

SUBSCRIPTION

# Kuwait Times



THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 2016

RABI ALTHANI 20, 1437 AH

No: 16771

In Middle East, wars, hunger grip millions



EgyptAir mechanic accused of putting IS bomb on board



Murray overpower limping Raonic; set up Djokovic final



## 2 TREMORS JOLT NORTH KABD AND SOUTH JAHRA

### KUWAIT WITNESSING 'HAIL, NOT SNOW'



150 Fils



Min 03°  
Max 14°



**KUWAIT:** People participate during the Hala February 2016 Carnival yesterday along the Gulf Road. The 17th edition of the annual festival entitled 'Kuwait Al-Atta' (giving) recorded a huge turnout. - Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Pages 4, 5)

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's national network for monitoring earthquakes at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research yesterday detected two tremors north of Kabd and South Jahra areas. Director of the decision-making program and supervisor of the network Abdullah Al-Enezi said in a press statement that the network recorded two tremors - the first was detected at 8:32 am of 5.2 degrees on the Richter scale while the second one occurred at 8:35 am (local time) of 3.7 degrees on the Richter scale. He added that the two tremors occurred at a depth of five kilometers and were felt by citizens and residents in the areas of Jahra, Qairawan and Saad Al-Abdullah.

In another development, Meteorologist Mohammad Karam has commented on spreading online pictures showing snowfalls in Kuwait saying that the frozen raindrops blanketed the ground due to freezing temperature. Rain clouds coupled with low temperature led to forming a frosty layer covering the ground, Ramadan said in remarks to KUNA after photos, with captions saying Kuwait is witnessing snowfalls for the first time have gone viral across the social media spectrum.

The hail fell onto wet grounds causing a layer of ice, said Ramadan, indicating that this was the scientific explanation of the phenomenon. Ramadan indicated that he would stop short of declaring that Kuwait is witnessing snowfalls, in the literal sense, and cautioned farmers that they should protect their groves and crop of the hail harmful effects. Temperature will increase gradually tomorrow and Monday, before settling at normal levels on Tuesday. Kuwait and other regional countries are currently whipped with freezing northwesterly winds. — Agencies

## SHOOTINGS, SUICIDE ATTACK ON SAUDI MOSQUE KILLS 4

**DUBAI:** A suicide bombing and gun attack on Shiite Muslim worshippers killed at least four people in eastern Saudi Arabia yesterday, the Interior Ministry and witnesses said, extending a spate of attacks on the kingdom's Shiite minority. The assault on the Imam Rida mosque in the Eastern Province town of Mahasen, a mixed Sunni-Shiite district in which there is an extension of a compound where state oil company Aramco employees live, also wounded at least 18 people.

There was no early claim of responsibility but it resembled previous attacks by Sunni militants from Islamic State on Shiites it considers to be heretics. The oil-producing Eastern Province is home to Saudi Arabia's Shiite community. It came less than a month after Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia executed 47 people, most of them Al-Qaeda militants convicted of attacks in the world's biggest oil exporting state since 2003, as well as dissident Shi'ite cleric Nimr Al-Nimr.

The Saudi interior ministry said security forces prevented two suicide bombers from entering the mosque, where one blew himself up, killing four people. Security forces exchanged fire with the second man and arrested him. Witnesses said one suicide bomber blew himself up outside the mosque, causing a power blackout inside. They said worshippers overpowered a second attacker after he opened fire in the mosque where 200 people were performing Friday prayers. "The explosion

happened outside the mosque, at the courtyard of the mosque, while another one entered with a machinegun. There are martyrs and wounded," one witness said in an audio message circulated on social media.

"The young men grabbed his machine gun and beat him up, but he did not die. The police then came and took him away and the wounded were taken in private cars because ambulance cars did not arrive quickly." Another witness, speaking to Reuters by telephone, said a third attacker was believed to be involved in the attack and that he may have fled or disappeared. A video recording provided by activists showed a crowd surrounding a man prone on the floor, turning him over and unfastening what they said was a suicide belt around his waist. Witnesses had earlier said three people died in the attack. Saudi Arabia has suffered a string of deadly shooting and bomb attacks in recent months, many of them claimed by the ultra-radical Islamic State. Islamic State is bitterly hostile to Gulf Arab monarchies and is seen to be trying to stoke Sunni-Shiite sectarian confrontation within Arabian peninsula states to destabilise and ultimately overthrow their dynasties. Al-Qaeda has warned Saudi Arabia it will pay for the executions of dozens of its members on Jan 2, saying they were intended to be a new year's gift to Riyadh's Western allies aimed at consolidating the Saud dynasty. — Reuters

## IRAN COERCES AFGHANS TO FIGHT IN SYRIA: HRW

**NEW YORK:** Iran's Revolutionary Guards has recruited thousands of Afghans, some by coercion, to fight in Syria's war alongside forces loyal to President Bashar Al-Assad, Human Rights Watch said yesterday. "Iran has not just offered Afghan refugees and migrants incentives to fight in Syria, but several said they were threatened with deportation back to Afghanistan unless they did," said Peter Bouckaert, emergency director at the New York-based HRW. "Faced with this bleak choice, some of these Afghan men and boys fled Iran for Europe."

Shiite Iran is a staunch supporter of Assad and provides financial and military support to his regime. Tehran says its Fatemiyoun Brigade, comprised of Afghan recruits, are volunteers to defend sacred Shiite sites in Syria and Iraq against Sunni extremists like those of the Islamic State group. The brigade, which is backed by the powerful Revolutionary Guards, is named after the daughter of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) whose mausoleum near Damascus is venerated by Shiites.

But some reports say the Afghans have been offered residency and a monthly salary to fight for Iran. The Islamic republic denies having any boots on the ground and insists its commanders and generals act as "military advisers" in Syria and Iraq. However, funerals are regularly held across Iran for "volunteer" fighters from Iran, Afghanistan, and sometimes Pakistan. Iran hosts an estimated three million Afghans, many of whom have fled persecution and repeated bouts of armed conflict in their homeland, said HRW. — AFP

## KFAS, AAAS INK MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

**WASHINGTON:** Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) has taken a stride in its scientific and research services joining hands with internationally renowned American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), with a landmark cooperation Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by both parties on Thursday at a ceremony held at the AAAS Headquarters in Washington, DC. The MoU, marking a major leap for Kuwait at these levels, was signed by AAAS Chief Executive Officer Dr Rush D Holt and KFAS Director General Dr Adnan Shihab-Eldin.

KFAS, Kuwait's advocate of innovation, technology and science, aspires through this cooperation, to enrich its expertise, scientific innovations and education for the service of the Kuwaiti community and humanity. During the ceremony, Dr Shihab-Eldin stressed upon KFAS's pioneering mission to stimulate, support and invest in initiatives and human resources that contribute to the building of a strong research culture, knowledge-based economy and sustainable future for the State of Kuwait. KFAS and AAAS will coordinate on basis of shared values for advancing science, engineering and innovation for the benefit of society.

### STEM education

They will set up mechanisms for expertise exchange, personnel interaction and the transfer of knowledge, he added. The agreement will be valid for three years and aims to promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) awareness, and STEM education, for Kuwaiti families, build competitive research capacity in the Kuwait research community, support technology and knowledge transfer and catalyzing research for economic development in Kuwait. It also aims to enhance capacity for research management and oversight in Kuwait institutions, connect research to enterprise and boost the research and innovation environment in the private sector. Moreover, they will work together to facilitate networks of expertise that include researchers from all areas of sciences and technology, persons specialized in product development and technology transfer, innovators and entrepreneurs from all fields, organize workshops, symposiums and targeted expert advice. The AAAS, founded in 1848, is the world's largest general scientific society and publisher of the Science family of journals. The non-profit AAAS is open to all and fulfills its mission to "advance science and serve society" through initiatives in science policy, international programs, science education, public engagement, and more.

The AAAS is an American international non-profit organization with the stated goals of promoting cooperation among scientists, defending scientific freedom, encouraging scientific responsibility, and supporting scientific education and science outreach for the betterment of all humanity. It is the world's largest general scientific society, with 126,995 individual and institutional members (at the end of 2008), and it is the publisher of the well-known scientific journal Science, which has a weekly circulation of 138,549.

Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), a non-profit organization established by an Amiri Decree, has been providing sustained support to the progress and advancement of science and technology for the last 40 years. The Amir of Kuwait chairs the Foundation's Board of Directors. Private sector companies contribute 1% of their annual net profits to the Foundation. The main objective of KFAS is to stimulate creative initiatives and human potentials that promote building a solid scientific and technological base and facilitate an enabling environment of innovation and culture. Initiatives include developing public awareness of science, strengthening the success factors of innovations, and enhancing innovative and research capacities.

KFAS also aims to support the talented and the gifted and to transform knowledge into tangible and practical innovations and to build a foundation for a knowledge-based national economy through supporting scientific, innovative and technological capacity in the private sector. KFAS aims to support efforts for modernization and scientific development within Kuwait by sponsoring basic and applied research, awarding grants to support and encourage research, prizes and recognition to enhance intellectual development. It also grants scholarships and fellowships for academic or training purposes, holds symposia and scientific conferences and encourages, supports and develops research projects and scientific programs. — KUNA

## Photo

of the day



**KUWAIT:** Memory of old Kuwait still lives .. a child wearing a traditional sailor's clothing. — KUNA

## KURDISTAN REGION'S VICE PRESIDENT LAUDS KUWAIT

**IRBIL:** Vice President of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region Kosrat Rasul Ali has extolled Kuwait's political and humanitarian stances under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in all fields. This came during his meeting with Dr Omar Al-Kandari Kuwait's Consul General in Irbil as they reviewed bilateral ties and means of promoting them in all fields, and a number of issues of mutual inter-

est. Ali said he is following up closely Kuwait's efforts in relieving refugees and internally displaced persons in the region, calling for increasing support and helping region countries secure their needs. He expressed satisfaction that Kuwait opened a consulate in the region, affirming that it has an effective role in cementing and boosting cooperation between the two sides. He also commended the depth of "historic" relations

between Kuwait and Iraqi Kurdistan region. On his part, Al-Kandari told KUNA following the meeting that the talks focused on bilateral ties and means of enhancing them in all domains.

Efforts exerted by the region to combat the so-called Islamic State (IS) which poses a grave threat to the whole region were discussed, he said, voicing satisfaction over the level of cooperation between the two sides. — KUNA

## KUWAIT, GCC PLAY VITAL ROLE IN HELPING SYRIAN REFUGEES

**MADRID:** The GCC countries, specifically Kuwait, played an integral role in helping the Syrian refugees during their darkest times, said Kuwait's Ambassador to Spain Dr Suleiman Al-Harbi late Thursday. Speaking at a roundtable focusing on the GCC contributions towards easing the plight of the Syrian refugees, Ambassador Al-Harbi said that his country, through the guidelines set by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, had organized three donors conferences in 2013, 2014, and 2015 to address the issue of some 13.5 million Syrian refugees and displaced who were being heavily affected by the crisis in their country since 2011.

Dr Al-Harbi said, during the event organized by Casa Arabe (Arab House), that honoring Kuwait with the co-organization of the fourth donors' conference for Syria in London next February was another indication of the strong role played by the Gulf country in helping the refugees. The fourth event will be organized by the UK, Germany, and Norway. The previous conferences had managed to gather \$3.8 billion accord-

ing to the UN with Kuwait donated around \$1.4 billion, said the Kuwaiti Ambassador who urged international participants give more. On their part, Gulf and Arab Ambassadors attending

the roundtable showcased their countries' own contributions to help the Syrian refugees, stressing that a just and feasible solution should be found to end the crisis in Syria. — KUNA



**MIRATOVAC:** A child strapped with his mother falls as he walks with other migrants and refugees after crossing the Macedonian border into Serbia, near the village of Miratovac yesterday. More than one million migrants and refugees crossed the Mediterranean Sea to Europe in 2015, nearly half of them Syrians, according to the UN refugee agency, UNHCR. — AFP

# TOWARDS A NEW, CONFIDENT KUWAIT

## Amir's First Speech

**KUWAIT:** Let us embark on our journey together, working towards a new, confident Kuwait, prepared for the challenges of the future and able to embrace new opportunities, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah rallied the nation a decade ago. In his first speech after ascending to power as the Amir of Kuwait, His Highness addressed the loss of "our beloved Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah," which "felt keenly by every Kuwaiti, for we all knew him as a generous, perceptive and compassionate man and as a wise, loving ruler.

He carried his responsibilities well, and fulfilled them with great skill. He made his life a time of continuous work, and devoted himself to Kuwait. He served as an example to us all of wisdom, fidelity, patience and intelligence. May Allah bless his soul." His Highness Sheikh Sabah then talked about the chivalrous features of the late Father Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, saying "the people of Kuwait should not forget someone who

stood shoulder to shoulder with Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed - Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah."

"At crucial moments in Kuwait's history, we have seen Sheikh Saad as a wise leader and a great thinker. Bad health may have prevented him from pursuing the national duties that he so loved, but his many great actions will guarantee him a place in the annals of Kuwait's history and in the hearts and minds of the Kuwaiti people. He will forever be remembered as a man who molded the history of modern Kuwait."

His Highness the Amir carried on saying: "Today, I promise you I will fulfill the trust you have placed in me, and lead our country forwards as my predecessors have done before me with wisdom and foresight. "I work only for you and for our country, Kuwait. Old and young, men and women, you are the very essence and strength of our land. A country depends on its people for its strength. Throughout the history of our nation, the Kuwaiti people have proved this time and time again for they love their homeland deeply."

In the speech, His Highness the Amir asked the people to be Kuwait's guardians, to protect it as the forefathers did before. "A new era is dawning and we look forward to creating a modern state empowered by education and knowledge and governed by cooperation, brotherhood and love so that its people, whether male or female, can all enjoy freedom, democracy and equality," His Highness stressed. "Without his people's cooperation, a ruler will fail, but I know that you will give me your full trust so we can join together to create a new age of progress and development for our country. It is my real hope that together we can realize this dream."

His Highness then underlined that "we all want a land that is successful, where loyalty and honesty prevail, where the good of the country is put before individual needs, where self-interest is replaced by common interest, where hard work flourishes and where law and order is respected. "I am confident that if we all - officials and non-officials alike - strive to make this a reality, our homeland will prosper, our lives will be happy and we will be an example to other nations."

