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# Kuwait Times Friday Times



Min 9°  
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NO: 16749- Friday, January 8, 2016

## 1,272 ARRESTED IN SULAIBIYA RAID

### INTERIOR DENIES 'RANDOM DEPORTATION OF EXPATS'

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Ministry of Interior General Security Department launched security campaigns yesterday at the fruit and vegetable market in Sulaibiya, during which 1,272 people were arrested.

The campaigns were launched based on directives by high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Interior, Immigration Department, General Traffic Department and other higher authorities. Some of the suspects were arrested for non-possession of valid residencies while some were detained for working under different sponsors. Those working with residency under Article 20 and wanted by law were also arrested. The suspects have been referred to the concerned authorities for necessary legal action against them. The MOI confirmed that such intensive campaigns will continue to maintain the security of the nation.



#### Deportation of expats

Meanwhile, Lt General Al-Fahad has denied the reports about random deportation of expats by the Interior Ministry. He said the ministry is only targeting residency violators. Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt General Suleiman Al-Fahad said that expats who are in violation of the residency law have adverse effects directly or indirectly on all the social and health services offered to citizens and expats who are residing legally in the country. Al-Fahad who led a wide ranging security campaign in Bneid Al-Qar said the security campaigns will continue until the phenomenon of residency and labor laws violation stopped, adding that it is a security concern.

Al-Fahad urged those who want to correct their status to go to concerned security authorities such as the Residency Affairs Department, and Residency Affairs Detectives Department. "Expats who are residing legally will not be affected in any way. The presence of a large number of residency violators adversely affect all services and also impede the state's development plans," he said, adding that the security campaigns are well organized.

"The security of the country and people cannot be compromised, and policemen are up to their responsibilities to keep security in check. All countries of the world organize such campaigns and departs every violator or wanted people. Kuwait is a country that respects human rights - and have many treaties in this regard and are keen to implement them," Al-Fahad added. — Agencies



**KUWAIT:** Photos show some of the expats arrested as Ministry of Interior General Security Department launched security campaigns yesterday at the fruit and vegetable market in Sulaibiya. — KUNA

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Local Spotlight

# PRAY THAT YOU DON'T GET SICK



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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**A** 22-year-old citizen was arrested at Amiri Hospital for impersonating a medical doctor or intern. He holds a certificate from the commercial studies institute and was never certified or qualified as a medical doctor, except in his dreams. He "worked" there for five months without being suspected by any of the staff, until a doctor raised doubts about him after noticing that the fake doctor did not know how to do stitches.

This made the Arab doctor ask the suspect to show his ID, but the latter said his ID was in his car and escaped. He was later arrested. During interrogation, the suspect said he had always dreamed of becoming a doctor, so he introduced himself as an intern.

If you pray, then pray not to get sick in Kuwait, because God knows who and whom you will end up with if you survive from wrong diagnoses, medical mistakes in operation theaters and fake doctors. This is not the first time a fake doctor has been caught in Kuwait's hospitals. Every day we read and hear about horrible

*Pray not to get sick in Kuwait, because God knows who and whom you will end up with if you survive from wrong diagnoses, medical mistakes in operation theaters and fake doctors.*

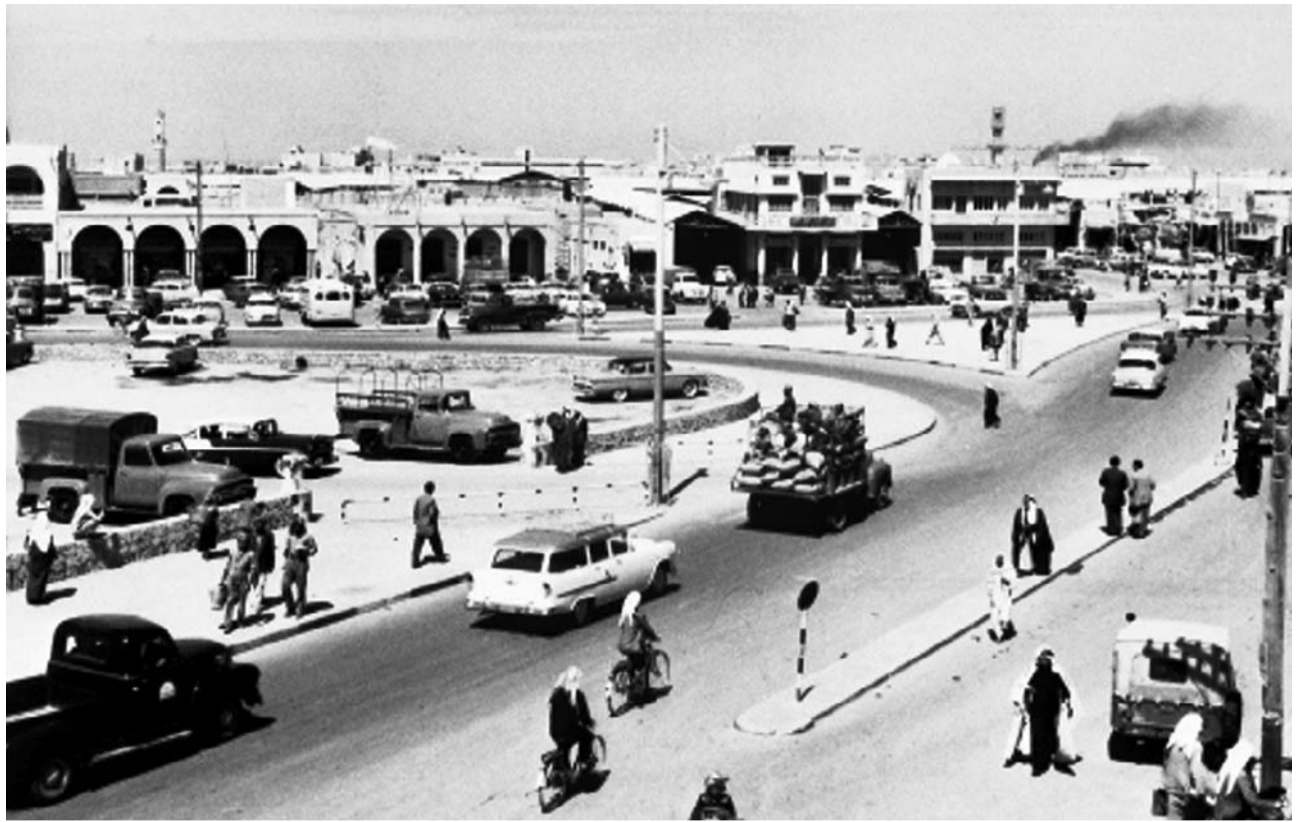
stories of patients who die in hospitals. And now this report about the young Kuwaiti man who spent five months at Amiri Hospital just because he told everyone that he was from the ruling family. So everyone stopped asking questions and let him manipulate people's lives.

Another point here is why anyone from the medical staff didn't chat with him about where he graduated, his schooling, etc. Nothing! I believe that the Arab doctor who busted him must be thanked for his courage. His bravery saved new souls from death and mistakes. I don't blame anyone seeking to travel abroad when they are sick, because of the lack of trust.

According to some media reports, medical sources revealed that the suspect took part in some surgeries and examined patients as well though the government later denied this. Such reports and incidents have become common in Kuwait's hospitals in recent years, and although lawmakers and media are complaining about poor health services, nothing has been done yet. I guess that means 'well, people, your health is not important'.

The poor health services at public hospitals has been forcing citizens to seek the services of private clinics and hospitals, some of whom have been taking advantage of citizens' need for medical treatment, especially those who are not covered by insurance. Reports about deteriorating health services are endless, painful and shameful, but it will always be ink on paper because so far no one seems to listen or care.

So, pray people...pray not to get sick.



Safat Square In the fifties

## SAFAT SQUARE STANDS THE TEST OF TIME SYMBOL OF CONVERGENCE AND UNITY

**KUWAIT:** Tucked away in one of Kuwait City's most prominent roads leading to the shared waters of the Arabian Gulf, Safat Square has stood the test of time as a place where people of different backgrounds have converged and come together under one banner. The square, in the 19th C and the early half of the 20th C, occupied a much larger space than what it does today and was an important commercial hub in addition to being a spot where Kuwaitis would join in public celebration and family gatherings.

Commercially, before the discovery of oil, it is here where travelling Bedouins from desert regions further inland would exchange their produce with the local sea-faring inhabitants of the city. The desert dwellers would offload their handmade leather and fur goods, lamb and camel meats, milks and ghee in return for tea, wheat, rice, sugar, herbs and spices and precious stones from places as far as India, Yemen and Iran brought over by the merchants who live by the sea.

It was a lively place, where cafes, barber shops, dates and fruits as well as small industries - like shipbuilding and Sadu fabric weaving - were found. Parents would bring along their young ones to experience the thrill of handled amusement rides or to ride a donkey on special occasions like Eid or the appointment of a new ruler. Senior statesmen would join the common man in taking part in these celebrations, which would sometimes even host foreign dignitaries as they did when the father of the constitution, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, assumed power back in 1950, some 11 years before he would disassociate Kuwait from its status as a British protectorate.

Celebrations would witness men recite wonderful traditional poetry about times of war, heroism, the life of



Safat Square in 1958

sea and the desert under a raised Kuwaiti flag in red (its colour pre-1961), with men clad in complete war gear over their dishdasha - such as the traditional dagger (khanjar), pistols, Arabian swords and holster. Emanating from the square was the

first road in Kuwait in 1945. Dasman Road ended at Dasman Palace and is known today as Ahmed Al-Jaber Street. The square was also home to the first state buildings for the army, police, court, finance authority, municipality and post office. — KUNA



# For the love of Henna



“Young artist develops her talent in Kuwait”

By Athoob A Alshuaibi

The young girl skillfully applied gold henna on the hands of women during an event, her mother watching approvingly. Only 17, her young age wasn't a barrier that prevented her from socializing and making conversation with her customers. Meet Samia Hasanat, a henna artist who has mastered her art after years of practice. Samia, originally from Bangladesh and born in Dubai, came with her family to Kuwait around eight years ago.

Samia has a deep love for henna, or mehndi as its known in the Indian Subcontinent, and has fond childhood memories of her aunt who used to apply it on her hands. “I blend my own henna from natural ingredients. I don't use readymade cones,” she told Kuwait Times. Mehndi has been mentioned in ancient Indian texts and has been used by women, and sometimes, men. Despite arguments over the origin of this tradition, it is clear that it has been adopted mainly by countries of the Subcontinent such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

“The difference between my work and that of other henna artists in Kuwait is in the pattern. Most designers base their work on Emirati designs of roses and swirls, while mine are more intricate. I combine peacocks,

miniature flowers and other patterns inspired from Indian nature,” said Samia.

### Beginnings

It all began at the age of 13 when her father took her to a salon in Kuwait



for a henna application before Eid. “The salon was busy and I had to wait for three hours. After all the wait, they told me to come tomorrow. I felt very bad. I decided then that I was going to learn this art and I would do it,” she said. For four years, Samia trained using pen and



paper and drawing on her own hand. “In the beginning, I practiced using readymade patterns. Later, I developed my own designs,” she said.

News of her skill spread widely among her relatives and friends, who came to her to apply henna during religious ceremonies and marriages. “It was at first all for free, until an old family friend suggested that I should get paid for it,” Samia said. Like any other home-based business in Kuwait, Samia thought of taking advantage of Instagram's popularity and created an account to showcase her artwork. She was captivated by the work of another henna artist, Amrin Wahid, who's based in Dubai.

“My home business took off only a year ago. My mother was worried I would lose interest in my studies since I'm making money now,” said Samia. “But it is very surprising how my business is prompting me to study harder. I don't feel bored doing it - It's energizing

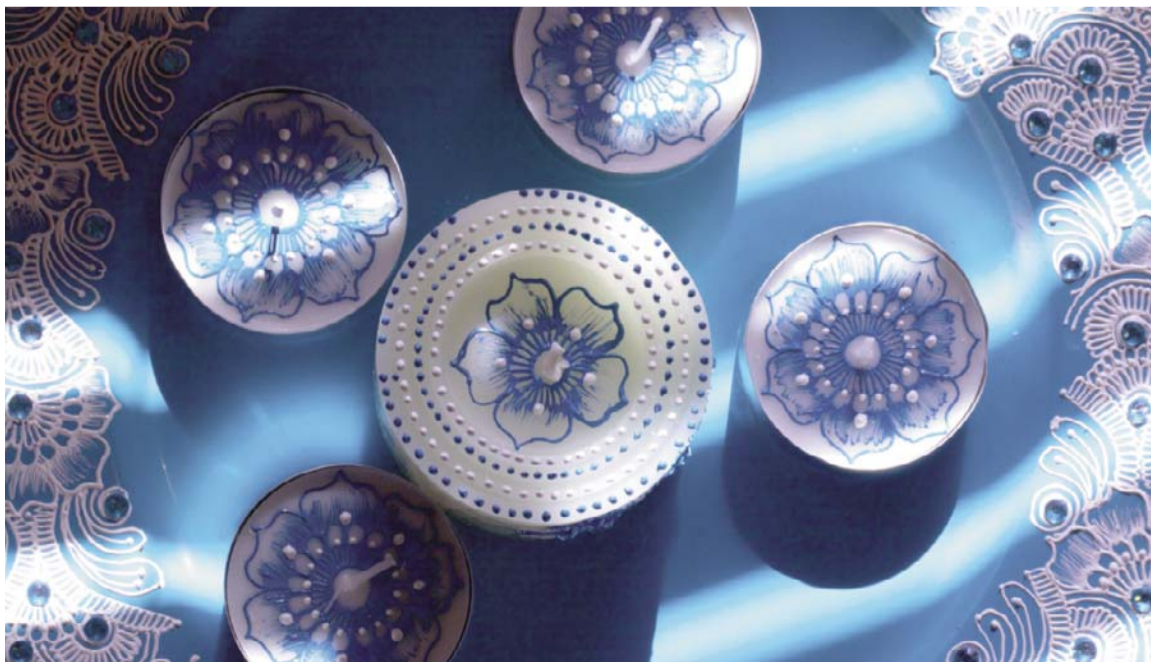
and it makes me happier because I don't view it as a business. I just do it out of love as I'm passionate about henna art. I meet more people and gain more friends, so it doesn't negatively affect me as an A-level commerce student,” she added.

### Ambitions

“So far, this is merely the first step. But, I'm confident enough to state that I'm successful at this stage. As my next step, I'm going to start accepting international orders. My clients are interested in my customized art for brides, engagement parties, bridal showers and bespoke mobile phone cases. However, depending on Instagram to market my business is just a preliminary move to extend and open my own henna studio,” Samia explained.

She believes, as an entrepreneur, that it's all about determination and solid motivation to make the thing most important to you a priority in your life. “Many get carried away during their teenage years, forgetting the fact that it is we who control ourselves by choosing good friends. Also, parents play a big role in this. They inspire you, support you and teach the difference between right and wrong. I guess it's entirely because of my parents that I'm on the right path,” Samia said.

“Remember, patience is a major principle since nothing happens quickly. You do not get what you want right away. You need to think about the steps and process them. I was naughty during my childhood though. I used to love ketchup. Once my mother gave me some and I spread it all over my body like a lotion!” she recalled. This incident somehow foretold that an artist was in the making.



— Photos by Athoob A Alshuaibi



# 'Rare coins and currency, arts and artifacts'

## Auctions popular in Kuwait

By Nawara Fattahova

Collecting coins is a popular hobby worldwide, and numismatists build their collections by buying coins from other collectors, antique stores or auctions. There are many collectors in Kuwait too, and regular auctions are held, including the most recent one in December at the Heritage Mall (Mujama' Al Turath) in Mubarakiya.

Basim Mohammed Al-Ibrahim, owner of the Old Currency Center at the mall, explained that this auction was the seventeenth one held in 2015, and was the biggest auction for currency in Kuwait. "This auction included both coins and banknotes. It included 170 batches, which may include from one item up to 30 items, and are always sold in one transaction. The next, the 18th currency auction, will be held on January 29, 2016. This mall has been operating for more

than one year. Every month we hold one or two auctions," he told Kuwait Times.

Before accepting currencies, both coins and banknotes, Ibrahim examines and evaluates them. "When a seller comes to submit his items to be sold at the auction, I examine them to determine if they are authentic or not, and I also evaluate their value as I'm an expert. Then I prepare a list with the participating items in the auction. According to this list, we

know how many and which items were sold. We also set minimum bids. When the currency is registered in the list, we provide a short description about it, and interested people can get a copy of this list. Then we set the date and time of the auction," he added.

The auction is usually very well attended. "Many people are interested in these auctions, and we have participants even from other countries. The number differs at each auc-





tion, but it's usually between 40 to 80 people. Some of them are collectors who practice it as a hobby, while others profit from it as it's a business for them. Some customers attend and buy personally, while others have brokers to do deals on their behalf," explained Ibrahim.

The currency auction is not the only auction held at the Heritage Mall. "There are 80 shops in this mall selling various valuable items that have collectors. There are stores dealing in antiques, currencies, precious stones and others. So there are auctions for antiques, books and magazines and others. There is a special hall in this mall where we hold these auctions, and it's a perfect place for such activities as it lies in the heart of the commercial area, which is much better than when some auctions were held in private halls in houses and neighbors were complaining. Through this activity we aim to add activities to Kuwait as it attracts many tourists, as we also seek heritage sites or traditional bazaars when we travel," Ibrahim pointed out.

There are no conditions on currencies that can be sold in this auction. "If a currency is available in the market, then we will not accept it. It has to be either rare or somehow special. It's not necessary to be historical or out of circulation - for instance the currency of South Africa can participate as it's not available in Kuwait. Also, we can accept a currency that has an error or a currency that has a special serial number such as 11111. And of course, we accept old currencies," concluded Ibrahim.



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Nawaf Al-Mirjan is a broker who participates in various antique auctions. "I announce the minimum bid, then raise the amount accordingly, and say the final price. My voice is my capital," he said, smiling. He also participates in auctions held in other places. "Usually there is an auction every Monday in a house, and on Tuesdays the antique auction is held at the Heritage Mall. Also, every two to three months, the Gulf auction for antiques is held at Discovery Mall. The auctions usually start after Maghreb prayers. During the auction, I provide a short introduction or explanation of the currency. I don't do this with antiques as usually the pieces are known and don't need explaining," said Mirjan.

"The selection of currencies here is good, but it's not as rich as international ones. Usually, we don't get ancient coins, but if we get one, it should always have a certificate that proves it's genuine and not fake. We haven't faced any problems yet as Ibrahim is an expert, and if he has doubts about any piece, he won't list it in the auction. Verifying banknotes is much easier than coins. The buyer of the coins lays down conditions that if a coin is not authentic, he has the right to return it. Ibrahim is in charge of returns, but the process is civil as most of us know each other," he stated.



# LOCAL VET HAS SOFT SPOT FOR STRAYS

By Faten Omar

**F**eral cats and dogs in Kuwait are exposed to hunger and adverse weather conditions, and are often involved in car accidents. But not many care about the welfare of these stray animals, and if someone does want to help them, they are discouraged by the steep expenses involved.

But not Obaid Al-Azmi, a veterinarian who provides medical treatment to these poor creatures for free. Azmi also tries to provide a warm and safe environment, foster homes or temporary shelters for abused, abandoned and neglected animals through his Instagram account. Kuwait Times spoke to Azmi to learn more about his work. Some excerpts.

**Kuwait Times: Tell us more about yourself.**

**Obaid Al-Azmi:** I work as a veterinarian at the Kuwait Zoo. I have 13 years of experience in this field. I have a two-year veterinary diploma from Kuwait and a bachelor's degree in veterinary surgery from Yemen. I will complete my master's degree in Egypt this month.

**KT: How did you start as a veterinarian?**

**Obaid:** I became a veterinarian by chance, as I was in the military when I got accepted in the specialty of veterinary medicine.

**KT: What do you like about what you do? What do you dislike?**

**Obaid:** I love everything about what I do, but it is hard work. You have to know everything about every animal. For example, at the zoo, I have to treat giraffes, lions, etc, and at my private clinic, I treat cats, dogs and birds. And every animal is totally different from another.

**KT: What education or skills are needed to be a vet?**

**Obaid:** You have to get a degree first, then learn everything about every animal. Being a veterinarian is more difficult than being a human doctor, because doctors treat one kind of species (humans) with one known structure, but animals are way different from each other. But now veterinarians have also started to specialize in specific kinds of animals.

As for me, I took more than 20 training courses with well-known veterinarians outside Kuwait, and recently a Kuwaiti female human doctor taught me how to use ultrasound. I even know which human medicines are good for animals, as they are cheaper.

**KT: What is most challenging thing about what you do?**

**Obaid:** The challenges that I face is that I can't make people understand that their pets, horses, sheep, or cows need vaccinations in order to avoid deadly diseases. Instead of paying KD 100 for treatment, you can just pay KD 10 for vaccination. The diseases will not only affect animals, they will also affect the owners and their children if cats or dogs bite them.

**KT: Tell us more about rescuing animals from the street?**

**Obaid:** Till around seven years ago, I heard from a lot of people that when they try to save a cat or dog from the street, they have to pay a

lot of money to do so. They could not afford to pay KD 600 for a street animal, as people have their own responsibilities and priorities. So I started to treat those animals for free if it was a simple case, but if it needed further treatment, I make them pay only for the medicines with no extra charge.

The most helpful person I have ever met is someone called Waleed, an animal lover who lives in Mahboula. He is always ready to help and ferries the animals on his motorcycle because he does not have a driving license.

The other challenge is that there is a shortage of medicines. Despite Kuwait being an advanced country, it hasn't paid attention to the importance of veterinary medicine, even though the authorities know that animals can affect humans with serious diseases, such as bird flu. And until 10 years ago, Kuwait only had four veterinarians.

**KT: What is most rewarding thing about being a veterinarian?**

**Obaid:** The happiness of seeing animals in good health. And it teaches me to be more patient.

**KT: What advice would you offer someone considering this career?**

**Obaid:** I advise them to work in the private sector, because the Kuwaiti government does not support this career with the poor salaries it pays. But in the private sector, you will earn a lot.

**KT: How much time off do you get/take?**

**Obaid:** Actually I suffer from permanent anxiety and cannot ignore even a normal call to help an animal. Even my wife asks me to switch off my phone to spend a normal day with my family for once. But she understands that those animals need me.

**KT: What is the most exciting change you've seen in veterinary medicine?**

**Obaid:** Since the past 10 years, veterinary medicine in Kuwait is evolving. Today we use advanced devices such as x-ray and sonar machines, endoscopes and plastic surgery for sutures by using strings that melt away and leave the wound with no

marks. Earlier, vets used to make a 5-cm-long incision for sterilization surgeries, but now we make an opening of less than half a centimeter to remove the animal's uterus.

**KT: Which animal has been your most memorable patient?**

**Obaid:** My most memorable animal patient was a street cat that had an accident and came to me with broken legs. Everyone advised me to amputate its legs before it was too late, but I desisted. Now it walks with only a simple limp.

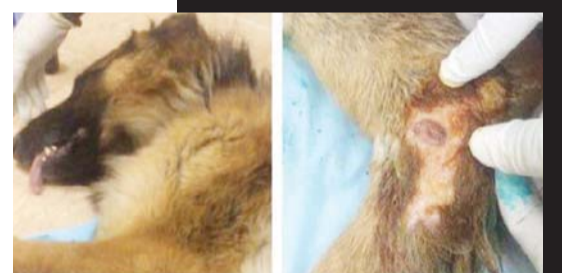
**KT: Are you a cat person or a dog person?**

**Obaid:** I'm a cat person - everybody knows that my cat Sundos is spoiled!

**KT: What makes a good veterinarian?**

**Obaid:** Understand the situation, and do not treat animals just for money.

*Veterinary medicine in Kuwait is evolving. Today we use advanced devices such as x-ray and sonar machines, endoscopes and plastic surgery for sutures by using strings that melt away and leave the wound with no marks.*



Obaid with his crew



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Ministry of Interior General Security Department launched security campaigns yesterday at the fruit and vegetable market in Sulaiibiya, during which 1272 individuals were arrested. The campaigns were launched based on directives by high-ranking officials from Ministry of Interior, Immigration Department, General Traffic Department and other authorities. — KUNA Photos

# KRCS CELEBRATES ITS 50TH ANNIVERSARY

## KUWAIT, QATAR DELIVERS AID TO SYRIANS

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait prominent humanitarian stances and its developmental initiatives granted Kuwait a distinguished and pioneering position in the humanitarian field, Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said yesterday.

Al-Sayer said in remarks to KUNA that the society is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its foundation in January 10 of the year 1966, and since then it has been offering humanitarian relief for people in need all over the world. He expressed his appreciation and gratitude for the great support offered by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to this society to compete with other international humanitarian organizations in alleviating the sufferings of people in need all over the world.

He applauded the efforts of the former Chairman of KRCS late Barjas Humoud Al-Barjas, being one of KRCS founders, who greatly contributed in reflecting the bright humanitarian image of Kuwait globally. The title offered to His Highness the Amir by the United Nations (UN) as Humanitarian Leader" and Kuwait as

"Humanitarian Center" came out of the deep belief of our political leadership of the importance of the humanitarian work which reflect the values of Islam in offering help to people without being biased to any religion or ethnicity, he affirmed.

A total of 18 Kuwaiti donors vowed to practice organized humanitarian voluntary work under the title of "Kuwait Red Crescent Society" and held their first meeting in December of the year 1965 to set the main regulations and system of the society and also to elect the first board of directors. KRCS later gained the recognition of the International Union for Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Geneva, after fulfilling all the needed membership criteria, and later became member number 110. KRCS is an independent institution and works in affiliation to the official authorities in the country regarding the humanitarian field.

### Aid to Syrian refugees

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti and Qatari Red Crescent societies yesterday delivered relief sup-

plies to 250 Syrian refugee families in the eastern region of Zahle, a KRCS official said. Menhel Al-Enezi, the chief of the KRCS field team, told KUNA that mattresses and blankets were distributed to the Syrians in Al-Rahab town, close to the market-tourist town Zahle, indicating that the materials were given to the refugees in coordination with the Qatari relief team as part of a joint Gulf humanitarian project. He added that 200 food rations and bedclothes were also delivered to Syrian refugees in Al-Marj town in the eastern Bekaa valley. Meanwhile, Athbi Al-Nuwaieem, member of the Kuwaiti society, said the "warm winter campaign 2016," launched days ago, would secure necessities for 30,000 Syrian families in various Lebanese regions.

He added that the aided refugees expressed gratitude to Kuwait, namely His Highness the Amir and the Government as well as the people.

Lebanon hosts more than one million Syrians who have fled the civil warfare at home. Many of them live in poor conditions that dramatically worsen during winter times when this country witnesses heavy snowfalls.



**Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society Dr Hilal Al-Sayer deliver relief supplies to Syrian refugee families.**

KRCS teams have braved difficult conditions resulting from snowing and reached the refugees in remote regions. — Agencies



## KUWAIT EMBASSY IN US BUYS \$18 M MANSION

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Embassy to the United States in Washington DC has bought a palatial 20,000 square foot home in the tony Forest Hills area for \$18 million (KD 5.5 million), reported local newspaper the Washingtonian. Formerly owned by a supermarket mogul, the Neoclassical mansion has seven bedrooms and 14 bathrooms: Elevator, climate-controlled wine cellar with a tasting room, swimming pool, pool house, formal and cottage gardens, and a sports court. Built in 1994, the mansion sits on an acre of land on Fesseden Street in the Northwest sector of the capital about 1.4 miles distant from the Kuwait Embassy.

# KUWAIT MP DEMANDS LIST OF LARGE-SCALE SPONSORS

## TURAJI CRITICIZES NEW DECREE FOR OIL SECTOR

**KUWAIT:** MP Mohammad Tana yesterday demanded that Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Subaih provide him with a list of names of companies and individuals who sponsor 500 or more expatriates. He also asked for the technical classification of those laborers and about the reasons for allowing such employers to sponsor such large numbers of expatriates. The lawmaker asked if any of these big sponsors is involved in a major project like the ones included in the five year development plan. MP Tana, who in October grilled the minister over a variety of issues including expatriate labor, asked the minister about the nature of work of those sponsors.

Sponsorship is essential in Kuwait and the rest of Gulf countries for expatriates to obtain a valid residence permit. But this tool has been greatly misused by

sponsors to demand hefty fees from expatriates to provide them with residence permits but without jobs. Lawmakers have repeatedly demanded a full investigation into the visa-trading business but only a few people have been referred to court. In another development, MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji strongly criticized the new decree governing the affairs of the state-owned Kuwait Petroleum Corp. (KPC) saying the decree strips the oil minister of his authorities. He said the new decree will only increase the ambiguity about the future of KPC and makes the minister with no powers.

He said that in light of the slide in oil prices and its impact on state revenues and development projects, coupled with a fall in the profits of the oil sector requires the government to rectify the situation in the oil sector, and warned

the government from leaving the sector subjected to dangers and disputes that could lead to catastrophic results.

MP Faisal Al-Kundari yesterday called for key amendments to the country's criminal laws after a number of terror suspects escaped punishment in court because of procedural flaws or lack of legislation. He said that the amendments are required to face new developments in the region and the rise of terror groups that have threatened the security of Kuwait. He said the amendments require a clear definition for terrorism and crime amid fast-paced regional developments and the rise of terror and extremist groups that target the security and integrity of the country. He called on the government to cooperate with the national assembly to resolve this problem.



## SURGEON REMOVES BRAIN TUMOR FROM AWAKE PATIENT

**KUWAIT:** A Kuwaiti surgeon has successfully carried out an operation to remove a tumor from the brain of a patient while she was awake. Dr Hesham Al-Khayat led the team that operated on the patient, a Syrian, in Ibn Sina Hospital days after she was unable to speak properly coupled with weakness in the right side of her body. The operation, performed in a selected number of hospitals around the world, is known as an awake craniotomy, during which the surgeon removes part of the bone from the skull to expose the brain while the patient is awake. The patient was unable to utter words properly and could not think right. Her condition worsened and she could not read nor ambulate.

During surgery, the neurosurgeon used brain-mapping techniques to identify and avoid injury to areas of the brain that control language, motor and sensory function. "Mapping techniques using mild electrical current are employed to locate the precise areas that control specific skills such as speech, all while the patient is awake in the operating room," Dr Al-Khayat said in a statement. "If the mild stimulation hinders the task of speaking, reading or moving, that area of the brain is marked and left untouched," he added as he explained

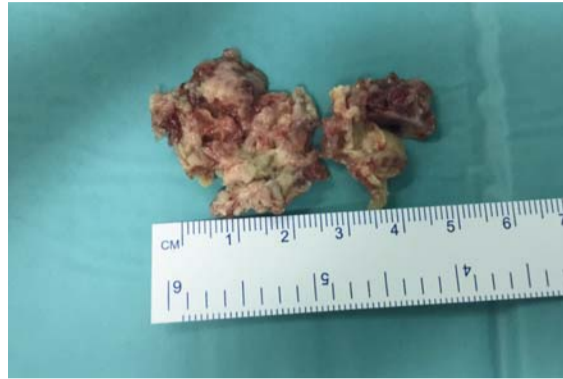


Photo of the tumor

the process of the surgery.

Al-Khayat said that such procedure entailed a carefully-orchestrated team approach between the neurosurgeon, the neurophysiologist, anesthesiologist and a helpful patient. This operation depends on local block of 12 nerves that supply the scalp, such technique will allow application of a pin head and to do scalp incision

with craniotomy pain-free. The surgeon then injects the layer that cover brain with local anesthesia.

"The dissection and excision of tumor in the brain are painless," explained Al-Khayat. Anesthesia team administers analgesic and tranquilizer medication to decrease pain and anxiety, thus facilitate the patient's cooperation during the procedure. During the procedure, an electronic tablet device is used to show the patient various pictures and scenes. The patient has to name the pictures or explain the scenes. This will help localize various eloquent area in the brain such as motor or speech center.

Such localization will help surgeon choose track to reach tumor away from eloquent area and will facilitate complete excision of tumor without any morbidity, he pointed out. "The procedure took only one and a half hours and she regained her speech and strength. The tumor was excised grossly," said Al-Khayat. He thanked the anesthesia, neurophysiology and neurosurgery teams as well as the whole nurse staff for performing the 100-percent awake craniotomy surgery, enabling removal of the whole tumor from an eloquent speech area safely and quickly. — KUNA



## KUWAIT OIL FALLS TO \$26.33 PB

**KUWAIT:** Price of Kuwaiti oil went down \$1.23 to \$26.33 per barrel Wednesday as opposed to \$27.67 pb on Tuesday, said Kuwait Oil Corporation (KPC) yesterday. In the world market, the crude price went down, Wednesday, six percent, due to rise of US crude reserves' rise-higher than forecast-and issuance of weak economic reports from China, the world's second leading crude consumer, thus fueling concerns the market glut will persist. Meanwhile, price of the Brent Blend dropped \$2.19 settling at \$34.23 per barrel. The American crude oil also fell, USD two, settling at USD 33.97 pb. — KUNA

## KUWAIT AMBASSADOR DENIES 'KUWAITIS MISSING IN EGYPT'

**CAIRO:** The Ambassador of Kuwait to Egypt Salem Ghassab Al-Zamanan announced yesterday the Kuwaiti citizen, Bader Al-Kanderi, studying in Egypt is in good health, along with his family members.

He said in remarks to KUNA that allegations that have turned viral on social media regarding purported disappearance of the student-studying in El-Sadat University in Al Minufiyah-with his wife and daughter, are totally false. The embassy determined the family was residing in a hotel in Al-Mohandeseen area.

