus outfit surfs on Kuta beach on Indonesia's resort island of Bali. — AFP

## AFTER TECHNO AND STREET ART, BERLIN TACKLES GRAPHIC NOVELS

Better known for its electronic music and street art, Berlin is now also home to a budding graphic novel scene in a country that has treated illustrated stories as children's literature. Hardly seen in bookstores just a few years ago, German-produced graphic novels now have their dedicated shelves, as not only homegrown artists but also foreign ones find inspiration in Berlin. "It was when I moved here that I felt a need to write," said Spanish author Alberto Madrigal, who moved to the German capital in 2007 and has since produced three graphic novels including his most recent, "Berlin 2.0".

The key reason drawing artists and musicians to Berlin apply too to graphic novelists—the cost of living is lower than in most other European capitals. But Berlin's tormented history—from the excesses of the Weimar era to Nazism to the stark division between democracy and communism—also serves as a gripping backdrop for any novel. It is no accident therefore that graphic novels produced here are less in it for a chuckle than aimed at making a political statement. Hamed Eshrat describes in "Tipping Point" his family's flight to Germany after Ayatollah Khomeini took power in his homeland Iran in 1979.

An East Berlin-born author who goes by the name Mawil told the story of the fall of the Berlin Wall through the eyes of a schoolboy in "Kinderland". In "Madgermanes", Birgit Weyhe depicts the fate of Mozambican workers sent to East Germany, while Reinhard Kleist describes the horrors of the Nazi-run death camp Auschwitz in "The Boxer". "The number of authors who are politically engaged has exploded. The new generation likes to deal with these intelligent subjects," said Sylvain Mazas, who made Germans laugh with "This book helps me to resolve the Middle East conflict, get my degree and find a wife".

### East German avant-garde

Prior to the last decade, Germany's homegrown illustrated book scene was largely made up by just a handful of authors. Among the best known is Ralf Koenig, who tickled generations at home and abroad with his gay-themed comics, or Walter Moers, who poked fun at Hitler. But the fall of the Wall brought a group of East German artists, who were trained in techniques that had been abandoned by art colleges in the West, to teach at the Berlin-Weissensee art school.

The group became known as Germany's comic

avant-garde and went on to have a powerful impact on younger generations of graphic novelists. Mazas, who like Mawil and Eshrat were all trained at the school, said that "it has for a long time been a very political place". At around the same time, Swiss publisher Edition Moderne began producing German translations of foreign graphic novels, including from France and the United States where the market is far bigger and more mature.

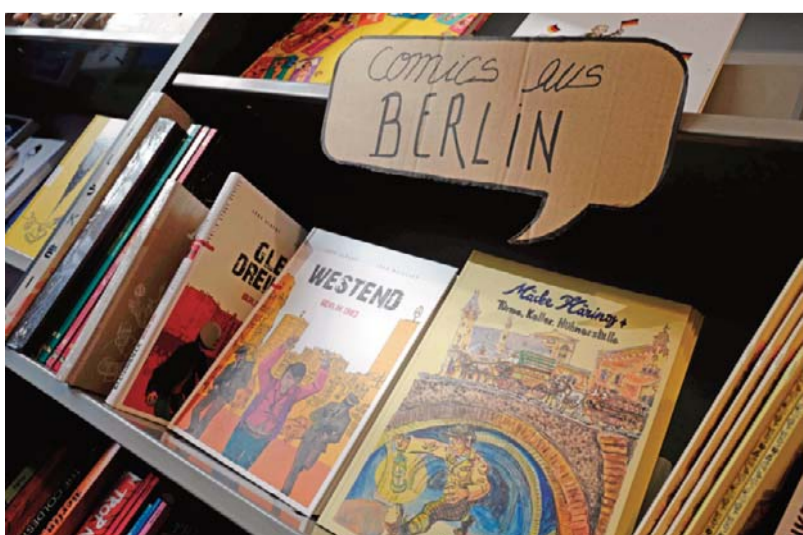
Germans, many who were raised on a diet of Mickey Mouse and Tintin comics, began to turn their attention to these graphic novels as well. Berlin publishers have steadily emerged, including Reprodukt in 1991, Avant-Verlag in 2001 and Jaja-Verlag in 2011. Initially, these also produced German translations, but later moved on to homegrown titles. German graphic novelists slowly "found recognition at home and abroad, while until 2005, there were only one-way translations," said Vincent Ovaert, cofounder of "Our Taste"—the first gallery dedicated to graphic novels in Berlin.

### 'It's growing'

Avant-Verlag's co-founder Johannes Ulrich noted that the proportion of German-produced works is now

"growing, not spectacularly, but it's growing". "Now I have 10 people working on their books who are all from Germany," he said. Nevertheless, publishers acknowledged that the industry is in its early stages and far off the scale of French or US equivalents. Experts estimate the German market to be only one-tenth the size of the French. A strong title can sell between 3,000 and 4,000 copies in Germany, Ulrich said. He recognized however that "while we reach out to a more diversified readership of 25 to 80 years, we hardly sell anything to those who are younger."

Mathieu Diez, who heads the Lyon graphic novel festival, said that even though the German market has "everything in place, there still isn't great interest from the public abroad." Next year, however, the festival will host a delegation of German authors who will showcase their works in two exhibitions. But Diez also cautioned that the graphic novel market is tough going, as "quality publications run up against the flood of French publications" which appear in the thousands a year. —AFP



A sign reading 'Comics from Berlin' hangs on a shelf in comic bookstore Modern Graphics in Berlin. — AFP Photos



German cartoonist and comics author Mawil (Markus Witzel) is interviewed in his studio in Berlin.



View of German cartoonist and comics author Reinhard Kleist's desk in his studio in Berlin.