On the role of the press on that period, His Highness noted "I would like to take this opportunity to praise the role our press has played in providing objective and truthful coverage of the events of the past few weeks. Their responsibility and prudence are highly commendable." On the country's future, His Highness the Amir pointed out "Kuwait expects a great deal from us. Other countries, not blessed with our rich resources have surpassed us. We cannot afford to stagnate, we must move forward. We have a duty to transform Kuwait into a center of hard work and innovation, a testament to progress and modernity." His Highness concluded the speech by emphasizing the fact that "we will progress together, with Allah's blessing, guided by His Book, the Holy Quran, and His Prophet's Sunnah". — KUNA



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

# Hala February 2016



**KUWAIT:** Kuwaitis join the parade yesterday as up to 27 government ministries and agencies and 13 Arab and foreign embassies and 80 floats took part in the Hala February 2016 festival, culminating in a colorful parade and marching bands on Gulf Road. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Faten Omar, Agencies

**KUWAIT:** Hala February 2016 Carnival kicked off yesterday at the Kuwait towers. The 17th edition of the annual festival entitled 'Kuwait Al-Atta' (giving) recorded a huge turnout. Up to 27 government ministries and agencies and 13 Arab and foreign embassies and 80 floats took part in the festival yesterday, culminating in a colorful parade and marching bands on the Gulf Road. The Carnival started with a sea show by the Kuwait Navy Force, the Ministry of Defense, the Coast Guard, Ministry of Interior and Kuwait Fire Service Directorate. The Police Aviation Services as well as gliders belonging to the scientific Club also participated during the March.

The parade was held under the auspices of Minister of Information and State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. This year's festival coincides with the 10th anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's assumption of power, the 25th anniversary since Liberation Day, and the 55th anniversary of the National Day.

Embassies taking part in the parade include; Indonesia, Jordan, the UAE, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen, Palestine, Sudan, Iran, India, Egypt, South Africa and South Korea. The festival regaled onlookers with an air show and a marine show besides the parade of floats and marching bands, among other offerings. The festival kicks off the shopping bonanza in February each year - energizing the shopping season in the country and promoting tourism, chairman of the organizing committee for "Hala February" festival Walid Al-Saqubi said.



# kicks off with a bang



He said there were many events lined up for the month of February that would resonate well with the public, stressing that talented Kuwaiti youths were welcome to join in.

At the end of the carnival, a concert was held - featuring Bilal Al-Shami, Ali Abdullah and Fatouma. The Hala February Festival is aimed at promoting tourism as lots of people from GCC countries come to Kuwait with their families to celebrate. Activities include; concerts, shopping, sports and poetry seminars. There are other activities such as Hala February's camp that started from January 16 to March 1 in Bnaider road 258.

The upcoming concerts will be at Hala February Theater in Ice Skating Rink featuring Ibrahim Dashti, Hatem Abbas and Saad Al-Mujrad. The fourth concert will be held on February 4, 2016 with singers Ismael

Mubark, Nabeel Shael, and Ahlam performing. While the last concert will be on February 5, 2016 (with Bahraini Hend, Shieren, and Hussain Al-Jassmi participating).

For poetry-lovers, there will be poetry recitals at Hala February Theater from January 31 to February 3, and from February 7 to February 10. There will be also entertainment shows and competitions at Dabous complex in Fahaheel, Dabous complex in Farwaniya and Beirut complex. The Hala February Carnival which started in 1999 has now become a local tradition in Kuwait. Kuwaitis consider the Hala February Festival as a good omen to start the year. This is the month when Kuwait celebrates its National Day of Independence (Feb 25) and Liberation Day (Feb 26).





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# International

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**Uganda brings maids home from Saudi after abuse complaints**

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**US, British spies hacked Israeli air force: Snowden**

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**Cameron closes in on EU migrant benefits deal**

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**BAGHDAD:** A displaced girl waits for donated food at Al-Takia camp in Baghdad, Iraq. More than 3 million Iraqis are displaced within the country by violence and instability. — AP

## HUNGER GRIPS MILLIONS ACROSS MIDEAST

FIGHTERS USING FOOD AS WEAPON IN REGION TORN APART BY WAR

**BEIRUT:** In a Middle East torn apart by war and conflict, fighters are increasingly using food as a weapon of war. Millions of people across countries like Syria, Yemen and Iraq are gripped by hunger, struggling to survive with little help from the outside world. Children suffer from severe malnutrition, their parents often having to beg or sell possessions to get basic commodities including water, medicine and fuel.

The biggest humanitarian catastrophe by far is Syria, where a ruinous five-year civil war has killed a quarter of a million people and displaced half the population. All sides in the conflict have used punishing blockades to force submission and surrender from the other side - a tactic that has proved effective particularly for government forces seeking to pacify opposition-held areas around the capital Damascus.

Since October, Russian airstrikes and the start of yet another winter have exacerbated a humanitarian crisis and led to deaths from starvation in some places. Humanitarian teams who recently entered a besieged Syrian town witnessed scenes that "haunt the soul," said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. He accused both the government of President Bashar Assad and the rebels fighting to oust him of using starvation as a weapon, calling it a war crime. Although sieges are an accepted military practice that are often carried out by forces seeking to avoid intense urban conflict, the conduct of forces carrying them out and their behavior toward civilian populations are regulated by international humanitarian law. Past cases include the sieges of Gorazde and Sarajevo during the Bosnian war. The Hamas-ruled

Gaza Strip, home to 1.8 million people, has also been under an Israeli and Egyptian blockade, restricting the flow of many goods into the war-torn Palestinian territory. The UN and aid agencies have struggled with funding shortages and growing impediments to the delivery of humanitarian assistance despite Security Council resolutions insisting on the unconditional delivery of aid across front lines.

In Yemen, the Arab world's most impoverished nation, nearly half of the country's 22 provinces are ranked as one step away from famine conditions. Here's a look at major areas in the Middle East under siege or suffering starvation:

### SYRIA

The United Nations estimates more than 400,000 people are besieged in 15 communities across Syria, roughly half of them in areas controlled by the Islamic State group. In 2014, the UN was able to deliver food to about five percent of people in besieged areas, while today estimates show the organization is reaching less than one percent.

In 2015, the World Food Program was forced to reduce the size of the food rations it provides to families inside Syria by up to 25 percent because of a funding shortfall. The agency says it has to raise \$25 million every week to meet the basic food needs of people affected by the Syrian conflict.

Some of the hardest hit blockaded areas in Syria are: Madaya: A town northeast of Damascus with a population of 40,000. The town has been besieged by government and allied militiamen

for months and gained international attention after harrowing pictures emerged showing emaciated children. Doctors Without Borders says 28 people have died of starvation in Madaya since September. Two convoys of humanitarian aid were delivered to the town last week. Aid workers who entered described seeing skeletal figures; children who could barely talk or walk, and parents who gave their kids sleeping pills to calm their hunger.

Fouaa and Kfarya: Two Shiite villages in the northern province of Idlib with a combined population of around 20,000. The villages have been blockaded by rebels for more than a year. Pro-government fighters recently evacuated from the villages describe desperate conditions there with scarce food and medicine, saying some residents are eating grass to survive and undergoing surgery without anesthesia. Aid convoys entered the villages simultaneously with the aid to Madaya after months-long negotiations between the government and armed groups.

Deir el-Zour: An estimated 200,000 people living in government-held parts of this city in eastern Syria are besieged by the Islamic State group. The UN says most of the residents are women and children facing sharply deteriorating conditions due to the ban on all commercial or humanitarian access, as well as the inability of residents to move outside of the city. While government stocks continue to provide bread, there are severe shortages of food, medicine and basic commodities. Opposition activists say they have documented the death of 27 people from malnutrition. Water is available only once a week for few hours. — AP



GENEVA: Journalists attend a briefing at the United Nations Offices on the opening day of Syrian peace talks yesterday in Geneva. — AFP

## 'MUST NOT FAIL' SYRIA PEACE TALKS UNCERTAIN KEY OPPOSITION MEMBERS KEEP AWAY FROM TALKS

**GENEVA:** The biggest push to date to end Syria's bloody civil war looked in trouble yesterday with key opposition members staying away from the scheduled start of peace talks with President Bashar Al-Assad's regime in Switzerland. The planned UN-mediated talks in Geneva are aimed at ending a nearly five-year-old conflict that has killed more than 260,000 people and facilitated the meteoric rise of the extremist Islamic State (IS) group.

The highly complex war has also destabilized the already restive Middle East and drawn in not only regional powers like Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey but also the United States and Russia.

It has also forced millions of Syrians from their homes, many of them into neighboring states and further afield, causing a major political headache for the European Union which received around a million migrants in 2015. The UN Syria envoy, Staffan de Mistura, issued on Thursday a video message to the Syrian people saying that after a string of previous failed initiatives, this new round of talks "cannot fail".

"Five years of this conflict have been too much. The horror is in front of everyone's eyes," de Mistura said. "You must know also that we count on you to raise your voice to say 'khalas' ('stop' in Arabic)."

### Vienna Process

The Geneva negotiations, if they happen, would not be a face-to-face conversation between the regime and its opponents. Instead they are "proximity talks" when go-betweens shuttle between the different participants. They are part of an ambitious plan launched in Vienna in November by a raft of key actors including Russia, the United States, Gulf states, Iran and Turkey that foresees elections within 18 months.

In December, the main Syrian political opposition and armed factions, excluding Kurdish groups, formed the umbrella opposition group known as the High Negotiations

Committee (HNC) in Riyadh. But despite Western pressure, the HNC on Thursday refused to show up in Switzerland before an agreement is reached on aid reaching hundreds of thousands of people stuck in besieged towns. "(On Friday) we won't be in Geneva. We could go there, but we will not enter the negotiating room if our demands aren't met," HNC coordinator Riad Hijab told Al-Arabiya television.

A senior delegate for the HNC, which was meeting in Riyadh for a fourth day Friday, told AFP however that it may still decide later in the day to travel to the negotiations. The HNC, which named Mohammed Alloush of the Islamist rebel group Army of Islam as its chief negotiator, has also asked for "clarifications" after the UN issued invitations to other opposition figures.

Individual invitations were reportedly issued to a list of figures opposed to the regime but who are thought to have closer ties to Moscow and have limited influence on the ground. Randa Kassis, a member of that list, told AFP in Geneva yesterday that despite the uncertainty on who would attend, "something has to start. We have to think of the Syrian people."

The HNC and its Saudi and Turkish backers have also objected to the participation of Syrian Kurdish groups that have made key advances against IS in northern Syria in recent months.

Russia, however, says Kurdish involvement is essential. The HNC also wants assurances from the international community that it will move to end regime attacks on civilians and allow humanitarian aid.

### 'Inflexible' Assad

The Syrian government delegation, headed by Syria's envoy to the UN Bashar Al-Jaafari, was expected in Geneva around midday (1100 GMT), the UN had said Thursday, and other opposition figures not part of the HNC said they would be present. UN

spokesman Ahmad Fawzi said Friday that the talks "will start as planned... in the afternoon." But Haytham Manna, a longstanding opposition figure who is co-chair of the political wing of a Kurdish-Arab alliance, told AFP in Geneva he did not expect the discussions to begin until Monday.

France-based Middle East analyst Agnes Levallois said the opposition was growing increasingly frustrated that the question of Assad's fate, a key stumbling block in previous talks, was being put off. — AFP

## UGANDA BRINGS MAIDS HOME FROM SAUDI AFTER ABUSE COMPLAINTS

**KAMPALA:** Ugandan officials are helping to bring back about 24 women working as domestic staff in Saudi Arabia after complaints about abuse that prompted a ban on sending Ugandans as housemaids to the Gulf state, a spokesman said yesterday.

Seven women have returned to Uganda so far this week after the Ugandan Embassy in Saudi Arabia intervened when they left their employers complaining about abuse and mistreatment and moved into Saudi detention centres waiting to go home. Sheikh Rashid Yahya Ssemuddu, the Ugandan ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said the women were staying at a shelter operated by the Saudi Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

The Ugandan government last week announced a ban on sending housemaids to Saudi Arabia after a barrage of complaints about workers being treated inhumanely and said the ban would remain until working conditions were "deemed fitting".

Ssemuddu said about 24 Ugandan women were at the shelter, some needing paperwork and airline tickets after complaining they had been held as slaves and their passports taken away.

"We are in daily contact with them and efforts are underway to have the rest of the women return home in the coming few days," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The Saudi Embassy in Uganda did not respond to requests for comments. It is the second time that Uganda had banned the movement of domestic staff to Saudi Arabia after a similar move in 2014.

But the two nations signed a five-year deal last July allowing college graduates to seek jobs as domestic workers and in other fields in oil-rich Saudi Arabia which was seen as a way of addressing high unemployment among young people in Uganda.

At the time Uganda's Labour Minister Muruli Mukasa said the agreement was intended to protect the rights and welfare of immigrant workers by setting a minimum wage and stopping labour companies from taking money off applicants' salaries. Ssemuddu said the embassy has received word from the Saudi Ministry of Labour that it now wants to schedule a meeting to discuss this bilateral agreement between the two trade partners.

"Our people should remain calm because we have known all the problems and their sources and we are going to deal with them," he said. Anti-slavery campaigners have called for Ugandan officials to be more vigilant to stop the trafficking of women to the Gulf states, many of whom are targeted by private, unauthorised recruitment agencies.

Rehema Babirye, one of the women who returned this week, said she was deceived by a local recruitment company who promised her a job in sales in Saudi Arabia. Once she arrived she was taken to work as a maid with no days off. — Reuters

## EGYPTAIR MECHANIC SUSPECTED IN RUSSIAN PLANE CRASH

**LONDON:** An EgyptAir mechanic whose cousin joined Islamic State in Syria is suspected of planting a bomb on a Russian passenger plane that was blown out of Egypt's skies in late October, according to sources familiar with the matter. So far Egypt has publicly said it has found no evidence that the MetroJet flight, which crashed in the Sinai Peninsula after takeoff from Sharm El-Sheikh airport, killing all 224 people on board, was brought down by terrorism. A senior security official at the airline denied that any of its employees had been arrested or were under suspicion, and an Interior Ministry official also said there had been no arrests. But the sources, who declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the ongoing investigation, said the mechanic had been detained, along with two airport policemen and a baggage handler suspected of helping him put the bomb on board.

"After learning that one of its members had a relative that worked at the airport, Islamic State delivered a bomb in a handbag to that person," said one of the sources, adding the suspect's cousin joined Islamic State in Syria a year and a half ago. "He was told to not ask any questions and get the bomb on the plane."

Another source said of the other suspects: "Two policemen are suspected of playing a role by turning a blind eye to the operation at a security checkpoint. But

there is a possibility that they were just not doing their jobs properly." None of the four have been prosecuted so far, the sources told Reuters. The crash has called into question Egypt's drive to eradicate Islamist militancy and hurt its tourism industry, a cornerstone of the economy. Islamic State's Egypt affiliate is waging an insurgency in parts of the Sinai, although mostly far from the tourist resorts along its Red Sea coast.

Russia and Western countries have long said that they believe the flight was brought down by a bomb smuggled on board. Egypt however has so far publicly said it has not found any evidence of foul play.

Any formal charges or official Egyptian confirmation that a bomb brought down the Airbus A321 could potentially expose Egypt to compensation payments to the families of the victims. The EgyptAir senior security official said state security police had investigated all workers at Sharm el-Sheikh airport without finding any evidence implicating any of them.