Confusion about their whereabouts started when they moved to the hotel, without informing the family back in Kuwait. The diplomat called on all Kuwaiti citizens residing in Egypt not to hesitate in calling the embassy in case of having any inquiries and need of help at following phone numbers: 0020235712187; 0020235712194; 0020235714101. — KUNA

## 'PROPERTY OCCUPANCY' IN KUWAIT ON THE RISE

**KUWAIT:** Last year witnessed continuing rise of 'occupancy' in investment properties (apartment buildings), along with relative stability of leases, according to Kuwait Real-Estate Association. The association, in a report included in its annual report, "Al-Mursheld Al-Aqari," indicated that there were "doubts," in 2015, regarding the investment properties in 2015 after oil prices decline, coupled with decrease of economic activities in the Arabian Gulf countries, however these suspicions

were not substantiated, thus the decline proved to be minimal, with the occupancy reaching as high as 94.3 percent.

However, the report noted that the very limited decline-if recorded-might have been linked to evacuating old buildings for demolishing, promoting new ones built at the same locations; therefore this does not signal decline of occupancy.

Estimates put number of apartment flats at some 320,000 at 13,000 investment plots, the report says, adding that

the occupied ones amount to 302, 000 and empty ones at 18,000. Rate of flats' non-occupation is "normal" at all times for some families change residence throughout the year. The report rules out occupancy decline due to current market conditions, noting that the average monthly rent rose to KD 313 in Q2, 2015. Apartment rents climbed in the past two years by 18.5 percent, at a yearly rate of 8.9 percent, reaching the unprecedented level of KD 300 per month. — KUNA



Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah

## GCC STRIVES FOR MORE DEVELOPED TOURISM

**MANAMA:** Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have always strived for a more developed tourism sector in the region, Kuwait's Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said.

As a council, we aim to develop the

tourism industry in the region," Sheikh Salman said upon arrival in the Bahraini capital Manama. Sheikh Salman is on a two-day visit to the country to take part in a ceremony to name Manama as the Gulf touristic capital. He is also expected to visit a number of cultural sites in the Bahraini capital. Citing Bahrain's

tremendous touristic potential, Sheikh Salman hoped that Kuwaiti and Bahraini ties would be further strengthened. Calling it a first step towards greater prosperity, Sheikh Salman congratulated the Bahraini leadership on naming Manama as the touristic capital of the Gulf. — KUNA

# International

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 2016

**50 killed in bombing at Libya police school**

11



**In besieged Syrian town, peace talks pointless**

12



**Paris police shoot dead man on Hebdo 'versary**

14



**SANAA:** A Yemeni member of Iran-backed Houthi group mans a checkpoint on a street yesterday in the capital Sanaa. The Houthis rebels continue to control the capital, which they overran 2014, but loyalists have captured areas east and northeast of the capital recently. — AFP

## IRAN BANS IMPORTS FROM SAUDI, FACES SAUDI BOYCOTTS

### SAUDI WILL COLLAPSE IF KEEPS ITS 'SECTARIAN POLICIES': IRAN GUARDS

**DUBAI:** Iran and Saudi Arabia took further steps to sever commercial ties yesterday, intensifying a feud between the regional rivals, as Tehran announced a ban on imports from Saudi Arabia and Saudi groups called for boycotts of Iranian products. Iran's government said it had forbidden imports from Saudi Arabia after a cabinet meeting chaired by President Hassan Rouhani yesterday morning, according to state news agency IRNA.

The cabinet also reaffirmed a ban on Umrah pilgrimages to holy Makkah - which are both lucrative for Saudi Arabia and important to Muslims - first imposed in April in response to an alleged sexual assault on two male Iranians by Saudi airport guards. Trade between Saudi Arabia and Iran is small compared with the size of their economies, but tens of thousands of Iranians travel to the kingdom every year to complete the haj as well as Umrah pilgrimages made outside of haj season.

Saudi Arabia severed ties with Iran on Sunday over the storming of its embassy in Tehran, intensifying a diplomatic crisis set in motion by the kingdom's execution of a prominent Shi'ite cleric the previous day.

Foreign minister Adel Al-Jubeir told Reuters on Monday the kingdom was halting air traffic and trade links with the Islamic republic, although none of the few Saudi companies with interests in Iran has yet announced changes to their operations.

Savola, the kingdom's largest food products company, which earns some 13 percent of total revenues from Iran, said on Tuesday it plans to maintain its investments there despite the standoff. But it and the few other Saudi companies doing business in Iran faced increasing public pressure over the course of the week, as consumer and business groups called for boycotts of Iranian products.

Chamber of commerce leaders told local daily newspaper Al-Riyadh that Saudi businesses should replace Iranian goods with alternatives from other Arab and Islamic countries. A trade boycott would cause the kingdom little economic harm, they said, noting that imports from Iran mainly consist of pistachio nuts and pickles. Consumer activist group Mogatah also urged Saudi businesses to remove Iranian goods from their shelves, posting photos of Iranian products for sale in Saudi Arabia on social media along with calls to support the government's policy.

The group scolded Swedish home goods retailer Ikea for selling a Persian carpet with a "made in Iran" label at its stores in Saudi Arabia, and applauded a local Riyadh-based carpet shop chain for deciding to end sales of Iranian rugs.

#### Iran Guards warning

The deputy head of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards

(IRGC) told Saudi Arabia yesterday it would "collapse" in coming years if it kept pursuing what he called its sectarian policies in the region. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Sudan and Djibouti broke off ties with Iran this week, the United Arab Emirates downgraded its relations and Kuwait and Qatar recalled their ambassadors after the Saudi embassy in Tehran was stormed by protesters.

Tensions between Shiite Muslim power Iran and the conservative Sunni kingdom have spiralled since Saudi Arabia on Saturday executed cleric Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr, an opponent of the ruling dynasty who demanded greater rights for Saudi Arabia's marginalized Shiite minority.

"The policies of the Saudi regime will have a domino effect and they will be buried under the avalanche they have created," the IRGC's second-in-command, Brigadier General Hossein Salami, was quoted as saying by the Fars news agency. "If the Saudis do not correct their path, their regime will collapse in coming years." Salami compared Saudi policies with those of Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi president overthrown by US forces in 2003. "The path the Saudi regime is taking is like the one Saddam took in the 1980s and 90s. He started a war with Iran, executed prominent clerics and top officials, suppressed dissidents and ended up having that miserable fate." — Agencies

## 50 KILLED IN BOMBING AT LIBYA POLICE SCHOOL

**ZLITEN, Libya:** A suicide truck bombing on a police school in Libya's city of Zliten killed more than 50 people yesterday, in the deadliest attack to hit the strife-torn country since its 2011 revolution. A bomber detonated an explosives-laden truck used for carrying water at a police training centre in central Zliten at around 8:30 am (0630 GMT), a local security source told AFP. A witness in Zliten, a coastal city about 170 kilometres (100 miles) east of Tripoli, told AFP some 300 men, mainly coast guards, were inside the compound at the time.

Health ministry spokesman Ammar Mohammed Ammar said 50 to 55 people had been killed and at least 100 wounded and that victims were being treated in several hospitals. Urgent calls were issued for blood donations. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack but the Islamic State group, which has been growing in power in Libya, has carried out many suicide bombings in the country.

Libya descended into chaos after the 2011 overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi and has had rival administrations since August 2014, when an Islamist-backed militia alliance overran Tripoli, forcing the government to take refuge in the east. The internationally recognised government condemned the attack as a "cowardly terrorist act" and called for the lifting of an arms embargo it says has prevented authorities from tackling IS.

### Calls for unity

Meanwhile, a deputy defense minister for the Tripoli-based government, Mohammad Bashir Al-Naas, vowed to avenge the attack. "The perpetrator is not known but he is a coward. He kills our



**TRIPOLI:** A Libyan man who was wounded in a suicide truck bombing on a police school receives medical care at a hospital in Libya's coastal city of Zliten, some 170 kilometres (100 miles) east of the capital Tripoli yesterday. — AFP

sons from the shadows. We must avenge them and do everything possible to protect them," Naas told a press conference. The United Nations is pressing Libya's rival sides to implement a power-sharing deal agreed last month on forming a unity government.

The UN envoy to Libya and Western governments called for unity in the wake of the attack, saying implementing the political agreement was crucial. "I condemn in the strongest terms today's deadly suicide attack in Zliten, call on all Libyans to urgently unite in fight against terrorism," UN

envoy Martin Kobler wrote on Twitter. EU policy chief Federica Mogherini also urged Libyans to back the unity deal. "The people of Libya deserve peace and security and... they have a great opportunity to set aside their divisions and work together, united, against the terrorist threat facing their country," she said.

Italy, the former colonial power in Libya, offered its support in helping to bring stability. "In the face of this terrorist threat, the first answer must be unity among Libyans," Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni said. "It is urgent that the recently

signed political agreement be implemented." France also condemned the attack and called on "all Libyan parties to quickly form a national unity government... that would be a partner for the international community in the face of terrorism."

### 'Struggle for power'

World powers fear Libya could descend further into chaos and become an IS stronghold on Europe's doorstep. In a report to the UN Security Council in November, International Criminal Court chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said that IS had been responsible for at least 27 car and suicide bombings in Libya in 2015.

The group claimed responsibility for suicide car bombings in the eastern town of Al-Qoba in February that killed at least 40 people. In recent days, IS has launched a series of attacks on oil facilities in eastern Libya, pushing east from its coastal stronghold of Sirte. Officials have warned of crippling consequences for the country if the jihadists manage to seize control of Libya's oil resources.

Calls have been growing for a possible foreign military intervention to bring stability to Libya and contain IS, which is reported to have at least 3,000 fighters in the country.

Mohamed Eljarh, a Libya analyst with the Atlantic Council, said it was unlikely the latest attack would boost unity efforts. "This has not been the case in the past, even when IS was expanding and the scale of attacks was intensifying," he said.

"Despite IS's evident presence in Libya, various political groups are still consumed with their struggle for power and control." —AFP



**LAGOS:** A Nigerian soldier stands between the 24 armored vehicles donated by the United States to the Nigerian military at the Nigerian Army 9th Brigade Parade Ground in Lagos yesterday. — AFP

## US GIVES VEHICLES TO NIGERIA ARMY; INSURGENTS HIT VILLAGE

**ABUJA:** The United States yesterday was donating 24 mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles to Nigeria's military, to enable the country's soldiers to combat Boko Haram Islamic insurgents who continued cutting a bloody path through northeast Nigeria.

About 30 people were killed between Monday and Wednesday in Borno state, as Boko Haram gunmen wearing soldiers' uniforms and female suicide bombers unleashed separate attacks on Izghe, a village 123 kilometers (76 miles) southwest of Maiduguri, the state capital, witnesses said.

Buba Ummate, a survivor, said: "They came in military uniforms and ... just started firing there.

At least 18 people were killed in that Monday attack, he said. Ummate said the following day, three female suicide bombers sneaked into Izghe and detonated bombs hidden under their garments, killing seven other people and destroying three houses. A male suicide bomber

also blew himself up, killing himself and four other people, said Yusuf Danizge, who learned of the attack from relatives who live in the community. A statement from the US Consulate in Lagos said the MRAP vehicles, valued at \$11 million, were being handed over yesterday to assist the West African country with both technical and military hardware to enable it to combat the rising challenges of regional extremism.

Temitayo Famutimi of the US Department of State said: "The equipment donation represents part of the continuing US commitment to Nigeria and its neighbors to counter Boko Haram's senseless acts of terror and promote regional security."

The United States also provides advisers, intelligence, training and logistical support to Nigerian military fighting Boko Haram as well as humanitarian aid and victim support services to some of the 2.5 million people driven from their homes by the insurgency. — AP

## SOMALIA CUTS TIES WITH IRAN AS DIPLOMATIC CRISIS RAGES

### KENYAN TEACHER 'ENLISTING PUPILS INTO SHABAAB' HELD

**MOGADISHU:** Somalia said yesterday it had cut diplomatic ties with Iran amid a diplomatic crisis with Saudi Arabia. A statement from Somalia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the "decision to sever diplomatic ties" and gave Iranian diplomats 72 hours to leave the Horn of Africa nation.

"This step has been taken after careful consideration and in response to the Republic of Iran's continuous interference in Somalia's internal affairs," the statement read, without giving further details. It comes days after Saudi Arabia broke off diplomatic ties with Iran in response to an arson attack on its own embassy in Tehran by protesters infuriated by Riyadh's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric.

### Several Saudi allies have followed suit

Meanwhile, one civilian was killed and another seriously wounded yesterday when mortars fired by Islamist Shebab insurgents exploded close to the presidential palace in Mogadishu, police said. Explosions were heard in the heavily guarded government district around Villa Somalia, the presidential palace, around noon yesterday.

"Several rounds of mortar shells landed in the neighborhood where the palace is located," police officer Jama Mohamed said, adding one person was killed and another wounded.

A government worker, Ibrahim Hussein, said he heard three explosions. The Al-Qaeda-linked Shebab claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement posted on a pro-Shebab website.

"The attack is part of operations carried out inside Mogadishu by the mujahedeen fighters," the statement read. The Shebab, who are fighting to overthrow the internationally backed government in Mogadishu, carry out regular attacks in the capital. The Islamists are on a mission to disprove claims they are close to defeat since being routed from Mogadishu in mid-2011 and losing several alleged commanders in US drone strikes.

### Kenyan teacher held

A Kenyan primary school teacher who recruited pupils into the Islamist militant group Al Shabaab in neighboring Somalia was sentenced to 20 years in jail by a court yesterday. The judge ruled the teacher, Samuel Wanjala Wabwile alias Salim Mohamed Wabwile, had taken advantage of poverty in the coastal county of Kilifi where school children walk in tattered uniforms without shoes to bait them using incentives like food. The East African nation has suffered a string of deadly attacks by al Shabaab in recent years, which scared away tourists and damaged economic growth.

Officials say dozens of youths have crossed into Somalia in the past three years for training by the militants after being recruited and radicalised at home. Wabwile was arrested in June last year and charged with three counts, including being a member of al Shabaab. The court convicted him of radicalising his pupils during Islamic lessons at the school where he taught in Kilifi, contrary to the law on the prevention of terrorism. "The accused preyed on the pupils' feeble minds to impart his ideological beliefs," magistrate Diana Mochache said.

Al-Shabaab is blamed for attacks in parts of Kenya including one in April last year on Garissa University in the east where 148 students were killed. In June 2014, the group killed 65 people over a 24-hour period in and around Mpeketoni in Lamu county. It was also responsible for a raid on Nairobi's Westgate Mall in 2013 that killed 67 people. The group seeks to overthrow the Western-backed Somali government and impose its strict interpretation of Islamic law. It has said it has targeted Kenya because of its participation in an African Union peacekeeping force in Somalia. — Agencies

## ROW OVER TURKISH TROOPS THROWS FUTURE OF MOSUL INTO QUESTION

**BAGHDAD:** Months before the first shots are fired in the threatened battle to drive Islamic State out of Mosul, a dispute over Turkish troops in the area suggests that a struggle for influence over the future of Iraq's second city has already begun.

Attention is turning towards Mosul, Islamic State's stronghold in the north, after the jihadists were defeated in the western city of Ramadi by government forces last month.

Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi has vowed to retake Mosul this year as a "fatal and final blow" to Islamic State in Iraq. The city's future is now in play, with Turkey a major contender for influence there along with Iraq's Kurds, the government in Baghdad and possibly even Iranian-backed Shi'ite militias.

A NATO member and Sunni Muslim power with historic ties to Nineveh province where Mosul is located, Turkey is backing Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga forces, which see themselves as vital in any battle for the city, and is training a Sunni militia also expected to help retake the largest urban centre under Islamic State control.

With the aid of these local allies, Turkey aims to expand its influence in the Sunni-populated province as Iraq splinters along communal lines, analysts say. Ankara also wants to counter Iranian influence in its southern, oil-producing neighbor.

"This is essentially a by-product of tensions with Iran," said Sinan Ulgen, head of the EDAM think-tank in Istanbul. The Iraqi military has been absent from Nineveh since collapsing in 2014 in the face of a major advance by Islamic State, and Baghdad is keen to reassert itself there. Turkey meanwhile has close energy and trade ties with Iraqi Kurdistan and, despite its opposition to Kurdish PKK militants waging an insurgency against Ankara, supports the peshmerga as part of its wider interest in seeing the northern Iraqi region remain stable. Peshmerga fighters, aided by Turkey, have pushed back Islamic State and extended their semi-autonomous northern region to include parts of Nineveh.

The stakes are high. The forces involved in previous operations to retake territory from Islamic State have had a say in how it is run afterwards and that is the calculation ahead of the expected battle for Mosul. "Turkey sees Mosul and northern Iraq as a sphere of influence, a buffer zone, an area where it needs to have a military presence," said Sajad Jiyad, a Baghdad-based political analyst who advises the government.

"They feel they need to be in control of that border area between Iraq, Turkey and Syria, or at least know what's going on." While there is no indication the Turks intend to send significant numbers of troops, they have had bases in Iraqi Kurdistan since the 1990s, slowly increasing their presence in their fight against the PKK. That leaves Turkey well placed once the battle for Mosul begins.

The diplomatic row began last month after Turkey - at Abadi's invitation, it said - sent 150 troops to the Bashiqa military base near Mosul to protect Turkish forces training the Hashid Watani Sunni militia to fight Islamic State. After Baghdad complained to the UN Security Council, Turkey - a member of the US-led coalition bombing Islamic State in Iraq and Syria - withdrew some troops to Kurdistan and said it would continue pulling out of Nineveh. But Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan has rejected a total withdrawal and last week Iraq's foreign minister said his country could respond militarily if forced.

Iraqi Finance Minister Hoshiyar Zebari, a senior Kurdish figure, later played down the dispute, saying it was "on its way to being solved." US President Barack Obama spoke by phone with Abadi on Wednesday, saying Turkey should withdraw any military forces from Iraq not authorised by Baghdad. There was no immediate comment from Ankara.

### HARD LINE

But with Abadi vowing to recover Mosul in 2016, competition for future control over the city of 2 million will intensify.

The Turks "are looking at the Americans and the Iranians, who already have a presence, and saying we should be doing something similar", said Jiyad, the Baghdad analyst.

Abadi took a strong stance against the troop deployment, denying Turkish claims that Baghdad had approved it and accusing Ankara of acting in bad faith. The Iraqi leader has battled an image of weakness and must deal with fractious coalition partners. His popularity could rise with the victory in Ramadi, but the Turkish troops issue could yet undermine him.—Reuters

## IN BESIEGED SYRIAN TOWN, PEACE TALKS SEEN POINTLESS

### WORLD FOOD PROGRAM SAYS 40,000 AT RISK IN MADAYA

**BEIRUT:** Warnings of widespread starvation are growing as pro-government forces besiege an opposition-held town in Syria and winter bites, darkening the already bleak outlook for peace talks the United Nations hopes to convene this month.

The blockade of Madaya, near the border with Lebanon, has become a focal issue for Syrian opposition leaders who told a UN envoy this week they will not take part in talks with the government until it and other sieges are lifted. At least 10 people have died of starvation in Madaya in the past six weeks, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says. Opposition activists say the number of dead is in the dozens although Reuters could not independently confirm the reports. "We were living on tree leaves, on plants, but now we are struggling in a snow storm and there are no more plants or leaves," said Majed Ali, 28, an opposition activist who spoke to Reuters by phone from Madaya. "I was 114 kilos before the siege. Now I am 80." Madaya residents make do with water flavoured, where available, with spices, lemon, salt and vinegar, said Abu Hassan Mousa, the head of an opposition council in Madaya. Where rice or powdered milk are available, the prices can reach some \$300 a kilo, residents said.

With half a metre of snowfall this week, furniture, doors and wooden fixtures and fittings are being burnt to heat homes, said Ali, the opposition activist. "Negotiations have no meaning all the time we are besieged, all the time we are hoping for a cup of milk for a child. What are we going to negotiate over? Our dead?" he said.

### MONTHS WITHOUT AID

Blockades have been a common feature of the nearly five-year-old war that has killed an estimated 250,000 people. Government forces have besieged rebel-held areas near Damascus for several years and more recently rebel groups have blockaded loyalist area including two villages in Idlib province. The fate of Madaya, where the World Food Programme (WFP) says the lives of 40,000 people are at risk,

may be linked to those villages. The areas were all part of a local ceasefire agreement agreed in September but implementation has been halting. The last aid delivery to Madaya, which happened in October, was synchronised with a similar delivery to the Shi'ite villages — Al-Foua and Kefraya. Ali described the people of Madaya as hostages held as a bargaining chip for Al-Foua and Kefraya.

Aid agencies were hoping for easier access to the area following the ceasefire deal concluded under UN supervision. "WFP is deeply concerned about the reported humanitarian situation in Madaya, which has been besieged for many months, now threatening the lives of nearly 40,000 people," WFP spokeswoman Bettina Luescher said in response to a question from Reuters.

"Madaya was last reached on 17 October with 3,900 food rations enough to feed over 19,000 people for one month," she said. "Since then, no more food assistance or humanitarian supplies made it to these areas as was planned." A UN commission of inquiry has said that siege warfare has been used "in a ruthlessly coordinated and planned manner" in Syria's civil war, with the aim of "forcing a population, collectively, to surrender or suffer starvation".

The blockade of Madaya began about six months ago when the Syrian army and its Lebanese ally, Hezbollah, started a campaign to reestablish President Bashar al-Assad's control over areas at the Syrian-Lebanese border, including the town of Zabadani.

A source who is close to Damascus and familiar with the situation in Madaya denied civilians had been prevented from leaving, and said the number of people in the town had been exaggerated.

But the Britain-based Observatory says 15 people including children had been killed while trying to flee, either shot dead or killed by landmines planted to enforce the blockade imposed by government forces and Hezbollah fighters. Syrian officials could not be reached for comment. Aid agencies say access to Madaya was requested six times in 2015, but provided only once.—Reuters



**DAMASCUS:** Syrians bury the body of a victim who reportedly died in a mortar shell attack at a layered cemetery yesterday in the rebel-held city of Douma, northeast of the capital Damascus. — AFP

## EGYPT: NO ONE HURT IN ATTACK NEAR HOTEL BY GIZA PYRAMIDS

**CAIRO:** An attacker fired birdshot at an Egyptian security post outside a hotel near the Giza Pyramids yesterday morning, the Interior Ministry said. The ministry said no one was hurt in the incident at the Three Pyramids Hotel, but the attack damaged the hotel's facade and also a bus parked in front of the building.

According to a ministry statement, the shooter was part of a group of about 15 people who threw flares at the hotel's security post. A suspect was arrested and police were still searching for the rest of the group, the statement said. It did not identify the arrested suspect.

The motive for the attack was unclear and no one immediately claimed responsibility for it. However, a witness at the scene indicated the attack was more organized than the ministry described and that deadly weapons were used. "The first thing they fired was flares, and then they started firing at the bus. Later they started firing birdshot at the hotel and tried to throw Molotov cocktails at the bus," said Jaber Jabarin, an Arab Israeli citizen who was staying at the hotel and witnessed the attack.

After throwing Molotov cocktails, Jabarin said the attackers "start-

ed firing at the hotel with live bullets." He described heavy, continuous gunfire. His account and the ministry's statement could not be immediately reconciled. In Jerusalem, Alon Lavi, a spokesman for Israel's Foreign Ministry, said the bus that was hit was in use by a group of visiting Arab Israelis but that no one was inside the bus at the time of the incident and that no Israelis were hurt. He said Israel was briefed on the incident by the Egyptian Foreign Ministry.

The attack came as Egyptian's Coptic Orthodox Christians were celebrating the Orthodox Christmas in predominantly Muslim Egypt. Most Orthodox Christians follow the older, Julian calendar and celebrate Christmas on Jan. 7. In Egypt, thousands of policemen were deployed across Cairo and other cities to protect churches and Christian celebrations.

The Egyptian government has for years been battling an insurgency by Islamic militants in the northern part of the Sinai Peninsula. Attacks on security forces there have significantly escalated after the military overthrew Islamist President Mohammed Morsi in 2013. There have also been attacks in the mainland. — AP

## BLACK PUDDING HAILED AS A SUPERFOOD IN BRITAIN

**LONDON:** Made out of pig's blood, pork fat and oatmeal, black pudding might seem an unlikely candidate for the shelves of Britain's health food aisles. But the breakfast staple, considered a delicacy in northwest England and the west Midlands, is the surprise inclusion on a list of superfoods to watch in 2016 produced by MuscleFood, a nutritional food retailer.

The crumbly blood sausage, traditionally served with hearty favorites like bacon and fried egg, contains high levels of protein, iron, calcium and zinc. "2015 saw healthy eating reach a new level and this year we predict this trend is only going to get bigger," British media quoted Darren Beale of MuscleFood as saying.

"It's been interesting to note how people are changing their habits depending on the new buzz words in clean eating.

"Some of the foods have been on the up for a while like avocado oil and maca root, but others like mushrooms and black pudding have been a total surprise to us." But some experts have already cast doubt on the claim. The Institute of Food Research told The Independent newspaper that it tried to avoid using the term "superfood", instead advocating a balanced diet.

It also said that black pudding generally contained up to 20 percent fat and had relatively high levels of calories and salt. Last year, the World Health Organization warned that sausages, ham and other processed meats cause bowel cancer. — AFP

# FEAR AND ANGER GRIP COLOGNE AFTER NEW YEAR'S EVE RAMPAGE

MERKEL WANTS AUTHORITIES TO GET TO BOTTOM OF COLOGNE ATTACKS

**COLOGNE:** "A group of men tried to mug me how am I supposed to react the next time?" teenager Marie-Sophie Christ demands of a policeman outside Cologne's main railway station. Fear and anger have gripped citizens of the Rhineland city after an unprecedented and apparently coordinated rash of robberies and sex assaults on New Year's Eve blamed on men of Arab or North African appearance.

Police vans have been parked outside the main railway station and the iconic Gothic cathedral since the full extent of the rampage in Cologne's city centre became clear. Authorities said Thursday they had received more than 120 criminal complaints about robbery and sexual abuse including two reported rapes by perpetrators who allegedly staged orchestrated attacks on revellers in the crowds. Sixteen suspects have been identified but no one has been charged in what police have acknowledged were chaotic scenes. Six days on, Marie-Sophie and her friend were shopping near the same spot when they were accosted by a group of young men. The girls fled when it appeared the men were after their backpacks. She no longer feels safe going about her business in town. "It's a strange feeling. We pay more attention to our belongings," she said, flanked by her friend Erika Fehler. Marie-Sophie's mother has imposed a new rule when they are in town together: they meet every hour in front of the cathedral.

"Mom was never this scared before," the high school student said. Cologne took in more than 10,000 asylum seekers in December alone, but Marie-Sophie is reluctant to pin the blame on them. Erika, however, is more suspicious.

"They looked like refugees... or Albanians," she asserts, describing them as bearded and wearing dark clothes. The high street near the railway station is notorious for pickpockets, particularly during



**COLOGNE:** A poster promoting the city of Cologne can be seen in front of the western city's landmark, the Cologne Cathedral, near the main railway station yesterday. Police in the western city told AFP they have received more than 100 complaints by women reporting assaults ranging from groping to rapes, allegedly committed in a large crowd of revellers during year-end festivities outside the city's main train station and its famed Gothic cathedral. — AFP

the holiday season. But the assaults reported during the year-end festivities shocked the nation, with German Justice Minister Heiko Maas speaking of "a new dimension of crime". Among traders working at the station, the anger is palpable. "There were hundreds of them and really aggressive," said a sandwich seller, who asked not to be named.

She said the people she saw on New Year's Eve were "Arabs, but not refugees they were really very

organized". "We still have the same problems with the same people," said the woman in her 50s, accusing police of responding too slowly and ineffectually, and saying there were "not enough" of them to keep the peace that night. The incidents have inflamed an already heated public debate about Chancellor Angela Merkel's liberal stance on asylum seekers arriving in Germany, who numbered nearly 1.1 million last year. — Agencies

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## POLISH PRESIDENT SIGNS MEDIA BILL INTO LAW

**WARSAW:** Polish President Andrzej Duda has signed into law a controversial bill handing the conservative government control of state media, despite EU concern and condemnation from rights watchdogs.

"It's important to the president that state media be impartial, objective and credible," presidential spokeswoman Malgorzata Sadurska told reporters yesterday. "That's why the president signed into law the radio and television bill" that the conservative-dominated parliament approved late last month.

Under the new law, senior figures in public radio and television will be appointed and sacked by the treasury minister, and no longer hired by the National Broadcasting Council.

The new legislation will also see the current managers and supervisory board members of Poland's public broadcasters fired with immediate effect.

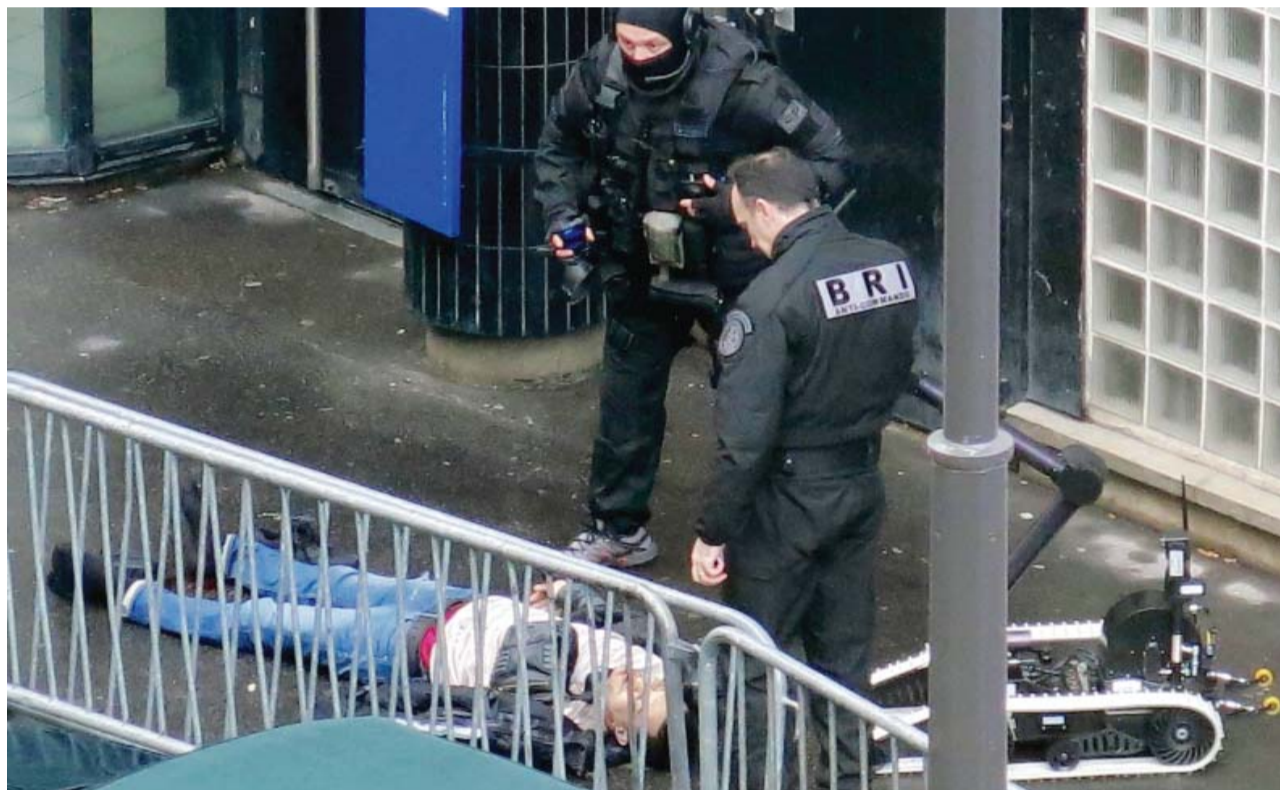
The ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party had earlier said it plans to turn the PAP news agency and public television and radio—all currently state-owned businesses—into national cultural institutions like

the opera or the national museum. The media measure is the latest controversial legislation introduced by the PiS, which is led by former premier Jaroslaw Kaczynski and which won a general election in October after eight years in opposition.

Duda already passed into law late last year a reform of the constitutional court, despite mass protests and claims by the opposition that the changes threaten judicial independence.

The Council of Europe, the continent's top human rights watchdog, had

urged Duda against signing the media law. The Polish government's legal moves have prompted escalating warnings from the European Commission that it could intervene, including two letters from its vice president, Frans Timmermans, asking Warsaw for information. In an unprecedented move, the Commission is set to debate the state of rule of law in Poland on January 13, which could lead to a potentially punitive process aimed at buttressing democracy and rights in the 28 EU states. — AFP



**PARIS:** Policemen stand by a man shot dead in front of a police station yesterday in Paris. French police shot dead a knife-wielding man yesterday as he attacked a police station in Paris, a year to the day since jihadist gunmen killed 12 people at Charlie Hebdo newspaper. — AFP

## PARIS POLICE SHOOT DEAD MAN ON HEBDO 'VERSARY

MAN WEARING FAKE SUICIDE BELT TRIES TO ENTER POLICE STATION

**PARIS:** Paris police shot dead yesterday a man wielding a knife after he tried to enter a police station shouting "God is Great" in Arabic and wearing what turned out to be a fake suicide belt. The incident took place exactly one year after deadly Islamist militant attacks on the Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine in the French capital and also just minutes after President Francois Hollande had given a speech in another part of Paris to mark the anniversary.