The official said state security traced the family connections of all the employees and they were cleared. "Any employee who shows sympathy to militants is prevented from going to work in any airport," he told Reuters. An Interior Ministry source also said no one had been arrested in connection with the crash. — Reuters



## UN MEDIATES RETURN OF ISRAELI 'SPY' BIRD FROM LEBANON

**JERUSALEM:** A vulture captured in Lebanon on suspicion of spying for Israel has been returned home with the help of the United Nations, Israeli authorities said yesterday. "In a discreet operation with the Lebanese and with the great help of UN forces and the UN liaison unit, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority was able to return the vulture that was caught a few days ago by villagers of Bint Jbeil, Lebanon," the authority said in a statement.

The UN acted as a go-between in negotiations between the Lebanese and the Gamla Nature Reserve where the bird lived before it flew across the border, it added. "The attempts were successful and yesterday evening at a meeting at the border at Rosh Hanikra the vulture was returned in reasonable health by UN officers," the statement said, referring to an area in northern Israel.

The bird was "said to be weak and with minor injuries" and had been taken for treatment. The Nature and Parks Authority issued a photograph of the bird being handed over by uniformed members of the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon, or UNIFIL.

It had first raised concerns over the vulture on Tuesday after images shared on social media appeared to show the bird with an Israeli identification ring and location transmitter captured by the villagers. The authority at the time said the villagers had suspected espionage due to the transmitter but the *bintjbeil.org* news portal said the bird had been freed after it was deemed not to pose any threat.

The vulture had crossed the border some days before and flown about four kilometres (2.5 miles) into Lebanon, the authority said. Israel and Lebanon are technically at war and the UNIFIL peacekeepers monitor their disputed border. Citizens of the two countries are banned from communicating by law.

Conspiracy theories are endemic in the Middle East, particularly when it comes to Israel's spying activities. Last summer, Palestinian media reported claims by the Gaza Strip's Hamas rulers that they had apprehended a dolphin off their Mediterranean coastline, equipped with video cameras for an Israeli spying mission.

In 2011, Saudi media reported that a vulture carrying a GPS transmitter and an



**TEL AVIV:** A vulture is seen after receiving treatment at a veterinary clinic in the Wildlife Hospital of Ramat Gan Zoo Safari near Tel Aviv, yesterday. — AFP

identification ring from Tel Aviv University had been detained by security forces who suspected it was being used for espionage. And in 2010, Israel's for-

eign ministry dismissed Egyptian reports linking a spate of Red Sea shark attacks to the country's Mossad intelligence agency. — AFP

## US, BRITISH SPIES HACKED ISRAELI AIR FORCE: SNOWDEN

### ISRAEL 'DISAPPOINTED' BY SPYING, MAY OVERHAUL SECURITY

**JERUSALEM:** The United States and Britain have monitored secret sorties and communications by Israel's air force in a hacking operation dating back to 1998, according to documents attributed to leaks by former US spy agency contractor Edward Snowden.

Israel voiced disappointment at the disclosures, which were published yesterday in three media outlets and might further strain relations with Washington after years of feuding over strategies on Iran and the Palestinians. Israel's *Yedioth Ahronoth* daily said the US National Security Agency, which specialises in electronic surveillance, and its British counterpart GCHQ spied on Israeli air force missions against the Palestinian enclave Gaza, Syria and Iran.

The spy operation, codenamed "Anarchist", was run out of a Cyprus base and targeted other Middle East states too, it said.

Its findings were mirrored by stories in Germany's *Der Spiegel* newsmagazine and the online publication *The Intercept*, which lists Snowden confidant Glenn Greenwald among its associates. "This access is indispensable for maintaining an understanding of Israeli military training and operations and thus an insight to possible future developments in the region," *The Intercept* quoted a classified GCHQ report as saying in 2008.

That year, Israel went to war against Hamas guerrillas in Gaza and began issuing increasingly vocal threats to attack Iranian nuclear facilities if it deemed international diplomacy insufficient to deny its arch-foe the means of making a bomb.

Asked for comment, the United States and Britain said through spokespeople for their embassies in Israel that they do not publicly discuss intelligence matters.

### NOT "DEEPEST KINGDOM OF SECRETS"

Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz, a member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's security cabinet, sought to play down the potential damage but said lessons would be learned.

"I do not think that this is the deepest kingdom of secrets, but it is certainly something that should not happen, which is unpleasant," he told Israel's Army Radio. "We will now have to look and consider changing the encryption, certainly."

With the Netanyahu government and Obama administration at loggerheads over the U.S.-led nuclear agreement with Iran, there have been a series of high-profile media exposes in recent months alleging mutual espionage between the allies.

Israel insists that it ceased such missions since it ran US Navy analyst Jonathan Pollard as an agent in the 1980s. "We know that the Americans spy on the whole world, and also on us, also on their friends," Steinitz said. "But still, it is disappointing, inter alia because, going back decades already, we have not spied nor collected intelligence nor hacked encryptions in the United States."

The *Intercept* report included what it said were images of armed Israeli drones hacked from onboard cameras' live feeds. Israel neither confirms nor denies having armed drones, though one of its senior military officers was quoted as acknowledging their existence in a 2010 US diplomatic cable that was previously disseminated by WikiLeaks. *Yedioth* said that the hacking revelations could hurt Israeli drone sales to Germany should Berlin worry about the aircraft networks' security. But Steinitz brushed off that possibility. "Every country carries out its own encryption," he said.

Germany said on Jan 12 it would lease Heron TP drones from state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). — Reuters

## GERMANY TIGHTENS ASYLUM RULES TO LIMIT REFUGEE INFLUX

**BERLIN:** Germany moved to tighten its asylum laws to slow a record migrant influx as Chancellor Angela Merkel sought to bridge deep European rifts over the crisis in talks with Italy's Matteo Renzi yesterday.

Late Thursday, Merkel's coalition government, after months of wrangling, hammered out a deal to limit numbers by blocking some migrant family reunifications and declaring three North African nations "safe countries of origin." The agreement means citizens of Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia will have little chance of gaining political asylum, echoing steps Germany took for several Balkans countries last year.

Germany will also block family reunifications for two years for rejected asylum seekers who can't be deported because they face the threat of torture or the death penalty in their own country.

Merkel's cabinet should sign off on the measures next week before parliament passes them into law, Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said yesterday. After a decade in power, Merkel has come under fierce pressure to reverse her open-arms migrant policy, with emotions heightened after a rash of sex assaults in Cologne on New Year's Eve police blamed on North Africans.

Merkel has seen her long-stellar poll ratings slide ahead of three state elections in March. A poll published Friday by news weekly *Focus* found that 40 percent of respondents want Merkel to resign.

### 'Window of opportunity'

Across Europe, debate has raged on how to handle the biggest migrant wave since World War II, with Sweden and Finland announcing plans to deport tens of thousands of failed asylum seekers.

Several eastern European countries have sealed their borders, and Hungary's hardline Prime Minister Victor Orban reiterated yesterday that "migration is a security issue", linking it to "the threat of terrorism and crime". Bulgarian Prime Minister Boko Borisov has demanded the closure of the external borders of the passport-free Schengen area, arguing that rather than spend money on migrants, Europe should stop them from coming. In Germany, the inflow has fallen from thousands to hundreds a day in recent weeks as winter sets in, and the government is desperate to keep it that way.

"Perhaps the weather was particularly bad this year, the meteorologists will tell us one day," said Merkel's migrant policy coordinator Peter Altmaier. "But above all, we must seize the window of opportunity that has opened ... Our goal must be for refugees numbers not to rise again after the end of the winter storms but for them to keep going down." Merkel has refused to set an upper limit for refugee numbers or to close German borders-but she has promised a "tangible reduction" of arrivals. Key planks of her policy involve EU and international cooperation from spreading refugees more equitably across the EU via 'hotspot' first-registration centres, to better guarding the bloc's outside borders, to striking a deal with Turkey to limit migrant flows from Syria, Iraq and beyond. — AFP



**GAZA CITY:** Palestinian Hamas militants attend the funeral of the seven Hamas militants killed after a tunnel, built for fighting Israel collapsed, in Gaza City yesterday. — AFP

## MAN HELD IN DISNEYLAND PARIS HOTEL WITH TWO HANDGUNS

**PARIS:** A man carrying two handguns, ammunition and a Quran was arrested Thursday at the Disneyland resort outside Paris, with the city still on edge after a devastating jihadist attack left 130 dead in November. The man was "detected upon his arrival at the hotel on the Disneyland site where he had a reservation. Hotel security found two handguns, a Quran and ammunition on him," the source said. Disneyland Paris said the guns were picked up by routine scanning of the man's bags at the hotel entrance.

A police source said preliminary investigations did not point to terrorism, and that the man had said he was carrying the guns because he feared for his safety.

France is on high alert after November's attacks saw gunmen and suicide bombers target cafes, a concert venue and the Stade de France national stadium, leaving 130 dead and hundreds wounded.

The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the carnage. In Thursday's incident, police arrested the suspect and secured his vehicle. They then arrested a woman, believing her to be his girlfriend, but released her after realising they had the wrong person, one of the police sources said. Papers found on the suspect indicated that he lived in Paris, but no further details were given. His girlfriend was still being sought.

The scene unfolded at the Art Deco-style New York hotel near the theme park, which is situated about 30 kilometres (18 miles) east of the French capital.

"Police were immediately warned and the individual was arrested. We are continuing to work closely with the authorities and the safety of our visitors and employees is our top priority," a spokesman for Disneyland Paris, Francois Banon, said in a statement.

### France and Belgium high alert

Disneyland Paris is the most visited theme park in Europe, with 14.8 million visitors in 2015, according to Euro Disney's annual report.

The suspect was the joint manager of a brasserie in Paris's 14th arrondissement, according to a source close to the investigation. Staff and regulars there expressed astonishment at his arrest. "For me it's a mistake," a member of the bar staff told AFP by telephone, adding that the phone had been "ringing every two seconds" since the news. "Honestly, I'm taken aback. It's a joke," added the other co-manager. The November Paris attack was the second major attack in France in a year, as the country has become a prime target for the jihadist group operating out of Iraq and Syria. A Belgian court on Thursday cited security concerns as it adjourned the appeal hearing of several people—some linked to key figures in the Paris attacks—against jail terms for recruiting fighters for Syria.— AFP

## BURUNDI ARRESTS, DETAINS TWO FOREIGN JOURNALISTS

**NAIROBI:** Burundi police said yesterday they were holding two respected foreign journalists as they reported on gunmen opposed to the government in the volatile nation.

French journalist Jean-Philippe Remy, Africa bureau chief for French daily Le Monde, and British photojournalist Phil Moore, were arrested on Thursday afternoon, they said. Both have covered the region for years winning several awards for their work. "The two foreigners were arrested in the company of armed criminals," the security ministry said in a statement. Presidential press chief Willy Nyamitwe said the pair were among 17 people arrested by police. Police said a mortar, a Kalashnikov rifle and pistols were also seized in the raid in Nyakabiga, a Bujumbura suburb and anti-government protest hotspot. "They have not been charged, we are still at the investigation stage," said police deputy spokesman Moise Nkurunziza. "If there is no evidence against them, they will be released, of course," he added.

### 'Consummate professionals'

In a statement Le Monde called for the "immediate release" of the two journalists. "They both have valid visas and were merely exercising their professional duties by meeting all concerned parties involved in the current tensions in Burundi," Le Monde said. "The Burundian authorities should immediately release French journalist Jean-Philippe Remy and British photographer Phil Moore, unless there is a credible legal basis for detaining them, and guarantee their safety," said Carina Tertsakian of Human Rights Watch.—AFP



**BRUSSELS:** British Prime Minister David Cameron (left) is welcomed by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker (R) prior to a meeting at the European Commission in Brussels, yesterday.— AFP

## CAMERON CLOSES IN ON EU MIGRANT BENEFITS DEAL

### LAST-DITCH BID TO KEEP BRITAIN IN EU

**BRUSSELS:** British Prime Minister David Cameron was making a final push yesterday in Brussels to seal a deal on curbing welfare benefits for migrants in a bid to keep Britain in the EU.

The talks with European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker are set to focus on an emergency "migration brake" that would meet Cameron's controversial key demand—a four-year limit before European Union workers in Britain can claim welfare payments. A deal would pave the way for EU President Donald Tusk to make formal proposals on Monday, in time to reach an agreement with the other 27 EU leaders at a crucial summit on February 18-19. If Cameron gets a deal at the summit he is then expected to hold an in-out referendum in June on Britain's four-decade old membership of the EU, with his own position in the balance.

These negotiations to prevent a so-called "Brexit" which would make it the first country to leave the EU, come amid a series of crises for the bloc including the biggest influx of migrants and refugees to Europe since World War II.

In Britain, a eurosceptic former minister in Cameron's centre-right Conservative party described the migration brake proposal as an "insult".

"That proposal is an insult to the United Kingdom. It's not a serious offer," John Redwood told BBC radio. "We need to take back control of our borders and we need to be able to control our own welfare system. That falls well short of that."

### Proposals likely Monday

In a sign of the urgency of the talks, Cameron cancelled a visit to Denmark and Sweden to hold yesterday's working lunch with Juncker, the head of the EU's powerful executive, whose appointment Cameron opposed in 2014.

He will also host a hastily-arranged dinner with Tusk in London on Sunday night, followed by a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Hamburg on February 12.

Tusk is likely to table his proposals on Monday, European sources told AFP. Cameron has set out four key areas for a deal: migrant benefits, safeguards against more political integration in the EU, protection of countries that do not use the euro currency—a key issue for the City of London financial district—and the boosting of economic competitiveness.

While Brussels officials say most are achievable, the major sticking point has been Cameron's insistence that EU migrants employed in Britain must wait four years before claiming welfare payments such as tax credits or housing benefits.

A "migration brake" that would allow Britain or any other country to limit benefits to EU migrants, if it can show its welfare system is under strain, is one of the options that the EU is examining, diplomatic sources have told AFP.

There is widespread opposition to a benefits limit among the other 27 EU nations, particularly in central Europe, which says the move would be discriminatory and harm the bloc's core princi-

ple of freedom of movement. Britain says the move will cut immigration in a country that looks set to be the EU's most populous by 2050.

### Referendum in June?

Asked about the "brake" plan, Cameron said on Thursday: "I'm glad that others in Europe are now taking on board this issue and looking at strong alternatives to the proposal I put forward." Cameron set out his reform demands to other EU leaders at a summit in December in which senior European officials said he had made a convincing case, overcoming last-minute objections by a handful of countries.

France has however appeared sceptical in recent weeks, with Prime Minister Manuel Valls warning at the Davos forum last week that a deal was unlikely at the February summit.

Cameron has insisted that he is in "no hurry" for a deal and will walk away if he does not get what he wants. The next EU summit is in March but British officials have said that is likely to be too late to allow preparations for a referendum in June, which is believed to be Cameron's preferred date.

Cameron has openly said that he will have the vote before the end of 2017, but the longer he waits the more he is at the mercy of events in a bloc threatened by an unprecedented migration crisis, and by rifts in his own party over Europe.—AFP

## MAJOR POWER BREAKDOWN HITS PAKISTAN'S COMMERCIAL CAPITAL

**KARACHI:** A major power breakdown yesterday left 90 percent of Pakistan's largest and richest city, Karachi, without electricity and brought much of normal life to a standstill. The sweltering and violence-plagued metropolis of 23 million people accounts for half of Pakistan's national revenues and is home to the stock exchange, the central bank and a giant port. The third major outage of the country's dilapidated electricity grid within a month forced shops, hospitals and businesses to turn to back-up generators as the lights went out, including those in the provincial assembly.

However, stock market trading was not interrupted. The private utility company running the electricity supply said high levels of humidity tripped a transmission line to cause the blackout yesterday. "The tripping should not be attributed to any lack in the infrastructure, rather it was caused by high levels of humidity," K-Electric said in a statement on Twitter, adding that power had returned to most of the city by early afternoon.

An official at the ministry of water and power said at least 90 percent of the city was affected after a transmission line

tripped because of dense fog. K-Electric would be supplied with power through a separate transmission line, added the official, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to speak to the media. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif rode to power in 2013 on a promise to fix the electricity crisis, but Pakistan still struggles to provide power to its 190 million people and industries.

The capital, Islamabad, was hit by a major blackout this month, as were Punjab, the country's most populous province, and the northwestern region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Power cuts running eight hours each day on average have crippled an economy already wrestling with militant violence, a high budget deficit and falling exports. Pakistan's state power companies are notoriously inefficient. The government sells power below the cost of production but pays subsidies late or not at all. Plants cannot afford fuel. Many influential families refuse to pay their bills while the poor often cannot afford to pay. The unpaid bills run right through the generation chain, inflating debt, and chipping off around two percent of Pakistan's GDP in the last five years.—Reuters



**NEW TAIPEI CITY, Taiwan:** Thomas Wang, director of Taiwan's Aviation Safety Council, speaks during a press conference of the final report of the Transasia Flight GE222 that crashed in Penghu in 2014 yesterday.—AFP

## PILOTS BLAMED FOR 2014 TRANSASIA CRASH ON TAIWAN ISLAND

**TAIPEI:** Two TransAsia Airways pilots caused a 2014 plane crash that left 48 people dead by flying too low as they attempted to land on an island during a typhoon, Taiwan's aviation authorities said yesterday. Taiwan's aviation body said the pilots flew below the minimum altitude required in poor visibility caused by Typhoon Matmo on July 23, 2014, in its final report into the airline's second fatal accident in a year.

The procedural mistake was widespread among TransAsia's pilots at the time, an aviation official said, endangering passenger and crew safety. Ill-fated Flight GE222 was carrying 54 passengers and four crew when it slammed into trees and houses near Magong city airport in the Taiwan Strait's scenic Penghu islands, leaving just 10 survivors. Two French nationals were among those killed in the island's worst air disaster in a decade. "An airworthy aircraft under the control of the flight crew was flown unintentionally into terrain with limited awareness by the crew of the aircraft's proximity to terrain," the Aviation Safety Council said in the investigation report.

The ATR 72-500 propeller plane had deviated off course during thunder and heavy rain as Typhoon Matmo pounded Taiwan. "They were not visual with the runway environment, contrary to standard operating procedures," the report said. According to flight safety regulations, the pilots were required to maintain their altitude when their plane descended to 330 feet (100 metres), but the aircraft continued to descend. "We found the pilots did not follow the standard operating procedure," council director Thomas Wang told reporters. "Then we discovered TransAsia's team of pilots flying the ATR fleet also had similar problems, and we wanted to know why the carrier tolerated this among its pilots, and why the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) did not discover this while carrying out regular inspections," he said.

Wang said "the company's pilots were flying without abiding by standard procedures, part of a workplace culture which endangered flight safety". According to transcripts of the plane's two black boxes, which record voices in the cockpit and other in-flight data, the co-pilot twice replied "no" when asked by the pilot whether he had seen the runway. —AFP

## CURTAIN FALLS ON MYANMAR'S ARMY-LED PARLIAMENT

**NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar:** Myanmar's pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi applauded the military-stacked parliament on its final day in office yesterday, as one-time enemies welcomed a transition that will loosen the army's 50-year grip on power. After a de-mob happy last session for sitting MPs, Suu Kyi congratulated her political opponents on "opening the road" for her party, which won a landslide in November elections.

Yesterday called time on a five-year term of a parliament that has fundamentally changed Myanmar's political landscape, delivered a shot in the arm to the economy and greater freedoms to society. "I believe we can all cooperate for our country and people, whether it is outside or inside the parliament," said Suu Kyi, who was held captive for more than 15 years by the army.

Her address to lawmakers from across the political spectrum came at a party at the Naypyidaw parliament that included karaoke for normally pofaced army figures. Her National League for Democracy (NLD) lawmakers will take their seats for the first time on Monday. The back-slapping mood was in stark contrast to the acrimony and repression that characterized the junta years. For decades Myanmar was seen as a basket-case run by paranoid generals who sunk the economy, crushed dissent and cut the Southeast Asian nation off from the rest of the world. But reforms since 2011 steered by President Thein Sein have overhauled the country and culminated in the NLD election victory.

### Songs today, challenges tomorrow

Suu Kyi faces deep challenges ahead to rebuild a country worn down by war, poverty and still under the influence of a powerful military. Yet yesterday in a once unthinkable atmosphere of collaboration, MPs took to the stage to belt out farewell songs as more than a thousand lawmakers old and new tucked into a slap-up meal in a grand hall after the closing session. Outgoing parliament speaker Shwe Mann crooned an English-language school favorite, urging the audience to join him as he



**NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar:** Chairperson of the National League for Democracy (NLD) Aung San Suu Kyi attends a farewell ceremony at parliament in Naypyidaw yesterday.—AFP

sang "dreams may come true". Other performance highlights included a colorful dance routine by ethnic minority MPs and Myanmar classics sung by uniformed soldiers.

"The Lady", as Suu Kyi is known in Myanmar, did not sing. President Thein Sein on Thursday hailed the country's democratic progress as a "triumph" for the country's people. He will remain in his post until the end of March, while the NLD will control the new parliament from February 1. The military retains huge powers, with a junta-era constitution giving unelected soldiers a quarter of all parliamentary seats as well as key government ministries. The army-scripted charter also blocks Suu Kyi from becoming president because she married and had children with a foreigner. The Nobel laureate has vowed to rule "above" the president without revealing who the proxy ruler would be.

Her greatest test will be to work with the army as she keeps her sights on power. "She has had a lot of obstacles and hurdles put in her path but she has come perhaps to the last one and the prize that she wants so much is within grasp," said Myanmar political analyst Khin Zaw Win. "But she

needs the help of the military," he said.

### Surprise endorsement

Suu Kyi has already taken that charm offensive to the very top, meeting army chief Min Aung Hlaing on Monday. She even secured the surprise endorsement of former junta strongman Than Shwe in a meeting following the elections last year. In a press conference following the day's festivities, Shwe Mann—who was a top general in Than Shwe's government-sought to take credit for that encounter. "Although he has no power today, he still has some deserved influence. I thought a meeting between Aung San Suu Kyi and senior general Than Shwe would be beneficial, so I arranged for it," he told reporters. Observers say Suu Kyi and her colleagues will have to learn fast to overcome their relative political inexperience. Civil wars continue to rage in Myanmar's ethnic minority borderlands, despite a nascent peace process. Corruption bedevils the country's creaking bureaucracy, while years of neglect also mean many of the nation's 51 million people still struggle to access basic services.—AFP

## JAPAN TURNS ON THIRD NUCLEAR REACTOR SINCE POST-FUKUSHIMA BAN

**TOKYO:** Japan yesterday restarted its third nuclear reactor since a country-wide shut down in the wake of the Fukushima disaster, after a court ruled it was safe despite opposition from local residents. The government and utility firms have been pushing to get reactors back in operation nearly five years after a huge earthquake and tsunami caused a disastrous meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. The accident forced all of Japan's dozens of reactors offline for about two years in the face of public wor-

ries over the safety of nuclear technology and fears about radiation exposure.

Kansai Electric Power's No 3 reactor at its Takahama nuclear plant in Fukui prefecture, northwest of Tokyo, was switched yesterday afternoon, a company official said. The Fukui District Court last month overturned an injunction preventing Kansai Electric from restarting two reactors won by local residents, who argued it was not proven to be safe despite a green light from the national Nuclear Regulation Authority. Kansai Electric-

which Bloomberg News reported was the most dependent on nuclear power of all of Japan's utilities before the Fukushima meltdown-plans to restart the No. 4 reactor in late February, the official said.

Two reactors in the southern prefecture of Kagoshima, operated by Kyushu Electric Power, restarted in August and October, ending a two-year hiatus in nuclear power generation. But many Japanese remain wary of nuclear power and thousands have refused to return to areas hit by the Fukushima meltdown

over fears of radiation exposure. Yesterday's restart drew immediate criticism from anti-nuclear campaigners. "Allowing the restart of the Takahama reactors with potential fire safety hazards that would pose significant risk of reactor core meltdown is irresponsible," Kendra Ulrich, senior global energy campaigner at Greenpeace Japan, said in a statement. "Once again, it may be the people of Japan who end up paying the price for their government's nuclear gambling." — AFP

## NORTH KOREA MISSILE SITE ACTIVITY REVIVES TALK OF US MISSILE DEFENSE IN SOUTH

**SEOUL:** South Korea indicated increased willingness to host an advanced US anti-missile defense yesterday as activity detected at a North Korean missile site revived talk of deploying a system opposed by China and Russia. US military officials have said the sophisticated system called Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) was needed in South Korea, which faces the threat of an increasingly advanced North Korean missile program.

"If THAAD is deployed by the US military in Korea, it will be helpful for our security and defense," South Korean Defense Ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said. Previously, South Korea was reluctant to openly discuss the possibility of the deployment, as it tried to walk a fine line between its closest ally, the United States, and its biggest trade partner, China. US officials told Reuters on Thursday there was increased activity at a North Korean missile site suggesting preparations for a possible rocket launch as UN Security Council members discuss fresh sanctions against North Korea after it conducted its fourth nuclear test on Jan 6. The officials cited intelligence suggesting movement of components and propellant at North Korea's Sohae satellite launch facility. A test could take place within a couple of weeks, they said. The United States maintains 28,500 military personnel in the country, a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended in a truce and left the two Koreas in a technical state of war. China is North Korea's lone major ally. But in recent years South Korea has forged increasingly strong ties with China.

"We believe that any country, when striving for its own security, should also consider other countries' security interests and regional peace and stability," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a briefing when asked about the possibility of deploying THAAD in South Korea. Kim said there was internal discussion in the US government about deploying the system to its military based in South Korea. The system has radar that can track multiple ballistic missiles up to 2,000 km (1,200 miles) away, a range which would reach deep into China and Russia. — Reuters

## SINGAPORE SHIPPING FIRM FINED FOR NORTH KOREA-LINKED ARMS

**SINGAPORE:** A Singapore shipping firm was fined yesterday for its role in an attempt to smuggle Soviet-era weapons and fighter jets from Cuba to North Korea in 2013. Chinpo Shipping Company Pte Ltd was found guilty by a Singapore district court of paying for a North Korean freighter to transit through the Panama Canal, in violation of UN sanctions. A UN report quoted in 2014 said Chinpo Shipping had acted as an agent for a Pyongyang-based company that operated the intercepted vessel.

Chinpo Shipping "transferred financial assets or resources that may reasonably be used to contribute to the nuclear-related programs or activities of" North Korea, a charge sheet said. This was in breach of UN sanctions aimed at curbing North Korea's nuclear program. Chinpo Shipping was found guilty in December of wiring \$72,000 to a shipping agent in Panama on July 8, 2013 to facilitate the passage of the North Korean freighter, Chong Chon Gang, through the Panama Canal. The Singapore court also convicted Chinpo Shipping of a second charge of conducting a remittance business without a license. The ship, bound for North Korea from Cuba, was intercepted and searched while navigating the Panama Canal on July 10, 2013. Authorities discovered 25 containers of military hardware, including two Soviet-era MiG-21 fighters, air defense systems, missiles and command and control vehicles, buried under 200,000 bags of sugar. Cuba had argued that the weapons were "obsolete" which the communist island had sent to Pyongyang for repair. —AFP



**HONG KONG, China:** This photo shows a woman walking past the Nga Tsin Wai village to be demolished as part of a city re-urbanization plan. — AFP photos

## HEARTBREAK AS HISTORIC HONG KONG VILLAGE DEMOLISHED

**HONG KONG:** A 650-year-old urban walled village in Hong Kong—the last of its kind—will be destroyed to make way for development in what critics say is another nail in the coffin for the city's cultural heritage. On a chilly morning, around 20 remaining residents of Nga Tsin Wai, an ancient settlement in the heart of bustling Kowloon, despondently packed their belongings before the wrecking ball arrives in the coming days. There were once dozens of such villages scattered across what became the urban center of the city—they were built by Chinese clans centuries ago, complete with moats and watchtowers to guard against intruders. While many walled villages still remain intact on the city's rural outskirts, Nga Tsin Wai is the only one left in the heart of Hong Kong.

The village was built in 1354 and the original walls and battlements have disappeared, leaving a collection of around 50 ramshackle houses, shops and a temple, hemmed in by concrete tower blocks that have grown up around it. Authorities argue the village is in poor condition and should make way for better quality housing units in an overcrowded city — 750 new flats will be built on the site. Heartbroken residents say it is the only place they call home. "The village has a long history and we have been here for a long time. But we have been given no choice but to leave," one resident, Kwok Yue-ka, told AFP. Kwok, a 52-year-old barber, held out until the

eviction deadline, unhappy with the government's compensation package. Authorities warned he must leave or risk jail. Kwok said he received HK\$200,000 (\$25,665) in compensation and would be moved to temporary housing. "I have treated this as my only home. I have lived here for 20 years. Now the future is uncertain. I feel frustrated," he said.

### History swept away

The destruction of historic buildings, old communities and street markets across Hong Kong has drawn widespread criticism in recent years. The last decade has seen the demolition of the landmark Queen's Pier, built during the British colonial era, swept away for a bypass and harbourfront development. An entire street in the Wan Chai neighborhood—known as "wedding card street" for the abundance of shops selling traditional Chinese wedding invites was demolished to make way for residential development and luxury stores. The government is under pressure to find space for 400,000 new housing units in the next 10 years to remedy the shortage of affordable homes as property prices have skyrocketed.

But while there is a pressing need for more accommodation, district councillor Paul Zimmerman, an advocate of sustainable urban planning, said Hongkongers were beginning to question the sacrifices made. "How do you balance the (econom-

ic) gains and the impact on individuals? How do you maintain these areas without destroying the local culture?" asks Zimmerman. "We have to take a more careful approach."