"The man may have been wearing something that could be a suicide belt," Interior Ministry spokesman Pierre-Henry Brandet told BFM TV. Brandet later confirmed to Reuters that the suicide belt was fake. France has been on high alert ever since the shootings last January at the Charlie Hebdo office and at a Jewish supermarket in which 17 people died over three days.

Security concerns were further heightened in November, when 130 people were killed in the capital in coordinated shootings and suicide bombings that targeted a music hall, bars and restaurants and a soccer stadium.

Islamic State, the militant group that controls swathes of Iraq and Syria, claimed responsibility for the Nov 13 attacks. Several of the militants involved in those attacks were, like last January's killers, French-born.

In Thursday's incident, the man tried to force his way into the police station in the 18th district in northern Paris, an area that Islamic State said it had been planning to hit as part of the November attacks.

### WIRES PROTRUDING

"According to our colleagues, he wanted to blow himself up," an official at the Alternative Police union said. "He had wires protruding from his clothes. That's why the police officer opened fire."

Officials said bomb disposal experts were on site. Journalist Anna Polonyi, who could see the outside of the police station from the window of her flat, posted photos on social media that showed what appeared to be a bomb-disposal robot beside the body.

She told Reuters that her sister, in the flat with her, had seen the incident happen. She

said the police shouted at the man and that he then started running towards them before they shot him.

Last year's attacks have boosted the popularity of the far-right National Front party ahead of a presidential election due in 2017. In his speech, Hollande promised to better equip police to prevent further militant attacks.

The president also defended draconian security measures implemented since November that his Socialist government had once shunned. "Terrorism has not stopped posing a threat to our country," Hollande said, repeating a promise to boost police recruitment and resources. Since the November attacks, Paris has increased its efforts at striking jihadist groups in Syria and Iraq, becoming the second largest contributor to the US-led coalition against Islamic State.

Security measures at home have included a three-month state of emergency during which the police have launched hundreds of raids on homes, mosques, restaurants and hotels. — Reuters

## EU FAR FROM SATISFIED WITH TURKISH MIGRANT COOPERATION

**AMSTERDAM:** The European Union said yesterday it is far from satisfied with Turkey's cooperation in stemming the flow of migrants to Europe after a landmark deal clinched late last year.

More than one million refugees and migrants have flooded Europe's shores in the last year, most of them crossing from Turkey to Greece, in the biggest crisis of its kind the continent has faced since World War II. In November EU leaders pledged three billion euros (\$3.2 billion) in aid for the more than two million refugees currently sheltering on Turkish soil from the Syrian civil war, in exchange for Ankara acting to reduce the flow.

But the number of migrants travelling in the last couple of weeks via Turkey remains "relatively high," European Commission Vice President Frans Timmermans told a press conference in Amsterdam at the launch of the Netherlands' six-month EU presidency.

"We have seen the first results which are encouraging, but we are a long way from being satisfied," he said. "We will continue discussing ways of improving the effectiveness of their cooperation."

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte told the press conference his priorities for his country's EU presidency were to lower the numbers of migrants entering Europe and ensure EU member states share the burden fairly.

Rutte called for implementing an EU scheme, which was approved in October over the opposition of several eastern European capitals, to relocate 160,000 asylum seekers from frontline countries Greece and Italy to other member states. So far only about 270 people have been relocated.

### 'Very confident'

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker meanwhile said he was "very confident" the Dutch presidency would fulfil an EU plan to set up a pan-European border and coast guard force to protect the bloc's external border by the time its mandate ends on June 30.

EU leaders set the deadline at a summit in Brussels last month, although Poland and other countries have expressed concerns the force would infringe on their sovereign right to manage their own borders. The leaders acknowledged they had been too slow to carry out a joint strategy to tackle the crisis that Juncker's commission, the EU executive, revealed in May following a shipwreck in which nearly 800 migrants drowned.

Turkey remains a lynchpin of the EU's plan. Timmermans, a former Dutch foreign minister who has led the EU talks with Ankara, said he will travel to Turkey next Sunday to discuss the implementation of a joint action plan agreed last November.

The EU has also agreed to kickstart stalled talks on Turkey's push for membership in the 28-nation bloc and end the visa requirement for Turkish visitors to the EU's passport-free Schengen zone, which is under pressure from the migrant influx. In return, Turkey vowed to take steps to halt the migrant outflow, including cracking down on people smugglers and cooperating with the EU on taking back economic migrants who do not qualify as refugees.

Turkey is the main launching point for mainly Syrian refugees and migrants who make the dangerous sea crossing to Greece before travelling up through the Balkans to Austria, Germany and other wealthy northern EU countries. — AFP

## AMERICAN CHARGED OVER BOMBING ATTACK ON US BASE IN AFGHANISTAN

**NEW YORK:** A US citizen already accused of going to Pakistan to train with Al-Qaeda was charged Wednesday with helping build explosives for a 2009 suicide attack on an American military base in Afghanistan. A revised indictment charges Muhanad Mahmoud Al Farekh with conspiracy to murder US nationals, conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction and other crimes. He is to appear in federal court in Brooklyn later; there was no immediate comment by his lawyer.

The charges stem from an attack on Jan 19, 2009, involving two vehicles driven by

unidentified suicide bombers that were rigged with explosives, the new indictment says. Only one of the bombs detonated. Al Farekh's fingerprints were later found on packing tape used on the second explosive, the indictment says. The court papers didn't identify the base or detail the damage. News accounts from the same 2009 date cited in court papers described a dual-car bomb attack at Forward Operating Base Chapman in Khost City, near the border with Pakistan, which killed one Afghan and wounded several others, but harmed no Americans.

The 30-year-old Al Farekh, who was born

in Texas, "allegedly turned his back on our country and tried to kill US soldiers in the course of executing their sworn duty to keep us safe," Brooklyn US Attorney Robert Capers said in a statement. Al Farekh was brought from Pakistan to the United States in April to face initial charges of providing material support to terrorists. Federal authorities alleged he and two other students at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada, started watching Al-Qaeda propaganda and hatching a plan to become martyrs abroad.

The three flew to Karachi, Pakistan, on

round-trip tickets in March 2007 after selling their belongings, disconnecting their phones and buying mountain boots commonly worn by Al-Qaeda fighters in Pakistan and Afghanistan, authorities said. Prosecutors said one of Al Farekh's co-conspirators trained three men on how to use AK-47s and other weapons at an Al-Qaeda training camp in 2008, the complaint says. The three - Najibullah Zazi, Zarein Ahmedzay and Adis Medunjanin - were later convicted of plotting to bomb New York City's subway system and are cooperating with federal authorities. — AP

# TRUMP CONFRONTS RISING RIVAL CRUZ

'I'D LOVE TO WIN IOWA, TO ME, IOWA IS VERY IMPORTANT'

**WASHINGTON:** The US presidential nominations battle kicks off February 1 in Iowa. Donald Trump leads the Republican race nationally, but in the heartland state, he risks being eclipsed by Senator Ted Cruz, whose rise is bedeviling the billionaire. Gone is the conviviality between the two candidates atop the Republican field vying to take the White House in the 2016 election. Trump has dug deep into his file on the Texas senator to wield his latest political weapon: Cruz's birth in Canada 45 years ago, and questions about his rival's eligibility for the presidency.

In an interview Tuesday with the Washington Post, Trump appeared to jump at the chance to revive the issue and perhaps throw Cruz off his game. "Republicans are going to have to ask themselves the question: 'Do we want a candidate who could be tied up in court for two years?' That'd be a big problem," said the 69-year-old Trump. "I'd hate to see something like that get in his way. But a lot of people are talking about it," he added. Cruz declined to take the bait. Pressed on the matter Wednesday on the campaign trail, he expressed confidence that the legal matter has been settled. "People will continue to make political noise about it, but as a legal matter it's quite straightforward," he told reporters.

The US Constitution establishes three criteria for presidential eligibility: he or she must be age 35 or older, have resided in the United States for at least 14 years, and be a "natural born citizen." That last clause was left ambiguous, although it excludes naturalized Americans. Several experts believe that Cruz, born in Calgary to an American mother and Cuban father, meets the standard of a natural born US citizen. Cruz cited the precedent of 2008 Republican nominee John McCain, who was born in the Panama Canal Zone, and 1964 standard-bearer Barry Goldwater, born in Arizona before it became a US state. Anticipating possible controversy, Cruz renounced his Canadian citizenship in 2014.

Trump and Cruz have sized each other up for months. They occupy the same political lane, portraying themselves as Washington outsiders opposed to the



**NEW YORK:** Republican Presidential Candidate Donald Trump interviewed by journalist Wolf Blitzer for The Situation Room on CNN. — AFP

establishment. Cruz, elected in 2012 with support from the grass-roots Tea Party movement, leads Congress's rebellious wing, perpetually accusing his own party's leaders of being too accommodating to President Barack Obama. To date, Cruz has hesitated to clash with Trump, even when the real estate tycoon faced a barrage of criticism from many in his party for his anti-Muslim remarks. In return, during a party debate in December, Trump praised the senator's "wonderful temperament."

### Iowa: First test

Cruz has nudged ahead in Iowa among Republican voters, earning 31 percent support versus Trump's 27 percent, according to the RealClearPolitics poll average. It is far from a decisive lead, but enough to trigger Trump's exasperation. Cruz, a steadfast advocate of religious freedom, is a better logical fit for many evangelical conservatives in Iowa.

The results of the Iowa caucuses are famously unpredictable. Participation is low, about 20 percent, and most voters settle on their candidate in the final days. The winners of the previous two caucuses, Mike Huckabee in 2008 and

Rick Santorum in 2012, ultimately fell by the wayside. For Trump, a defeat in Iowa would dent his image as the undisputed Republican leader. "I'd love to win Iowa. To me, Iowa is very important," he told The Hill. Twelve Republicans remain in the race. Behind Trump and Cruz are Senator Marco Rubio; retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson; New Jersey Governor Chris Christie; and Jeb Bush, son and brother of two presidents.

The Democratic race is effectively between favorite Hillary Clinton, 68, and independent Senator Bernie Sanders, 74. Former Maryland governor Martin O'Malley trails in third and is seeking an Iowa miracle. Clinton finished third in Iowa in 2008, behind Obama and John Edwards. Today she stands at 50 percent in Iowa polls, 13 points ahead of Sanders. Her campaign is nonetheless investing considerable time and funds in the Hawkeye State, aware that a poor showing there would mark a terrible start to the year. She has barnstormed Iowa, hosting 69 events over 35 days there, the Des Moines Register said. "I know that if I get off to a good start here in Iowa, we're halfway home," Clinton said Monday in Davenport. — AFP

## A LOOK AT THE 'AFFLUENZA' TEEN'S MEXICO STRATEGY

**FORT WORTH:** A teenage fugitive who's known for using an "affluenza" defense at his trial for causing a deadly drunken car crash has won an injunction to stay in Mexico, but legal experts say any argument that his human rights have been infringed upon likely won't hold up. Ethan Couch, 18, and his mother, Tonya Couch, were taken into custody last week in the Pacific resort city of Puerto Vallarta, where authorities believe they fled in November as Texas prosecutors investigated whether he had violated the terms of his probation.

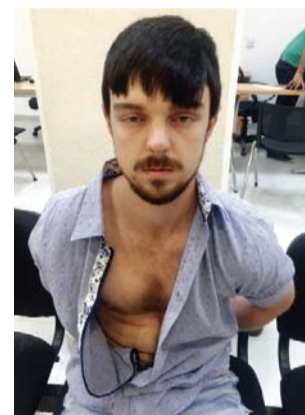
Ethan Couch was driving drunk and speeding near Fort Worth in June 2013 when he crashed into a disabled SUV, killing four people and injuring several others, including passengers in his pickup truck. He pleaded guilty in juvenile court to four counts of intoxication manslaughter and two counts of intoxication assault causing serious bodily injury and was sentenced to 10 years' probation. The Couches fled shortly after a video surfaced in November that appears to show Ethan Couch at a party where people were drinking. Couch is being held at an immigration detention center in Mexico City. His mother, meanwhile, awaits transfer to Texas from Los Angeles, where on Tuesday she waived her right to an extradition hearing.

### Why would Couch flee?

Because human rights are protected in the Mexican constitution, American felons fleeing capital punishment or lengthy prison terms have treated Mexico as a refuge, said Washington, DC-based attorney Bruce Zagaris. In 2005, though, the Mexican Supreme Court broke with legal tradition by agreeing to allow the extradition of criminal suspects who face life sentences abroad. Judges have refused extradition requests from the US when the suspect faces cruel and unusual punishment, including the death penalty. Zagaris said it's unlikely that such protections would be offered to Ethan Couch, though. "Because of his money and power, it's hard for Ethan Couch to allege, as you normally would if you were a potential victim of human rights violations, that he's going to be subject to unusual and cruel treatment," he said. It is unclear whether Mexico was the Couches' final destination, or what punishment they anticipated Ethan Couch would receive for violating his probation.

### What could Couch gain?

A federal judge could rule that he stays in Mexico on a permanent basis under court protection, but such a judgment is unlikely, legal experts said. While the judge considers his appeal, Couch will remain in the immigration detention center, which "buys time to prepare his defense" in the US, said Javier Lopez de Obeso, a San Antonio attorney licensed to practice in Mexico who is not involved with the case. Most likely, Lopez says, Couch will be deported back to Texas. Even if the judge rules in his favor, Mexican authorities are not likely to reject an extradition request from the US Tarrant County District Attorney Sharen Wilson has said she plans to ask a judge to transfer his case to adult court, where Couch could get up to 120 days in an adult jail, followed by 10 years of probation. — AP



**MEXICO:** This Dec 28, 2015 file photo, released by Mexico's Jalisco state prosecutor's office shows authorities identify as Ethan Couch, after he was taken into custody in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. — AP



**DARBHANGA, India** : Two year old malnourished Indian child Dinesh Pandit is fed by his mother Aasha Devis Pandit as he sits on a bed at the Nutritional Rehabilitation Centre at Darbhanga Medical College and hospital in Darbhanga in the eastern Indian state of Bihar. — AFP photos

## INDIA GOVERNMENT BATTLES TO TAME MALNUTRITION AS POPULATION SOARS

### INDIA STILL LAGS BEHIND ON CHILD NUTRITION

**DARBHANGA:** As another dangerously underweight toddler balances precariously on his set of scales, Dr Om Prakash knows he has to move fast to avert tragedy. "The children who are severely malnourished can die between a few hours to a few days," says the doctor during a shift at an intensive care unit exclusively for children in India's poorest state. "For the health of any person, nutrition is the first requirement. When nutrition is affected, all of the body's functions are deranged." The 30-bed hospital at Darbhanga in the eastern state of Bihar teems with children with protruding

largest number of malnourished children in the world, larger than in sub-Saharan Africa," Sashwati Banerjee, Managing Director, Sesame Workshop India said.

These children, if they survive, will grow up shorter and weaker, with their brains and immune systems compromised, more vulnerable to illness. Between 2006 and 2014, stunting levels in children under five declined from 48 percent to 39 percent, according to the Global Nutrition Report. But it still far exceeds a global average of 24 percent, found the report, which was overseen by the International Food Policy

food that has lower calories and is easily digestible," said Prakash. "Over time we increase the amount, then we switch to semi-solid food and gradually to the locally available food." Zalumun Khatoun's four-year-old grandson Shahadat Hussein weighs eight kilos, just half of the normal weight for his age. "He was on medication for nine months, then he had a fever all the time and he started to lose weight," she said, as doctors and nurses busily zipped in and out of the facility. While overall levels of malnutrition are on the slide, eradication efforts are also being undermined by the rapid rise in India's population which is expected to surpass China's by 2022, according to UN projections.

Bihar, which already has a population of 104 million, has one of the fastest rates of growth in the country with the average woman giving birth to four children. Often this is more mouths than they can afford to feed. The impoverished, largely rural state also has one of India's highest rates of malnutrition. The mothers, often poor and illiterate, are undernourished themselves—women's lower status means they lose out on limited food resources, leading many babies to be underweight from birth. A lack of awareness means they switch to cow or buffalo milk instead of breastfeeding, making their children prone to various illnesses. In addition, high rates of open defecation in India contribute to the problem.

The World Health Organization, together with UNICEF and USAID issued a report in November 2015 which they said demonstrated a link between a lack of sanitation and malnutrition. Open defecation increases the spread of diarrhoea, multiple episodes of which can permanently alter a child's gut, preventing the absorption of essential nutrients leading to stunted growth. In addition, intestinal parasites such as roundworm, and hookworm, are transmitted through contaminated soil in areas where open defecation is practiced. Hookworm is a major cause of anaemia in pregnant women, leading to malnourished, underweight babies, UNICEF said. — AFP



**DARBHANGA, India** : Two year old malnourished Indian child Dinesh Pandit lies on a weighing scale at the Nutritional Rehabilitation Centre at Darbhanga Medical College and hospital.

bellies and sunken eyes—tell-tale signs of wasting and stunting, owing to severe malnutrition.

While its economy is growing at a healthy rate, India still lags behind some of its poorer neighbors on child nutrition with more than 40 million stunted children, according to a recently released report. Despite the government spending billions of rupees on tackling the scourge, it has yet to make a serious dent in a problem perpetuated by poverty, gender inequality, and disease. "India actually houses the

Research Institute. Shrivelled and scrawny, the children at the Bihar centre are weighed in bright blue plastic tubs, normally used to carry water or laundry. There are no toys or drawings on the walls, only the sound of children wailing while others sit motionless and stare, dazed.

#### Normal food 'a disaster'

Doctors feed them a special concoction of sugar and milk based on how much they weigh. "It would be a disaster if normal food was given to them. So we give them

## SAUDI FM VISITS PAKISTAN AS IRAN TENSIONS DEEPEN

**ISLAMABAD:** Saudi Arabia's foreign minister arrived in Pakistan yesterday, where he will meet leaders of a government keen to defuse spiraling sectarian tension between the Sunni-majority kingdom and Shiite Iran. Saudi Arabia's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric on Saturday has inflamed tension across the Middle East and infuriated Iran, Riyadh's main rival in the region. Several of Saudi Arabia's Sunni allies have broken diplomatic ties with Iran after demonstrators ransacked the Saudi embassy in Tehran.

Pakistan, which has a large Shiite minority, has sought to avoid taking sides as Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif tries to stem sectarian violence at home and boost economic ties with both Saudi Arabia and Iran. Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir is due to meet Sharif, his foreign affairs adviser Sartaj Aziz, and army chief General Raheel Sharif later. Pakistan's foreign ministry said a joint news conference with Al-Jubeir set for yesterday had been cancelled, citing a delay in his arrival for the two-day visit.

Aziz, Sharif's foreign affairs adviser, said that Pakistan was a friend of both Saudi Arabia and Iran, and would seek to heal the rift between them during al-Jubeir's visit. "Pakistan has called for resolution of differences through peaceful means in the larger interest of Muslim unity in these challenging times," Aziz told parliament on Tuesday. The visit comes after Pakistan last month distanced itself from an anti-Islamic State coalition announced by Saudi Arabia, which had named Pakistan as a member. Pakistan also declined a Saudi call to join a Riyadh-led intervention, backed by most Sunni Gulf Arab states, in Yemen last year to fight Iranian-allied rebels. — Reuters

## TALKS UNCERTAIN AS INDIA URGES PAKISTAN TO HUNT MILITANTS FIRST

**NEW DELHI:** India called on Pakistan yesterday to take "prompt and decisive" action against militants it blames for an attack on an air base, days before fraught peace talks between the nuclear-armed neighbors are scheduled to resume. A meeting between the foreign secretaries of both nations had been tentatively scheduled for Jan 15, but it is unclear if it will still happen after the weekend attack on the Indian Air Force base near the Pakistan border. India's foreign ministry said Islamabad has been given actionable intelligence that those who planned the assault came from Pakistan. "As far as we are concerned the ball is now in Pakistan's court," spokesman Vikas Swarup told reporters when asked if the talks were on. "The immediate issue in front of us is Pakistan's response to the terrorist attack."

A senior Pakistani official said India provided intelligence that included telephone numbers, call intercepts, and locations where they believe the attackers or their handlers were. Pakistan is following up the leads, the official said, and hopes that the talks would not be cancelled while it explores them. Prime ministers Narendra Modi of India and Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan are struggling to keep their renewed dialogue on track after the militant attack killed seven Indian military personnel and wounded 22. Modi made a surprise stopover in Pakistan last month, the first time an Indian premier has visited in over a decade.

#### Latest talks

The standoff after the apparent thaw is part of a pattern over the years. Attempts to restart talks have been frequently thwarted by attacks between the two countries, which have fought three wars since becoming separate nations in 1947. With such an eventuality in mind, the national security advisers of the two countries agreed on a process during a meeting in early December to keep dialogue going in case of a potential disruption, the Pakistani official said. As a result, Indian NSA Ajit Doval has spoken at least three times by phone with his Pakistani counterpart, Naseer Khan Janjua, since the attack, including last Saturday evening when the fighting was still ongoing, the Pakistani official said.

India's security establishment has blamed the attack on militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad, alleged to have been behind an assault on the country's parliament in 2001 that almost brought the two countries to war for a fourth time. The Pakistani official said Pakistan could temporarily arrest Jaish-e-Mohammad's leader Masood Azhar to appease India, but only if the leads checked out. Pakistan also expects DNA evidence, bodies and other forms of identification from India "within days", the official said. Sharif met senior ministers and his national security advisers yesterday and discussed "issues pertaining to national and regional security", according to a statement from his office. — Reuters





SRINAGAR, JAMMU AND KASHMIR, India : Kashmiri mourners carry the coffin of the chief minister of the state of Jammu and Kashmir Mufti Mohammad Sayeed during funeral prayers in Srinagar yesterday. —AFP photos

# INDIAN KASHMIR CHIEF MINISTER DIES

**SRINAGAR, India:** Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, chief minister of India's restive Kashmir region and one of the country's best-known Muslim politicians, died yesterday, an official said. The 79-year-old, whose party is in a controversial coalition with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist party in the Himalayan region, is likely to be succeeded as chief minister by his daughter. Sayeed died in hospital in New Delhi after being admitted on December 24 suffering from a respiratory illness, a hospital official told AFP.

His daughter Mehbooba Mufti, current head of the moderate People's Democratic Party (PDP) that he founded in 1999, is widely expected to take over as the state's first female chief minister. He will be given a state funeral in Kashmir, with Modi expected to attend. "Mufti Sahab's demise leaves a huge void in the nation & in J&K, where his exemplary leadership had a major impact on people's lives," the prime minister tweeted, using an honorific denoting respect. Sayeed's PDP controversially went into coalition in Jammu and Kashmir state with Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party after state elections at the end of 2014. The PDP's main support base is among Muslims in the Kashmir Valley, the epicentre of the separatist insurgency that broke out in 1989, although the party stops short of calling for independence for the restive Himalayan region.

## 'Limited options'

Analysts said the death of the veteran leader, who also served as chief minister in Kashmir between 2002 and 2005, was unlikely to trigger major change. "The BJP and PDP have limited options

and will try to continue in power," said Happymon Jacob, assistant professor of international studies at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University. "But Mehbooba is a bit immature when it comes to the administrative part. She has never held any position in the government and has to start from scratch in an alliance with an ideologically disparate partner." Sayeed, a former lawyer, was appointed India's first Muslim home minister in 1989.

Later the same year another of his daughters was kidnapped by Kashmiri militants. She was eventually released in exchange for five jailed rebels. His party won the 2002 election in Kashmir on a promise to bring a "healing touch" to the war-ravaged region, and Sayeed has won praise for his efforts to bring about

reconciliation. But he also faced criticism at home for his perceived closeness to New Delhi. A profile of the chief minister in the latest issue of Indian magazine *The Caravan* was headlined "The Collaborator-How Mufti Mohammad Sayeed became Delhi's man in Kashmir". Several rebel groups have for decades been fighting Indian forces deployed on the Indian side of divided Kashmir, seeking independence or a merger of the territory with Pakistan. The fighting has left tens of thousands dead, mostly civilians. The region is divided between India and Pakistan, both of which claim the Himalayan territory in its entirety. Sayeed's body flown yesterday to Kashmir, where his funeral is expected to take place later in the day. — AFP



SRINAGAR, JAMMU AND KASHMIR, India : Kashmiri mourners offer funeral prayers for the chief minister of the state of Jammu and Kashmir Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

## CHINESE PRESSURE SEES PAKISTAN MULL STATUS OF REGION DISPUTED BY INDIA

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan is mulling upgrading the constitutional status of its northern Gilgit-Baltistan region, which is also claimed by India, in a bid to provide legal cover to a multi-billion-dollar Chinese investment plan, officials said yesterday.

The move could signal a historic shift in Pakistan's position on the future of the wider Kashmir region, observers have said, dealing another potential blow to fragile peace talk efforts that received a boost after India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Lahore in December. The proposal would see the mountainous region mentioned by name for the first time in Pakistan's constitution, bringing it one step closer to being fully absorbed as an additional province.

Islamabad has historically insisted the parts of Kashmir it controls are semi-autonomous and has not formally integrated them into the country, in line with its position that a referendum should be carried out across the whole of the region. Sajjad Al-Haq, spokesman for the chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan Hafiz Hafeez Al-Rehman, told AFP: "A high level committee formed by the prime minister is working on the issue, you will hear good news soon." Rehman, who arrived in Islamabad yesterday, was working on the finishing touches to the agreement, a senior official said, adding the document could be unveiled "in a few days". In addition to being named in the constitution, Gilgit-Baltistan would also send two lawmakers to sit in the federal parliament though they would be given observer status only.

### Indian-claimed territory

A third top government official from Gilgit-Baltistan said the move was in response to concerns raised by Beijing about the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, an ambitious \$46 billion infrastructure plan set to link China's western city of Kashgar to the Pakistani port of Gwadar on the Arabian Sea. "China cannot afford to invest billions of dollars on a road that passes through a disputed territory claimed both by India and Pakistan," the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said. The corridor plans have been strongly criticized by New Delhi, with India's Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj in June calling the project "unacceptable" for crossing through Indian-claimed territory. — AFP

## DO MORE TO RESCUE WOMEN TRAFFICKED TO GOA, CHARITY TELLS INDIA GOVERNMENT

**MUMBAI:** A prominent charity in India's beach resort state of Goa called on the government yesterday to do more to rescue thousands of women and children who are trafficked to the popular tourism spot every year for sexual exploitation and forced labor. Home Ministry data show more than 5,000 women and children were rescued from various forms of modern day slavery in Goa in the first 10 months of 2015. But charities and police working to end human trafficking in the western coastal state disputed the data, saying they believed the number of victims rescued was much lower.

"The demand for commercial sex workers is high during the tourist season of October to February, but unfortunately there are very few rescues during this time as the police are busy with tourists and music shows and other activities," said Arun Pandey, director of the charity Anyay Rahit Zindagi. "Most rescues are during the monsoon, when the police are relatively free. But there haven't been as many rescues as this data claims," he said, adding that only a couple of hundred victims were rescued each year.

### Hospitality industry

Almost 36 million people are enslaved worldwide - trafficked into brothels, forced into manual labor, victims of debt bondage or even born into servitude, according to the 2014 Global Slavery Index. Almost half of them - 16 million - are in India, where slavery ranges from bonded labor in quarries and kilns to domestic servitude and prostitution. Activists in Goa say up to 4,000 women and children from Nepal, Bangladesh, Thailand and from other Indian states are duped by traffickers who promise them good jobs in the state, which is famed for its palm-fringed beaches and night life. Instead, they find themselves being exploited in brothels fronted by hotels, beauty salons, spas and bars or used in forced labor such as domestic work or in the hospitality industry. Minister of State Haribhai Parathibhai Chaudhary told India's parliament last month that 4,371 women and 823 children were rescued in Goa in the first 10 months of 2015 — the highest number rescued in that period from any Indian state. — Reuters

# IRAN EMBASSY IN YEMEN 'BOMBED'

## TEHRAN ACCUSES SAUDI AS TENSION ESCALATIONS

**TEHRAN:** Iran yesterday accused Saudi warplanes of deliberately bombing its embassy in Yemen, in a new escalation of diplomatic tensions that have reverberated across the Middle East. Shiite-dominated Iran also announced a ban on imports of all products from its Sunni-ruled rival, following a dramatic chill in relations that has triggered international alarm. It comes days after Saudi Arabia broke off diplomatic ties with Iran in response to an arson attack on its own embassy in Tehran by protesters infuriated by Riyadh's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric.

Tehran said an unspecified number of embassy staff had been wounded in the raid on the rebel-held Yemeni capital Sanaa, which has been targeted by months of air strikes by a Saudi-led Arab coalition. "This deliberate action by Saudi Arabia is a violation of all international conventions that protect diplomatic missions," Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Hossein Jaber Ansari said, quoted by state television.

"The Saudi government is responsible for the damage caused and for the situation of members of staff who were injured," Ansari added, without specifying when the alleged strike took place or the seriousness of the injuries. "The Islamic republic reserves the right to pursue its interests in this mat-

ter," he said. Iran also announced that a ban on Iranians travelling to the Saudi holy city of Mecca for the umrah pilgrimage would remain in place indefinitely. Longstanding frictions between the Middle East's foremost Sunni and Shiite Muslim powers exploded into a full-blown diplomatic crisis at the weekend when Riyadh executed Shiite cleric and activist Nimr Al-Nimr along with 46 others.

### Diplomatic fallout

Nimr's death unleashed a wave of anger across the Shiite world, including in Iran where protesters stormed and set fire to the Saudi embassy in Tehran and consulate in the second city of Mashhad. Iran denounced the attacks on the Saudi missions, but the repercussions quickly rippled across the region with Saudi allies Bahrain, Sudan and Djibouti also cutting diplomatic ties with Tehran. The United Arab Emirates downgraded relations with Iran while Kuwait and Qatar recalled their ambassadors. The Yemen conflict, which pits the pro-Iranian Houthi Shiite rebels against pro-government forces backed by Riyadh and other Gulf Arab states, is one of the main sources of dispute between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

They also support opposing sides in Syria, where Tehran has provided military

assistance to its close ally President Bashar Al-Assad against rebel groups, some backed by Saudi Arabia. The growing tensions have heaped doubt on a UN-backed plan that foresees talks between the Syrian sides this month in a bid to end a war that has claimed more than a quarter of a million lives. The roadmap, unanimously adopted by the UN Security Council, calls for the establishment of a transitional government within six months and elections within 18 months.

The Iran-Saudi crisis also threatens a fragile UN-backed initiative to end the war in Yemen, where the world body says at least 2,795 civilians have been killed since March. UN envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed has called for a new round of talks on January 14 but the sides have yet to confirm that they will attend. At the same time the row has dealt another blow to the unity of the OPEC oil cartel, which includes both Iran and Saudi Arabia, at a time when a glut of crude on world markets has sent prices plunging. The growing Middle East tensions have further reduced expectations of any action by OPEC to try to shore up oil prices. With fears of weaker Chinese demand also mounting, New York's main crude contract slid to a 12-year low of \$32.10 a barrel yesterday. — AFP

## PROTESTS AS TWO CIVILIAN JETS LAND ON CHINESE-BUILT ISLAND

**BEIJING:** Two civilian jets landed on the airstrip of a new island China built in the South China Sea, drawing more protests over China's activities in disputed waters. The China Daily newspaper reported yesterday the planes made the two-hour flight to Fiery Cross Reef from Haikou on the southern island province of Hainan. It said the test flights on Wednesday proved the runway's ability to safely handle large civilian aircraft. Photos showed one of the planes to be a China Southern Airlines Airbus A319-115. An earlier test flight Saturday drew angry protests from Vietnam, Philippines and Japan. China's building of seven islands by piling sand on reefs and atolls has been condemned by its neighbors and the United States, which accused China of raising tensions in an area where six governments maintain overlapping maritime territorial claims. In Manila, visiting British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond said freedom of navigation and overflight in the South China Sea was non-negotiable and urged rival governments to avoid provocative steps. "They are red lines for us," Hammond said, adding that as a major trading nation, Britain expects to continue exercising those rights.

Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Hai Binh said in a statement that China's action seriously violated Vietnam's sovereignty and demanded China immediately stop and that it respect international law. Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario warned that China may next impose an air defense identification zone above the contested region, as it did over the East China Sea, and said such a move would be "unacceptable." China has rejected calls for a halt in island construction, saying its claim of sovereignty over the entire area gives it the right to proceed as it wishes. It says the new islands are principally for civilian use but also help defend Chinese sovereignty. China's robust assertions of its claims have sparked tense exchanges, mainly among China, Vietnam and the Philippines, over long-disputed and potentially oil- or gas-rich offshore territories also claimed by Taiwan, Malaysia and Brunei. That's also creating new tensions with the US, which has refused to recognize the new islands as geographic features deserving of territorial waters and other aspects of sovereignty. — AP

# S KOREA SEEKS US STRATEGIC WEAPONS AFTER NUKE TEST

**SEOUL:** South Korea is in talks with the United States to deploy US strategic weapons on the Korean peninsula, a South Korean military official said yesterday, a day after North Korea said it successfully tested a hydrogen nuclear device. South Korea also said it would resume propaganda broadcasts by loudspeaker into North Korea from today, which is likely to infuriate its isolated rival, in response to its fourth nuclear test. The United States and weapons experts voiced doubts the device North Korea tested on Wednesday was a hydrogen bomb, but calls mounted for more sanctions against it for its rogue nuclear program. The underground explosion angered China, which was not given prior notice although it is North Korea's main ally, pointing to a strain in their ties.

The test also alarmed Japan. Its prime minister, Shinzo Abe, agreed with US President Barack Obama in a telephone call that a firm global response was needed, the White House said. Obama also spoke to President Park Geun-hye of South Korea to discuss options. A South Korean military official told Reuters the two countries had discussed the deployment of US strategic assets on the divided Korean peninsula, but declined to give further details. After North Korea last tested a nuclear device, in 2013, Washington sent a pair of nuclear-capable B-2 stealth bombers on a sortie over South Korea in a show of force. At the time, North Korea responded by threatening a nuclear strike on the United States.



**NORTH KOREA:** In this Oct 10, 2015, file photo, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un salutes at a parade in Pyongyang. — AP

South Korea, technically in a state of war against the North, said it was not considering a nuclear deterrent of its own, despite calls from ruling party leaders. The United States is highly unlikely to restore the tactical nuclear missiles it removed from South Korea in 1991, experts said. The test was a "grave violation" of an August agreement by the two Koreas to ease tension and improve ties, a South Korean national security official, Cho Tae-yong, said in a statement. "Our military is at a state of full readiness, and if North Korea wages provocation, there will be firm punishment."

The South raised its military alert to the highest level in areas along the border near its propaganda loudspeakers, the South's Yonhap news agency reported yesterday. The United States is limited in its military response for fear of provoking an unpredictable regime in Pyongyang, said Anthony Cordesman, a defense policy expert at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies think-tank. "Any escalation in this region, any over-reaction can easily lead to not only a conflict between South and North Korea, but drag China and the United States and Japan into a confrontation,"

Cordesman said.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman called for a resumption of so-called six-party talks between the two Koreas, China, the United States, Japan and Russia aimed at curbing North Korea's nuclear ambitions. "We are worried about how things are developing," the spokeswoman, Hua Chunying, told a briefing. Asked about a suggestion from US Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump that China could do more to rein in North Korea, Hua said: "What constructive efforts have they made?" Hours after the nuclear test, the UN Security Council said it

would work immediately on significant new measures against North Korea. Diplomats said that could mean an expansion of sanctions, although major powers might balk at an all-out economic offensive. North Korea has a long history of bellicose rhetoric against the United States and its Asian allies but its assertion that it had tested a hydrogen device, much more powerful than an atomic bomb, came as a surprise. North Korea also said it was capable of miniaturizing the H-bomb, in theory allowing it to be placed on a missile and threatening the US West Coast, South Korea and Japan. — Reuters



**NORTH KOREA:** North Korean soldiers turn and look towards leader Kim Jong Un as they carry packs marked with the nuclear symbol during a parade marking the 60th anniversary of the Korean War armistice in Pyongyang, North Korea. — AP

# Lifes

PEOPLE'S  
CHOICE  
AWARDS



'Furious 7,' 'Big Bang Theory'  
win at People's Choice Awards



In this Feb 11, 2007 file photo, Carrie Underwood poses with the awards for best new artist and for best female country vocal performance for 'Jesus, Take the Wheel' at the 49th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles. Underwood rose to fame as the winner of the fourth season of 'American Idol,' in 2005. — AP photos



In this Feb 25, 2007 file photo, singer and actress Jennifer Hudson poses with the Oscar she won for best supporting actress for her work in "Dreamgirls" at the 79th Academy Awards in Los Angeles.



In this Aug 22, 2015 photo released by Fox, judges Keith Urban, from left, Jennifer Lopez and Harry Connick Jr appear at auditions for the final season of 'American Idol,' in Little Rock, Ark.



In this March 4, 2015 file photo, American singer and songwriter Kelly Clarkson poses for a portrait in promotion of her forthcoming album 'Piece by Piece' at the Sony Club in New York.

## 'American Idol' back for last time before lights out

It was the glitzy, record-breaking show that launched some of the brightest entertainment careers in recent times, but as "American Idol" kicks off for a final season Wednesday, it is a star on the wane. When the 15th series debuts on Fox it will rely in part on a cameo role from rap superstar Kanye West going through the motions of an audition to pull in the punters. Tough competition, declining appetite among millennials for live television and a new trend of signing a record deal after being discovered on YouTube means that the public has lost its taste for "American Idol."

When the last winner of the franchise is crowned in April, it will be the end of what its magnetic host Ryan Seacrest optimistically calls "part of Americana" and "part of American history." A spin-off of popular British series "Pop Idol," "American Idol" began in 2002 and pulled in record audiences between 2003 and 2011, culminating in average viewing figures of 31.2 million in its 2005-06 heyday. The format was simple: thousands of aspiring singers dreaming of stardom audition before a panel of celebrity judges, then fight to keep their places each week in a sing-off decided by a public vote.

TV talent shows date back to the mid-20th century. What was different was the promise of a recording contract and a new life of stardom. "We had talent shows as far back as the late 40s and early 50s,"

says Dominic Caristi, professor of telecommunications at Ball State University. "Talent competitions are not new. But what was new here, the show reinvigorated this idea that people could become a star."

The first winner was Kelly Clarkson in 2002, a 20-year-old cocktail waitress from Texas at the time who went on to sell more than 10 million albums and win three Grammy Awards.

Carrie Underwood won season four in 2005, since selling nearly 60 million albums, and Jennifer Hudson, booted off the third season, went on to win an Oscar and a Grammy as a singer and actress. "We genuinely create superstars," said Simon Fuller, the British creator, in a clip ahead of the final season. "That's the thing about American Idol that sets us apart."

### Losing interest

Part of the show's success was thanks to the charm of Seacrest and the icy putdowns of British impresario Simon Cowell, the most famous of its judges, who stepped down in 2010. Cowell, dressed in a white shirt unbuttoned halfway to the navel, captured the imagination of an American public reared on political correctness. "I think it changed, certainly network television in America. Shows like 'Survivor' and 'American Idol' set the tone for reality shows we're watching today,"

said Caristi. But over the last 10 years the rise of the Internet and online consumption of music and videos have seen "American Idol" lose its grip.

"Young people who want to be rock stars now have this hope of making a video, submit it somewhere, get attention and become stars," said Caristi. Justin Bieber and Lana Del Rey are among those who have been discovered in the last 10 years after self-promoting their music on YouTube. In 2011, rival network NBC launched "The Voice," which in 2013-14 pulled in more viewers than "American Idol."

But more profoundly, the TV talent show came unstuck by the declining appetite among young people for live television, with the preference now for recorded programs they can watch whenever they like. "More people are watching at whatever time suits them. And so it's harder to get 'buzz' from social media," said Caristi. To go out with a bang, Fox has promised surprises for the 15th season.

On Wednesday night, viewers will see West, Kim Kardashian's husband, put through his paces at an audition under the watchful eye of judges Keith Urban, Harry Connick Jr and Jennifer Lopez. Other celebrity appearances are also in the works, stars hoping to cash in from being on television and watched by an audience which is today no more than a third of the record viewership in 2006. — AFP

## Janet Jackson says she's getting better after tour halt

Janet Jackson says she's getting better and doesn't have cancer as speculation swirls over a mystery malady that led the pop superstar to suspend her world tour. The 49-year-old singer on Christmas Eve announced that she was postponing an unspecified number of concerts as doctors told her she needed an operation "soon." While she had insisted that she would not comment further, Jackson released a new message late Wednesday to refute reports on her condition. "The rumors are untrue. I do not have cancer," wrote Jackson, who still did not specify her ailment.

"I'm recovering. My doctors have approved my concerts as scheduled in Europe, and as I promised, the postponed shows will be rescheduled," she said, giving a clearer indication on when she will resume her tour. Jackson is due to open the European leg of her "Unbreakable" album's tour on March 30 in Birmingham, England. She has more than two months of concerts scheduled before then around North America. Jackson began her tour on

August 31 in Vancouver and has already performed extensively across North America, along with several dates in Japan.

Jackson released the update on her health through social media in the form of a silent message on a black screen at the end of a two-minute video. The clip begins with a snippet from her song "The Great Forever" off her latest album, in which she sings, "Not too pleased with what you're digging / I'm just busy living my life." Jackson had temporarily retreated from the public eye after her brother Michael died in 2009 but returned two years later with a global tour. "Unbreakable," with a sound often eerily reminiscent of her late brother's, is her first album since the King of Pop's death. Jackson in the 1980s became a superstar in her own right, pursuing elaborate stage formations and socially conscious messaging on works such as "Rhythm Nation." — AFP



This May 23, 2013 file photo shows US singer Janet Jackson as she arrives for the amFAR's 20th Annual Cinema Against AIDS, during the 66th Annual Cannes Film Festival.

## Christina Hendricks joins 'Bad Santa 2'

Christina Hendricks has joined the cast of Miramax and Broad Green Pictures pic "Bad Santa 2" starring Billy Bob Thornton. Tony Cox and Brett Kelly are returning, and Kathy Bates also recently joined the cast. Mark Waters is directing the sequel, which is being produced by Andrew Gunn and Geyer Kosinski. Broad Green and Miramax are co-financing and co-producing the comedy. Shooting begins in Montreal next week.

Plot details are vague, but Hendricks will play an Ivy League-educated, upper-class woman who runs a charity that is targeted by Thornton's mall Santa and his foul-mouthed, tough-as-nails mother. Hendricks will also play Thornton's love interest. Johnny Rosenthal, Doug Ellin and Shauna Cross wrote the script. Miramax's Zanne Devine and David Thwaites, Broad Green's Gabriel and Daniel Hammond, Waters, Ellin and Jessica Tuchinsky are exec producing.

Hendricks can be seen next opposite Michael Shannon in the indie "Pottersville," which has begun shooting, and she has a starring role on SundanceTV's "Hap And Leonard," a series based on the Joe Lansdale novels. She is repped by ICM Partners, LINK and attorney Howard Fishman. Deadline Hollywood first reported the news. — Reuters

## Tickets sell out for Guns N' Roses Coachella

Tickets quickly sold out Wednesday for the Coachella music festival where hard rockers Guns N' Roses will reunite after more than two decades. Passes for the three-day festival in the southern California desert went on sale online at 11 am (1900 GMT) and one hour later Coachella social media accounts said that all tickets were gone. Coachella, which has become one of the world's best-known festivals, draws more than 180,000 people a year over two consecutive three-day weekends with identical lineups.

Guns N' Roses, whose 1987 album "Appetite for Destruction" remains the top-selling US debut ever, are scheduled as headliners on the two Saturdays—April 16 and April 23. The festival will mark the first time that singer Axl Rose and guitarist Slash play together since 1993 when they ended a tour in Argentina amid personality disputes. Other prominent acts at Coachella this year will include LCD Soundsystem, the influential New York electronic band from the 2000s that is also reuniting, as well as pioneering gangsta rapper Ice Cube and singers Ellie Goulding and Sia. — AFP



In this April 23, 2014 file photo, Axl Rose, left, and Duff McKagan of Guns N' Roses perform at the 6th Annual Revolver Golden Gods Award Show in Los Angeles. — AP

## Adele, streaming services lift 2015 music sales

The rapid growth of streaming and sensational success of Adele triggered a rebound of overall music consumption last year in the United States and Britain, industry trackers said Wednesday. The growth came despite a persistent fall in CD sales and a growing decline in digital downloads on service such as iTunes as consumers turn to online streaming services and their unlimited, on-demand selection. US music consumption rose 15.2 percent in 2015 from a year earlier to 549.4 million albums or their digital equivalent, reversing a decline in 2014, Nielsen Music said in an annual report.

British music consumption also reversed a slump, with album equivalent sales rising 3.7 percent, according to data released separately Wednesday by the British Phonographic Industry trade association. Both the United States and Britain, the world's largest and fourth-largest music markets respectively, saw streaming volumes nearly double as new competitors such as Apple Music and Jay Z's Tidal helped expand a sector led by Sweden's Spotify. Music streams went up 92.8 percent year-on-year to 317.2 billion songs in the United States and rose by 81.7 percent in Britain. "You're going to continue to see the types of growth that we've been seeing for a long time to come, I think," said David Bakula, Nielsen's senior vice president of industry insights.

### More listening, but more profits?

Nielsen looks at consumption and not directly at revenue—which is a major sore point for many artists who argue that their compensation from streaming is puny. Industry bodies will report detailed figures on profits in the coming months. Bakula said that the Nielsen data showed a growing industry in net terms. "People have been conditioned to look at album numbers for so long as the health of the industry," he said. "Down six percent"—the year's decline in total album sales without factoring in streaming—"doesn't sound as bad when you add in" billions of streams, he said.

Yet leading the way in 2015's rebound was one of the few artists to reject streaming—Adele. Backed by public anticipation due to a more than four-year wait since her previous album, Adele's "25" enjoyed the biggest first-week sales on record in the United States and Britain. "25," full of ballads of heartache and childhood nostalgia, was by far the top-selling album in both countries for the year even though it came out on November 20. Nielsen said its research found that about one-third of US consumers planned to buy "25," with around 20 percent of them not generally music consumers.

### Adele effect

Yet even with its record-breaking numbers, "25" accounted for



In this image released by NBC, Adele performs at Radio City Music Hall in New York. — AP

just 3.1 percent of US album sales for the year, meaning Adelemania likely had knock-on effects. "I think the impact, beyond just the sales part of it, is the fact that people were talking about it—people who are not your traditional music buyers," Bakula said. Another steep source of growth, but on a much smaller scale than streaming, is its low-tech foil-vinyl, which has enjoyed a rebirth led by collectors. Vinyl sales rose by nearly 30 percent in the United States and shot up by more than 64 percent in Britain.

Nielsen found disparities in format choices based on genre. More than half of US listeners to Latin music or electronica were streaming, while physical sales were particularly strong among buyers of jazz, classical, children's or holiday-oriented music. Pop star Taylor Swift's "1989," the top US album in 2014, was the second best-seller last year, beating out Justin Bieber's new work "Purpose." On Britain's full-year chart, Adele was followed by Ed Sheeran and Sam Smith—two recent English stars whose albums came out in 2014 — while fourth place went to the late Elvis Presley. His album, "If I Can Dream," features archival recordings of The King accompanied by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. — AFP

## 'Star Wars' passes 'Avatar' for N America box office record

"Star Wars: The Force Awakens" soared past "Avatar" on Wednesday to become the top-grossing movie of all time in North America, riding on hype, nostalgia and an inventive script. Disney said the seventh film in the "Star Wars" saga had grossed \$758.2 million through Tuesday, when it took in \$8 million, and surpassed on Wednesday the \$760.5 million earned by James Cameron's Oscar-winning sci-fi epic "Avatar."

"This afternoon, with early box office results in, 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' became the highest-grossing film of all time in the domestic market," Disney said in a statement, without providing figures. The "humbled and grateful" company thanked its fans for helping it reach the milestone, saying that without them "there is no Star Wars." "There has indeed been an awakening—and it's all thanks to you," it said.

At \$1.56 billion in global earnings, "The Force Awakens" still has some work ahead on that scale to overtake "Avatar" (\$2.79 billion) or another Cameron blockbuster, "Titanic" (\$2.19 billion). It is now fourth in all-time worldwide revenues, also trailing "Jurassic World" (\$1.67 billion). But many observers expect the film ultimately to challenge for the top spot. "Star Wars has always been one of the most beloved franchises in all of filmdom... it was just a matter of finally having a deserving sequel to the original trilogy that tipped the scales and topped 'Avatar,'" said Jeff Bock, of industry tracker Exhibitor Relations.

The upcoming release on Saturday in the huge Chinese market of the film directed by JJ Abrams could help give it a further push to light speed. The success of "The Force Awakens"—detailing the adventures of classic "Star Wars" characters Princess Leia and Han Solo as well as new heroes like Rey, Finn and Poe Dameron—helped propel the overall American box office to a record \$11.1 billion last year, the Rentrak website reported. Robert Thompson, a professor of popular culture at Syracuse University in New York, said the hype and marketing surrounding the latest "Star War" had helped ensure its success but so was the fact that it is a good movie.

"Had the film been a disappointment, the numbers after the first weekend would have been a very different story," he told AFP. "My prediction is that 'Avatar' will retain its global crown, but I could certainly be wrong on that." Disney, which purchased Lucasfilm from "Star Wars" creator George Lucas for \$4 billion in 2012, plans two more films in the space saga and a spinoff. James Cameron is also planning three sequels to "Avatar," which should ensure that the two franchises will continue battling it out for the top spot at the box office. — AFP



This December 18, 2015 file photo shows Star Wars fans raising their lightsabers during Lightsaber Battle LA on Pershing Square in downtown Los Angeles, California. — AFP



This photo provided by Universal Pictures shows, from left, Tyrese Gibson as Roman, Michelle Rodriguez as Letty, Paul Walker as Brian, and Chris Ludacris as Tej, in a scene from 'Furious 7.' — AP



Ellen DeGeneres poses in the press room with the award for favorite daytime TV host and favorite humanitarian.



Sandra Bullock accepts the award for favorite movie actress for 'Our Brand Is Crisis'.

# 'Furious 7,' 'Big Bang Theory' win at People's Choice Awards



Chris Hemsworth accepts the award for favorite action movie actor for 'Avengers: Age Of Ultron'.

**"F**urious 7" was named favorite movie, "The Big Bang Theory" won top TV show, and Ellen DeGeneres set a record at the People's Choice Awards. The fan-voted prizes were presented Wednesday night in Los Angeles at a ceremony hosted by Jane Lynch. DeGeneres received a humanitarian award, as well as the trophy for favorite daytime TV host, bringing her total People's Choice wins to a record-tying 17. A select list of winners:

**Movie:** "Furious 7"  
**Movie actor:** Channing Tatum  
**Movie actress:** Sandra Bullock  
**Action movie:** "Furious 7"  
**Comedic movie:** "Pitch Perfect 2"  
**Dramatic movie:** "The Martian"  
**Family movie:** "Minions"

**Thriller movie:** "Taken 3"  
**TV show:** "The Big Bang Theory"  
**Network TV comedy:** "The Big Bang Theory"  
**Network TV drama:** "Grey's Anatomy"  
**Cable TV comedy:** "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia"  
**Cable TV drama:** "Pretty Little Liars"  
**Competition TV show:** "The Voice"  
**Streaming series:** "Orange is the New Black"  
**Animated TV show:** "The Simpsons"  
**Male musician:** Ed Sheeran  
**Female musician:** Taylor Swift  
**Group:** Fifth Harmony  
**Album:** "Title," Meghan Trainor  
**Song:** "What Do You Mean?" Justin Bieber  
**Social media celebrity:** Britney Spears  
**Mobile game:** "Candy Crush Saga"— AP



Melissa McCarthy accepts the award for favorite comedic movie actress for 'Spy'.



Taylor Kinney accepts the award for favorite dramatic TV actor for "Chicago Fire".



Dakota Johnson, left, accepts the award for favorite dramatic movie actress for 'Fifty Shades of Grey' from Alison Brie.



Johnny Depp accepts the award for favorite dramatic movie actor for 'Black Mass'.



Host Jane Lynch performs at the People's Choice Awards.



Shay Mitchell, and from left, Ashley Benson, Troian Bellisario, Lucy Hale, and Ian Harding accept the award for favorite cable TV drama for 'Pretty Little Liars'.



Meghan Trainor poses in the press room with the award for favorite album for "Title".



Priyanka Chopra, left, and John Stamos present the award for favorite movie.



Julie Chen, and from left, Aisha Tyler, Sara Gilbert, Sharon Osbourne, and Sheryl Underwood accept the award for favorite daytime TV hosting team for 'The Talk'.



James Pickens, Jr., and from left, Sarah Drew, Camilla Luddington, Ellen Pompeo, Jerrika Hinton, Kelly McCreary, Caterina Scorsone, Chandra Wilson and Justin Chambers pose with the award for favorite network TV drama.



Jack Black, left, and Kate Hudson present the award for favorite comedic movie actress.



Vanessa Hudgens, and from left, Keke Palmer, Julianne Hough, Carly Rae Jepsen, and Kether Donohue arrive at the People's Choice Awards.



Kaley Cuoco, center, and the cast and crew of 'The Big Bang Theory' accept the award for favorite network TV comedy.



Natalie Dormer, right, presents the award for favorite dramatic TV actor to Taylor Kinney for "Chicago Fire".



Mandy Patinkin, and from left, Claire Danes, and F Murray Abraham accept the award for favorite premium cable TV show for 'Homeland'.



# Chipotles, chicken and slow cookers, Weeknights are easy

By Katie Workman

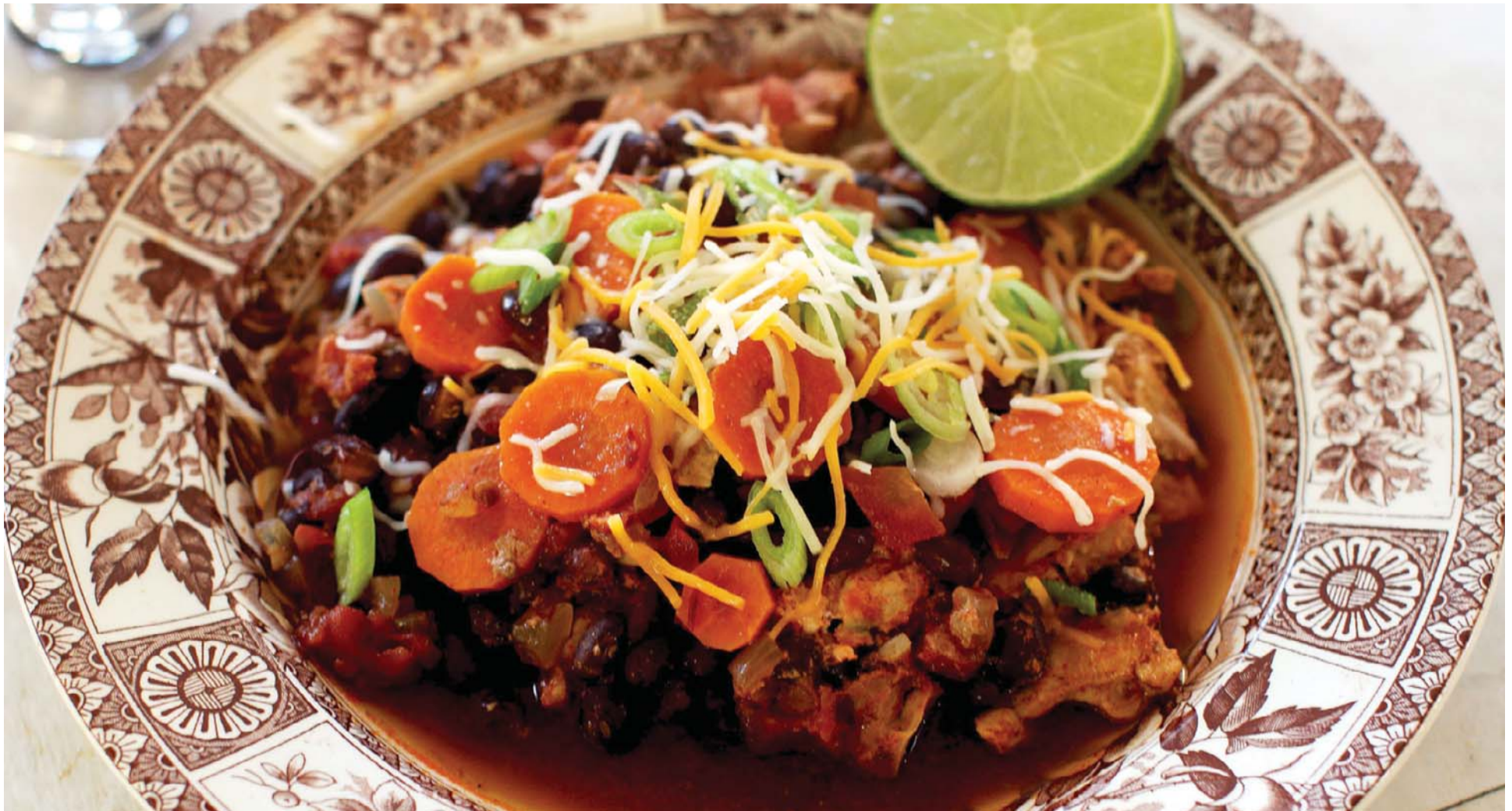
One of the greatest secret weapon ingredients I know is chipotles in adobo sauce. These are smoked jalapeño peppers that have been stewed in a sauce of tomatoes, garlic, vinegar, salt and various spices, such as cumin, oregano and paprika. Imagine doing all that yourself! No thanks! Luckily, the whole thing - peppers and sauce - is sold in tiny cans at just about every grocer.

The easiest way to use these peppers and sauce is to puree the whole thing. I just dump the contents of the can right into the food processor or blender. Then I store the puree in a sealed container in the fridge. Whenever a soup, stew or a chili (or anything that calls for a little touch of smoky heat) needs a little something extra, in goes a tablespoon or two of the puree.

Speaking of secret weapons, one of the best appliances to earn that description is the slow cooker. For many of us, this handy kitchen cooker takes up permanent residence on the

counter during the colder months. The unparalleled pleasure of walking into your home at the end of a long day to be greeted by the scent of a cooked meal is hard to overstate.

In this chili, these two secret weapons join together to turn juicy and moist boneless, skinless chicken thighs into a somewhat spicy and couldn't-be-easier chili. I often make chili with ground chicken or turkey, which we all love, but it was nice to change it up with real cubes of chicken. This one is a definite weeknight keeper.



## SLOW COOKER CHICKEN CHILI

### Ingredients Servings: 8

1 cup chopped yellow onion  
2 medium carrots, peeled and sliced  
4 cloves garlic, minced  
2 tablespoons pureed chipotles in adobo sauce  
28-ounce can diced tomatoes, with juices  
2 tablespoons chili powder

2 teaspoons ground cumin  
Two 15 1/2-ounce cans black beans, drained  
3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs, trimmed of fat and cut into 1-inch pieces  
2 scallions, trimmed and chopped  
Juice of 1 lime  
Salt  
Shredded cheddar cheese or Mexican cheese blend  
Sour cream

### Preparation

In a large slow cooker, combine the onion, carrots, garlic, chipotles in adobo, tomatoes, chili powder, cumin and beans. Stir to combine, then add the chicken and stir again. Cook in the slow cooker on high for 4 to 6 hours, or low for 6 to 8 hours. Stir in the scallions and lime juice just before serving. Taste, then season with salt. Serve with shredded cheese and sour cream on the side.





# With a few tricks, baked egg rolls can be as good as fried

By Melissa D'Arabian

**A**lice was our au pair from China, and when she joined our family she brought with her a slew of tasty dishes. Our family fell in love with her complex fried rice, dumplings with juicy meat fillings, and her crispy egg rolls with garlicky-meaty-mushroom fillings. The tricky thing was that Alice was one of those cooks who worked her magic without a recipe. I would watch, taking mental notes of the ingredients and quantities (writing it down felt, well, wrong), but replicating her dishes proved similar to me trying to capture

the exact taste of my grandma's cooking - impossible.

Though we loved all of her cooking (well, except for her take on chocolate muffins, but that's another story), her egg rolls were the family favorite. And why not? Minced up goodies wrapped in delicate, fried (essentially) pasta? Yes, please!

So I took the liberty (since I was missing the mark anyway) to create my own version, one that managed to get most of the crispy goodness with far less fat. After experimenting with a variety of methods - from spraying the eggrolls with an oil mister or cooking spray as well as dry-baking - the clear winner was the pastry brush method combined with a hot oven while

also using a baking rack to allow for full air circulation during cooking.

So what if these egg rolls are not completely traditional. I did capture the essence of Alice's cooking, and when the girls are missing her I know fond memories are only an egg roll away. And by the way, my experimenting also proved that quickly sauteed bananas sprinkled with a little orange juice and a dark chocolate chip or two also make for a perfect dessert egg roll filling! Brush with coconut oil and dip cooked egg rolls in tangy Greek yogurt. Yum!

## BAKED EGG ROLLS

### Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon vegetable oil, plus 1 tablespoon
- 1 link spicy turkey sausage (about 1/5 pound), casing removed
- 8 ounces button mushrooms, finely chopped
- 3/4 cup finely chopped celery
- 3/4 cup shredded carrot
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger
- 3 scallions, white and green parts, chopped
- 1 cup frozen peas, thawed
- 2 cups finely chopped Napa cabbage (or regular cabbage)
- 1 teaspoon sesame oil
- 3 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon cornstarch
- 15 large (5- or 6-inch) egg roll (wonton) wrappers

### Preparation

Heat the oven to 400 degrees. Line a baking sheet with foil, then set a wire rack over it. Mist the rack with cooking spray. In a large saute pan over medium-high, heat 1 teaspoon of vegetable oil. Add the sausage and cook, breaking it up with a wooden spoon. Once cooked, transfer the sausage to a plate and set aside, leaving the residual oil in the pan. Return the pan to the heat and add the mushrooms, celery and carrot. Cook until the mushrooms are soft, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic, ginger and scallions, then cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the peas, cabbage and sesame oil and cook until the cabbage softens, another 2 or 3 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl mix together the soy sauce and cornstarch with 1 tablespoon of water. Pour the mixture

into the pan with the vegetables, then add the sausage. Stir, then cover and cook for 2 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and allow to cool just until easily handled. Set a wonton wrapper on the work surface. Spoon a couple tablespoons of the vegetable mixture onto the wrapper. Start with one side and roll up the wrapper over the filling, folding in the sides as you go. As you finish rolling, use a finger to spread a little water on the edge to help create a seal. Repeat with remaining wontons and filling. Place the egg rolls on the rack on the prepared baking sheet. Use the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil to brush the egg rolls. Bake until golden and crispy, about 20 minutes. If you do not have a baking rack, place the egg rolls directly on the baking sheet and turn the egg rolls over halfway through the cook time.

# Movies



## Deadpool

**D**eadpool will be the movie that kicks off the superhero season of 2016, but you really shouldn't expect it to be your typical superhero film. The violent, psychotic, foul-mouthed titular hero has spent decades providing a very different flavor to the world of Marvel Comics, and now he's bringing that energy to the big screen - telling an origin story of how the character got his incredible healing powers and takes revenge against the man responsible. This one has been in the works for years, going back to Ryan Reynolds' turn in X-Men Origins; Wolverine, and fans everywhere hope that the R-rated blockbuster will be deemed "worth the wait."

# 7 superhero movies

## coming in 2016 and what you need to know

In case you didn't know, superheroes are kind of a big deal in Hollywood these days. In the last few years, men and women in tights and/or capes have brought in big numbers at the box office... and 2016 will most definitely be no different. In fact, this year is set to be one of the biggest the genre has ever seen, with a grand total of seven different movies set to come out.

But what are these titles? When are they coming out? Who is in them? What are they about? For your convenience, we've put together this handy little guide that will help you know everything you need to know about the year in superhero films.

## Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice

DC Comics and Warner Bros. want to compete with Marvel Studios and their cinematic universe, and Zack Snyder's *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* is the project that will hopefully allow them to do that. Both a sequel to *Man of Steel* and its own feature introducing the larger DC Comics world, the blockbuster is a project for which fans have been waiting decades (the *Dark Knight* and *Man of Tomorrow* finally together on the big screen!), and with any luck it will raise our expectations for the *Justice League* that will be out in 2017. With any luck the film will deliver on everything we want and paint a bright future for the franchise.



**Suicide Squad**

David Ayer's *Suicide Squad* won't be R-rated or hyper-violent like *Deadpool*, but it will offer a different flavor to the superhero genre - specifically by being a movie primarily about supervillains. The likes of *The Joker*, *Harley Quinn*, *Deadshot* and more will make their DC Cinematic Universe debuts in the movie, with some of them teaming up for a Black Ops mission in hopes of reducing their sentences. Between both this film and *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*, we will definitely have an idea of the fully scope and potential for DC's planned future by the end of 2016.



## Captain America: Civil War



Just last year we saw the release of Joss Whedon's *The Avengers: Age of Ultron*, but Marvel Studios is apparently immediately ready to up the stakes in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, and will do so by having just about all of our favorite heroes clashing in regard to global superhero legislation policies. *Captain America: Civil War* promises to primarily function as a direct sequel to *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* - and that just makes us all the more excited for it, particularly because it brings back the same writers (who also worked on *Captain America: The First Avenger*) and directors. Who will win in a battle between *Captain America* and *Iron Man*? We will find out in May.

## X-Men: Apocalypse

Bryan Singer's *X-Men: Days of Future Past* completely changed the superhero franchise, hitting a big ol' reset button on the expanded continuity, but with *X-Men: Apocalypse* it looks like the whole thing is ready to be blown up all over again. In the movie, the titular team will be facing their most dangerous threat yet in the form of the titular antagonist, an ancient mutant with basically god-like powers, and the film also has the responsibility to laying down the path that future movies will follow for years to come (most importantly by introducing a lot of new young actors). Some of the design elements have caused a bit of controversy, but we won't be able to make any real judgments until the summer.



## Doctor Strange

Marvel Studios has been promising a lot of weird with *Doctor Strange* - what with the movie introducing magical concepts to the Marvel Cinematic Universe - and we've got our fingers tightly crossed that it can deliver. The film is a new origin story for the franchise, telling the story of a brilliant brain surgeon who searches the world to find a cure for his

irreparably damaged hands, but should provide some trippy visuals as characters transport into new dimensions the likes of which audiences have hopefully never seen. In terms of just acting talent, the movie has put together one of the most impressive ensembles we've seen (in the superhero genre or out), and we're remarkably excited to see all of them work together under the talented vision of Scott Derrickson.

(www.cinemablend.com)



## Gambit

If *Gambit* comes out in 2016, the *X-Men* franchise will be the first to have three movies released in one year... but that's a pretty big "if." While this project has been in the works for a while, telling the origin story of the eponymous kinetic energy-controlling mutant as he grows up in New Orleans, behind the scenes snags wound up causing major delays, and at the time that this article is being published has not yet shot a single frame of footage. We're excited for this one, as it should expand the *X-Men* series in new and interesting ways, but we have a feeling that by October its release date will still be at least a few months away.