### 'Losing tradition'

The Urban Renewal Authority, overseeing the redevelopment of Nga Tsin Wai walled village, described it as "decrepit" and said only a small number of villagers would be affected. "The living conditions are poor due to the lack of proper maintenance and sanitation facilities," a spokeswoman told AFP. She said current residents did not have the legal right to live there because the land is owned by the government, adding that some elements would be preserved, including the village temple. But campaigners say it is not just about bricks and mortar as the social fabric and way of life of the village disappears. "Culture is cultivated by people who live there. Without the people the area is dead even if the buildings are splendid," Ho Chi-fung of Grassroots Housing Rights Alliance, a concern group for the housing needs of underprivileged Hong Kong residents, told AFP. Residents have gradually moved away from the village over the past 20 years and empty houses have been knocked down, but a small community remained, including a Chinese medicine pharmacy, barber shops and hand-craft sellers. —AFP

# US FACES RESISTANCE FOR TOUGH SANCTIONS ON N KOREA

**TOKYO:** As North Korea awaits the United Nations' response to its purported first H-bomb test, Washington is believed to be floating measures that could cause it some serious problems. They range from a ban on selling the North oil or buying its minerals to excluding banks doing business with it from accessing the dollar-based economy or even barring its flagship airline from entering other countries' airspace. According to some, such measures, if strictly implemented, could together be harsh enough to destabilize North Korea's ruling regime - and that's exactly why it would be a big surprise if they are on the UN's final list.

Every major power in the region has good reason to want to keep North Korea from becoming a credible nuclear threat. But China, which would have to be fully on board to make such sanctions work, has deep misgivings about the wisdom of really tough moves. Russia, no fan of U.S. foreign policy initiatives, has been moving closer to, not farther away from, the regime in Pyongyang. Even South Korea, which arguably has the most to lose if its northern neighbor's nuclear program moves ahead unchecked, appears to be hesitant about taking drastic measures, such as shutting down its lucrative joint venture industrial zone with Pyongyang just north of the Demilitarized Zone.

The reason is straightforward. Apart from the more hard-line thinkers in Washington, virtually no one wants to have to deal with what might happen if concerted international action were to actually destabilize Kim Jong Un's regime, however strongly they may feel about its human rights record, authoritarian government and militantly defiant attitude toward Washington, Tokyo, Seoul and anyone else it sees as a threat. US Secretary of State John Kerry ran into

that wall this week during talks in Beijing with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. After meeting for more than four hours Wednesday, Kerry expressed his frustration with what the United States sees as China's failure to do more rein in Pyongyang, noting that "more significant and impactful sanctions were put in place against Iran, which did not have a nuclear weapon than against North Korea, which does." "All nations, particularly those who seek a global leadership role, or have a global leadership role, have a responsibility to deal with this threat," Kerry said.

### Verbatim version

In response, Wang said China, which is North Korea's most important ally, chief trading partner and a key source of economic assistance, agreed on the need for a new UN resolution. But he suggested Beijing would not support new penalties even though it condemned the Jan 6 test. "Sanctions are not an end in themselves," Wang said bluntly. "The new resolution should not provoke new tension in the situation, still less destabilize the Korean Peninsula." The gap between Washington and Beijing was evident in a particularly angry editorial Tuesday by China's official Xinhua news agency, which - using an almost verbatim version of Pyongyang's own take on the issue - put the blame on "Uncle Sam's uncompromising hostility, manifested in its unceasing defaming, sanctions, isolation and provocation of the DPRK." It said the key to resolving tensions with North Korea, officially called the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, lies with the US giving up its "antagonistic approach wrought from a Cold War mentality."

So far, sanctions have included bans on weapon sales, dealing with blacklisted indi-



**PYONGYANG, North Korea:** In this Oct 10, 2015, file photo, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un delivers remarks at a military parade in Pyongyang.—AP

viduals or enterprises and other targeted measures. But they have clearly failed to achieve their main purpose to denuclearize the North. Though its economy has been battered, North Korea has nuclear weapons and has now enshrined in its constitution its right to maintain and develop them. The North says they are an indispensable part of its national defense strategy. No country with the possible exception of South Africa that has gone as far down the road as the North to becoming a nuclear power has ever turned back.

### Luxury goods

Even so, despite a plethora of sanctions and resolutions that have been thrown at

North Korea since its first nuclear test in 2006, Kerry is correct in suggesting that far more action could be taken through sanctions and an enhanced effort to ensure they are strictly enforced by punishing North Korea's "enablers" - who are mostly seen as Chinese businesses, state enterprises and entrepreneurs. Unilaterally, the US Congress is already moving in that direction. Legislation recently passed by the House of Representatives targets any country, business or individual that materially contributes to North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile development, exports luxury goods to North Korea or engages with Pyongyang in money laundering, the manufacture of counterfeit goods or narcotics trafficking.—AP

Kuwait Times

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## MEXICAN COPS AGAIN AT CENTER OF A MASS DISAPPEARANCE

**TIERRA BLANCA, Mexico:** For more than two weeks, the parents of five missing young people have been living inside a Mexican state prosecutor's office in an attempt to pressure authorities to find their children. The parents spent the first night sitting on cold plastic chairs. Then they brought mattresses, a microwave oven and a television set inside the government building. "It's our home now," said Columba Arroniz Gonzalez as she heated up some tortillas and soup for her gaunt-looking husband in the patio of the prosecutor's office in Tierra Blanca, in the eastern state of Veracruz.

Their son, Bernardo Benitez, 25, is among the five young people, including a 16-year-old girl, who disappeared after state police officers detained them in gang-plagued Tierra Blanca on January 11. The case has become a symbol of Mexico's growing number of "forced disappearances"—a term used for abductions committed by authorities. Their plight has been compared to the disappearance of 43 students in southern Guerrero state in September 2014, when municipal police attacked the young men and delivered them to a drug cartel, which allegedly killed them. At least 275 complaints of forced disappearances were lodged between 2006 and September 2015, according to figures from the attorney general's office obtained by AFP through a freedom of information request.

It started with four complaints in 2006, when the government declared a war against drug trafficking, and soared to 68 in 2014. There were 41 complaints in the first nine months of 2015. But the attorney general's office has launched only 15 legal proceedings. In the case of the 43 students, the police who were detained were charged with kidnapping instead of forced disappearance.

### Arrests and bodies

In Veracruz, seven state police officers, including a regional commander, have been charged with the forced disappearances of the five young people. The officers told investigators that they delivered the five—Susana Tapia, 16, Bernardo Benitez, 25, Jose Benitez, 24, Mario Arturo Orozco Sanchez, 28, and Jose Alfredo Gonzalez, 25 — to a gang. Last weekend, the local leader of the Jalisco New Generation drug cartel was arrested in connection with the case. The reason behind the disappearance remains a mystery. A half-dozen bodies have been found in the search. While none belonged to the five missing young people, the discoveries highlighted the extent of violence in Veracruz, a state plagued by cartel turf wars for years.

The five are now among the more than 26,600 people who are reported missing across Mexico. Since their families took over the prosecutor's office, mothers of other missing people have come to visit them in solidarity with their cause.

### Birthday turned into tragedy

The five victims, who lived in Playa Vicente, had spent a weekend in the port of Veracruz to celebrate a birthday. After the party, in the morning of Monday, January 11, they took a detour to have breakfast in Tierra Blanca, their relatives said. Dionisia Sanchez, mother of Mario Arturo, said police stopped them for speeding, but for unknown reasons, two officers got into their car while two of the young people were put in a police pick-up truck. Part of the scene was captured by surveillance cameras. The area where they were detained has two service stations and a supermarket, just 100 meters (yards) from a state police facility.

Service station workers said they did not see anything, but neighbors who declined to give their names said that state police offices had "take over the town." A friend of the missing five who happened to be at the supermarket witnessed their arrest. The witness was able to call Jose Benitez, who told him that it was just a "routine" police stop. But when he saw his friends being taken away, he called again. The phone, however, had been turned off. When their parents heard the news, they rushed to Tierra Blanca to look for them and contacted the authorities, thinking that they were merely held by the police.

If they had been taken by a gang, "we would have thought that it was a kidnapping," said Bernardo Benitez, 54, who has the same name as his missing son. "But if it's the police, what are you supposed to think?" The elder Benitez went through a similar drama before. Seven years ago, he paid a ransom after his father was kidnapped. But he never reappeared and, like his son, remains missing to this day.—AFP



**TIERRA BLANCA, MEXICO:** View of an altar with pictures of five youngsters who went missing past January 11 in Tierra Blanca community, Veracruz State.—AFP photos

## DEBATE TAKEAWAYS: WITHOUT TRUMP, SPOTLIGHT ON CRUZ, RUBIO

**DES MOINES, Iowa:** It was clear, even before it started, that Thursday night's Republican presidential debate would be dramatically different. GOP front-runner Donald Trump had voluntarily given up his regular place at center stage. He skipped the debate, preferring to mount a rally across town to punish Fox News Channel for "toying" with him. The billionaire businessman's absence was addressed early and then his Republican rivals quickly moved on, getting a far better opportunity to shine. Overall, the two-hour affair featured a sober tone focused more on substance than personality. There were exceptions, of course. Ted Cruz defended his authenticity and Marco Rubio faced pointed questions on immigration.

But just days before Iowa's leadoff caucuses, there were none of the breakout moments that have sometimes characterized the more colorful debates featuring Trump, battling Cruz for first place in the 2016 primary season's opening contest. Some takeaways from Thursday's Republican debate:

### Elephant not in the room

Trump has repeatedly demonstrated his ability to dominate the stage. There is little doubt he helped his rivals by not showing up. He was mocked early and largely forgotten. Cruz set the tone with a sarcastic impression of his top rival: "I'm a maniac and everyone on this stage is stupid, fat and ugly," Cruz said. "Now that we've gotten the Donald Trump portion out of the way ..." Florida Sen Marco Rubio also weighed in: "It's not about Donald Trump. He's an entertaining guy. He's the greatest show on earth." Beyond a few playful jabs, the two-hour debate was a Trump-free zone, one of the few such events in the race so far.

### Cruz the front-runner

Cruz fought to make sure he was positioned at center stage in Trump's absence, but did little to take advantage of the opportunity. He tried to embrace the role of de facto front-runner at the outset, pointing out that he was being attacked by several rivals - even before there were any pointed exchanges. Cruz later faced sharp questions on immigration, national security and, perhaps most importantly, whether he was trustworthy. Trust is the theme of the fiery conservative's campaign, and several candidates questioned his authenticity.

"Ted, throughout this campaign, you've been willing to say or do anything in order to get votes," Rubio charged. Cruz fought back by accusing Rubio of bending to the will of donors on immigration, but it was hardly a decisive victory.

### No amnesty for Rubio

Rubio did not help himself among the conservatives who

question his position on immigration. The issue is by far his greatest vulnerability as he tries to convince skeptical GOP activists that he doesn't support so-called amnesty. The debate moderators played a series of video clips highlighting Rubio's apparent shift on the issue, which put the first-term senator on the defensive at the outset of a key exchange. At best, Rubio may have clouded the issue of whether he had backed off his earlier calls for comprehensive legislation that includes a pathway to citizenship. But rival Jeb Bush seemed to get the best of him in an exchange in which Bush questioned Rubio's retreat on the issue. "You shouldn't cut and run," Bush charged.

### Bush clouds lane

Bush repeatedly beat back questions about his long-term viability in the 2016 contest, insisting he has a path to the nomination and would ultimately defeat leading Democrat Hillary Clinton. "We're just starting. The first vote hasn't been counted. Why don't we let the process work?" Bush said. Overall, Bush had more success on the debate stage without having to contend with Trump. His strength - and full-steam-ahead approach - was a pointed reminder that the fight for the party's mainstream wing is far from over.

Bush and Rubio are competing with New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and Ohio Gov. John Kasich to win over the GOP's centrist wing. Some party officials hoped Rubio would have emerged as the consensus choice by now. Bush defended rounds of anti-Rubio attack ads. "This is beanbag compared to what the Clinton hit machine is going to do to the Republican nominee," Bush said.

### Trump's counterprogramming

It was a risky move politically, but Donald Trump helped raise \$6 million to benefit veterans at an event three miles away from the debate stage. Instead of going after his rivals on national television, Trump read out the names of wealthy friends who'd pledged major contributions to veterans' causes. When he announced he'd pledged \$1 million himself, the crowd erupted in cheers. He explained to the Drake University crowd that he had little choice but to skip the debate. Trump admitted he didn't know if the decision would hurt him in the polls, but tried to cast it as a sign of strength.

"You have to stick up for your rights. When you're treated badly, you have to stick up for your rights," he said. As for the debate, Trump predicted it would have far fewer viewers without him on the stage. That may be true, but Iowa voters will decide in four days whether Trump hurt his chances in the 2016 race simply to prove a point.—AP

# BUSINESS

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NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) yesterday in New York City. The Dow Jones industrial average rose over 100 points on Thursday following a rise in oil prices, the third straight day of rising prices. — AFP

## OIL TO AVERAGE OVER \$40 IN 2016: REPORT

### ANALYSTS CUT 2016 BRENT PRICE FORECASTS BY \$10

**LONDON:** Oil prices will average just over \$40 this year, the biggest cut to monthly forecasts in a year, as an influx of Iranian barrels hits an already-saturated world market, a Reuters poll showed yesterday. The survey of 29 economists and analysts forecast benchmark North Sea Brent crude will average \$42.5 a barrel, down \$10 from last month's poll. This would be the largest drop between monthly surveys since January last year and the eighth successive monthly Reuters poll in which analysts have lowered their price forecasts.

Brent crude, which averaged about \$54 a barrel in 2015, has fallen nearly 9 percent so far in January and has crashed from around \$115 a barrel in June 2014.

Oil prices fell below \$30 a barrel this month to their lowest since 2003, under pressure from mounting concerns about the inability of even robust demand to keep pace with supply and the unlikely prospect that the world's largest producers would agree to curtail output.

"The most immediate issue for the market will be just how much oil Iran brings back to the market ... A significant difference to Iranian production in either direction should have an impact on prices," Capital Economics commodities analyst Thomas Pugh said. Geopolitical tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran

may prevent the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries from coming to a consensus on cutting supply, analysts said.

"The chance of OPEC taking any decision to cut output is highly unlikely. Saudi Arabia will participate in the output cut only if all the OPEC members as well as other big producers (like Russia) also reduce output," CRISIL Research director Rahul Prithiani said.

Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich said yesterday the country's output could decline as a result of lower investment, but the state would not intervene to balance the market.

That appeared to pour cold water on possible joint OPEC and non-OPEC production cuts mentioned by Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Thursday, comments which raised hopes of the first such global output deal in over a decade. Record-high production from OPEC's second-largest producer, Iraq and the addition of Iranian barrels after Western sanctions on Tehran were lifted have heightened concern that even growing demand will not be enough to absorb the extra supply.