Friday Times

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 2016

# Travel



## Tech-free travel: Where to go for a true digital detox

**Back away from your iPhone - this is a travel intervention. Do you ask about wifi before you've checked in? Instinctively arrange meals to fit an Instagram frame? Do you miss the magic of wildlife migrations and waterfalls in your hurry to edit the perfect Snapchat Story?**





Help is at hand, digital traveler. But to overcome this addiction you must accept the cold turkey treatment. These remote places will deny you wifi, muddy your phone signal, and replace the trill of instant messages with roaring waves, monastic chanting or pure silence. Shun the modern world at these eight far-flung destinations.

**Luxury lodges in Namibia**

Does the idea of digging your own toilet make you want to stockpile two-ply and rush back to civilization? Fortunately you don't have to forgo comfort to disconnect from the digital world. In Namibia, you can luxuriate in a plush lodge and remain blissfully unboth-

ered by emails from your boss. Wilderness Safaris ([wilderness-safaris.com](http://wilderness-safaris.com)) has a range of luxury accommodation, including 26 deliberately wifi-free camps in some of Namibia's richest wildlife-spotting territory. Their Desert Rhino Camp is set within a valley home to Africa's largest free-roaming population of black rhinos, plus lions, giraffes, springbok and more. Out with Facebook and Reddit; in with rhino-tracking and evenings spent idling around a fire pit.

**Royal Belum State Park, Malaysia**

There are no wifi hotspots in Eden. Royal Belum State Park in Malaysia has more than 117 hectares of tangled rainforest and wet-

lands, a wilderness primal enough to make you forget technology. Much of the area was flooded after the completion of a dam in 1972, so visits to this watery wonderland take place by boat. You'll drift serenely towards hillocks thick with jungle, home to tapir, tigers and sun bears. Slippery hiking trails wind through glades where the air thrums with butterflies and katydids. Charmingly ramshackle Belum Eco Resort, on a private island within the park, only has a single spot where mobile phones work (just enough for an emergency call) and you can forget about 3G signal or wifi. Besides, who needs to browse the web when you can watch sunsets over Lake Temenggor to a soundtrack of twilight crickets?

**Broken Hill, Australia**

Beyond the frontier town of Broken Hill, the stars - not a satnav - will be your guide. Dusty Broken Hill is already tucked away in New South Wales' outback, so you needn't roam far from town for majestic isolation. The area is so far removed from urban bustle (and most importantly, light pollution) that it's slowly building a name as a stargazing retreat, following the founding of Outback Astronomy ([outbackastronomy.com.au](http://outbackastronomy.com.au)). Check the website before booking, as viewings are dependent on weather and the lunar cycle.

Then, in the silence of the desert, you can swap the nocturnal glow of your iPad (it's



30

Travel

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 2016



bad for your eyesight anyway) for the twinkle of distant constellations.

#### Eqi glacier, Greenland

Instagram addicts, prepare to struggle at Eqi glacier. This far-flung corner of Greenland is seriously photogenic: snowy turrets swirl from the glacier face, which emits an almighty rumble as it sloughs off curtains of ice. Lagoons shimmer, hillsides are dotted with magenta niviarsiaq flowers, and there's no sound save the howl of wind and clucking auks. Glacier Lodge Eqi ([glacierlodgeeqi.com](http://glacierlodgeeqi.com)), facing the glacier, has no phone signal at all and transport is by a single daily boat from Ilulissat, Greenland's third city. Once you disembark at this tiny seasonal settlement, pristine nature is your only entertainment. Channel your inner Arctic explorer by treading in the footsteps of Paul-...mile Victor, who set out from Eqi on many an expedition; his hut is still affixed to the rocks here. After trekking cliffside paths and relaxing on the balcony of your solar-powered hut, the slow pace is sure to seduce you.

#### Catalonia's Cistercian monasteries

Romanesque architecture and unbroken centuries of spiritual ritual should be enough to peel your thumbs away from your iPhone. But if you need an extra shove, the phone signal-destroying powers of thick sandstone walls should do the trick. Retreat to the mountains of central Catalonia where you'll find three imposing Cistercian monasteries including Monestir de Santa Maria de Poblet, with elaborate graves of Catalan kings, and Santa Maria de Vallbona de les Monges ([monestirvallbona.cat](http://monestirvallbona.cat)), still home to a small group of nuns. The loveliest of the three (and the best suited to quiet contemplation) is Monestir de Santes Creus ([en.mhcat.cat](http://en.mhcat.cat)). After a little time idling through its 14th-century cloister and sneaking among the monastery's chambers and passageways, you'll barely notice the silence from your smartphone.

#### Green Bank, USA

West Virginia's 'town without wifi' is a reluctant outpost for the technology-averse.

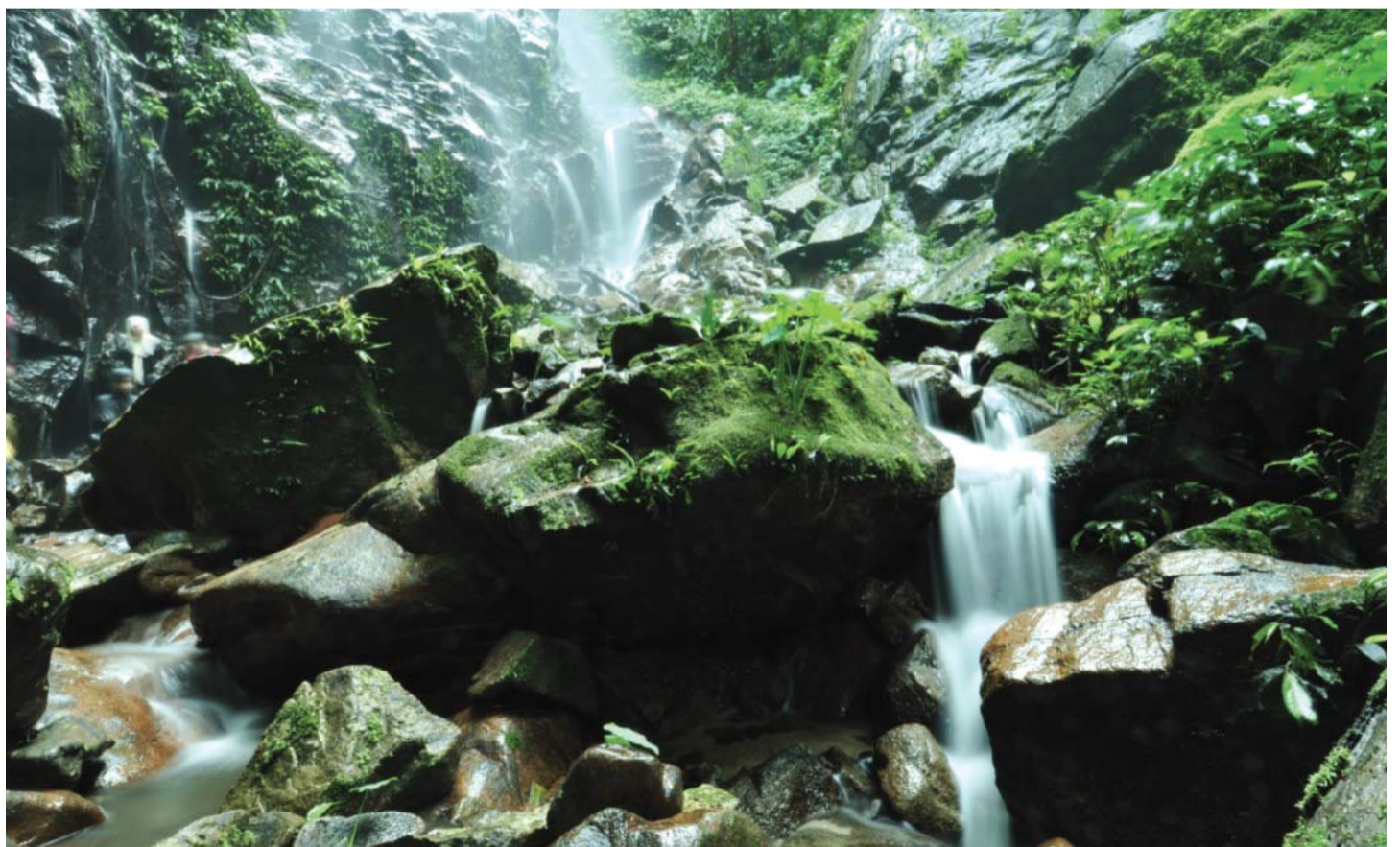
Green Bank is home to one of the world's biggest radio telescopes, a behemoth weighing more than 8000 tonnes with a diameter of nearly 100m. To allow astronomers interruption-free research, the telescope is surrounded by a 'radio quiet zone', where any technology transmitting a wireless signal (like mobile phones) is forbidden. The town's population of 143 adjusted with ease; what they didn't expect was a small stream of wifi refugees moving to Green Bank, claiming to suffer from electromagnetic hypersensitivity. The plight of the wifi-allergic should put your temporary disconnectivity into perspective, leaving you to admire the Allegheny Mountains and rolling greenery of this under-rated US state.

#### Uninhabited islands in Halkidiki, Greece

Halkidiki in Greece is best known as a playground for the summer holiday crowd. There are gleaming beach resorts, seafood tavern as steps from the shore, and the air is scented with ouzo and sunscreen. But you can explore this sun-kissed swathe of mainland Greece in wilder style, in the capable hands of Grigorios Delichristos Excursions. This adventurous outfit arranges island hopping with a Survivor-esque twist: Grigorios' expeditions ply uninhabited islands off the Cassandra peninsula, so you can expect wild camping, log fires and spear fishing. It's poetic, remote and there isn't a plug socket in sight. After all, wifi is an unnecessary distraction when you're foraging for dinner.

#### Loch Hourn, Scottish Highlands

Skiary guesthouse ([skiary.com](http://skiary.com)) in Scotland does better than being free from wifi: there's no phone signal, no electricity and no roads. The lodge is within two hours' drive of Fort William or Inverness, towns at the gateway to the Scottish Highlands, but you'll need to traipse the last mile on foot (or request a transfer by boat in advance). Once settled at this family-run guesthouse, stow your now-useless gadgets in your cozy room and explore the wilds. Hills gripped by heather and meadows where pine martens scamper make picturesque hiking terrain. After a day or two of hill walking, mackerel fishing and pristine sunsets over the loch, you might even be sorry to return to the digital world. — ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com))



WORD SEARCH

Ice Hockey

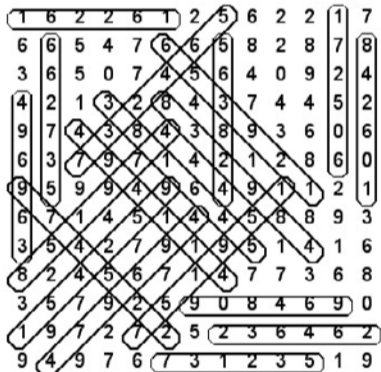
Find and circle all of the Hockey words that are hidden in the grid. The words may be hidden in any direction.

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

- ARENA
- ASSIST
- CROWD
- DEFENSEMEN
- FACE-OFF
- FORWARDS
- GOALIE
- HELMET
- ICING
- OFFSIDE
- PASS
- PENALTY
- PUCK
- REFEREE
- RINK
- SCORE
- SKATES
- STICK
- TEAMS

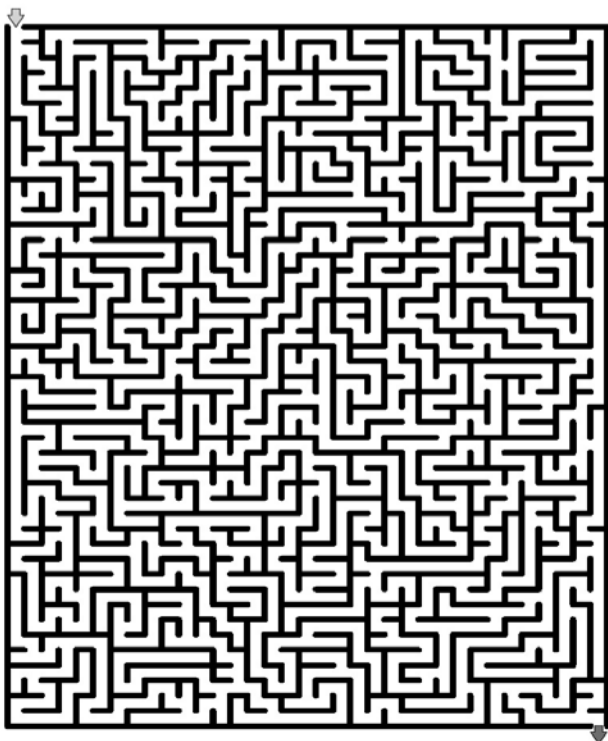
Yesterday's Solution

6 Digit Numbers

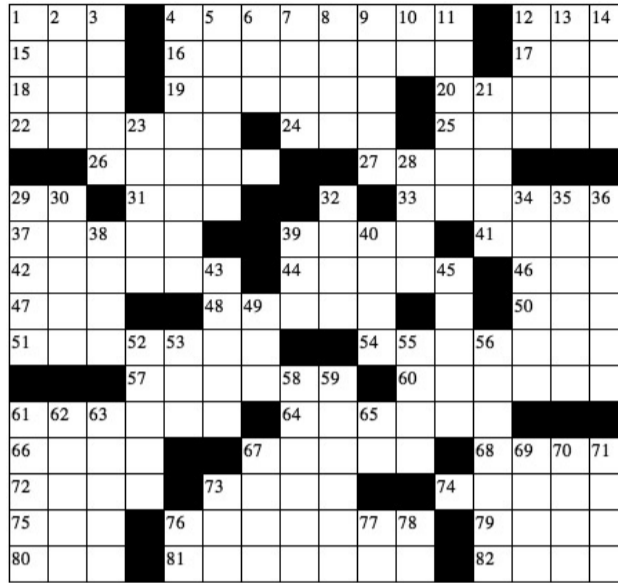


- 106248
- 154259
- 162261
- 225479
- 236462
- 479158
- 489238
- 494114
- 496963
- 496974
- 532137
- 546183
- 563824
- 564237
- 605271
- 653921
- 662735
- 751951
- 908469

CHALLENGING MAZE



CROSSWORD 1131



ACROSS

1. The 19th letter of the Greek alphabet.
4. A deep fissure.
12. 300 to 3000 megahertz.
15. An edge tool used to cut and shape wood.
16. Resembling air or having the form of air.
17. Flower arrangement consisting of a circular band of foliage or flowers for ornamental purposes.
18. A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.
19. Involving two dimensions.
20. Obvious and dull.
22. (of tempo) Leisurely n.
24. A cgs unit of work or energy.
25. With the mouth wide open as in wonder or awe.
26. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
27. Long green edible beaked pods of the okra plant.
29. A doctor's degree in religion.
31. A boy or man.
33. Remote city of Kazakhstan that (ostensibly for security reasons) was made the capital in 1998.
37. A high wave (often dangerous) caused by tidal flow (as by colliding tidal currents or in a narrow estuary).
41. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
42. A family of fish in the order Zeomorphi.
44. Rice cooked in well-seasoned broth with onions or celery and usually poultry or game or shellfish and sometimes tomatoes.
46. A state-chartered savings bank owned by its depositors and managed by a board of trustees.
47. To make a mistake or be incorrect.
48. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
50. (informal) Of the highest quality.
51. Caused to be slower or later.
54. A town in Italy in southwestern Sicily near the coast.
57. A winged often one-seed indehiscent fruit as of the ash or elm or maple.
60. United States painter born in Germany.
61. United States writer of poems and plays about racial conflict (born in 1934).
64. A member of the Iroquoian people formerly living east of Lake Ontario.
66. Lacking excess flesh.
68. A stock exchange in New York.
72. Type genus of the family Arcidae.
74. Conforming to an ultimate standard of perfection or excellence.
75. A federation of North American industrial unions that merged with the American Federation of Labor in 1955.
79. A genus of Strigidae.
80. Range of what one can know or understand.
81. Following as an effect or result.
82. (Greek mythology) Winged goddess of victory.

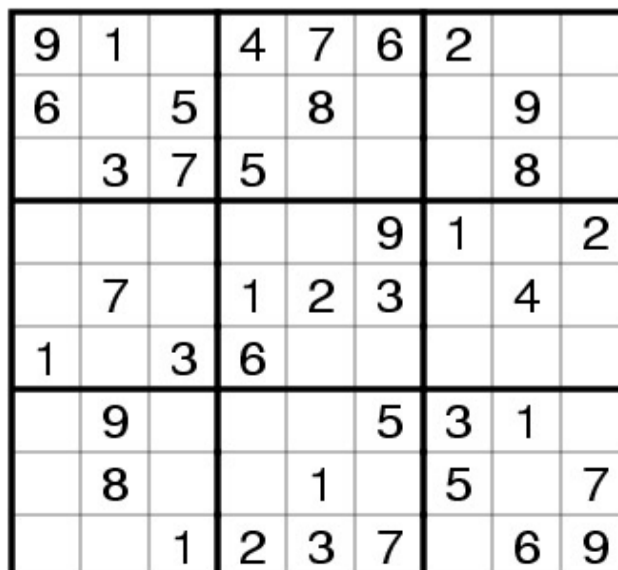
DOWN

1. The basic unit of money in Western Samoa.
2. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
3. A member of a Turkic people of Uzbekistan and neighboring areas.
4. Pig-sized tailless South American amphibious rodent with partly webbed feet.
5. Load anew with ammunition, "She reloaded the gun carefully".
6. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
7. Weak-stemmed plant that derives support from climbing, twining, or creeping along a surface.
8. (old-fashioned) At or from or to a great distance.
9. Any of several sorghums cultivated as a source of syrup.
10. A soft silver-white or yellowish metallic element of the alkali metal group.
11. Go on board.
12. The inner and longer of the two bones of the human forearm.
13. A collection of objects laid on top of each other.
14. A set of related records (either written or electronic) kept together.
21. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
23. Extremely cold.
28. God of love and erotic desire.
30. United States industrialist who manufactured plows suitable for working the prairie soil (1804-1886).
32. English essayist (1775-1834).
34. The ohmic resistance of a conductor.
35. An East Indian sailor.
36. The superior of a group of nuns.
38. A young woman.
39. An emergency procedure consisting of external cardiac massage and artificial respiration.
40. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
43. Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.
45. Involving the entire earth.
49. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
52. (Hindu) A manner of sitting (as in the practice of Yoga).
53. Noisy talk.
55. (Old Testament) Cain and Abel were the first children of Adam and Eve born after the Fall of Man.
56. The trait of lacking restraint or control.
58. The capital and largest city of Dominica.
59. A deficiency of red blood cells.
62. The lofty nest of a bird of prey (such as a hawk or eagle).
63. A device that, on receiving radar signals, transmits coded signals in response to help navigators determine their position.
65. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
67. Acute lung injury characterized by coughing and rales.
69. Large hairy humanoid creature said to live in the Himalayas.
70. A member of the Algonquian people living in Wisconsin the Fox River valley and the shores of Green Bay.
71. Other than what is under consideration or implied.
73. (British) Your grandmother.
76. A Mid-Atlantic state.
77. A silvery malleable metallic element that resists corrosion.
78. A unit of weight equivalent to 1000 kilograms.

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution





00:20 Fast N' Loud  
 01:10 Predators Up Close With Joel Lambert  
 02:00 Deadly Islands  
 02:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island  
 03:40 Auction Hunters  
 04:05 The Liquidator  
 04:30 Storage Wars Canada  
 05:00 What Happened Next?  
 05:30 How It's Made  
 06:00 Mythbusters  
 06:50 The Carbonaro Effect  
 07:15 The Carbonaro Effect  
 07:40 You Have Been Warned  
 08:30 Spawn Of Jaws: The Birth  
 09:20 Dual Survival  
 10:10 River Monsters  
 11:00 Predators Up Close With Joel Lambert  
 11:50 Deadly Islands  
 12:40 Treasure Quest: Snake Island  
 13:30 Misfit Garage  
 14:20 Street Outlaws  
 15:10 Engine Addict With Jimmy De Ville  
 16:00 You Have Been Warned  
 16:50 You Have Been Warned  
 17:40 You Have Been Warned  
 18:30 You Have Been Warned  
 19:20 You Have Been Warned  
 20:10 You Have Been Warned  
 21:00 Misfit Garage  
 21:50 Street Outlaws  
 22:40 Engine Addict With Jimmy De Ville  
 23:30 Extreme Smuggling



00:35 Mythbusters  
 01:20 How It's Made  
 01:44 How It's Made  
 02:08 How The Universe Works  
 02:55 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?  
 03:42 How The Universe Works  
 04:29 Mythbusters  
 05:16 How The Universe Works  
 06:03 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?  
 06:50 Mega Builders  
 07:37 How Do They Do It?  
 08:00 How Do They Do It?  
 08:23 Mythbusters  
 09:08 How The Universe Works  
 09:53 Stephen Hawking Biography  
 11:23 Stephen Hawking's Universe  
 12:08 Stephen Hawking's Universe  
 12:53 Stephen Hawking's Universe  
 14:23 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design  
 15:10 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design  
 15:57 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design  
 16:44 Stephen Hawking Biography  
 18:18 Stephen Hawking's Universe  
 19:50 Stephen Hawking's Universe  
 20:40 Stephen Hawking's Universe  
 21:25 Stephen Hawking Biography  
 23:00 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design  
 23:45 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design



00:40 Who On Earth Did I Marry?  
 01:05 Who On Earth Did I Marry?  
 01:30 The Haunted  
 02:20 Ghost Lab  
 03:10 Deadly Affairs  
 04:00 Swamp Murders  
 04:45 Who On Earth Did I Marry?  
 05:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?  
 05:30 The Haunted  
 06:20 Deadly Affairs  
 07:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones  
 08:00 Dr. G: Medical Examiner  
 08:50 On The Case With Paula Zahn  
 09:40 Fatal Encounters  
 10:30 Murder Shift  
 11:20 Deadly Affairs  
 12:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones  
 13:00 The Will  
 13:50 I Almost Got Away With It  
 14:40 California Investigator

15:05 Dr. G: Medical Examiner  
 15:55 Fatal Encounters  
 16:45 On The Case With Paula Zahn  
 17:35 Murder Shift  
 18:25 I Almost Got Away With It  
 19:15 The Will  
 20:05 Deadly Affairs  
 20:55 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones  
 21:45 California Investigator  
 22:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?  
 22:35 Who On Earth Did I Marry?  
 23:00 Missing In Maui: A Disappeared Special  
 23:50 Deadly Devotion



00:00 Violetta  
 00:45 The Hive  
 00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
 01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
 01:40 Wolfblood  
 02:05 Wolfblood  
 02:30 Violetta  
 03:15 The Hive  
 03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
 03:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
 04:10 Wolfblood  
 04:35 Wolfblood  
 05:00 Violetta  
 05:45 The Hive  
 05:50 Mouk  
 06:00 Lolirock  
 06:25 Hank Zipzer  
 06:50 Girl Meets World  
 07:15 H2O: Just Add Water  
 07:40 H2O: Just Add Water  
 08:05 Austin & Ally  
 08:30 Austin & Ally  
 08:55 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
 09:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
 09:45 Jessie  
 10:10 Jessie  
 10:35 Zapped  
 12:20 Hank Zipzer  
 12:45 I Didn't Do It

13:10 I Didn't Do It  
 13:35 Liv And Maddie  
 14:00 Liv And Maddie  
 14:30 H2O  
 14:55 H2O  
 15:20 Jessie  
 15:45 Jessie  
 16:10 Violetta  
 17:00 I Love Violetta  
 17:10 Bad Hair Day  
 18:45 I Didn't Do It  
 19:05 H2O  
 19:30 Violetta  
 20:20 I Love Violetta  
 20:30 An Extremely Goofy Movie  
 21:50 Violetta Recipes  
 22:00 Binny And The Ghost  
 22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
 22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch  
 23:10 Wolfblood  
 23:35 Wolfblood



00:00 Christina Milian Turned Up  
 00:55 The Grace Helbig Show  
 01:25 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
 02:20 E! News  
 03:15 Giuliana & Bill  
 04:10 E! Entertainment Special  
 05:05 E! Entertainment Special  
 06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
 06:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
 07:50 Style Star  
 08:20 E! News  
 09:15 Giuliana & Bill  
 10:15 Giuliana & Bill  
 11:10 The Grace Helbig Show  
 11:35 The Grace Helbig Show  
 12:05 E! News  
 13:05 Christina Milian Turned Up  
 14:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
 15:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
 16:00 Dash Dolls  
 17:00 Dash Dolls  
 18:00 E! News

19:00 Hollywood Cycle  
 20:00 WAGs  
 21:00 Fashion Bloggers  
 21:30 Fashion Bloggers  
 22:00 E! News  
 23:00 House Of DVF



00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
 00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
 01:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers  
 01:30 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers  
 02:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts  
 02:30 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts  
 03:00 Man Fire Food  
 03:30 Man Fire Food  
 04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
 04:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games  
 06:00 Chopped  
 07:00 Man Fire Food  
 07:30 Man Fire Food  
 08:00 Chopped  
 09:00 Guy's Grocery Games  
 10:00 The Kitchen  
 11:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics  
 11:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics  
 12:00 Chopped  
 13:00 Guy's Big Bite  
 13:30 Guy's Big Bite  
 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
 14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives  
 15:00 Man Fire Food  
 15:30 Man Fire Food  
 16:00 Chopped  
 17:00 The Kitchen  
 18:00 Siba's Table  
 18:30 Grandma's Secret Cookbook  
 19:00 Chopped  
 20:00 Guy's Grocery Games  
 21:00 Australian Food Adventures With Matt Moran  
 22:00 Bite This With Nadia G  
 22:30 Bite This With Nadia G  
 23:00 The Freshman Class  
 23:30 The Freshman Class



00:10 Pick Me!  
 01:05 Emmerdale  
 01:30 Coach Trip  
 02:00 Coronation Street  
 02:30 Murdoch Mysteries  
 03:25 Midsomer Murders  
 05:15 The Chase  
 06:10 Paddock To Plate  
 07:05 Coach Trip  
 07:30 Midsomer Murders  
 09:20 Murdoch Mysteries  
 10:15 The Chase  
 11:10 Coach Trip  
 11:35 Pick Me!  
 12:30 Paddock To Plate  
 13:25 Emmerdale  
 13:50 Emmerdale  
 14:20 Coronation Street  
 14:45 Murdoch Mysteries  
 15:35 The Chase: Celebrity Specials  
 16:30 Grantchester  
 17:25 The Syndicate  
 18:20 Paddock To Plate  
 19:10 Coronation Street  
 19:35 The Chase: Celebrity Specials  
 20:30 Grantchester  
 21:25 The Syndicate  
 22:20 Coronation Street  
 22:50 Emmerdale  
 23:15 Emmerdale  
 23:40 Coach Trip



00:30 Cristela  
 01:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore  
 01:30 Web Therapy  
 02:00 Girls  
 02:30 The Big C  
 03:00 Last Man Standing  
 03:30 Benched  
 04:00 Men At Work  
 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon  
 05:30 Young & Hungry  
 06:00 Til Death

06:30 New Girl  
 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers  
 08:00 Men At Work  
 08:30 Young & Hungry  
 09:30 Community  
 10:30 New Girl  
 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon  
 12:00 Til Death  
 12:30 Men At Work  
 13:00 Young & Hungry  
 13:30 New Girl  
 14:00 Benched  
 14:30 Community  
 15:00 Baby Daddy  
 15:30 Cristela  
 16:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore  
 16:30 Til Death  
 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers  
 18:00 Fresh Off The Boat  
 18:30 Black-ish  
 19:00 Parks And Recreation  
 19:30 Baby Daddy  
 20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon  
 21:00 Cristela  
 21:30 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore  
 22:00 It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia  
 22:30 It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia  
 23:00 The Big C  
 23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers



00:00 Justified  
 01:00 Blindspot  
 02:00 Empire  
 03:00 Secrets And Lies  
 04:00 American Idol  
 06:00 Covert Affairs  
 07:00 Switched At Birth  
 08:00 Odyssey  
 09:00 American Idol  
 11:00 Switched At Birth  
 12:00 Top Gear (US)  
 13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show  
 14:00 Odyssey  
 15:00 Live Good Morning America  
 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show



ESCAPE PLAN ON OSN MOVIES ACTION



FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 2016

- 18:00 Odyssey
- 19:00 American Idol
- 21:00 Grey's Anatomy
- 22:00 Dominion
- 23:00 The Strain

## OSN FIRST

### MORE

- 00:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 01:00 Good Morning America
- 03:00 Mistresses
- 04:00 Grimm
- 05:00 Good Morning America
- 07:00 Top Gear (UK)
- 08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 09:00 Parenthood
- 10:00 Top Gear (UK)
- 11:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 12:00 C.S.I.
- 13:00 Shark Tank
- 14:00 Parenthood
- 15:00 Chicago Fire
- 16:00 The Voice
- 18:00 Shark Tank
- 19:00 Parenthood
- 20:00 C.S.I.
- 21:00 Shark Tank
- 22:00 Mistresses
- 23:00 Grimm

## OSN MOVIES

### ACTION

- 00:00 Freezer
- 02:00 Combustion
- 04:00 Superfast
- 06:00 Justice League: Throne Of Atlantis
- 08:00 Escape Plan
- 10:00 The Amazing Spider-Man 2
- 12:30 Superfast
- 14:15 Marvel's Next Avengers: Heroes Of Tomorrow
- 15:45 Escape Plan
- 17:45 The Outsider
- 19:30 The Amazing Spider-Man 2
- 22:00 Getaway

## OSN MOVIES HD

### ACTION

- 00:00 Combustion-18
- 02:00 Superfast-PG15
- 04:00 Justice League: Throne Of Atlantis-PG15
- 06:00 Escape Plan-PG15
- 08:00 The Amazing Spider-Man 2-PG15
- 10:30 Superfast-PG15
- 12:15 Marvel's Next Avengers: Heroes Of Tomorrow-PG
- 13:45 Escape Plan-PG15
- 15:45 The Outsider-PG15
- 17:30 The Amazing Spider-Man 2-PG15
- 20:00 Getaway-PG15
- 22:00 Enemies Closer-PG15

## OSN MOVIES HD

### COMEDY

- 00:00 She Wants Me
- 02:00 Blues Brothers 2000
- 04:00 Simon Birch
- 06:00 When In Rome
- 08:00 Tooth Fairy
- 10:00 Simon Birch
- 12:00 Blues Brothers 2000
- 14:00 Life With Mikey
- 16:00 Tooth Fairy
- 18:00 The Ladykillers
- 20:00 22 Jump Street
- 22:00 No Way Jose

## OSN MOVIES

### DRAMA

- 01:00 The Truth About Emanuel-PG15
- 02:45 Nightcrawler-PG15
- 05:00 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The Strike-PG15
- 07:00 Romeo & Juliet-PG15
- 09:00 Hours-PG15
- 11:00 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The Strike-PG15
- 13:00 Belle-PG15
- 15:00 Paranoia-PG15
- 17:00 Hours-PG15
- 19:00 Foxcatcher-PG15
- 21:30 Inside Llewelyn Davis-PG15
- 23:15 Anna-18



### GETAWAY ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

## OSN MOVIES HD

### FESTIVAL

- 01:15 Awakenings
- 03:30 The Brass Teapot
- 07:00 1911
- 09:00 Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom
- 11:30 Secret Window
- 13:15 Little Man Tate
- 15:00 Rushmore
- 16:45 Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom
- 19:15 Men Of Honor
- 21:30 The Immigrant
- 23:30 Donnie Brasco

## OSN MOVIES HD

### KIDS

- 01:00 The Heart Of The Oak
- 02:45 Memory Loss
- 04:30 Cher Ami
- 06:00 The Adventures Of Don Quixote
- 08:00 Mamma Moo And Crow
- 10:00 Beethoven's Treasure Tail
- 11:45 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 13:15 Memory Loss
- 14:45 Blue Elephant 2
- 16:30 Jungle Shuffle
- 18:00 Beethoven's Treasure Tail
- 20:00 Goat Story 2
- 22:00 Blue Elephant 2
- 23:45 Jungle Shuffle

## OSN MOVIES HD

### PREMIERE

- 00:00 A Fighting Man-PG15
- 01:30 The Numbers Station-PG15
- 03:15 Christmas With Holly -f-PG15
- 05:00 Billy Elliot The Musical-PG15
- 08:00 Free Birds-PG
- 10:00 Next Goal Wins-PG
- 11:45 Unbroken-PG15
- 14:00 The Package-PG15
- 16:00 Free Birds-PG
- 18:00 Alexander And The Terrible... Very Bad Day-PG
- 20:00 What If-PG15
- 22:00 The Skeleton Twins-18

## OSN NEWS

- 01:00 Live MSNBC Mtp Daily
- 03:30 ABC World News With David Muir
- 04:00 Live MSNBC All In With Chris Hayes
- 05:00 Live MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
- 06:00 Live MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
- 07:30 ABC World News With David Muir
- 08:18 ABC World News With David Muir
- 09:06 MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
- 10:00 MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
- 11:00 Live ABC World News Now
- 11:30 Live ABC World News Now
- 12:00 Live NBC Early Today
- 12:30 Live ABC America This Morning
- 13:00 Live ABC America This Morning
- 13:30 Live ABC America This Morning
- 14:00 Live ABC America This Morning
- 14:30 MSNBC First Look
- 15:00 Live NBC Today Show
- 19:38 MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
- 20:19 MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
- 21:00 Live MSNBC Live With Thomas Roberts
- 23:00 Live MSNBC Live With Kate Snow

## AMC

- 03:20 Nightwatch
- 05:00 American Rhapsody
- 06:45 Clifford
- 08:15 True Heart
- 09:45 Puckoon
- 11:10 Saved!
- 12:40 American Rhapsody
- 14:25 Agent Cody Banks
- 16:05 Agent Cody Banks 2: Destination London
- 17:45 George Washington
- 19:15 True Heart

- 20:45 Big Screen
- 21:00 Mannequin
- 22:30 The Basketball Diaries
- 00:10 Reservoir Dogs
- 01:50 No Mercy

## crime & investigation network

- 03:00 50 Ways To Kill Your Lover
- 04:00 Private Crimes
- 04:30 Private Crimes
- 05:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
- 06:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
- 07:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 08:00 Surveillance Oz
- 09:00 Surveillance Oz
- 10:00 Frenemies
- 10:30 Frenemies
- 11:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 12:00 Crime Stories
- 13:00 Homicide Hunter
- 14:00 I Survived
- 15:00 Frenemies
- 15:30 Frenemies
- 16:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 17:00 Crime Stories
- 18:00 The First 48
- 19:00 I Survived
- 20:00 Homicide Hunter
- 21:00 Crime Stories
- 22:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 23:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
- 00:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
- 01:00 My Crazy Ex
- 02:00 I Was Possessed

## Disney Junior

- 03:05 Calimero
- 03:20 Zou
- 03:30 Loopdidoo
- 03:45 Art Attack
- 04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
- 04:20 Calimero
- 04:35 Zou
- 04:45 Loopdidoo
- 05:00 Art Attack
- 05:25 Henry Hugglemonster
- 05:35 Calimero
- 05:50 Zou
- 06:00 Loopdidoo
- 06:15 Art Attack
- 06:35 Henry Hugglemonster

- 06:50 Calimero
- 07:00 Zou
- 07:20 Loopdidoo
- 07:35 Art Attack
- 08:00 Calimero
- 08:10 Zou
- 08:25 Loopdidoo
- 08:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 09:05 Sofia The First
- 09:30 Miles From Tomorrow
- 10:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 10:35 Doc McStuffins
- 11:00 Sofia The First
- 11:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 12:00 Miles From Tomorrow
- 12:25 Special Agent Oso
- 12:50 Handy Manny
- 13:15 Jungle Junction
- 13:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 14:00 Sofia The First
- 14:25 Sofia The First
- 14:50 Miles From Tomorrow
- 15:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 15:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 16:05 The Adventures Of The Disney...
- 16:35 Miles From Tomorrow
- 17:00 Sofia The First
- 17:25 Aladdin
- 17:50 Gummi Bears
- 18:15 Chip 'n' Dale's Rescue Rangers
- 18:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 19:05 Miles From Tomorrow
- 19:30 Sofia The First
- 19:55 Doc McStuffins
- 20:15 Captain Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 20:45 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 21:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 21:35 Sofia The First
- 22:00 The Adventures Of The Disney...
- 22:55 The Adventures Of The Disney...
- 23:20 Lilo And Stitch
- 23:45 Cars Toons
- 23:50 Zou
- 00:05 Henry Hugglemonster
- 00:20 Calimero
- 00:35 Zou
- 00:50 Loopdidoo
- 01:05 Art Attack

- 01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 01:45 Calimero
- 02:00 Zou
- 02:15 Loopdidoo
- 02:30 Art Attack
- 02:55 Henry Hugglemonster

## Disney XD

- 07:00 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
- 07:25 Booster
- 07:50 Supa Strikas
- 08:15 Lab Rats
- 08:40 K. C. Undercover
- 09:10 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 09:35 Kirby Buckets
- 10:00 Lab Rats
- 10:25 Kickin' It
- 10:50 Mighty Med
- 11:20 Supa Strikas
- 11:45 K. C. Undercover
- 12:10 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
- 12:35 Annedroids
- 13:00 Up, Up And Away
- 14:20 Phineas And Ferb
- 14:45 Phineas And Ferb
- 15:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 15:15 Rocket Monkeys
- 15:40 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
- 16:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 16:30 Kirby Buckets
- 16:55 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 17:25 K. C. Undercover
- 17:50 Supa Strikas
- 18:15 Lab Rats
- 18:40 Mighty Med
- 19:10 Annedroids
- 19:35 Kickin' It
- 20:00 K. C. Undercover
- 20:25 Supa Strikas
- 20:55 Lab Rats
- 21:20 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 21:45 Kickin' It
- 22:10 Phineas And Ferb
- 22:40 Super Matrak
- 23:05 Super Matrak
- 23:30 Booster
- 00:00 Programmes Start At 7:00am KSA



**Aries (March 21-April 19)**

This is a very good day for getting things accomplished. You may shine in your particular job description but there could come a time soon to consider business changes that will offer better opportunities for growth and income. If you are observant, you will be able to create that change for yourself, when you are ready. You will receive encouragement and advice from an unexpected source. New ideas may lead in the direction of education, travel, creative writing or communication. Distribute your energies wisely-laugh! You may be a bit overly protective with someone this afternoon-careful. Something promised is not coming forth; however, you have the patience to keep quiet and keep moving forward. You will soon have what you need.



**Taurus (April 20-May 20)**

This is a day that should find everything running smoothly. Interplay with senior business partners may take up most of your morning. New ways to communicate or an easy manner will make conversations and interactions go well. A new technical process will have to be taught and you could spend a longer time in finding someone for the job than in just becoming the teacher yourself. You may find yourself more talkative than usual. When you are asked to guide others today, remember that knowledge is on your side. Not only will you be able to help, you will have luck with your mission. Later you will enjoy gathering with friends or the usual fun group for perhaps some team game. Tonight would be a good time to enjoy some family quiet time.



**Gemini (May 21-June 20)**

You have a definite purpose-now you need a definite plan. You could be the one chosen for a special project and you will want everything regarding that project to be perfect. Your timing should be good and those around you will find you most agreeable. Your mood is quite fitting-you get things moving and you are motivated. Others may find you especially witty and ask to work with you. A strong need for that one-on-one conversation takes precedence this afternoon and you may find yourself in lengthy conversations with a friend over past vacation adventures. You may feel the need to care for others-perhaps on a public rather than private level. It could be you will work with the homeless or be creative in helping the handicapped.



**Cancer (June 21-July 22)**

You and a close friend make plans for the upcoming week-end. Together you complete the shopping list for items that are needed and who will buy what. If your country is cold, you may have decided to go to a tropical area . . . If your country is hot, you may have decided a skiing trip is in order. Whatever the case, a hobby and a fun change of atmosphere make life most interesting. Professionally speaking, you are on top of your game, so to speak. Because you create new and fun things to do in your off-work hours, you have incentive to work and make a good income to fulfill your dreams. Close personal ties to other people are a focal point for your feelings-marriage and other partnerships could be key arenas for this in the future.



**Leo (July 23-August 22)**

Start the year out right . . . With passion. Love is preferred; however, kindhearted communication with friends and family will also work. There is much on your mind concerning personal issues as well as setting new goals and conquering several work issues. Much writing, advertising and computer-related work is set for this workday. The reformer, the inventor, the engineer, the revolutionary-these are important archetypes for you. They are icons of the ambitions that stir you. Independence, freedom from past patterns and a daring readiness to innovate are the paths of achievement. You are a magnet for people. Dinner is easy this evening. Tonight ends as the day began . . . With passion. There are two people at your place when the lights go out.



**Virgo (August 23-September 22)**

You could be experiencing some emotional changes today as you help a friend or relative with some difficult situation. Positive thinking can change your life in good ways and that is what you teach. One day at a time, you can do anything and that is the example you set. You may need to be accountable to others so . . . Say what you mean and mean what you say. You will receive help when it comes to entertaining others or cleaning up after a big night of entertaining. Talking with loved ones while you work or listening to music while you work makes the chores go lightning fast. A social life can be enjoyed this afternoon and evening. You are wise to occasionally create meals that are easy to share and can be served using paper plates and napkins.



**Libra (September 23-October 22)**

At home, away from the workplace, you may still be thinking of work and the way work is performed. When you think of the routine that is the accepted norm, you may come up with ideas to help update and modernize the worker and his or her tools. You may not be high enough on the totem pole to make certain changes but you are able to write a report that will create quite an interest. You may want to end your report with the suggestion that you could save the company money and do the research. This will make you a more valuable part of the team. To improve your own work, look at the communication techniques and what happens to create a faster change. This afternoon would be a good time to put out a birdfeeder with corn or fat.



**Scorpio (October 23-November 21)**

Gather facts that will back up your ideas, especially where a business or financial plan is concerned. Keep your vision in mind and you will reach your goals. You like to be prepared and later today you have an opportunity to do a little planning and a little catching up type of work. You will find expressions of appreciation from your housemates this afternoon. You may decide that a mutual admiration society is in order. You go about telling others how much you appreciate them. A busy life for everyone around you, including yourself, leaves little time for a visit on most days. You enjoy having stability in your life and will continue to find time to send cards or letters, or make phone calls that help update you on family happenings and activities.



**Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)**

Some negative aspects can be worked through very quickly this morning-especially if you are paying attention. Give yourself time to see through all sides of a subject before coming up with a decision. This afternoon would be a good time to follow instructions-head down-pencil busy. A new co-worker may have you confused-there could be a power struggle. Figuring out how to organize projects and people is apt to become a topic of special interest-and a challenge. Opinions are not enough now: authority or evidence must back them-above all, they must have practical worth and application. This could be a time for intense study. Actually, sitting down to a meal and communicating may help to solve a few problems this evening. Balance is the key.



**Capricorn (December 22-January 19)**

A relaxed, quiet day would be nice but the schedule today is very full. Your basic attitude tends to be filled with the ability to retain that feeling of peaceful acceptance for each day, along with a unique curiosity about all around you. You feel confident in your life direction and are looking forward to this year ahead of you. You are determined to find ways to use your skills and your knowledge in gaining productive business results. Ambitious schemes and the pursuit of success take on a high priority. This brings a focus on the practical, the successful, the pragmatic-whatever it takes to get you ahead. You will not be disappointed in the surprises that come your way. Loved ones are emphasized this evening.



**Aquarius (January 20- February 18)**

Usually, shortcuts are not a very good idea but today . . . It is the only way to get the demands of work completed. A helpful co-worker friend is a very welcomed assistant. You will be able to return the favor soon. You may decide to start paying closer attention to your financial situation this year so that you can detect the leaks. Going through your clothes and putting things in order creates an opportunity for you to mend or to cull out the things that need repair or cleaning. It is easiest to concentrate on the project of the day when you are organized at home. Someone who is really very fond of you may do you a big favor this afternoon. This action on his or her part lets you know just how special you are to him or her. If you feel the same way, express your feelings.



**Pisces (February 19-March 20)**

Someone will give you advice on travel or income and it would be worth your time to listen; this could be fun, beneficial and educational. There are harmonious energies moving in your direction regarding new projects. This could mean in the workplace or at home. If you are worried about beginning a new project, relax; there is fun in discovery. If you are wondering how a new project will fare, don't . . . Just put your head forward and move ahead. You attract the people that admire your common sense and your knack for handling all sorts of issues. You may want to consider your talents-there are monetary rewards just waiting, perhaps from a book. Tonight you may talk to the family about building a deck or some other addition to the house.

**COUNTRY CODES**

Afghanistan	0093	Kuwait	00965
Albania	00355	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Algeria	00213	Laos	00856
Andorra	00376	Latvia	00371
Angola	00244	Lebanon	00961
Anguilla	001264	Liberia	00231
Antigua	001268	Libya	00218
Argentina	0054	Lithuania	00370
Armenia	00374	Luxembourg	00352
Australia	0061	Macau	00853
Austria	0043	Macedonia	00389
Bahamas	001242	Madagascar	00261
Bahrain	00973	Majorca	0034
Bangladesh	00880	Malawi	00265
Barbados	001246	Malaysia	0060
Belarus	00375	Maldives	00960
Belgium	0032	Mali	00223
Belize	00501	Malta	00356
Benin	00229	Marshall Islands	00692
Bermuda	001441	Martinique	00596
Bhutan	00975	Mauritania	00222
Bolivia	00591	Mauritius	00230
Bosnia	00387	Mayotte	00269
Botswana	00267	Mexico	0052
Brazil	0055	Micronesia	00691
Brunei	00673	Moldova	00373
Bulgaria	00359	Monaco	00377
Burkina	00226	Mongolia	00976
Burundi	00257	Montserrat	001664
Cambodia	00855	Morocco	00212
Cameroon	00237	Mozambique	00258
Canada	001	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Cape Verde	00238	Namibia	00264
Cayman Islands	001345	Nepal	00977
Central African Republic	00238	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Chad	00235	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Chile	0056	New Caledonia	00687
China	0086	New Zealand	0064
Colombia	0057	Nicaragua	00505
Comoros	00269	Niger	00227
Congo	00242	Nigeria	00234
Cook Islands	00682	Niue	00683
Costa Rica	00506	Norfolk Island	00672
Croatia	00385	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Cuba	0053	North Korea	00850
Cyprus	00357	Norway	0047
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Oman	00968
Czech Republic	00420	Pakistan	0092
Denmark	0045	Palau	00680
Diego Garcia	00246	Panama	00507
Djibouti	00253	Papua New Guinea	00675
Dominica	001767	Paraguay	00595
Dominican Republic	001809	Peru	0051
Ecuador	00593	Philippines	0063
Egypt	0020	Poland	0048
El Salvador	00503	Portugal	00351
England (UK)	0044	Puerto Rico	001787
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Qatar	00974
Eritrea	00291	Romania	0040
Estonia	00372	Russian Federation	007
Ethiopia	00251	Rwanda	00250
Falkland Islands	00500	Saint Helena	00290
Faroe Islands	00298	Saint Kitts	001869
Fiji	00679	Saint Lucia	001758
Finland	00358	Saint Pierre	00508
France	0033	Saint Vincent	001784
French Guiana	00594	Samoa US	00684
French Polynesia	00689	Samoa West	00685
Gabon	00241	San Marino	00378
Gambia	00220	Sao Tome	00239
Georgia	00995	Saudi Arabia	00966
Germany	0049	Scotland (UK)	0044
Ghana	00233	Senegal	00221
Gibraltar	00350	Seychelles	00284
Greece	0030	Sierra Leone	00232
Greenland	00299	Singapore	0065
Grenada	001473	Slovakia	00421
Guadeloupe	00590	Slovenia	00386
Guam	001671	Solomon Islands	00677
Guatemala	00502	Somalia	00252
Guinea	00224	South Africa	0027
Guyana	00592	South Korea	0082
Haiti	00509	Spain	0034
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Sri Lanka	0094
Honduras	00504	Sudan	00249
Hong Kong	00852	Suriname	00597
Hungary	0036	Swaziland	00268
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sweden	0046
Iceland	00354	Switzerland	0041
India	0091	Syria	00963
Indian Ocean	00873	Taiwan	00886
Indonesia	0062	Tanzania	00255
Iran	0098	Thailand	0066
Iraq	00964	Toga	00228
Ireland	00353	Tonga	00676
Italy	0039	Tokelau	00690
Ivory Coast	00225	Trinidad	001868
Jamaica	001876	Tunisia	00216
Japan	0081	Turkey	0090
Jordan	00962	Tuvalu	00688
Kazakhstan	007	Uganda	00256
Kenya	00254	Ukraine	00380
Kiribati	00686	United Arab Emirates	00976

## MALARIA DRUG SHORTAGE LEAD TO BETTER SOLUTIONS VS EBOLA

**MIAMI:** As doctors struggled to treat growing numbers of patients during the Ebola crisis in West Africa, the shortage of one helpful drug may have led to the discovery of a better one. The results of a study published Wednesday in the *New England Journal of Medicine* show that Ebola patients given an anti-malarial drug called artesunate-amodiaquine (ASAQ) had a 31 percent lower risk of dying than those given the standard treatment for the mosquito-borne disease.

The results point to a potentially promising treatment for a disease that has no market-approved treatments or cures, as researchers scramble to come up with a vaccine before the next outbreak strikes. The study came about when a treatment center run by Doctors Without Borders in Foya, Liberia, "ran out of its supply of artemether-lumefantrine (AL) after a sudden spike in admissions to the center" in August 2014, said the report.

Suddenly, 100 cases of confirmed Ebola virus were being admitted each week to what had started as a 10-bed isolation unit in a former refugee transit center. The substitute drug, artesunate-amodiaquine, was prescribed for all patients with suspected Ebola virus disease who were admitted to the treatment center for a period of 12 days, "with no other known systematic changes in care," said the report. Anti-malaria medicines are routinely given to suspected Ebola patients because the symptoms of the two illnesses—including fever, headaches and joint pain—often overlap.

Once the Ebola epidemic finally ebbed, researchers realized they had a significant group of patients — 381 in all from June



**CONAKRY, Guinea:** In this March 7, 2015 file photo, a health worker injects a man in his arm with an Ebola vaccine. — AP

to October 2014 — whose outcomes they could compare and analyze. Some had taken the standard treatment AL, others had taken ASAQ. They found that 64.4 percent of the patients in the artemether-lumefantrine group died, compared to 50.7 percent of the patients in the artesunate-amodiaquine group.

The study had some limitations, including that records did not contain information about whether the patients completed their regimen of medication or not. Also, since the pills are taken orally, some severely ill patients may not have been able to ingest them due to vomiting. Researchers still do not understand what

may make ASAQ more effective at saving lives, or if perhaps the standard drug AL is simply more risky, or more prone to causing death.

"Given the particular context of this study, we must remain cautious about drawing broad conclusions," said co-author Iza Ciglenecki. "To date, however, ASAQ appears to be a promising path towards an effective treatment. Further preclinical and clinical studies to confirm the effect of ASAQ in reducing the Ebola mortality are urgently needed." More than 11,000 people died during the West African Ebola epidemic, which lasted almost two years. — AFP

## REDUCING SUGARY DRINKS CUTS ONLY A FEW CALORIES

**LONDON:** Studies from Britain and Mexico suggest reducing sugar in sweetened drinks or taxing it more to cut consumption can help people limit their calorie intake and lower their risk of developing diabetes, but not by much. Two separate pieces of research published on Thursday in the *British Medical Journal* and *The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology* journal found that either approach can lead to a drop in calories of between about 16 and 39 a day.

The British parliament's Health Committee called last November for tough measures including a tax on sugary drinks to fight child obesity, but a spokesman for Prime Minister David Cameron said he did not agree and would propose other measures. Graham MacGregor, who led the UK study as professor of cardiovascular medicine and chairman of the Action on Sugar campaign group, said the positive impact of calorie reduction could be dramatic across a large population over several years, even if its effect was not strong on an individual level.

A gradual reduction in drinks' sugar content over five years without replacing it with artificial sweeteners - is the best approach, he suggested. "Our study shows this strategy could have a profound impact on reducing energy intake from sugar-sweetened beverages and could therefore lower the risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes in the long term," he said in a statement about the findings.

His team's research used predictive modeling to assess the potential impact of a 40 percent reduction in free sugars added to drinks over five years in Britain. The results showed this would lead to an average drop in energy intake of 38.4 calories a day by the end of the fifth year, leading to an average reduction in body weight of 1.2 kilograms in adults. This, the study found, would result in some 500,000 fewer adults being overweight and a million fewer being obese - which in turn would prevent between 274,000 and 309,000 obesity-related type 2 diabetes cases over the next two decades.

### 'Purely theoretical'

Stephen O'Rahilly, who is director of the metabolic research laboratories at the University of Cambridge and was not directly involved in either study, said it would be hard to argue with the broad conclusions of MacGregor's work. It was nevertheless "a purely theoretical study," he added. "There are many assumptions made which reduce confidence in the statements regarding the precise extent of the health benefit." In the second study in Mexico, researchers analyzed the actual effect of a 10 percent tax on sugar-sweetened drinks introduced in January 2014. They found it was associated with a 12 percent reduction in sales of taxed drinks and a 4 percent increase in purchases of untaxed drinks a year after it was implemented. — Reuters

# CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times  
100 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE 1961-2011

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem  
د. فهد علي المخيزيم  
Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال  
M.B. Bch. FRCP. FAAP. PEM

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368



## KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (07/01/2016 TO 13/01/2016)

**SHARQIA-1**  
DADDY'S HOME 12:00 PM  
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 2:00 PM  
DADDY'S HOME 4:00 PM  
DILWALE - Hindi 6:00 PM  
DILWALE - Hindi 9:00 PM  
DADDY'S HOME 12:05 AM

**SHARQIA-2**  
THE REVENANT 12:15 PM  
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 1:30 PM  
THE REVENANT 3:15 PM  
THE REVENANT 6:15 PM  
THE REVENANT 9:15 PM  
THE REVENANT 12:15 AM

**SHARQIA-3**  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 11:30 AM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 1:15 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 3:00 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 4:45 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 6:30 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 8:45 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 11:00 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 12:45 AM

**MUHALAB-1**  
DADDY'S HOME 11:30 AM  
DADDY'S HOME 1:30 PM  
EXTRACTION 3:30 PM  
DADDY'S HOME 5:30 PM  
DILWALE - Hindi 7:30 PM  
DADDY'S HOME 10:30 PM  
EXTRACTION 12:30 AM

**MUHALAB-2**  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 11:45 AM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 1:30 PM  
WAZIR - Hindi 3:15 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 5:30 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 7:45 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 10:00 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 12:15 AM

**MUHALAB-3**  
THE REVENANT 11:30 AM  
THE REVENANT 2:30 PM  
THE REVENANT 5:30 PM  
THE REVENANT 8:30 PM  
THE REVENANT 11:30 PM

**FANAR-1**  
DADDY'S HOME 11:30 AM  
DADDY'S HOME 1:30 PM  
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 3:30 PM  
DADDY'S HOME 5:30 PM  
FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS 7:30 PM  
DADDY'S HOME 9:45 PM  
THE REVENANT 11:45 PM

**FANAR-2**  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 12:30 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 2:30 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 4:30 PM  
EXTRACTION 6:30 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 8:30 PM  
EXTRACTION 10:30 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 12:30 AM

**FANAR-3**  
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 11:45 AM  
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 1:45 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 3:30 PM  
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 5:45 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 7:30 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 9:45 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 12:05 AM

**FANAR-4**  
THE REVENANT 12:15 PM  
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 1:30 PM  
THE REVENANT 3:15 PM  
THE REVENANT 6:15 PM  
THE REVENANT 9:15 PM  
THE REVENANT 12:15 AM

**FANAR-5**  
DILWALE - Hindi 12:00 PM  
DILWALE - Hindi 3:00 PM  
WAZIR - Hindi 6:00 PM  
DILWALE - Hindi 8:30 PM  
DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 PM

**MARINA-1**  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 11:45 AM

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 1:30 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 3:15 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 5:00 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 6:45 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 9:00 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 11:15 PM  
THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE DEAD 1:00 AM

**MARINA-2**  
DADDY'S HOME 11:45 AM  
DADDY'S HOME 1:45 PM  
POINT BREAK 3:45 PM  
DADDY'S HOME 6:15 PM  
EXTRACTION 8:15 PM  
THE REVENANT 10:15 PM  
EXTRACTION 1:15 AM

**MARINA-3**  
THE REVENANT 12:30 PM  
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 1:30 PM  
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 3:30 PM  
THE REVENANT 5:45 PM  
THE REVENANT 8:45 PM  
THE REVENANT 11:45 PM

**AVENUES-1**  
GET SQUIRRELY 12:30 PM  
GET SQUIRRELY 2:45 PM  
GET SQUIRRELY 5:00 PM  
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 7:15 PM  
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 9:15 PM  
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 11:15 PM  
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film 1:15 AM

**AVENUES-2**  
EXTRACTION 1:00 PM  
EXTRACTION 3:15 PM  
EXTRACTION 5:30 PM  
CHARLIE - Malayalam 7:45 PM  
EXTRACTION 10:30 PM  
EXTRACTION 12:45 AM

**AVENUES-3**  
DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 AM  
DILWALE - Hindi 2:30 PM  
DILWALE - Hindi 5:45 PM  
DILWALE - Hindi 9:00 PM  
DILWALE - Hindi 12:15 AM

**360° 1**  
THE REVENANT 11:30 AM  
THE REVENANT 2:30 PM  
THE REVENANT 5:45 PM  
THE REVENANT 9:00 PM  
THE REVENANT 12:15 AM

**360° 2**  
THE REVENANT 1:15 PM  
THE REVENANT 4:30 PM  
THE REVENANT 7:45 PM  
THE REVENANT 11:00 PM

**360° 3**  
EXTRACTION 12:30 PM  
SNOWTIME! 2:45 PM  
EXTRACTION 5:00 PM  
EXTRACTION 7:15 PM  
EXTRACTION 9:30 PM  
EXTRACTION 11:45 PM

**AL-KOUT.1**  
THE REVENANT 11:30 AM  
THE REVENANT 2:30 PM  
THE REVENANT 5:30 PM  
THE REVENANT 8:30 PM  
THE REVENANT 11:30 PM

**AL-KOUT.2**  
DADDY'S HOME 12:30 PM  
EXTRACTION 2:45 PM  
DADDY'S HOME 5:00 PM  
DADDY'S HOME 7:00 PM  
DADDY'S HOME 9:00 PM  
EXTRACTION 11:00 PM  
EXTRACTION 1:00 AM

**AL-KOUT.3**  
FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS 12:45 PM  
FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS 3:00 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 5:15 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 7:30 PM  
PAPARAZZI - Arabic 9:45 PM  
FATHERS AND DAUGHTERS 12:05 AM

### ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation available for bachelor (partition) in a room in Salmiya. Call: 66711141. (C 5110)

Sharing accommodation in a 2 bedroom C/AC flat 1 room separate bathroom, new finger office Farwaniya, (family only) from Jan 30. Phone: 99482666. (C 5109) 6-1-2016

Sharing accommodation available for a bachelor with a Mangalorean Catholic bachelor near Khaitan cinema Garnatha bus stop. Contact: 66036893. (C 5107) 5-1-2016

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, Gunasekaran R (Hindu), S/o Ramalingam, DOB 02.06.1974. Passport No:

### FLOOR FOR RENT

in Surra with four bedrooms, two of them are master room. Four bathrooms and one big living room.

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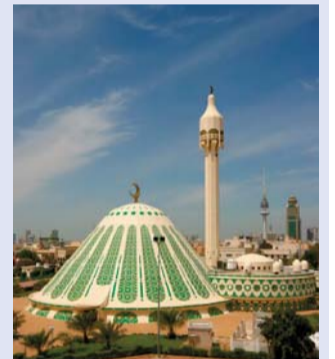
F5807434, residing at No. 28, Pillaiyar Koil Street, SiruPuliyur Eswarakandanallur, Villupuram, 607204 has converted to Islam with the name of R. Nazir on 30th November 2015. (C 5108) 6-1-2015

### EMERGENCY

112

### Prayer timings

Fajr: 05:19  
Shorook 06:44  
Duhr: 11:55  
Asr: 14:47  
Maghrib: 17:06  
Isha: 18:28



## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

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

# Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 2016



Osborne warns of 'dangerous cocktail' of threats for 2016

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ETIHAD ASKS COURT FOR MORE TIME FOR AIR BERLIN CODE SHARES

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WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve building in Washington, DC. Stocks were edging slightly higher in midday trading as investors waited for news about interest rates from the Federal Reserve. — AFP

## FEARS FOR WORLD ECONOMY WREAK CARNAGE GULF MARKETS PLUNGE AS OIL, GLOBAL STOCKS CRASH

**KUWAIT:** Share prices in the energy-rich Gulf states fell sharply yesterday as oil dived to an 11-year low and China triggered a global markets rout. The gloomy economic indicators and tensions between regional heavyweights Saudi Arabia and Iran combined to dent investor confidence, leading to a massive sell-off that sent prices crashing. All seven Gulf bourses ended the last trading day of the Muslim week in negative territory, with the slide led by the Saudi market, the region's largest.

The Saudi Arabian riyal fell to a record low against the dollar in the one-year forwards market yesterday in response to a fresh slide in oil prices. One-year dollar/riyal forwards climbed as high as 880 points in very volatile trade, exceeding their previous record of 850 points hit during a previous bout of speculation against the riyal in 1999, according to Thomson Reuters data.

A level of 880 points implies depreciation of the riyal of 2.3 percent over the next 12 months. The riyal is pegged in the spot market at 3.75 to the dollar. Some banks and funds use the forwards market to hedge against the risk that the peg might eventually be broken.

"Several negative factors combined to dampen investor confidence in the Gulf bourses, leading them to dump shares," said Mohammad Zidan, chief market strategist at Kuwait's Orbex Brokerage. "Oil prices continued to fall, with no

bottom in sight. China's economic woes appear to be deeper than earlier believed and Saudi-Iran tensions just added insult to injury," Zidan said.

The Saudi Tadawul All-Shares Index dipped 4.5 percent to finish on 6,225.22 points, a three-year low. All its 15 sectors dropped, with banking shedding 4.6 percent and petrochemicals 3.3 percent.

The Dubai Financial Market Index dropped 3.4 percent to fall below the key 3,000-point mark for the first time this year. It closed on 2,966.3 points. Leader Emaar properties sank 5.4 percent and most stocks ended down. Its sister market in Abu Dhabi dipped 3.2 percent to end the day on 4,135 points. The Qatar Exchange, the region's second largest, dropped 3.0 percent, falling below the 9,800 mark, with losses across all sectors. The normally dormant Kuwait Stock Exchange followed suit, losing 1.6 percent to trade at levels last seen 11 years ago. The small Oman and Bahrain bourses lost 0.5 percent and 0.7 percent respectively. All Gulf stock exchanges ended 2015 in negative territory, led by Saudi Arabia, after the sharp decline in oil prices. Riyadh broke off diplomatic ties with Iran on Sunday after protesters set fire to its Tehran embassy and

### World stocks crash

World stock markets tumbled and oil plummeted new lows yesterday as investors feared for the

global economy on signs of a dramatic slowdown in powerhouse China.

European stock markets plunged in morning deals following a heavy sell-off across Asia triggered by a suspension to trading in China, the world's second biggest economy and key driver of commodities consumption.

Wall Street had already faltered on Wednesday, with dealers spooked by a World Bank report cutting its global growth forecasts again. At about 0915 GMT, London's benchmark FTSE 100 index was down a hefty 2.8 percent compared with Wednesday's close.

Leading eurozone markets Frankfurt and Paris were down by more than three percent, with Madrid and Milan faring only slightly better. The smaller Nordic markets were down more than four percent. "Equity markets are continuing their steep losses... with investor sentiment being pressured by various factors," said Lukman Otunuga, research analyst at trading group FXTM.

"These include the resumption of fears over global growth following weak data from China... while increased geopolitical tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran and an unexpected nuclear test from North Korea have also encouraged investors to dodge away from riskier assets."

The week's geopolitical developments have combined to heap further pressure on oil prices,

sending New York's main crude contract sliding Thursday to a 12-year low at \$32.10 a barrel.

But gold was benefiting from its status as a haven investment, while a "rush to the safety of sovereign bonds is underway," noted Brenda Kelly, head analyst at London Capital Group.

"The (German) bund is helping the euro retrace higher against the dollar and the pound," she added in a note to clients.

Chinese markets were suspended yesterday for the second day this week after they fell more than seven percent, leading an Asia-wide sell-off as Beijing weakened the value of the yuan currency by the most since August.

Regulators in China called an end to trade within just 30 minutes of opening after the central bank weakened the value of its yuan currency by 0.51 percent against the dollar. The drop was the biggest since August when the value was cut by five percent in a week-sparking weeks of global market turmoil over worries Beijing did not have a handle on its economic crisis. The yuan is now at its weakest in five years.

Trading was halted just before 10am (0200 GMT) as a "circuit breaker" kicked in after the benchmark Shanghai index slumped seven percent and the Shenzhen composite index, which tracks stocks on China's second exchange, tumbled 8.2 percent. — Agencies

## ETIHAD ASKS COURT FOR MORE TIME FOR AIR BERLIN CODE SHARES

**BERLIN:** Gulf airline Etihad has asked a German court for more time to continue code sharing with Air Berlin on 29 routes while it appeals a decision that will block it from operating the flights after Jan. 15, it said yesterday. A court in Brunswick last week said Etihad may not continue to jointly sell tickets for 29 routes operated by Air Berlin, in which Etihad owns a 29 percent stake, because they were not covered by the current air traffic rights agreement between Germany and the United Arab Emirates.

The code shares are important for

Air Berlin as it tries to return to profitability after years of losses. Such deals allow carriers to offer more destinations as part of their network, reaching more customers and thus helping to fill planes and boost revenues.

Etihad yesterday said it wanted an appeals court to allow it to continue the code shares, which had previously been approved six times, until at least March 26 and that the Brunswick court had made errors in its interpretation of the agreement.

The carrier said the current bilateral air traffic rights agreement

allows Etihad to fly to four destinations in Germany with its own aircraft, plus a further three in Germany via code-sharing, and that the agreement permits flights that go from these points beyond Germany.

"We are convinced that the conditions of the bilateral agreement are clear and we are confident that a correct review of our complaint will lead to the restoration of competition and choice on the German market," Jim Callaghan, Etihad Airways General Counsel, said in a statement.