"Even if no major event happens but supply remains more resilient than expected and demand a bit weaker, we could still see prices drift lower," Pugh said. Analysts expect Brent and WTI futures to aver-

age \$34.4 and \$33.2, respectively, in the first quarter, considerably higher than what the futures market is pricing in. Oil edged up above \$34 a barrel yesterday, a gain of some 25 percent from the 12-year lows seen earlier in January, on hopes that a deal between major exporters to cut production could help reduce one of the worst oil gluts in history. Brent futures have jumped by around a quarter since hitting an intra-day low of \$27.10 a barrel on Jan 20. It hit a high on Thursday of \$35.84.

Brent was up 40 cents to \$34.29 a barrel by 1300 GMT yesterday, after gaining 79 cents, or 2.4 percent, on Thursday. US crude was up 43 cents to \$33.65 a barrel, having settled up 92 cents, or 2.9 percent, at \$33.22 on Thursday. Non-OPEC Russia said this week it could cooperate with OPEC on production curbs, something it had been refusing to do for 15 years since the ill-fated agreement with OPEC in 2001.

On Friday, Moscow sent confusing signals as Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich said Russian output could decline as a result of lower investment, but the state would not intervene to balance the market. That appeared to pour cold water on possible joint OPEC and non-OPEC production cuts mentioned by Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak on Thursday.

However many analysts think there is still a chance of a deal. "As the headlines fly it is difficult to be absolutely sure about each word used but we don't read 'no meeting scheduled yet' the same as 'no meeting scheduled'," Olivier Jakob, analyst at Petromatrix in Zug, Switzerland said.

"The 'yet' is not necessarily a 'nyet' and we can therefore continue to speculate about a possible meeting." "While we view this outcome as unlikely, a 5 percent production cut by just Saudi Arabia and Russia would be sufficient to bring the market close to balance," Jefferies said in a research note on Friday, referring to Russia's comment.

Figures from Iran underlined the fact that there is no end in sight to the glut in the market unless there is a cut in production by major exporters.

Iran's oil exports are set to rise more than a fifth in January and February from last year's daily average, data from a source with knowledge of its loading schedules shows, revealing how Tehran is ramping up sales after the lifting of sanctions. "If OPEC proposes to Russia production limits that do not undermine Russia's long-term objectives, and key Russian producers back the deal, Russia may indeed agree to production limits," said analysts from US based ESAI Energy. —Reuters

## IRAQ INKS \$328M DEAL WITH GE TO BOOST POWER

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq has signed a \$328 million deal with US company General Electric that will boost power output during peak summer months, officials said yesterday, although it falls far short of the country's needs. The deal will make only a small dent in the country's major summer production shortfall, which leaves Iraqis with just a few hours of government-provided power a day while temperatures can hit 50 degrees Celsius (120 Fahrenheit).

Electricity ministry spokesman Musaab Al-Mudarris told AFP that the deal, which involves maintenance and improvements on more than 10 power stations in multiple provinces, would add between 700 and 1,000 megawatts to production capacity. The US embassy in Baghdad said the deal was "valued at more than \$328 million", and that it "will sustain and increase Iraq's power generation by at least 700 megawatts for the peak summer period".

But Electricity Minister Qassem Al-Fahdawi told parliament last year that the summer production shortfall was over 7,500 megawatts, meaning the projected increase under the GE deal is still dwarfed by the scale of the problem.

Fahdawi also said that production is only part of the problem, as Baghdad's grid has a maximum capacity of 3,500 megawatts irrespective of how much is produced. Anger over poor services and widespread corruption sparked weeks of protests in Baghdad and other areas last year, pushing Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi to announce a reform program. But little in the way of significant change, either in terms of corruption or services, has taken place so far. —AFP

## OIL CRASH HAS ECONOMIC BENEFITS BUT GEOPOLITICAL RISKS FOR US

**NEW YORK:** The oil price crash is mostly a godsend for the United States, delivering American consumers and businesses cheaper gasoline prices while hobbling the economies of adversaries like Russia. But analysts say that the longer the oil price stays so low, the greater the chances it will generate new geopolitical problems that Washington would not like to see. Even if the 70 percent plunge in crude prices has battered the homegrown US oil industry, overall its economy benefits: it remains a net importer of oil and as the price of crude falls, the country's trade imbalance improves. "There's no question that low oil prices are very good for the US. Painful for some people obviously, but for the US economy and US consumers a very good thing," said Bruce Everett, a former ExxonMobil official and professor at Tufts University.

There are apparent strategic benefits of cheap oil, too. Countries like Russia, Venezuela and Iran, with which Washington shares chilly relations, are overly dependent on oil exports and their economies have been heavily battered by the downturn.

"If you don't care especially about the (other) oil producers, it's a plus," said George Perry of Brookings Institution. But the flip side is that strains from a loss of oil income can trigger destabilizing behavior as well.

Energy specialist Jan Kalicki of the Wilson Center posed the question of whether Russia would be less or more troublesome on the world scene if the economic climate worsens.

"The pressure is on Russia from oil prices and their general economic decline," Kalicki said. "You could make an argument that the Russians have been influenced to some extent by that in taking stronger steps internationally... in Ukraine or in Syria for example. That, he said, serves to "take domestic attention away from the economic problems that it is facing."

### Convergence of interests

For Iran, the price fall comes as the country is being permitted to resume a high-level of oil exports with the lifting of international nuclear sanctions on the country. The net effect, income-wise, is little significant immediate gain for the country, according to Anthony Cordesman, a Middle East and security expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Even at a price of \$40 a barrel—some 15 percent higher than now—the resumption of oil exports won't have a big economic effect for the country of 84 million people.—AFP



**ATHENS:** A taxi driver holding a trade union's flag walks along parked taxicabs outside the labor ministry in Athens yesterday, during a protest against a controversial social security and pension reform that is part of the country's tough economic bailout. —AFP

## IRAN OIL OUTPUT ON TRACK TO RISE BY 500,000 BPD

FIRST CARGOES WITH EXTRA CRUDE SOLD TO EUROPE

**DUBAI/LONDON:** Iran is on track to raise oil production by 500,000 barrels per day after the lifting of sanctions this month and has already sold 6 supertankers with additional crude to buyers in Europe and Asia, a Iranian oil source said.

The source, familiar with export operations, said three supertankers with additional volumes of crude have been sold to buyers in Europe and three to Asian customers for delivery in February.

Trading sources said Litasco, the trading arm of Russia's Lukoil, looked set to become the first buyer in Europe since the lifting of sanctions. The Swiss trader will deliver one million barrels of Iranian Light grade to Lukoil's Petrotel refinery in Romania, loading at Iran's Kharg Island terminal on February 5.

"Iran raised its crude oil production by at least 500,000 bpd and the market will see it in the next few days," said the Iranian source, who is familiar with export operations. "(There are) three contracts finalised with European customers... Iran is also talking with its traditional customers in Asia, especially India."

Iran has promised to begin regaining market share lost during years of curtailed output after European sanctions on its oil industry were lifted this month. Tehran has said it would boost output immediately by 500,000 bpd and by another 500,000 bpd within a year, ultimately reaching pre-sanction production levels of 4 million bpd seen in 2010-2011.

The source said that by the end of March or start of April Iran will also introduce a new heavy crude blend, West Karun, to win back more customers. "We have been in the market for a long time... We think we are ready to be as good as

before," the source said.

Iran is expected to add barrels in an already oversupplied market where its rivals Saudi Arabia and Iraq have consistently raised production, helping create one of the biggest gluts in history and contributing to a price plunge to 12-year lows.

But OPEC officials have said the markets have begun to rebalance as investment is being curtailed due to low oil prices. The market can therefore absorb additional Iranian volumes without suffering much extra pain, OPEC officials have said. European refiners bought as much as 800,000 bpd from Iran before the sanc-

tions and have in the past few years replaced those volumes with oil from Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Iran has said it is willing to win its customers back quickly and has already agreed to resume sales to Greek Hellenic Petroleum and France's Total. But the first shipments have been complicated by a lack of clarity on ship insurance, dollar clearance and European banks' letters of credit. "It's just a matter of price. If the price is good, we'll buy it," Marco Schiavetti, director of supply and trading with Italy's Saras said of Iranian oil this week. "Obviously we will talk to them soon, and we will consider." — Reuters

## RUSSIAN CB WARNS OF FUTURE HIKES AS IT HOLDS KEY RATE

**MOSCOW:** Russia's central bank yesterday warned of possible interest rate hikes ahead if inflation risks rise, as it held its key rate at 11 percent after a fresh oil price drop.

"On the backdrop of yet another oil price slump, monthly consumer price growth rates stabilised at a high level, with a higher risk of accelerated inflation," the bank said in a statement after its latest board meeting, warning that "should inflation risks amplify, the Bank of Russia cannot rule out a tightening of its monetary policy."

Authorities have been struggling to revive Russia's recession-hit economy battered by Western sanctions over Ukraine and low oil prices—and the ruble's recent woes on the back of a fresh slump for oil have hampered their

efforts still further.

The Bank of Russia has been juggling inflation fears against demands from business to cut rates after a mammoth hike to prop up the ruble in December 2014. "The recent weakening of the ruble is putting pro-inflationary pressure and causes inflation expectations to grow, despite a slowdown in annual inflation," the bank said, predicting that inflation this month would drop to 10 percent, down from 12.9 percent in December.

In its statement the bank said that it estimated annual inflation would drop to under seven percent by January 2017 and reach its target of 4 percent by the end of next year. Russia's GDP dropped by an estimated 3.7 percent in 2015 and looks set to shrink again this year.—AFP



## RUSSIAN OIL FIRMS MUST CUT OUTPUT, NOT STATE: DY PM

**MOSCOW:** A Russian deputy prime minister said yesterday that oil companies—and not the state—should decide whether to cut production in the face of low oil prices due in part to a supply glut. “If prices remain at non-profitable levels for an extended period, investments will have to be corrected and this will lead to lower production, but this will not be in the interest of the state,” Russian news agencies quoted deputy prime minister Arkady Dvorkovich as saying.

“We proceed from the fact that the oil industry is private to a large extent ... and is not controlled by the state,” he said. “And this will continue.” Dvorkovich said that Russian companies will study the prospect of cutting production “in accordance to their interests.”

Low oil prices have weighed heavily on Russia’s recession-hit economy, which shrank by 3.7 percent in 2015 and is set to continue suffering this year.

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said Thursday that Moscow was ready to take part in an OPEC meeting aimed at establishing possible “coordination” in the face of low oil prices.

The minister alleged that OPEC heavyweight Saudi Arabia had proposed that oil-producing countries cut production by up to five percent, a prospect he said would be discussed at an upcoming meeting.

Novak’s statement led to the highest jump in oil prices in three weeks. “We are constantly in contact with partners from other oil-producing countries and consumers,” Dvorkovich said yesterday.

Russia’s energy ministry earlier this week convened a meeting with the country’s industry leaders to discuss possible coordination with OPEC countries. But Russian media reported the absence of certain key players such as Igor Sechin, the head of state oil giant Rosneft.

Analysts remain sceptical about the prospect of Russia and OPEC countries cutting their production, as both sides have increased oil output to preserve their place on the market. Last year Russia’s oil production hit a post-Soviet high of 10.7 million barrels a day on average.—AFP



**MOSCOW:** Russian President Vladimir Putin (C) chairs a meeting on economic issues at the Kremlin in Moscow yesterday.—AFP



**LOS ANGELES:** A woman walks past a recently shuttered Walmart store in Chinatown that is part of the closure of 154 store locations across the United States, in Los Angeles yesterday.— AFP

## US ECONOMIC GROWTH SLOWS SHARPLY TO 0.7% RATE IN Q4

### CONSUMER SPENDING SLOWS TO A 2.2 % RATE

**WASHINGTON:** US economic growth braked sharply in the fourth quarter as businesses stepped up efforts to reduce an inventory glut and a strong dollar and tepid global demand weighed on exports.

Gross domestic product increased at a 0.7 percent annual rate, the Commerce Department said yesterday, also as lower oil prices continued to undermine investment by energy firms and unseasonably mild weather cut into consumer spending on utilities and apparel. The growth pace was in line with economists’ expectations and followed a 2 percent rate in the third quarter. The economy grew 2.4 percent in 2015 after a similar expansion in 2014.

But some of the impediments to growth - inventories and mild temperatures - are temporary and the economy is expected to snap back in the first quarter. Excluding inventories and trade, the economy grew at a 1.6 per-

cent pace. Nevertheless, the GDP report could spark a fresh wave of selling on the stock market, which has been roiled by fears of anemic growth in both the United States and China.

The Federal Reserve on Wednesday acknowledged that growth “slowed late last year,” but also noted that “labor market conditions improved further.” The Fed, the US central bank, raised interest rates in December for the first time since June 2006. Though the Fed has not ruled out another hike in March, financial markets volatility could see that delayed until June.

#### SMALL INVENTORY BUILD

In the fourth quarter, businesses accumulated \$68.6 billion worth of inventory. While that is down from \$85.5 billion in the third quarter, it was a bit more than economists had expected, suggesting inventories could remain a drag on growth in the first quarter.

The small inventory build subtracted 0.45 percentage point from the first estimate of fourth-quarter GDP growth. Consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, increased at a 2.2 percent rate. That marked a step-down from the 3.0 percent pace notched in the third quarter.

Unusually mild weather hurt sales of winter apparel in December and undermined demand for heating through the quarter. With gasoline prices around \$2 per gallon, a tightening labor market gradually lifting wages and house prices boosting household wealth, economists believe the slowdown in consumer spending will be short-lived.

The dollar, which has gained 11 percent against the currencies of the United States’ trading partners since last January, likely remained a drag on exports, leading to a trade deficit that subtracted 0.47 percentage point from GDP growth in the fourth quarter.— Reuters

## GAZPROM CANCELS GAS DISCOUNT FOR TURKEY

**ANKARA:** Russia’s Gazprom has cancelled a discount in gas prices for Turkish customers, industry officials said yesterday, in the latest salvo in a diplomatic and trade row after Turkey shot down a Russian war plane two months ago.

Turkey said last year it struck a deal giving it a 10.25 percent price discount on gas from Russia’s Gazprom but a final signature on the accord had been delayed, prompting state pipeline operator Botas to appeal to the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC).

Officials from Turkey’s private sector gas companies told Reuters that Gazprom had cancelled the discount and alerted the Turkish companies last week during a meeting in Vienna.

“Following this, private sector companies have begun sending notifications to their customers about the new situation. The new price and how it will be applied retrospectively is yet to be figured out,” an executive at a private sector firm said.

Gazprom declined to comment on the issue but sources close to the company

denied the report and said negotiations were still underway. Russia is Turkey’s largest gas supplier with sales of 28-30 billion cubic metres annually worth around \$6.5 billion. Turkey imports 60 percent of its gas and 35 percent of its oil from Russia.