Etihad has said the code shares were a key part of its case for invest-

ing in loss-making Air Berlin in 2012. While some analysts have queried whether Etihad will stand by Air Berlin, the Abu Dhabi-based airline has said it remains committed to Germany's second largest carrier.

But that has not stopped labour representatives at Air Berlin from writing to German Chancellor Angela Merkel to ask her to find a political answer to the dispute, German magazine Spiegel reported on its website. The German transport ministry says it has repeatedly offered to hold talks with the UAE government over the bilateral agreement. — Reuters



**KARACHI:** Pakistani stockbrokers watch share prices on a monitor during trading at The Karachi Stock Exchange (KSE) in Karachi yesterday. The benchmark KSE-100-Index was down 141.26 point sat 22873.88 at the end of the mid-day session. — AFP

## US APPLICATIONS FOR JOBLESS AID DROPPED LAST WEEK

**WASHINGTON:** Fewer people sought US unemployment benefits last week, suggesting that the job market remains healthy and insulated from the turmoil abroad in Europe and China.

**THE NUMBERS:** Applications for jobless aid fell 10,000 to a seasonally adjusted 277,000, the Labor Department said yesterday. The less volatile 4-week average dipped 1,250 to 275,750. Over the past 12 months, the number of people receiving benefits has fallen 8.3 percent to 2.2 million.

**THE TAKEAWAY:** US employers appear to be secure, even as the Chinese stock market is collapsing, oil prices are plunging and Europe continues to slowly nurse its way back to financial health. The relatively low level of applications for unemployment aid

indicates that job growth should be healthy in the December jobs report being released by the government today.

Weekly figures below 300,000 - a level not seen in the past 10 months - tend to correspond with strong monthly job gains. Applications for benefits are a proxy for layoffs, so the consistent lows for claims suggest that employers are holding onto staff and possibly looking to expand.

**KEY DRIVERS:** Businesses expect their revenues to keep improving, increasing their need for workers even as the manufacturing sector copes with a broader global slowdown that has hurt exports abroad and turned the financial markets volatile. Employers have hired about 210,000 workers a month this year. And

unemployment last month held at a seven-year low 5 percent.

A private survey from a payroll processor ADP released Wednesday said that the economy added 257,000 jobs last month. Economists expect the government employment report to show that roughly 200,000 people found work in December.

**BIG PICTURE:** Consumers have kept the more than six-year recovery from the Great Recession going. Auto sales climbed last year to record levels, while home sales and spending at restaurants and online retailers improved. Still, low oil prices and weak international demand coming out of Europe, China and several emerging economies such as Brazil are raising alarms about a global slowdown. — AP

## News

in brief

### US dollar stable against Kuwaiti dinar at 0.303

**KUWAIT:** The exchange rate of the US dollar against the Kuwaiti dinar on Wednesday was stable at KD 0.303 while the rate of the euro rose to KD 0.328, said a statement by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. According to the CBK, the exchange rate of the Sterling pound went down to KD 0.444 while the Swiss Franc went up to KD 0.302, and the exchange rate of the Japanese yen remained the same.

### Maaden unit to borrow 4bn riyals from state fund

**DUBAI:** A subsidiary of Saudi Arabian Mining Co (Ma'aden) will borrow 4 billion riyals (\$1.07 billion) in construction loans from a state-backed agency, the parent firm said yesterday. Maaden, the Gulf's largest miner, said in a bourse statement that the Saudi Industrial Development Fund (SIDF) has approved providing the loan facilities to Ma'aden Waad Al Shamal Phosphate Company (MWSPC). A 900 million riyal facility will fund building an ammonia plant, while a separate loan for the same amount will finance construction of a diammonium phosphate plant. Both loans will be repaid in 14 semi-annual installments over seven years, with the two plants to be built in Ras Al-Khair. Two further loans - of 1 billion and 1.2 billion riyals respectively - will fund building plants to manufacture sulphuric acid, phosphoric acid and phosphate concentrate in Waad Al Shamal. These loans are for eight years and will be repaid in 16 semi-annual installments.

### Abu Dhabi's Gulf Capital raises \$175m for second credit fund

**ABU DHABI:** Gulf Capital has raised \$175 million for the first closing of a new credit fund, and aims for a final close of \$250 million, the Abu Dhabi-based private equity firm said yesterday. The fund, Gulf Credit Opportunities Fund II, expects to make up to 12 investments of \$15 million to \$30 million each during its 10-year life. A credit fund structures its investments as private debt rather than equity. Gulf Credit Partners, which manages Gulf Capital's funds, will invest in companies generating annual revenues of between \$25 million and \$250 million in the Middle East, Africa and Turkey. The new fund will be Gulf Capital's second credit fund. The first closed in 2013 at around \$221 million, and is currently over 90 percent invested in some eight companies. Gulf Capital handles over \$4 billion of assets across 10 funds and investment vehicles.

## WEAK WORLD MARKETS SIGNAL FRESH GLOBAL CRISIS: SOROS

### CHINA CRISIS UNDERMINING GLOBAL FINANCIAL STABILITY

**COLOMBO:** American financier George Soros warned yesterday that weaker world markets, triggered by a slowdown in China, were showing signs of a financial crisis reminiscent of the 2008 crash.

Speaking at an investment forum in Sri Lanka, the magnate and philanthropist said China's flagging economy and subsequent devaluation of its currency were undermining global financial stability. His speech came as world markets tumbled and oil prices reached new lows after China suspended its stock market when shares fell more than seven percent for the second time this week.

"Unfortunately China has a major adjustment problem and it has a lot of

choices and it can actually transfer to the rest of the world its own problems by devaluing its currency—and that is what China is doing," Soros said of the number-two economy.

A weaker Chinese yuan was "inflicting deflationary pressures" on the rest of the world, he told the Sri Lanka Economic Forum, attended by President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. "We are facing a very serious transitional problem which is quite recent and it is, I would say, (something) that amounts to a crisis and we are at the beginning of that," Soros said. "When I look at the financial markets, there I see a serious challenge,

which reminds me of actually the crisis we had in 2008."

The Hungarian-born multi-billionaire said he had warned his investment staff to play it safe. "In my guidance to my investment people, I have been telling them to be very, very cautious and very, very, very careful."

Soros warned that current deflationary pressures could lead to a downward spiral. While falling prices might be good for consumers in the short term, deflation can endure dangerously if consumers delay purchases in the hope of lower prices later, which in turn prompts companies to hold off investment.

"Instead of spending that (saved)

income, they will use it to reduce their indebtedness because they can buy goods that they want cheaper next year," he told the forum. "Cash becomes the desirable form of investment and that is very bad for the financial markets. And the banking system that has been lending a lot of money to the developing world is now pulling back."

He urged Sri Lanka, which is emerging from a decades-long ethnic war, to lower its expectations of foreign capital "pouring" in, and work more to strengthen its economy. "I am afraid, I have to be a messenger that delivers bad news because you are facing a very difficult external situation," he said. — AFP

## POUNDLAND HIT AS CHRISTMAS SHOPPERS DESERT THE HIGH STREET AND GO ONLINE

**LONDON:** British discount retailer Poundland suffered in the run-up to Christmas as consumers deserted the high street in favor of online shopping, resulting in "disappointing" festive sales and a downgrade of profit expectations for the year.

Shares in the group that sells everything from washing detergent to boxes of chocolates and packs of batteries for just one British pound (\$1.5) slumped more than 10 percent to an all-time low of 172 pence after the retailer's third-quarter update yesterday. Poundland, which has rapidly increased its number of shops in recent years, culminating in the buyout of rival 99p Stores last year, was one of the first retailers to warn of a volatile Christmas two months ago.

"The trading conditions that we experienced in November continued through the third quarter, with high street customer numbers down year on year and this has impacted sales growth," Chief Executive Jim McCarthy said.

The effect of Britain's changing shopping habits, with more and more sales moving online, has been felt in force on the high street this Christmas. Marks & Spencer reported dire trading in clothing and gifts over Christmas, partly blaming unseasonably warm winter weather, while much of department stores group John Lewis's better performance came online rather than in store. —Reuters



**AMSTERDAM:** Christmas shoppers look at luxury goods on display at department store in the center of Amsterdam, Netherlands. Figures released yesterday show that the 19-country eurozone economy was ending 2015 on a relatively solid note with unemployment across the region down at its lowest level in more than four years despite subdued retail spending. — AP

## M&S VETERAN ROWE TO SUCCEED BOLLAND AS CEO

**LONDON:** Marc Bolland will step down as the boss of Marks & Spencer in April, bringing an end to six difficult years at the British retailer following yet another weak Christmas. Bolland will be replaced as chief executive by Steve Rowe, 48, who has run divisions covering both food and clothing in his 25 years at the company, the best known name in British shopping.

M&S Chairman Robert Swannell told reporters Bolland had not been under any pressure to leave from either the board or shareholders and one investor told Reuters they had not expected the departure so swiftly. "(The news was) quite a surprise, although it is not uncommon for CEOs to move on after that kind of tenure," said Richard Marwood, senior investment manager at AXA Investment Managers, one of the company's top 40 shareholders.

"Having somebody already in the business succeeding him is probably no bad thing. I don't think we are looking for a change of direction. Investors are still waiting for the Bolland plan of a more cash generative, well invested and internet enabled business to be fully delivered," he added.

Analysts said Bolland had modernised M&S and put it on to a stronger footing—with international and online sales improving and the food business taking market share—giving Rowe a stronger platform than Bolland when he took over in 2010. M&S shares traded 0.8 percent higher at 442.3 pence at 0825 GMT. Bolland, 56, spent billions of pounds on the redesign of products, stores, supply chain logistics and the website to address decades of underinvestment at its clothing business. —Reuters

## EUROZONE UNEMPLOYMENT FALLS TO LOWEST IN FOUR YEARS

**BRUSSELS:** Eurozone unemployment dropped to its lowest level in four years in November, official data showed yesterday, beating analyst expectations amid lingering doubts about the strength of the economy in Europe.

The improved jobs picture comes as the 19-country single currency bloc is still stuck in a bout of low inflation and weak growth despite unprecedented stimulus measures by the European Central Bank. The European Union's Eurostat agency said euro-zone unemployment fell to 10.5 percent in November from a revised 10.6 percent in October, hitting the lowest level since October 2011.

Joblessness in the eurozone has gradually fallen from the record 12.2 percent reached in September 2013 as the damaging eurozone debt crisis peaked out. However, it still remains way above the 7.5 percent levels seen during the economic boom leading up to the financial crash in 2008.

In comparison, unemployment in the much faster growing United States currently stands at 5.0 percent. Economists worry that growth in Europe, currently set to expand by 1.6 percent in 2015, is too weak to erase the big pockets of unemployment, especially Greece, Spain and Portugal, but also in economic heavyweights France and Italy.

"The number of eurozone jobless has now fallen (by) 1.57 million overall since October 2014. Encouraging, but it needs to come down a lot further," said Howard Archer, chief European economist at IHS Global Insight. As usual the level of joblessness, which totalled 16.9 million across the eurozone, varied from country to country. The highest rate was in debt-stricken Greece, at 24.6 percent in September, the latest data available.

Youth unemployment in Greece stood at a higher 49.5 percent and at a still worrying 47.5 percent in Spain whose economy has done much better than many

others. The lowest rate overall in the bloc was in economic powerhouse Germany, unchanged for a third consecutive month at an ultra low 4.5 percent.

France, the eurozone's second biggest economy, saw unemployment fall to 10.1 percent from 10.3 percent in October, a sign that a poor jobs picture could finally be improving. For the whole eurozone, economists surveyed by the Factset data company had forecast an unemployment rate of 10.7 percent.

Separate Eurostat data meanwhile showed that retail sales in the eurozone fell 0.3 percent in November, a third consecutive monthly drop.

"The decline is somewhat surprising given relatively strong consumer confidence, improvements in the labour market and tailwinds from low oil prices, but it remains to be seen whether total consumption is in a similar slump as retail sales is," said analyst Bert Colijn from ING Bank. — AFP

## GREEK FM ON EUROPEAN CHARM OFFENSIVE OVER DEBT TALKS

**ATHENS:** Greek Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos begins a six-day European charm offensive starting today to promote the country's tough debt talks, his office said. Greece's leftist government in July signed a third debt rescue program worth 86 billion euros (\$92 billion) after the country looked to be on the brink of crashing out of the eurozone.

Representatives of the creditors—the European Commission, European Central Bank, International Monetary Fund and the ESM European bailout fund—will return to Athens on January 18 to monitor adherence to the program. Tsakalotos will first travel to Rome for

talks with his counterpart Pier Carlo Padoan, and will then head to Lisbon, Paris, Helsinki, Amsterdam and Berlin to see Mario Centeno, Michel Sapin, Alexander Stubb, Jeroen Dijsselbloem and Wolfgang Schäuble.

"Tsakalotos will discuss the course of the European program, in view of the first evaluation, as well as the issue of the Greek debt," the finance ministry said in a statement yesterday. Greek President Prokypis Pavlopoulos is also reportedly planning a series of high-profile visits this month to Moscow and Berlin to see Russian President Vladimir Putin and German Chancellor Angela

Merkel. Greece hopes that the end of this evaluation will kickstart a discussion on how to make repayment of its huge public debt more sustainable.

But Athens must first reach agreement with the creditors on a new overhaul of its ailing pension system. Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on Sunday warned that his government would not give in to "unreasonable" demands on the issue.

"The creditors have to know that we are going to respect the agreement to the letter, but that doesn't mean we are going to succumb to unreasonable and undesired demands," he told Real

News newspaper.

The Greek labor ministry has announced plans to lower the maximum pension to 2,300 euros from 2,700 euros currently. The ministry also wants to increase social security contributions by employers by 1.0 percent, a move likely to be resisted by the creditors.

Athens is also trying to edge out the International Monetary Fund from its rescue program, arguing that the global lender places excessive emphasis on recessionary cuts. However, a number of prominent European nations including Germany oppose the prospect, as does the EU rescue fund. — AFP

## OSBORNE WARNS OF 'DANGEROUS COCKTAIL' OF THREATS FOR 2016

### FM WARNS AGAINST COMPLACENCY AFTER SOLID GROWTH

**LONDON:** Finance minister George Osborne said yesterday that Britain's economy was not immune from a "dangerous cocktail" of threats from abroad, and urged against complacency after two years of solid growth. Osborne—whom Prime Minister David Cameron has named as a possible successor—said in a new year's message that Britain faced headwinds from slower growth in China, Brazil and Russia as well as tensions in the Middle East.

"The economy has slipped down the list of many people's everyday concerns. But the biggest risk is that people think that it's 'job done'," Osborne said.

Britain has been the fastest growing of its peers for the past couple of years, but Cameron and Osborne regularly focus on the danger of economic mismanagement. Cameron spoke of "red warning lights" from the world economy

in late 2014. Since becoming finance minister in 2010, Osborne has made reducing Britain's large budget deficit his priority, and more than halved it to just under 5 percent of gross domestic product during his first five years in office.

In the run-up to May 2015's national election, Osborne said he wanted Britain to run a budget surplus in normal economic times, a goal the opposition Labour Party and many economists think is too stringent and risks hurting growth. Public borrowing during the current financial year has come in above forecasts, raising doubts about whether Osborne will meet his most immediate fiscal goals.

Business surveys have also suggested the outlook for economic growth is darker than thought a few months ago. The British Chambers of Commerce said on Thursday that manufacturing exports

had stagnated for the first time since 2009.

"This year opens with a dangerous cocktail of new threats," Osborne said. "We are only seven days into the New Year, and already we've had worrying news about stock market falls around the world, the slowdown in China (and) deep problems in Brazil and in Russia."

While a big fall in oil prices was good for most British consumers and businesses, it would hurt oil and gas output and investors who had lent to the sector, he said. Tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran were also a worry. Osborne made no mention of the referendum on European Union membership which Cameron has promised to hold before the end of 2017 but which many analysts expect to take place as early as June. They warn it could cause businesses to delay investment. — Reuters

## FOOD PRICES PLUNGE IN 2015 ON HIGH SUPPLY, LOW DEMAND

**ROME:** Global food prices plunged 19 percent in 2015 following a fresh decline in December on the back of plentiful supplies and a slowing global economy, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said yesterday.

It was the fourth consecutive annual fall in food prices. The FAO's food price index, which measures monthly changes for a basket of cereals, oilseeds, dairy products, meat and sugar, averaged 154.1 points in December versus a revised 155.6 points the month before, a fall of some one percent. "Abundant supplies in the face of a timid world demand and an appreciating dollar are the main reason for the general weakness that dominated food prices in 2015," said FAO senior economist Abdolreza Abbassian.

December's reading was dragged down by falling prices for meat, dairy and cereals, which counterbalanced gains in quotations for sugar and vegetable oils.

Expectations of high supply of cereal following the removal of export taxes in Argentina weighed on wheat prices, and maize prices fell as export competition intensified and international demand remained sluggish. The dedicated cereal price index shed 15.4 percent in the course of the year, vegetable oils dropped to a nine-year low and dairy prices registered their lowest annual average since 2009. Sugar prices rose 0.6 percent in December but on average throughout the year were 21 percent lower than in 2014. — Reuters

## GOLD AT 9-WEEK HIGH

**LONDON:** Gold climbed above \$1,100 an ounce for the first time in nine weeks yesterday as the dollar fell and investors channelled money into safer assets as worries over the Chinese economy hit global stocks. European shares fell sharply after China accelerated the depreciation of the yuan, sending Asian shares to a three-month low.

Chinese stocks fell 7 percent yesterday after less than half an hour of trading, triggering a circuit breaker that suspended trading for the rest of the day. Spot gold rose to a nine-week high of \$1,102.80 an ounce, before paring some gains to trade up 0.2 percent at \$1,095.95 by 1057 GMT. US gold futures also jumped for a fourth straight session to a nine-week high of \$1,102.50. "Gold's strength is probably going to be relatively short term, but there is an upside risk to gold, if the view that China is going to pull the whole world into recession becomes stronger," Citigroup metals strategist David Wilson said.

"But if the US and Europe continue to grow, gold will go weaker ... Chinese stock markets had got massively overinflated because a lot of money piled into it and now people come back to reality."

Conversely, palladium, which as an autocatalyst metal is more exposed to economic weakness, slid to a near-5-1/2-year low of \$492.47 an ounce.

Bullion was also supported by a softer dollar and the release of the minutes of the Federal Reserve's last policy meet, assuring markets of gradual rate increases this year. Gold, often seen as an alternative investment during times of geopolitical and financial uncertainty, benefited from the risk-averse sentiment in the market along with other haven assets such as the Japanese yen and US Treasuries.

"Gold is clearly re-establishing its role as a safe-haven. For as long as global stock markets - in particular China's - appear wobbly, gold is likely to attract a good bid," HSBC analyst James Steel said.

A raft of data releases from China in coming weeks is likely to show activity continuing to slow, adding to global concerns about the country's economic outlook for 2016. — Reuters



**NEW DELHI:** The Chairman of Microsoft India Bhaskar Pramanik (L), the Director of the Windows Business Group Vineet Durani and Microsoft India's General Manager of Marketing and Operations Tyler Bryson pose for a photograph during the launch of the Microsoft Surface Pro 4 tablet in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP



## CHINA STOCKS PLUMMET, TRIGGERING ANOTHER HALT

**BEIJING:** China halted stock trading yesterday, its second daylong trading suspension this week, after prices plunged in the latest spasm of investor panic on its volatile markets.

Chinese markets have lurched up and down as regulators gradually withdraw emergency measures imposed after the main stock index plunged in June following an explosive rise.

A similar price plunge Monday triggered a sell-off on Wall Street and other global markets. On Thursday, trading was suspended

after a market index, the CSI 300, nosedived 7 percent a half-hour after markets opened, triggering a "circuit breaker" that was introduced Jan 1.

Financial analysts have warned Chinese markets are likely to see extreme volatility for a few more months as they seek a stable level following last year's rout. The "circuit breaker" requires a 15-minute pause in trading if the CSI 300 falls 5 percent within 30 minutes. Trading halted only 13 minutes into the morning session Thursday. Stocks plunged further after trading resumed 15

minutes later, triggering the daylong trading freeze.

The benchmark Shanghai Composite Index fell 7.3 percent to 3,115.89. The Shenzhen Composite Index for China's smaller second exchange slumped 8.3 percent to 1,955.88.

Also Thursday, a six-month ban on sales by shareholders who own more than 5 percent of a company was due to expire. Regulators announced this week that to avoid fueling further volatility, such sales will be limited to private transactions.

The Shanghai benchmark more than doubled between late 2014 and its June 12 peak as millions of novice investors bought shares. Prices plunged 30 percent after that, triggering a panicked response by Beijing. Regulators banned large sales, cut interest rates, canceled initial public stock offerings and ordered state companies to buy shares.

Chinese leaders had encouraged the public to buy in hopes of raising money to overhaul state industry. The market rout alienated small investors who were left holding shares worth less than they paid. — AP



**JIANGSU:** An employee counts 100-yuan (15 USD) banknotes at a bank in Lianyungang, in eastern China's Jiangsu province yesterday. China weakened the value of its yuan currency by 0.51 percent to 6.5646 against the US dollar on January 7, figures from the China Foreign Exchange Trade System showed. — AFP

## CHINA'S STOCKMARKET CIRCUIT BREAKER SLAMMED FOR CRISIS

MECHANISM TRIGGERS TEMPORARY HALT AT 5%, PERMANENT AT 7%

**SINGAPORE:** A new circuit breaker designed to stem volatility in China's stock markets by halting trade when the market plunges, was making it worse, investors and analysts said yesterday after the mechanism brought trade to an end for the second time this week. Investors say the circuit breaker on the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock exchanges, which suspends trade for 15 minutes when the market falls 5 percent then halts it for the day after a fall of 7 percent, changes the way investors trade in a way that fires up selling pressure rather than cooling it.

They say the trigger levels for the breaker, introduced on Jan. 4, were too low and too close together to work effectively. "The 5 percent threshold is clearly too low for a market as volatile as China's," said Tom Rafferty, Asia Economist at The Economist Intelligence Unit.

"Once the 5 percent threshold is hit, investors inevitably pile in with sell orders. I would expect an upper adjustment in the threshold level as well as other changes to be introduced soon."

And with just a 2 percentage point gap

before the permanent halt, investors fear that "if they don't sell early they won't be able to, because the circuit breaker will kick in", said Shane Oliver, head of investment strategy at AMP Capital in Sydney.

Nomura's China analyst Wendy Liu said in a Jan. 5 note that circuit breakers had worked well in many countries, including the United States, Korea and Japan, but agreed China's trigger thresholds were too close together, adding to investors' fears.

"As a comparison, the US has set three thresholds of 7 percent, 13 percent and 20 percent, and Korea has set three thresholds of 8 percent, 15 percent and 20 percent," she wrote.

The S&P 500, whose circuit breaker is the benchmark on which many other bourses have modelled theirs, is much less restrictive than China's and also factors in what time of day selling occurs.

Before 3:25 pm, trade is halted for 15 minutes if the index falls 7 percent, then for another 15 minutes if it falls 13 percent, and finally stops trading altogether when the market tumbles 20 percent.

If it is after 3.25 pm, only a 20 percent

drop will halt trade. India, like China an emerging market that closely controls its capital account, adopts a similar approach but with threshold falls of 10 and 15 percent for trading halts and 20 percent for shutdown, with longer trading halts imposed as the day progresses.

Bernard Aw, market strategist at IG in Singapore said China might be better served by something more like Singapore's approach. "Singapore has a dynamic limit, where the 10 percent upwards or downwards band is based on the last traded price at least 5 minutes ago, instead of the previous closing price or the start of the trading day. It could be more effective in terms of injecting some calm into the market because traders know they can get out, even if they can only trade within that percentage. It doesn't induce the fear that you can't get out."

The new circuit breaker is the latest in a series of measures introduced by Beijing in the hope of avoiding a repeat of last summer's market crash, which wiped out a third of the value of local bourses within a month. — Reuters

## CHINA FX RESERVES FALL \$512.66 BN IN 2015

**BEIJING:** China's foreign exchange reserves, the world's largest, posted their biggest annual drop on record in 2015, adding to worries about growing capital outflows that are dragging its yuan currency to multi-year lows and mauling global financial markets.

Foreign exchange reserves fell \$512.66 billion in 2015 to \$3.33 trillion, central bank data showed yesterday. They dropped \$107.9 billion in December alone, the biggest monthly decline on record and more than markets had expected. Economists polled by Reuters had expected reserves to end the year at \$3.40 trillion.

Nearly two-thirds of the year's drop came between August and December, hinting at the scope of the central bank's attempts to stabilize the yuan after its surprise devaluation of the currency on Aug. 11 panicked markets. Global questions about China's foreign exchange policy have erupted again early in 2016, as the central bank unexpectedly set its official midpoint rate for the currency on Thursday at a near five-year low, allowing it to depreciate at a faster rate.

"The sharp fall in foreign exchange reserves indicates increased pressure on capital outflows," said Li Huiyong, an economist at Shenyin & Wanguo Securities, adding that he believed the People's Bank of China still has ample ammunition to defend the yuan. But many economists worry about the rapid fall in forex reserves, as the central bank had to sell dollars and buy the yuan to support the local currency last year, effectively draining more liquidity from the banking system at a time when the world's second-largest economy was already slowing.

"The larger than expected drawdown on reserves ... indicates that long-term intervention is unsustainable," which will likely lead to further falls in the yuan which in coming days, said Chester Liaw, an economist at Forecast Pte Ltd in Singapore.

The drop in December took the cumulative decline in the reserves to \$662.85 billion, or 16.6 percent, since a June 2014 peak of \$3.99 trillion, central bank data showed.

Chinese officials have blamed the rising value of the US dollar against non-dollar currencies such as the euro and the yen as one factor behind the fall in the currency reserves.

The value of its gold reserves stood at \$60.19 billion at the end of December, up from \$59.52 billion at the end of November, the People's Bank of China said on its website.

Gold reserves stood at 56.66 million fine troy ounces at the end of December, up from 56.05 million at end-November. China's International Monetary Fund (IMF) reserve position was at \$4.55 billion, down from \$4.60 billion the previous month. It held \$10.28 billion of IMF Special Drawing Rights at the end of last month, compared with \$10.18 billion at the end of November.

The central bank in July shifted to reporting its foreign exchange reserves on a monthly basis after adopting the IMF's Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS). The bank had previously released the data on a quarterly basis. — Reuters

# FEDERER BREEZES PAST GERMAN QUALIFIER

**BRISBANE:** Top seed Roger Federer barely broke a sweat as he breezed past German qualifier Tobias Kamke 6-2, 6-1 in the second round of the Brisbane International yesterday. Federer, who had a first round bye, took just 55 minutes to see off Kamke, playing in the main draw of an ATP tournament for the first time since April.

The Swiss maestro had been suffering from the flu earlier in the week but showed no signs of illness in a commanding performance at the Pat Rafter Arena. He asked organizers to put his first match back a day, and said he only started to feel better on Wednesday morning. The defending champion smashed 18 winners past Kamke, who struggled from the outset against the world number three and only had one break point on Federer's serve throughout the match.

Federer will next meet Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov in the quarter-finals, a rematch from last year's semi-final, which Federer won comfortably. "I played great against him last year here," Federer said. "Tomorrow is going to be tougher. It's been a rocky last couple of days and I don't quite know what to expect quite yet. "Today was thankfully short, but it also doesn't give me as much information as where my game is at.

"In practice it's been great—I have been hitting the ball well. I am where I want to be. "Tomorrow we'll see. He's (Dimitrov) had a tough grind today, but he's extremely match-tough. I expect him to be fresh again tomorrow. I played him quite aggressive last year and that worked well. We'll see if I'll do the same again tomorrow."

Dimitrov earlier survived a three-set epic against Serbia's Viktor Troicki 5-7, 7-6 (8/6), 6-2. "I think I was definitely struggling a little bit at the beginning of the match," he said. "But it was good. It was a good match for me. That's how I see it.



**BRISBANE:** Roger Federer of Switzerland plays a shot in his match against Tobias Kamke of Germany during the Brisbane International tennis tournament. — AP

"And I'm happy that after two hours, 45 minutes my body felt really well. I took the heat pretty good."

Fourth seeded Canadian Milos Raonic was pushed all the way by Croatian qualifier Ivan Dodig before eventually winning 6-7 (2/7), 6-1, 6-4 in

almost two and a half hours. Raonic, who reached a career ranking of four last May, dropped back to 14 after injury problems later in the year saw him withdraw from the French Open then miss the last three weeks of the season.

He said he was finally playing injury free for the

first time in nine months. "I'm further along than where I was (last year)," he said. "I think I just sort of need matches like today to sort of reset myself." Raonic next takes on Lucas Pouille after the Frenchman ousted sixth seeded Belgian David Goffin 7-6 (7/5), 4-6, 6-3. — AFP

## PATRIOTS' BRADY SAYS RIGHT ANKLE IS SLOWLY IMPROVING

**FOXBOROUGH:** Danny Amendola had a good chuckle when he was asked if he was ever concerned that quarterback Tom Brady wouldn't be able to play in New England's playoff opener. "Oh, no," the Patriots receiver laughed on Wednesday as the defending Super Bowl champions used their bye week to get better and get ready for their Jan. 16 playoff game against Cincinnati, Kansas City or Houston. "He's a tough guy, the ultimate competitor."

Three days after 320-pound Dolphins defensive lineman Ndamukong Suh fell on his right leg, Brady said that he is "feeling better than I was a couple of days ago." Although he was favoring the leg after the game, a 20-10 loss, he appeared to be walking without a limp on Wednesday. "This is the first time we've had off in quite a while," Brady said. "A lot of guys have been fighting through different kind of bumps and bruises over the course of the season, so you try and take advantage of that. ... We're going to need everybody a week from Saturday to be at their very best."

Only once in his career has Brady missed games because of injury: In 2008, when he sustained a season-ending injury in the first quarter of the first game. Brady was also knocked out of the AFC title game in 2001, but returned to lead the Patriots to their first Super Bowl victory.

"He's the toughest guy. He's the ultimate competitor. He's going to be out there," Amendola said. "He's been around for a long time, playing really good foot-



**FOXBOROUGH:** New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady faces reporters before a scheduled NFL football practice. — AP

ball. He plays really good football and he'll bring it out of us, too."

Brady limped around on the sideline after Suh, who had been pulled down by his helmet, landed on the back of the quarterback's legs on Sunday. Although Brady returned to the game, he left in the fourth quarter for backup Jimmy Garoppolo. "I read a cool quote the other day. It said 'I didn't come this far to only come this far,'" Brady said. "So we've still got further to go."

Other Patriots are also using the week

to recover. Amendola is coming back from a knee injury that kept him out of a pair of games. Fellow receiver Julian Edelman is hoping to come back after missing seven games in the regular season with a broken foot. Offensive lineman Sebastien Vollmer and linebacker Dont'a Hightower are also healing. And coach Bill Belichick walked through the locker room on Wednesday with an ace bandage and what appeared to be a heating pad wrapped around his torso. "Well, I mean, look: That's football," Belichick said of the injuries. — AP

## MVP CROSBY NOT PICKED AMONG NHL ALL-STARS

**NEW YORK:** Two-time NHL MVP Sidney Crosby of the Pittsburgh Penguins was not among the final 40 All-Stars announced on Wednesday. Crosby is ranked 36th in the league in points after a slow start, but the Penguins captain has 22 points in his past 20 games. Under the NHL's new All-Star format, only six forwards, three defensemen, and two goaltenders can make it from each of the four divisions, and every team had to be represented. The Florida Panthers and Washington Capitals each have three players and a coach going to the new 3-on-3 tournament this month in Nashville, Tennessee. The Metropolitan Division-leading Capitals will be represented by captain Alex Ovechkin, center Nicklas Backstrom, goaltender Braden Holtby, and coach Barry Trotz. Backstrom's bid drew the most praise.

"He deserves it," Ovechkin said after practice at Boston University. "He's one of the top players in the league. Finally, it's not only one guy who goes from Washington. It's going to be three guys." The 3-on-3 tournament will pit the conference division teams against each other on Jan. 31 at Bridgestone Arena, with the winners facing off for the championship and \$1 million to split. The skills competition will take place on Jan. 30.

Trotz returns to Nashville after coaching the Predators for their first 15 seasons. The host club also had three players selected by the NHL hockey operations department: Defensemen Shea Weber and Roman Josi, and goaltender Pekka Rinne. Florida's three All-Stars are a nod to their 10-game winning streak and leading the Atlantic Division. In addition to fan-voted captain Jaromir Jagr, defenseman Aaron Ekblad, and goalie Roberto Luongo were chosen, and coach Gerard Gallant will be behind the bench. Jagr campaigned on Twitter for fans not to vote for him, arguing that the fast-paced 3-on-3 ice hockey would be more stress on his 43-year-old body than a brief vacation. It didn't work, as he was picked as a captain along with Ovechkin, top point-scorer Patrick Kane of the Chicago Blackhawks (Central) and Arizona Coyotes tough guy John Scott (Pacific). Scott made it as a result of an online campaign despite recording just one assist in 11 games. Leading goal-scorer Jamie Benn and Dallas Stars teammate Tyler Seguin were among the 40 All-Stars. Lindy Ruff of the Stars will coach the Central Division, while Darryl Sutter of the Los Angeles Kings will coach the Pacific. — AP

# GRIFFEY JR, PIAZZA ELECTED TO BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

**NEW YORK:** Ken Griffey Jr was considered Mr Clean during 22 years in Major League Baseball, untainted by accusations of drug use as he climbed the home-run list during the height of the Steroids Era. He nearly made a clean sweep in the Baseball Hall of Fame voting, too. Griffey received 437 of 440 votes in his first appearance on the Baseball Writers' Association of America ballot, a record 99.3 percent.