The two countries have been at loggerheads since Turkey downed a Russian warplane along the Turkey-Syria border two weeks ago saying it violated its air space, the most serious incident between Russia and a NATO member state in half a century.

They have long been in disagreement

over Syria and the future of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, a Moscow ally who Turkey says needs to be removed. Another private sector official said once the cancellation of the price cut comes into effect, the import price for Russian gas for private sector supplies would rise to \$196-197 per every thousands cubic meter. Energy Minister Berat Albayrak said earlier this week that Botas was conducting work to reduce the price of natural gas, an effort that private sector officials said could prove to be tricky with the price cancellation.— Reuters

## SPAIN'S ECONOMY GREW 3.2% IN 2015 IN SIGN OF RECOVERY

**MADRID:** Spain's economy rose 3.2 percent in 2015, official figures showed yesterday, its second year of growth as the country emerges from a damaging economic crisis marked by sky-high unemployment and rising inequalities. The GDP growth figure-in line with expectations-is one of the best among European countries and will be yet another boost for embattled acting Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy a day after the INE national statistics agency announced a record drop in unemployment.

Further adding to the good news, the INE also said Friday that a new record of 68.1 million foreign tourists visited Spain last year as travellers forego other Mediterranean nations such as Tunisia hit by extremist attacks. The statistics agency did not detail what the engines of growth were in 2015 for the eurozone's fourth largest economy, which went through five years of on-off recession before starting to recover in 2014.

But according to the central bank, growth was boosted by domestic

demand, a healthy tourism sector that represents some 14 percent of Spain's GDP and external factors such as weak interest rates in the eurozone and a plunge in oil prices.

Analysts at Morgan Stanley said however that the main forward-looking indicators suggested that Spain's economy was "on a path of deceleration." "The service sector is seeing slower, but still solid increases in employment, and the rate of expansion in new business is now at its weakest level since November 2014," they wrote. "Domestic demand is resilient, driven by strong consumer spending, though it's starting to weaken. Political uncertainty may affect business investment negatively."

Rajoy's conservative Popular Party won December general elections but fell short of an absolute majority, forcing him to try to cobble together a government with rival parties that refuse to support him-creating a political deadlock that has lasted for more than a month now.



**BARCELONA:** Chairman of CaixaBank Isidre Faine stands during a press conference presenting the group's 2015 annual report in Barcelona yesterday. — AFP

In his four years at the helm, Rajoy implemented drastic spending cuts and tax rises to steer Spain away from col-

lapse, prompting the recovery but also damaging inequalities that cost him many votes at the elections. — AFP

## EUROZONE INFLATION AT 15-MTH HIGH, BUT OUTLOOK STILL WEAK ECONOMISTS SEE MEANINGFUL PICKUP IN ECONOMY

**LONDON:** Inflation across the 19-country eurozone doubled in January, but few economists think it represents a meaningful pick-up in the economy given subdued growth across much of the region, a renewed drop in oil prices and mounting uncertainties around the world. Consumer prices were 0.4 percent higher in January than the year before, against December's 0.2 percent rate, according to figures released yesterday by Eurostat. January's rate was the highest since October 2014, when it was also 0.4 percent, a development that may provide comfort to at least some policymakers at the European Central Bank.

The ECB is in the midst of a massive stimulus program that is designed to get inflation back toward its target of just below 2 percent. By keeping interest rates low and pumping money into the economy via a bond-buying program worth over a trillion euros, the ECB is hoping to generate enough economic activity to get prices rising. Last week, ECB President Mario Draghi hinted that an expansion of the stimulus could be announced in March. Inflation has been below target since February 2013 for a variety of reasons, not least the fall in oil prices. Few economists think inflation is heading toward target any time soon.

"Rather than representing the start of a convincing upward trend, we view today's outturn as a transitory hiccup in an otherwise lifeless path for inflation," said Timo del Carpio, European economist at RBC Capital Markets. Once again, energy prices weighed the most on inflation in January, but the impact was smaller than it has been in previous months as prior-year declines start falling out of the annual comparison. In the year to January, energy prices were 5.3 percent lower. The last time the impact was smaller was in June 2015.

Other components of inflation saw

price increases, such as processed food, alcohol & tobacco. Perhaps more encouraging for ECB rate-setters was the news that the core rate, which strips out volatile items like energy and food, rose to 1 percent from 0.9 percent. The increase in the core rate suggests underlying price pressures are building as unemployment drops in many parts of the eurozone and amid signs of a pick-up in wage increases. The outlook for inflation is likely to hinge heavily on oil prices. A big drop in January - which saw the benchmark New York rate fall to a near 13-year low around \$27 a barrel - amid worries over the scale of the Chinese economic slowdown stoked renewed worries that the eurozone, and other economies such as Japan, could suffer a debilitating bout of deflation, or

falling prices. The idea of falling prices sounds good but in reality can be a big problem. Consumers could decide to postpone spending if they think prices are likely to continue falling, while businesses fail to generate the profit margins they need to invest and innovate. In combination, they can cause an economy to stagnate, as happened in Japan over the past two decades.

A rebound in oil prices this week following speculation that the OPEC oil cartel and other suppliers such as Russia are mulling production cuts has helped push the price of oil back above \$30 a barrel - on Friday, it was up a further 19 cents at \$33.41 a barrel. If that trend continues, the deflation fears may recede and ease the pressure on the ECB to do more. — AP

## PORTUGAL HANGS TOUGH ON ENDING AUSTERITY

**LISBON:** Portugal's prime minister said yesterday he will seek to accommodate European authorities' concerns about his government's spending plan for this year, but won't give up his promise to end austerity in the country. Antonio Costa told Parliament his government will be "constructive" in talks with the European Commission. At the same time he said he will "stay faithful" to his recent election pledge of switching the government's focus from debt reduction to economic growth and job creation.

European authorities want Portugal to keep cutting spending. The aim is to reduce the debt burden that forced Portugal to ask for a 78 billion-euro (\$85 billion) bailout in 2011. In return for the cash which prevented the country's bankruptcy, Portugal had to enact a series of

spending cuts and tax increases that weighed on the economy and pushed unemployment sharply higher.

Though the bailout ended in 2014, the previous center-right government persevered with the austerity as Portugal is still burdened by high debts. Disillusion with that austerity was a key voter concern in a general election last October. Following the election, Costa's Socialists were able to form a minority government that relies on support from the Communist Party and radical Left Bloc. They are warning Costa against bowing to Brussels' demands. Labor groups close to the Communist Party also kept up the political pressure on Costa with their first strike since the government took power. The strike was part of a wider fight to restore labor entitlements scrapped after the bailout. — AP

## NORWAY'S PARLIAMENT TO BACK BROADER INVESTMENT BRIEF FOR WEALTH FUND

**OSLO:** Norway's lawmakers are expected to grant the country's \$800 billion sovereign wealth fund a broader investment brief to better spread risk, the leader of the parliamentary finance committee said. The central bank, which manages the fund, last month recommended it should be allowed to invest in unlisted infrastructure projects and put a higher share of its assets into real estate, changes representing the biggest shift in strategy since it was permitted to buy property in 2010.

The fund currently invests about 60 percent of its value in stocks, 35 percent in bonds and up to five percent in real estate, all outside Norway. It can invest in companies involved in infrastructure projects, but it cannot take a direct stake in a project that is not listed on the stock exchange. "My understanding is that there is broad agreement on the need for adjustments that contribute to increased diversification ...to improve the distribution of risk," finance committee leader Hans Olav Syversen told Reuters. "It's my impression that all parties in parliament are open to making these changes." According to letters from the central bank published by the finance ministry in December, the fund should be allowed to invest up to 5 percent in unlisted infrastructure projects and raise its stake in property to a range of 5-15 percent. The proposed changes are being reviewed by the ministry for inclusion in a white paper in April, after which they will be debated by parliament. There is a consensus among lawmakers welcoming the changes, though some adjustments are expected.

Separately, the government earlier this month appointed experts to evaluate how much of the fund should be invested in equities, reporting back in October with conclusions to be debated in parliament in spring 2017. Syversen, who is the finance spokesman for the Christian Democrats, a centrist party that the minority coalition government relies on for support, is keen for additional investments in emerging economies. "I feel it's important to also open up for the possibility to increase investments in emerging markets. It could be through infrastructure, but also through private equity," he said.

The other party the government relies on, the Liberals, favours a green push, which is already on the cards. The fund's chief executive told Reuters in December it would invest in renewable energy were it allowed to invest in unlisted infrastructure projects. "(We believe) it is reasonable the oil fund expands its investments universe by going into renewable infrastructure projects," the Liberals' representative on the finance committee, Terje Breivik, told Reuters.

He added: "I am not at all sceptical towards increasing the investments in property to 10 percent, but I feel it's just as important to look at how much government bonds the fund should hold." Svein Flaatten, who represents the ruling Conservatives on the committee, said opening up to infrastructure and increasing real estate investments could hinge on the costs of doing so. His party was open to making changes to the fund's allocations, he said, with raising the percentage of shares and cutting back on the fixed income portfolio an option. The finance ministry declined to say which proposals it would make in its upcoming white paper. — Reuters



BEIJING: Chinese investors monitor stock prices on an electronic display in a brokerage house in Beijing yesterday. — AP

# PLUNGING CHINA STOCKS SEE CRUELEST MONTH SINCE 2008

## 2016 STARTS OFF ON A NEGATIVE NOTE

**SHANGHAI:** Chinese stocks slumped an astonishing 23 percent in January, their worst month since the depths of the global financial crisis in 2008 and making the Shanghai exchange the world's worst-performing major market. The confirmation of a multi-decade low in Chinese growth, questions over the government's ability to stave off a "hard landing" and capital flight have set a negative tone at the beginning of the year, analysts said.

The Shanghai Composite Index closed at 2,737.60 on Friday, the last trading day of the month, up on the day but plummeting 22.65

percent since the start of 2016, its worst month for seven years.

Shanghai has the worst year-to-date performance among international stock indexes tracked by the Wall Street Journal. Many analysts put support for the index at 2,500 points but warn trading will be volatile. "The market fell this month due to weak economic fundamentals," Founder Securities analyst Guo Yanhong told AFP. "There are no big policy themes to drive the market up."

The world's second-largest economy grew 6.9 percent in 2015, its slowest pace in 25 years, the government said last week.

Fourth quarter gross domestic product (GDP) growth was 6.8 percent, the worst since early 2009.

For international investors, worries over stock turmoil and a weakening currency recall last summer, when the Shanghai index fell more than 40 percent from its peak and authorities shocked markets with a yuan devaluation.

The weakening economy has caused capital to storm out of China. Wall Street giant Goldman Sachs estimates a foreign exchange outflow of \$97 billion in December alone. Bloomberg News gave a tally of a \$1.0 trillion for all of 2015.

"For financial markets, uncontrollable capital outflows, not slower GDP growth, is the top concern," Wang Tao, head of China economic research at UBS, said in a report on Thursday.

The technology-heavy index of Shenzhen, China's second stock exchange, tumbled 26.83 percent in January.

### No fanfare

The tens of millions of small investors who dominate trading in China have been alarmed by the fact the government has failed to aggressively shore up the stock market in January, in the way that it did in mid-2015. Despite months of turmoil, the Shanghai market eked out a weak nine percent rise last year, saved only by an extraordinary government rescue package which included state funds buying up shares, contravening official pledges to let the market play a greater role.

"They have saved the market in previous routs with great fanfare. Now with the market dropping like this, they have stayed quiet," Haitong Securities analyst Zhang Qi told AFP.

The launch in early January of a stock market "circuit breaker", which aimed to curb volatility by stopping trading in the case of big swings, had the opposite effect by causing investor panic. — Reuters

## CHINA SET TO ADOPT 6.5-7% GROWTH TARGET RANGE FOR 2016

**BEIJING:** China's leaders are expected to target economic growth in a range of 6.5 percent to 7 percent this year, sources familiar with their thinking said, setting a range for the first time because policymakers are uncertain on the economy's prospects. The proposed range, which would follow a 2015 target of "around 7 percent" growth, was endorsed by top leaders at the closed-door Central Economic Work Conference in mid-December, according to the sources with knowledge of the meeting outcome.

The world's second-largest economy grew 6.9 percent in 2015, the weakest in 25 years, although some economists believe real growth is even lower. "They are likely to target economic growth of 6.5-7 percent this year, with 6.5 percent as the bottom line," said one of the sources, a policy adviser. Policymakers, worried by global uncertainties and the impact on growth of their structural economic reforms, struggled to reach a consensus at the December meeting, the sources said.

The State Council Information Office, the public relations arm of the government, had no comment on the growth forecast when contacted by Reuters. The floor of 6.5 percent reflects the minimum average rate of growth needed over the next five years to meet an existing goal of doubling gross domestic product and per capita income by 2020 from 2010.

The 2016 growth target and the country's 13th Five-Year Plan, a blueprint covering 2016-2020, will be announced at the annual meeting of the National People's Congress, the country's parliament, in early March. Although the target range was endorsed by the leadership in December, it could still be adjusted before parliament convenes. "The government will not be too nervous about growth this year and will focus more on structural adjustments," said a government economist.

"Growth may still slow in the first and second quarter and people are divided over the third and fourth quarter. The full-year growth could slow to 6.5-6.6 percent."

### POLICY SUPPORT

A string of cuts in interest rates and bank reserve requirements since November 2014 have failed to put a floor under the slowing economy. Beijing is expected to put more emphasis on fiscal policy to support growth, including tax cuts and running a bigger budget deficit of about 3 percent of GDP. China's leaders have flagged a "new normal" of slower growth as they look to shift the economy to a more sustainable, consumption-led model. — Reuters

## JAPANESE AIRLINE PROFITS JUMP ON TOURISM SURGE

**TOKYO:** Japan's two-biggest airlines reported soaring profits yesterday as a surge in tourism and lower fuel costs beefed-up their bottom line. Japan Airlines (JAL) and rival All Nippon Airways (ANA) credited a weak yen for helping boost tourism into Japan as it makes a country often seen as too expensive much cheaper for visitors.

Plunging oil prices have also been good for carriers as it cuts down on what is often their single-biggest expense. The parent company of ANA said its nine-month net profit jumped 40 percent thanks to growth in its international, while it also announced it would buy three Airbus A380s for \$1.25 billion. ANA Holdings' net profit in the April-December period rose to 73.3 billion yen (\$606 billion), and the company revised up its fiscal year profit forecast by about a quarter. JAL said net profit for the same period soared 20 percent to 143.69 billion yen, thanks to an increase in the number of international visitors to Japan. "Passenger traffic increased as a result of capturing the robust demand from inbound travellers especially on North America, China and Southeast Asia routes," JAL said in a statement.

ANA said its international demand "on certain routes from Japan" were dented temporarily after the jihadist attacks in Paris in November, but it added that the impact was limited.