"It's real simple," he explained after Wednesday's announcement. "I've always said that I've got to look my kids in the eyes and you want to play fair." Mike Piazza, the top offensive catcher in MLB history, was elected, too, and will be inducted along with Griffey in Cooperstown, New York, on July 24. Among the many muscled sluggers whose accomplishments were questioned during a time when chemists preyed on clubhouses, Piazza was made to wait to be inducted until his fourth appearance on the ballot. After falling 28 votes shy last year, he was selected on 365 votes.

## 'You can say these things'

He wouldn't say whether he was upset about being sullied by suspicions. "That's the freedom we have," Piazza said. "You can say these things, and that's the country we live in." Griffey topped the previous high voting percentage of 98.84, set when Tom Seaver appeared on 425 of 430 ballots in 1992.

A player needs to appear on 75 percent of ballots to gain election. Jeff Bagwell missed by 15 votes and Tim Lincecum by 23. Trevor Hoffman, second on the career saves list and appearing on the ballot for the first time, was 34 short. Total ballots dropped by 109 from last year after writers who have not been active for 10 years were eliminated under a rules change by the Hall's board of directors. With a younger average electorate, Roger Clemens rose to 45 percent and Barry Bonds to 44 percent, both up from about 37 percent last year. Clemens has denied using performance-enhancing drugs, and Bonds said he never knowingly took any banned substances.

"They were Hall of Famers before all this stuff started," Griffey said. Mark McGwire, who admitted using steroids, received 12 percent in his 10th and final ballot appearance. Half of MLB's top 10 home-run hitters are not in the Hall of Fame: Bonds (762), Alex Rodriguez (654), Jim Thome (612), Sammy Sosa (609) and McGwire (583). Rodriguez, who served a yearlong drug suspension in 2014, remains active. Thome's first appearance on the ballot will be in 2018.

Griffey believes drug-testing, which began in



**NEW YORK:** In this Aug 26, 2000, file photo, Arizona Diamondbacks' Jay Bell is tagged out at home plate by New York Mets catcher Mike Piazza in the fourth inning of a baseball game. — AP

MLB in 2003, should eliminate the possibility of stigma for the current generation of players. "There won't be any questions and you'll know from here on out," he said. Some players who admitted using steroids claimed they chose the needle because of pressure to compete. Griffey said he never was tempted.

## Special game

"I also had a dad that said you're never going to be the biggest, you're never going to be the strongest and you're never going to be the fastest," he said. "There's always going to be someone in each of those categories, but the one thing they can't do is outwork you." Griffey and Piazza had contrasting paths to stardom. Griffey was selected first in the 1987 amateur baseball

draft and became the first No 1 to make the Hall. Piazza was taken by the Los Angeles Dodgers with the 1,390th pick on the 62nd round in 1988; since the MLB draft started in 1965, the lowest draft pick elected to the Hall had been John Smoltz, taken with selection 574 on the 22nd round in 1985.

"It crystallizes how special this game is," Piazza said. "It separates it from other sports. Athletic talent definitely helps, but it's not the only thing that can make you successful." Griffey was known simply as "Junior" by many as a contrast to his father, three-time All-Star outfielder Ken Griffey, who played alongside him in Seattle during 1990 and '91. The younger Griffey became a 13-time All-Star outfielder and finished with 630 homers, sixth on the career list. Wanting to play closer to his home in Florida, he pushed for a trade to Cincinnati - his

father's old team and the area he grew up in - after the 1999 season. But slowed by injuries, he never reached 100 RBIs again after his first season with the Reds, and he moved on to the Chicago White Sox in 2008 before spending his last season with the Mariners. Piazza made his MLB debut with the Dodgers in 1992 before being dealt to Florida in 1998 and then traded to the Mets.

He played for the Mets' 2000 National League championship team and remained with New York through 2005, hitting a memorable go-ahead home run in the first game in New York following the 2001 terrorist attacks. He hit better than .300 in nine straight seasons and finished with 427 home runs, including a record 396 when he was in the game behind the plate. A 12-time All-Star, Piazza had a .308 career batting average. — AP

# BUCCANEERS FIRE COACH SMITH AFTER TWO LOSING SEASONS

**TAMPA:** The Tampa Bay Buccaneers tripled their victory total from the previous year, and new quarterback Jameis Winston had a strong rookie season. Still, it wasn't enough to save coach Lovie Smith's job. Smith was fired Wednesday after going 6-10 this season and 8-24 overall in two years running a team that has missed the NFL playoffs eight consecutive years.

The late-night announcement came as a surprise because Smith's job was not considered to be in danger after the Bucs improved from two wins last season and briefly contended for a wild-card playoff berth with Winston, the No. 1 overall pick in the draft, starting every game.

"This decision was difficult on a variety of levels," Buccaneers co-chairman Joel Glazer said in a statement. "I am disappointed that we were not more successful these past few seasons, but we are committed to doing what is necessary to give our fans the winning team they deserve." General manager Jason Licht will oversee the search for a new coach.

## 'Quick fix'

Smith led the Chicago Bears to the NFC title in 2006 before losing to Indianapolis in the Super Bowl. He was 84-66 in nine seasons with Chicago. The Bucs showed some improvement this season with

Winston joining Andrew Luck and Cam Newton as the only players since the 1970 NFL/AFL merger to throw for 4,000 yards as rookies. But they lost five of their last six games, including the final four to finish last in the NFC South for the fifth straight season.

"You'd like to have a quick fix, but that just wasn't part of the process," Smith said earlier this week. "When you get to 6-6 in a season, it makes you think that maybe you're a little bit further along and we can get it done. But in the end, we weren't quite there." For the first time, the Bucs ranked in the top 10 in the NFL in total offense and defense, but they struggled to get the ball into the end zone, ranking 20th in total points scored. They were also 26th in scoring defense, allowing 24 or more points 10 times. The Bucs gained over 500 yards twice and averaged a team-record 375.9 yards per game. Martin finished second to Adrian Peterson for the NFL rushing title, and Mike Evans had another big year with 74 receptions for 1,206 yards, but only three TDs.

Nevertheless, Smith reiterated his belief that the team is headed in the right direction. "Our football team isn't a finished product yet, but I think it's safe to say that we're in pretty good shape going forward with (Winston) leading us, on and off the field," he said. But the Bucs will move ahead without Smith, the team's third coach since Jon Gruden was fired after the 2008 season. Gruden led Tampa Bay



**TAMPA:** Tampa Bay Buccaneers head coach Lovie Smith walks off the stage after his end of the season news conference. — AP

to its only Super Bowl win; none of his successors have had an overall winning record in Tampa. — AP



WASHINGTON: Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James hangs from the rim after dunking in front of Washington Wizards forward Otto Porter Jr (22), center Marcin Gortat (13) and guard Garrett Temple (17) during the second half. — AP

## JAMES SCORES 34 AS CAVALIERS TOP WIZARDS

**WASHINGTON:** LeBron James scored 34 points, Kyrie Irving took over in the fourth quarter and the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the injury-ravaged Washington Wizards 121-115 on Wednesday night for their fifth straight victory. Irving scored 21 of his 32 points in the fourth quarter, including a run of 10 straight that put the game away. James had 10 rebounds, and JR Smith added 25 points for Cleveland. Garrett Temple led the Wizards with 21 points and John Wall had 20. Playing without Kris Humphries, DeJuan Blair and Drew Gooden, Washington lost its second straight game.

### KNICKS 98, HEAT 90

Carmelo Anthony scored 25 points and New York shot 56 percent to end a streak of eight consecutive losses to Miami. Anthony made 9 for 12. In his first two games against the Heat, Anthony shot 10 for 29 and totaled 32 points. Robin Lopez added a season-high 19 points for the Knicks, who won their third game in a row. Chris Bosh scored 28 points for the Heat.

### THUNDER 112, GRIZZLIES 94

Kevin Durant had 26 points and a season-high 17 rebounds after missing the previous game with a sprained right big toe, and Oklahoma beat Memphis. Durant, who began the day as the NBA's No. 3 scorer, broke loose for 17 points in the second half on 7-for-8

shooting. He played 33 minutes and appeared to have no problems with mobility. Russell Westbrook added 20 points, seven rebounds and seven assists for the Thunder. Mario Chalmers led the Grizzlies with 23 points.

### MAVERICKS 100, PELICANS 91

Raymond Felton scored 22 points in a game Dallas chose to rest four starters, and the Mavericks defeated New Orleans. Dallas coach Rick Carlisle sat out Dirk Nowitzki, Deron Williams, Zaza Pachulia and Wesley Matthews after they each played 40-plus minutes in a double-overtime victory over Sacramento on Tuesday night. Chandler Parsons, the only usual starter in uniform, scored 19 of his 21 in the first half. Anthony Davis had 26 points and 12 rebounds for the Pelicans.

### SPURS 123, JAZZ 98

Tim Duncan scored a season-high 18 points and San Antonio had eight other players in double figures to beat Utah and remain unbeaten at home. The Spurs matched the best start in franchise history by winning their 21st straight home game to open the season. Trey Burke had 21 points for the Jazz and Gordon Hayward had 18.

### CLIPPERS 109, TRAIL BLAZERS 98

Chris Paul had 21 points and 19 assists to lead Los Angeles past Portland. The Clippers

won their seventh straight game despite the absence of Blake Griffin, who has missed six games because of a partially torn left quadriceps tendon. DeAndre Jordan had 14 points and 14 rebounds. Damian Lillard had 20 points and nine assists for Portland. The Trail Blazers were without guard CJ McCollum because of a "clerical error." McCollum was mistakenly left off the team's active roster that is turned in before the game. Although the Blazers initially said that McCollum was active, he did not start. The team announced he was inactive shortly before halftime.

### PACERS 95, MAGIC 86

Paul George had 20 points and Monta Ellis scored nine of his 19 in the fourth quarter, leading Indiana over Orlando. George, who scored at least 31 points in his previous three games, shot 5 of 13 but led a second-quarter rally that put the Pacers ahead for good. It was the Pacers' sixth straight victory (two this season) against the Magic, who have lost four in a row overall.

### RAPTORS 91, NETS 74

Jonas Valanciunas had 22 points and 11 rebounds, and Toronto handed Brooklyn its eighth straight home loss. Kyle Lowry had 17 points, eight rebounds and six assists. He made all seven shots inside the arc but was 0 for 7 from 3-point range as the Raptors bounced back after giving up nearly 120 points per game in consecutive losses to

Chicago and Cleveland. The Nets haven't won at Barclays Center since beating Philadelphia on Dec. 10. Brook Lopez had 24 points and 13 rebounds for Brooklyn.

### PISTONS 99, CELTICS 94

Reggie Jackson 24 points, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope finished with 20 and Detroit beat Boston. Isaiah Thomas led the Celtics with 22 points, scoring their final 15 over the last 7:24 after missing 14 of his first 15 shots.

### SUNS 111, HORNETS 102

Mirza Teletovic made five of the Suns' season-high 19 3-pointers as Phoenix ended a nine-game skid by beating Charlotte. Brandon Knight added 18 points and seven assists for the Suns. Kemba Walker had 25 points to lead the Hornets, who lost their fifth straight.

### NUGGETS 78, TIMBERWOLVES 74

Daniilo Gallinari had 20 points, seven rebounds and four assists to help Denver end a six-game losing streak with a victory over Minnesota. Jusuf Nurkic had 15 points and 10 rebounds, and the Nuggets overcame 35.8 percent shooting by hitting eight of 20 3-pointers. Denver had lost nine of its previous 10 games. Karl-Anthony Towns had 14 points and 14 rebounds, and Nikola Pekovic scored 12 points in his season debut for the reeling Timberwolves. Minnesota has lost four straight games and eight of nine. — AP

## AFRIDI DEFENDS SELF AFTER MEDIA ROW

**LAHORE:** Pakistan's Twenty20 captain Shahid Afridi defended himself yesterday after a row with a television journalist that prompted the media to briefly boycott coverage of an ongoing training camp, saying he "always respects others". Afridi was asked by Dunya News journalist Sanaullah Khan at the camp in Lahore on Wednesday how he would improve his captaincy after a recent 3-0 loss against England in the United Arab Emirates saw Pakistan plummet to sixth in the world Twenty20 rankings, from a high of second.

A miffed Afridi retorted: "I expected you to ask such a pathetic and low question, someone ask the next question please." The dismissive reply on live television ignited anger among journalists, who boycotted the remainder of the planned events on Wednesday and demanded an apology. Khan, who had asked Afridi a similar question in November and received a similar answer, even took to Twitter with a live #AskSana question-and-answer session about the incident.

Yesterday, Afridi defended himself and accepted responsibility for the

humiliation in the UAE. "I always respect others and demand the same from others," he said. "It's under my captaincy that the team rose to number two but we made basic errors to lose against England and that affected our rankings." Team manager Intikhab Alam managed to pacify the media, who returned yesterday to cover the final day of the camp.

"I have talked to Afridi and he has reiterated that he respects the media, so hopefully such an incident will not happen again," Alam said yesterday. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said

the incident should not be blown out of proportion. "It should not have happened," PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan told media. "We will look into it but don't take it as something big." Afridi has led Pakistan since Mohammad Hafeez stepped down in 2014, winning six of the last ten matches. Pakistan will fly to New Zealand on January 10 to play three Twenty20 matches and as many one-day internationals, the first in Auckland on January 15. Afridi said he was sure the players would improve their rankings during the tour. — AFP

## WARNER BLASTS FASTEST SCG TON AS TEST DRAW

**SYDNEY:** Australia's David Warner lit up the final day of the rain-ruined third Test with the fastest Test century at the Sydney Cricket Ground as the match meandered to a draw against the West Indies yesterday.

Man-of-the-match Warner, determined to finish an undistinguished series on a high, reached his 16th Test century off 82 balls before a small Sydney crowd in the last rites to a frustrating Test. It eclipsed Matthew Hayden's 84-ball ton against Zimbabwe in 2003. The buccaneering opener had a highest score of 64 in the two previous Tests as team-mates helped themselves to six centuries against the tourists' innocuous bowling attack.

Warner was hell-bent on rectifying that deficiency and attacked the bowling from the first ball to raise his maiden ton against the West Indies. When the match was called off at 4:50pm local time (0550 GMT), Warner was unbeaten on 122 off 103 balls with Peter Nevill on seven and Australia 176 for two in reply to the West Indies' 330.

The match was destined to a draw after two days were washed out with only 86.2 overs possible before the anti-climatic fifth day. Skipper Steve Smith revealed after play that he had offered to contrive a result through declarations, but said that his West Indies counterpart Jason Holder declined the offer.

"Unfortunately, they didn't come to the party," Smith said. When play resumed the West Indies added 82 runs before being dismissed for 330. Australia, and Warner in particular, went after the tourists' total with gusto to entertain the small crowd given free admission into the Sydney Cricket Ground. Warner provided plenty of entertainment, clubbing spinner Jomel Warrican for two sixes in three balls on the way to plundering 16 runs from one over.

"We tried to go out there and be as positive as we could," Warner said. "We tried to score some runs at a nice rate to give the fans something to watch." Warner and Joe Burns raised their 100-run stand off 92 balls, with Warner contributing 74 runs. Burns was out soon after, attempting to hoist Warrican over mid-on only to be taken head-high by Kemar Roach for 26. — AFP



**SYDNEY:** Australia's David Warner plays a shot during their cricket test match against the West Indies. — Ap



**MUMBAI:** In this photograph taken on January 5, 2016, Mumbai schoolboy Pranav Dhanawade (center), 15, is carried as he celebrates smashing a 117-year-old record for the highest number of runs scored in one innings. — AFP

## INDIA GREATS SAY DON'T KNOCK MUMBAI BOY'S RECORD 1,009

**MUMBAI:** A Mumbai teenager's record-breaking 1,009 not out wasn't the match's only startling statistic—one of the boundaries was only 30 yards long, while the opposition was so meagre that one bowler conceded 142 runs in just six overs. Fifteen-year-old Pranav Dhanawade also reportedly escaped 21 dropped catches on his way to obliterating a 117-year-old world record for runs scored in a single innings earlier this week.

But India's cricket establishment said doubts about the quality of the opposing team, most of whom were only 12 and not used to playing with hard cricket balls, should not detract from Dhanawade's history-making knock. "You have to acknowledge that what he has done is absolutely extraordinary," cricket columnist Ayaz Memon said yesterday.

"Whatever the quality of the opposition or the size of the ground, the fact is you could give away your wicket after having satisfied yourself with 150, 200. "But to go on to make 1,000 runs requires physical effort and mental motivation," the journalist added, pointing out that boundary was the same length for all of the players.

Dhanawade, the son of an auto-rickshaw driver, smashed 129 fours and 59 sixes as he

became the first batsman in any class of cricket to score 1,000 runs in one innings. He soared past Arthur Collins' previous record of 628 runs, recorded in England in 1899, on Monday and reached the four-digit mark on Tuesday in an innings lasting 395 minutes. His KC Gandhi High School team eventually declared on 1,465 for three-after their opponents, Arya Gurukul, had been bowled out for just 31 in the inter-school match.

Two other KC Gandhi batsmen scored centuries, 173 and 137 respectively, but have barely received a mention. Arya Gurukul's bowling statistics made for grim reading—one bowler gave away 284 runs for nought, while another took two wickets but at the cost of 352 runs. In their second innings, Arya Gurukul made 52 and KC Gandhi won the match by an innings and 1,382 runs.

The losing side's coach, Yogesh Jagtap, told the Mumbai Mirror that he had cobbled together a team of 12-year-olds for the under-16s match because many first-team regulars were busy with exams. "We were playing only for commitment," he told the tabloid, revealing that some of his players were more used to fielding with tennis balls and had yet to overcome their fear of the leather ball.

### 'Not a joke'

But Mahendra Singh Dhoni, the captain of India in the short forms of the game, warned critics not to play down Dhanawade's achievement. "Scoring 1,009 runs is not a joke. It's a tremendous effort and shows a glimpse of talent," he told reporters ahead of India's departure for their tour of Australia. Indian international batsman Ajinkya Rahane agreed. "This is a very big thing to bat for one-and-a-half days and needs immense concentration and focus," the Press Trust of India quoted him as saying. Dhanawade has barely had time to catch his breath since making history. He's been inundated with media requests and feted by politicians and well-wishers. But his father said the fame wasn't going to his son's head.

"We have not been able to sleep properly for two days but the attention will fade soon," said Prashant Dhanawade. "For now Pranav needs to put his bat to one side and study for crucial exams in March. "He's very young and I would be very happy if he plays for India but there are many steps before he can get there," he added. There are indeed. High-scoring at Mumbai schools level is not uncommon, with individual scores of 546, 498 and 473 all recorded in recent years. — AFP

# ZIDANE DEBUTS AS MADRID COACH AGAINST DEPORTIVO

**BARCELONA:** Zinedine Zidane will make his coaching debut tomorrow when Real Madrid hosts Deportivo La Coruna in the Spanish league. The former France great was promoted from managing Madrid's reserve team, which plays in the third division, to taking over for Rafa Benitez after the Spaniard was fired following Madrid's 2-2 draw at Valencia last weekend.

A fan favorite from his five seasons at Madrid, a warm welcome is expected for Zidane by the Santiago Bernabeu crowd. Disgruntled fans had called for Benitez to be fired following the team's inconsistent form that has Madrid in third place, four points off the pace of provisional leader Atletico Madrid.

"The important thing is to keep the players' spirits high, I think they've done a good job," Zidane said at his first news conference on Tuesday. "We have to think that the work done by Benitez has been good and I want to wish him all the best for the future. My message is work." Barcelona, in second and two points adrift and with a game in hand, will have played earlier tomorrow at Camp Nou against Granada. Atletico waits until Sunday in a tough visit to fifth-place Celta Vigo. Here are some things to know about this weekend's Spanish league games.

## Zidane's style

Zidane etched his place in Madrid's lore with his unique combination of dribbling, passing and scoring skills, which reached their pinnacle when he scored a spectacular volley for the winning goal in the 2002 Champions League final. He now must quiet those who question president Florentino Perez's decision to turn the star-stud-



**PARIS:** In this file photo, former soccer player and current Real Madrid B team coach Zinedine Zidane waves to spectators prior to the international friendly soccer match between France and Brazil at the Stade de France. — AP

ded squad over to a coach whose resume is limited to a year-and-a-half in the third division and a stint as a first-team assistant.

Zidane has promised to promote an "attractive, but balanced" style, and said that he will maintain the trio of strikers formed by Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and Karim Benzema.

"I want to bring the exciting game that this club has always had," Zidane said. "The important

thing is to play football and my job will be based on playing from the back, progressing in to the opposition half quickly and having possession of the ball."

Besides who will start among the glut of midfielders, the question is whether Zidane will keep Bale on the right side of the attack, as opposed to his natural place on the left, after Benitez scrapped his experiment to use him as a central playmaker.

## Deceptive Deportivo

It has been a long time since Deportivo inspired fear in its opponents. But striker Lucas Perez, with 12 goals, and an overachieving bunch coached by Victor Sanchez del Amo has made Deportivo a formidable foe. Seventh-place Deportivo has as many losses as Madrid does—three—and rallied for a 2-2 draw at Barcelona last month.

## Prelude to Ballon d'Or

Lionel Messi will get another opportunity to shine against a struggling Granada two days before he is favored to win a record fifth FIFA Ballon d'Or award. One thing is certain, the recognition for the world's best player will remain in the Spanish league, with Ronaldo and Neymar the other finalists at Monday's gala in Zurich.

## Time to shine

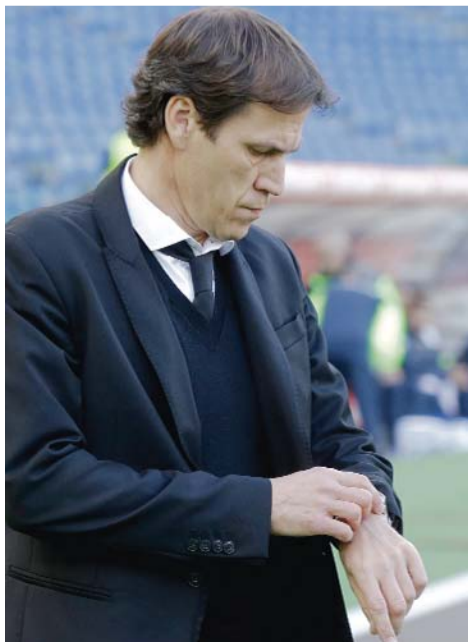
Atletico has risen to the top on the strength of its defense anchored by goalkeeper Jan Oblak, who has conceded a league-low eight goals. Barcelona is second with 15. But coach Diego Simeone is still looking for strikers Jackson Martinez and Fernando Torres to rediscover their scoring touch. Torres has been stuck on 99 career goals for Atletico since Sept. 19, a scoring drought of 19 straight appearances, while Jackson hasn't scored in three games since returning from injury. The Colombia striker has only three goals since transferring from FC Porto last year. Celta has lost two straight in the league and will have one day less to prepare for the match with a Copa del Rey game against Cadiz on Thursday. Atletico played on Wednesday, drawing 1-1 at Rayo Vallecano. — AP

# MIHAJLOVIC, GARCIA AT RISK IN ROMA-MILAN

**ROME:** AC Milan coach Sinisa Mihajlovic and Roma counterpart Rudi Garcia are each at risk of losing their jobs entering tomorrow's match at the Stadio Olimpico, which is being labeled as an "elimination game."

Milan is in crisis again after a 1-0 loss at home to Bologna on Wednesday, which dropped the Rossoneri to seventh place - 10 points below the Champions League spots. Roma is also full of problems following a 3-3 draw at Chievo Verona in which it squandered a two-goal lead. Having begun the season as a title contender, the Giallorossi are now fifth and still struggling to overcome the psychological blow of a 6-1 rout by Barcelona in the Champions League. Neither Mihajlovic nor Garcia is giving in, however.

"I'm not going to put a bandage on my head



**Roma coach Rudi Garcia**

before breaking it," Mihajlovic said. "I'm focusing on Roma and then we'll see what happens in the future." Mihajlovic pointed out that Milan has been playing without key forwards Jeremy Menez and Mario Balotelli, who have each been out injured.

Balotelli, who has been out since September, is expected back from pelvis surgery next week. "We're not scoring enough goals - that's the problem," Mihajlovic added, referring to the squad's 24 goals scored and 22 conceded. Roma's problem is that it's conceding too many goals - with 35 scored and 21 conceded. "It's OK," Garcia said of the three goals conceded to Chievo. "We were coming off four matches where we didn't concede a goal and we rediscovered our offensive verve. ... But clearly these were two points lost and that burns. We need to use this as motivation against Milan."

At the top of the standings, Inter Milan holds a one-point lead over Fiorentina and Napoli. Inter hosts Sassuolo this weekend, Fiorentina faces Lazio and Napoli visits promoted Frosinone. Four-time defending champion Juventus, who have won eight straight and is three points off the lead in fourth, travels to Sampdoria. Also this weekend, it's: Carpi vs. Udinese; Atalanta vs. Genoa; Bologna vs. Chievo; Torino vs. Empoli; and Hellas Verona vs. Palermo. Here are some things to know about Serie A entering this weekend's matches.

## Inter's efficiency

Inter Milan is getting used to winning matches by a single goal. A win at Empoli on Wednesday was its ninth 1-0 victory this season and the Nerazzurri have won 10 matches in all by a single-goal margin. Inter has kept clean sheets in 12 of 18 matches and standout forward Mauro Icardi has scored eight goals with 12 attempts on target. "I would like to see more from my squad. ... But the goal is victories and we've been able to get those," Inter coach Roberto Mancini said.

## Dybala's development

Having started the season in a bench role,



**MILAN:** AC Milan's Mario Balotelli watches from the stands at the end of a Serie A soccer match between AC Milan and Bologna, at the San Siro stadium. — AP photos

Paulo Dybala is now the center of attention at Juventus. The 22-year-old Argentina international scored with a curling free kick and also provided the cross for another goal in Juve's 3-0 win over Verona on Wednesday. Having taken over Andrea Pirlo's No 21 shirt, Dybala looked like the Italy midfield maestro with his pin-point free kick - the first time Juventus has scored with a free kick since Pirlo's effort against Torino in a derby in April. After joining Juventus from Palermo in a 32 million euro (\$34 million) transfer in June, the 22-year-old Dybala has scored nine goals in Serie A and is on pace for one of the best debut seasons in club history.

## Zamparini's mood swings

Furious after a 3-1 loss at home to Fiorentina, Palermo president Maurizio Zamparini reportedly decided to fire Davide Ballardini but then changed his mind. The decision apparently hinged on a phone call to former coach Giuseppe Iachini, who was fired in November but is still under contract with the Sicilian club. After Zamparini told Iachini he was considering rehiring him, Iachini reportedly asked for new players in the transfer market. That's when Zamparini decided to stick with Ballardini. Palermo is 16th, only three points clear of the relegation zone. Zamparini has made more than 30 coaching changes in his 13 years as Palermo president. — AP

## EVERTON BEATS MAN CITY IN 1ST LEG OF FA CUP SEMI

**LIVERPOOL:** A Merseyside derby in the English League Cup final was closer to reality after Everton beat Manchester City 2-1 in the first leg of their semifinal on Wednesday, with in-form Romelu Lukaku grabbing the winner. Lukaku scored his 19th goal of the season when he headed home late at Goodison Park, giving Everton a deserved lead to take to City for the second leg on Jan. 27.

Liverpool, Everton's close neighbor and biggest rival, leads Stoke 1-0 after the first leg of the other semifinal. The Merseyside clubs met in the 1984 final, which Liverpool won, during a period in which they were the dominant teams in the country.

There are still 90 minutes to go in both matchups - the second legs are in three weeks - but Everton manager Roberto Martinez said his team will take confidence from the manner of this victory, outplaying City at times. Ramiro Funes Mori put Everton ahead in first-half injury time, steering home a rebound from close range after Ross Barkley's shot was parried out, and the hosts were pressing for a second goal - perhaps over-zealously - when City equalized on a counterattack in the 76th.

Sergio Aguero controlled a long clearance forward and had only two defenders in front of him on the halfway line. The striker laid in a perfectly weighted pass for substitute Jesus Navas, who had sprinted upfield in support and met the ball with a first-time diagonal shot past goalkeeper Joel Robles. But two minutes later Lukaku had the final say. He has failed to score in only two of his last 12 games in all competitions, making him arguably the most lethal striker in English football at the moment.

"The perfect striker"

"I have always thought Romelu Lukaku is the perfect striker for our team," Martinez said. "He wants to be the best in the world ... it's a joy to see him enjoying his football and scoring goals." Lukaku hobbled off with a minor ankle injury soon after scoring, one of three Everton players to go off in the second half as England's hectic schedule during and after Christmas continues to take its toll. Seamus Coleman and Tom Cleverley had more serious calf injuries.

City started brightly but often looked sluggish, with Barkley finding plenty of space between City's defense and midfield to instigate attacks. Gareth Barry performed an admirable job as Everton's holding midfielder and provided the assist for Lukaku, leading Martinez to describe him as "one of the best English players ever." City got 90 minutes out of Aguero as he battles back to full fitness - and he wasted City's best chances aside from the goal - but lost center back Eliaquim Mangala to a hamstring injury. With Vincent Kompany also out, City is short of cover in central defense. Everton has never won the League Cup, losing the final in 1977 and '84. City has won it three times, most recently in 2014. — AP



**LIVERPOOL:** Everton's Belgian striker Romelu Lukaku celebrates scoring their second goal for Everton to take the lead 2-1 during the English League Cup semi-final first leg football match between Everton and Manchester City at Goodison Park. — AFP



**BARCELONA:** Barcelona's Turkish midfielder Arda Turan vies with Espanyol's Chilean defender Enzo Roco during the Spanish Copa del Rey (King's Cup) round of 16 first leg football match FC Barcelona vs RCD Espanyol at the Camp Nou stadium. — AFP

## BARCELONA BEATS ESPANYOL IN BRUTAL COPA CUP MATCH

**BARCELONA:** Lionel Messi scored two goals and set up two more to lead Barcelona's 4-1 win over cross-town rival Espanyol, which finished a hot-tempered Copa del Rey clash with nine men on Wednesday. Felipe Caicedo grabbed Espanyol a ninth-minute lead at Camp Nou, but Messi hit right back four minutes later.

The star forward put the hosts ahead with an unstoppable free kick just before halftime, and assisted Gerard Pique soon after the interval. Messi then set up Neymar for the fourth goal after Espanyol's Hernan Perez and Papakouly Diop were sent off, and Caicedo and Marco Asensio were lost to injury.

Tempers flared as the game dragged on, with Messi, Neymar, and Luis Suarez receiving yellow cards, along with eight for Espanyol. The referee's report also mentioned a heated exchange between opposing players after the match. Espanyol's Gerard Moreno said some Barcelona players "were waiting for them" and "provoked" him and his teammates.

"There was tension and intensity," Barcelona coach Luis Enrique said. "The referees mark the limits, not the players or the coaches. They are the ones charged with ensuring this is soccer and not American football." Espanyol, which held Barcelona to 0-0 in the Spanish league on Saturday, will have the return leg of the round-of-16 tie at its stadium next week.

### Bilbao, Valencia find success

Elsewhere, Athletic Bilbao, last year's finalist to Barcelona, scored three times in the second half to erase a two-goal deficit and beat Villarreal 3-2, while Atletico Madrid, Valencia, Sevilla, and Deportivo La Coruna got positive results.

Arda Turan and Aleix Vidal, used as a substitute, debuted for Barcelona, after the club finished its ban on new players during 2015 for breaking FIFA's rules regarding the transfer for youth players.

Espanyol found its opener when Caicedo used an

excellent first touch before slotting in a ball he received from Asensio, who started a counterattack by intercepting Dani Alves' pass. But Messi quickly responded when he caught Espanyol's defense off-balance after Andres Iniesta played him forward to beat goalkeeper Pau Lopez. Caicedo went down holding his left thigh near halftime, but the visitors' defense held firm until

Messi sent his free kick streaking in off the underside of the crossbar. Espanyol's hopes took another blow when Asensio was substituted after he apparently picked up an injury during the halftime warm-ups. It was all Barcelona the rest of the way, as Messi set up Pique to tap in his goal after Iniesta's incisive pass started the move.

Perez's second booking was followed by Diop seeing red for something he apparently said to Suarez in the 75th. The undermanned Espanyol resisted until Messi flipped the ball forward for Neymar to put in. Bilbao also fell behind at home after Villarreal scored twice on counterattacks finished off by Leo Baptistao and Samuel Garcia. But Benat Etxebarria set up Inaki Williams to pull one back, striker Aritz Aduriz soon leveled, and Aymeric Laporte completed the comeback in the 81st.

Atletico trailed after Nacho Martinez struck from long range for Rayo Vallecano, but Saul Niguez scored against his former team in the 67th to get an away goal in a 1-1 draw. Winter reinforcements Augusto Fernandez and Claudio Kranevitter debuted for Atletico. Gary Neville also got his first win as Valencia coach over a topflight team after Alvaro Negredo scored a hat trick in a 4-0 rout of Granada.

Valencia is still without a win through four Spanish league matches under Neville, and had previously beaten only a third-division team in the cup since the former Manchester United player took charge. Sevilla took a 2-0 lead from its victory at Real Betis in a one-sided Seville derby, while Deportivo La Coruna needed defender Alberto Lopo to head in a late equalizer to claim a 1-1 draw at second-division club Mirandes. — AP

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 2016

Friday Times

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**Messi shines in wild  
Copa del Rey clash**