"International passenger services surpassed levels from the same period of the previous year in both passenger numbers and revenues due to solid business travel demand...and the capture of robust travelling demand to Japan from all regions," it said. JAL has suspended flights between Narita airport and Paris after demand took a hit following the November attacks in the French capital.

The carrier has said it will extend the suspension until March 15. The airline had operated one round trip a day between Paris and each of the two main Tokyo airports-Narita and Haneda. JAL has continued the normal operations of flights between Haneda and Paris. — AFP

## EUROPEAN SHARES GET LIFT FROM BOJ'S RATE MOVE

**LONDON:** European equities bounced back yesterday, tracking a rally in Asia after the Bank of Japan stunned the markets by voting narrowly to introduce negative interest rates in a bid to revive inflation. Japan's central bank said it would charge 0.1 percent for excess reserves parked with the institution, an aggressive deflation-fighting policy pioneered by the European Central Bank.

"It has become clear that stock markets cannot stand on their own feet. As long as the economy is shaky and the world is burdened with high debt, central banks and their money printing machines are a necessary evil to keep up the markets," Koen De Leus, senior economist at KBC in Brussels, said.

Deflation discourages consumers from buying because they begin to expect prices to fall even further. Japan has been wrestling with the problem since the 1990s, and its central bank is concerned about the time it is taking to reverse expectations of price reductions.

"The signal that the Bank of Japan gives

reminds us that central banks will continue to play their role of fighting deflation," said Philippe Gijsels, head of research at BNP Paribas Fortis Global Markets.

"These actions typically drive up risky assets." The pan-European FTSEurofirst 300 index rose 0.9 percent by 1139 GMT after having fallen 1.7 percent in the previous session.

Among top sectoral movers, the European banking index rose 1.2 percent after an encouraging earnings report from Spain's Banco Sabadell and with some Italian banks underpinned by speculation over possible M&A.

Banco Sabadell gained 6.1 percent after posting a 91 percent jump in full-year net profit, boosted by the acquisition of British peer TSB that more than offset rising provisions against bad loans in the fourth quarter.

Italy's Popolare di Milano rose 3.9 percent and Banco Popolare was up 5.8 percent with traders citing speculation the two lenders could be closer to an agreement over a possible merger. — Reuters

## FRENCH ECONOMY GREW 1.1% IN 2015: STUDY

**PARIS:** France's economy grew by 1.1 percent in 2015, its biggest expansion in four years, which the government hailed as confirmation of a turnaround after years of economic stagnation, official statistics showed yesterday.

Finance Minister Michel Sapin said the figures showed 2015 was "the year of recovery" for the eurozone's second-biggest economy. France posted growth of 0.2 percent in the fourth quarter, down from 0.3 percent in the July-September period, national statistics agency INSEE said. The full-year growth figure, up from just 0.2 percent in 2014, was in line with the government's predictions. However, it still lagged behind the 1.5-percent growth rate expected in the wider eurozone for 2015.

Sapin said the fact that output had continued expanding in the fourth quarter, despite the jihadist attacks on Paris in November that left 130 people dead and dealt a severe blow to tourism, showed that "the French did not give up".

"The upturn will intensify in 2016, which will allow us to have more jobs. That is our priority," Sapin told AFP. Unemployment has been a stubborn problem for President Francois Hollande ever since he came to power in 2012 on a pledge to reduce the jobless total.

That has not happened and the number of people actively looking for work last year rose to a record 3.59 million, according to labour ministry figures published Wednesday.

Although the additional 89,000 people seeking work in 2015 was the lowest rise since 2010, Prime Minister Manuel Valls said Thursday: "It's still insufficient, as the unemployment figures show."

"But for the first time since 2011, we are again creating growth." The Socialist government will also take encouragement from signs of increased consumer confidence, with consumer spending up 1.4 percent in 2015. Business investment also grew, rising by 2.0 percent year-on-year. —AFP



**PARIS:** French Economy and Industry minister Emmanuel Macron presents his New Year wishes to the press yesterday at the ministry in Paris. — AFP

## BOJ STUNS MARKETS WITH NEGATIVE INTEREST RATES

KURODA SAYS MOVE AIMS TO FORESTALL RISKS FROM OIL, CHINA

**TOKYO:** The Bank of Japan unexpectedly cut a benchmark interest rate below zero yesterday, stunning investors with another bold move to stimulate the economy as volatile markets and slowing global growth threaten its efforts to overcome deflation.

Global equities jumped, the yen tumbled and sovereign bonds rallied after the BOJ said it would charge for a portion of bank reserves parked with the institution, an aggressive policy pioneered by the European Central Bank (ECB). "What's important is to

of economic malaise.

Kuroda said the world's third-biggest economy was recovering moderately and the underlying price trend was rising steadily. "But there's a risk recent further falls in oil prices, uncertainty over emerging economies, including China, and global market instability could hurt business confidence and delay the eradication of people's deflationary mindset," he said. "The BOJ decided to adopt negative interest rates ... to forestall such risks from materialising."

that financial institutions hold with it.

The central bank said in a statement announcing the decision it would cut interest rates further into negative territory if necessary, in its battle against deflation.

"Kuroda had been saying that he didn't think something like this would help so it is a bit surprising and it's clear the market has been surprised by it," said Nicholas Smith, a strategist at CLSA based in Tokyo. Some economists doubted the BOJ move would prove effective. "It has gone on the defensive," said Hideo Kumano, chief economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute. "It made this decision not because it's effective, but because markets are collapsing and it feels it has no other option."

### GOING NEGATIVE

Several European central banks have cut key rates below zero, and the ECB became the first major central bank to do so in June 2014. In pursuing the same path, the BOJ is hoping banks will step up lending to support activity in the real economy, rather than pay a penalty to deposit excess cash at the central bank.

There is little sign of any pent-up demand from Japanese banks or cash-rich companies for fresh funds, however, and any money released into the system may merely be hoarded or steered into speculative activity. "This is an aggressive all-stick-no-carrot approach to spurring investment," said Martin King, co-managing director at Tyton Capital Advisors in Tokyo.

The BOJ maintained its pledge to expand base money at an annual pace of 80 trillion yen (\$675 billion) via aggressive purchases of Japanese government bonds (JGBs) and risky assets conducted under its quantitative and qualitative easing (QQE) program. The BOJ's move - boosting the dollar by 1.7 percent against the yen - could make it even harder for the US Federal Reserve to raise interest rates four times this year, as originally envisaged by its policy board. — Reuters



**TOKYO:** Governor of the Bank of Japan (BoJ) Haruhiko Kuroda answers a question during his regular press conference in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

show people that the BOJ is strongly committed to achieving 2 percent inflation and that it will do whatever it takes to achieve it," BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda told a news conference after the decision.

In adopting negative interest rates Japan is reaching for a new weapon in its long battle against deflation, which since the 1990s have discouraged consumers from buying big because they expect prices to fall further. Deflation is seen as the root of two decades

Kuroda said as recently as last week he was not thinking of adopting a negative interest rate policy for now, telling parliament that further easing would likely take the form of an expansion of its massive asset-buying program. But, with consumer inflation just 0.1 percent in the year to December despite three years of aggressive money-printing, the BOJ's policy board decided in a narrow 5-4 vote to charge a 0.1 percent interest on a portion of current account deposits

## GOLD DOWN ON DOLLAR, STILL SET FOR BIGGEST MONTHLY GAIN IN A YEAR

**LONDON:** Gold edged lower yesterday as the dollar strengthened, but prices were still on track for their strongest monthly climb in a year after global economic headwinds hit riskier assets.

The metal has risen nearly 5 percent in January, underpinned by concerns over the world's growth outlook, especially China, which has raised questions about the pace of interest rate rises in the United States. "Maybe things won't be this bad next month in the wider markets, so it is possible that if ETFs' flows are subsiding, prices will be lower too," Macquarie analyst Matthew Turner said.

"But one positive lesson we can learn from this month is that gold does still have a safe-haven role and that could stand it in good stead through a testing year to come."

Spot gold was down 0.1 percent at \$1,113.26 an ounce by 1239 GMT, while US gold for February delivery was down 0.2 percent at \$1,113.90 an ounce. The metal reached a 12-week high of \$1,127.80 on Wednesday, after the Federal Reserve said it was closely watching the global economy and financial markets. This supported the view that US policymakers may not be able to raise interest rates again as soon as March.

A March rate hike was looking "extremely unlikely," said Michael McCarthy, chief market strategist at CMC Markets in Sydney. "Now that the Fed has said that they are looking at international conditions and their impact on the U.S. economy, it's quite clear they'd be waiting ... and there are not just enough macro data between now and the March meeting for them to shift from their current position," said McCarthy.

Gold slid 10 percent last year on fears that higher US interest rates would lift the opportunity cost of holding the metal. The dollar rose 0.7 percent against a basket of leading currencies yesterday, mainly due to a weak Japanese yen after the Bank of Japan stunned markets by joining a handful of major central banks in adopting negative interest rates.

Investors were awaiting US fourth-quarter gross domestic product data at 1330 GMT. Economists polled by Reuters suggest US GDP growth of 0.8 percent in October-December, slowing from a 2 percent expansion in the third quarter. Data on Thursday showed new orders for US durable goods posted their biggest drop in 16 months in December, suggesting that growth in the world's top economy braked sharply at the end of 2015.

The world's largest gold-backed exchange-traded fund, New York-listed SPDR Gold Shares, reported an inflow in January. Spot silver was down 0.1 percent at \$14.21 an ounce. Spot platinum fell 0.5 percent to \$861.40 an ounce while palladium gained 0.2 percent to \$491.75. — Reuters



Kuwait Times

www.kuwaittimes.net

# Weekender

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 2016

Red roses with shining glitter are on display at the international trade fair for plants in Essen, Germany. More than 1,600 exhibitors from 50 countries present the latest trends at the world's leading trade fair for horticulture. — AP

## Reality check: Barbie now tall, curvy and petite too

SEE PAGE 25



In this March 8, 1968 file photo, members of the rock group Jefferson Airplane pose for a photograph in San Francisco. — AP photos



This June 20, 2001 file photo shows Jefferson Starships' Paul Kantner, left, performing in front of Diana Mangano during the 'Freedom Sings' benefit concert in New York.

# Jefferson Airplane co-founder Paul Kantner dies at age 74



In this Tuesday, Oct 27, 2015, file photo, Hong Kong actor-singer Aaron Kwok poses on the red carpet of the opening ceremony for the Studio City project in Macau. — AP

## Crime thriller 'Port of Call' leads Hong Kong film nominees

Thrills and adventure lead the nominations for the Hong Kong Film Awards. Thirteen nominations went to "Port of Call," a thriller about a detective looking into a heinous crime that tore apart two families and is loosely based on a real event. It's up for best film, best actor for Hong Kong superstar Aaron Kwok and best director for Philip Yung, for whom "Port of Call" was his third feature. The 3D action adventure film "The Taking of Tiger Mountain" has 11 nominations, including best film and best director for the veteran Tsui Hark.

The third "Ip Man" film was popular with fans as well as critics. Its eight nominations include best film, best director and best action choreography. The other best film nominees are "Little Big Master" and perhaps the biggest surprise, "Ten Years." The low-budget, independent film contains five stories postulating about Hong Kong's future. The film portrays the city in 10 years' time when the local language is no longer spoken and freedom of speech is lost, echoing apprehensions of many people in Hong Kong now. Though it was nominated for the top award, it was shut out in the other categories.

Actor Sean Lau Ching Wan and actress Ivana Wong announced the nominees yesterday. The best actor category has some of Hong Kong's most beloved past winners, with Kwok, Andy Lau, Nick Cheung, Tony Leung and Jacky Cheung nominated. Nominees for best actress, coming from Taiwan, China and Hong Kong, are Tang Wei, Miriam Yeung, Sylvia Chang, Karena Lam and Jessi Li. The awards will be handed out April 3. — AP

Paul Kantner, a founding member of the Jefferson Airplane who stayed with the seminal San Francisco band through its transformation from 1960s hippies to 1970s hit makers as the eventual leader of successor group Jefferson Starship, has died at age 74. Kantner, who drew upon his passion for politics and science fiction to help write such rock classics as "Wooden Ships" and "Volunteers," died on Thursday of organ failure and septic shock. He had been admitted to a San Francisco hospital after falling ill earlier in the week, his former girlfriend and publicist Cynthia Bowman, the mother of one of his three children, told The Associated Press.

The guitarist and songwriter had survived close brushes with death as a younger man, including a motorcycle accident during the early 1960s and a 1980 cerebral hemorrhage, and he recovered from a heart attack last year. Few bands were so identified with San Francisco or so well-embodied the idealism and hedonism of the late '60s as Jefferson Airplane, its message boldly stated on buttons and bumper stickers that read "THE JEFFERSON AIRPLANE LOVES YOU." The Airplane advocated sex, psychedelic drugs, rebellion and a communal lifestyle, operating out of an eccentric, Colonial Revival house near Haight-Ashbury. Its members supported various political and social causes, tossed out LSD at concerts and played at both the Monterey and Woodstock festivals.

### 'White Rabbit'

Formed by veterans of the folk circuit in the mid-'60s, the Airplane combined folk, rock, blues and jazz and was the first group from a Bay Area scene that also featured Janis Joplin and the Grateful Dead to achieve mainstream success, thanks to the classics "Somebody to Love" and "White Rabbit." Besides Kantner, who played rhythm guitar and added backing vocals, the Airplane's best-known lineup included singers Grace Slick and Marty Balin; lead guitarist Jorma Kaukonen; bassist Jack Casady; and drummer Spencer Dryden, who died in 2005. Jefferson Airplane, named in part after blues artist Blind Lemon Jefferson, was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1996 and is

scheduled to receive the Recording Academy's lifetime achievement award this year. "He was the first guy I picked for the band and he was the first guy who taught me how to roll a joint," Balin wrote of Kantner on his Facebook page. "And although I know he liked to play the devil's advocate, I am sure he has earned his wings now" Kantner, who looked as much like a college student as a rock star with his glasses and shaggy blond hair, did not have the vocal or stage presence of Balin and Slick, or the instrumental power of Kaukonen or Casady. But he became the conscience of the band and by the end of the '60s was shaping its increasingly radical direction, whether co-writing the militant "Volunteers" with Balin or inserting a profane taunt into his own incendiary "We Can Be Together," leading to an extended fight with their record company, RCA.

Meanwhile, Kantner and Slick reigned as one of rock's most prominent couples. Rolling Stone would note their contrasting styles, labeling Slick "the Acid Queen of outrageousness" and Kantner her "calm, dry, sardonic flip side." In 1971, Slick gave birth to their daughter, whom the couple originally wanted to call God, but decided to name China. (China Kantner became an actress and MTV VJ.) Slick and Kantner broke up in the late 1970s and Kantner had a son, Alexander, with Bowman, and another son, Gareth.

### Science fiction

Kantner was the Airplane's only native San Franciscan and its most political and experimental thinker. He had been a science fiction reader since childhood and with friends David Crosby and Jerry Garcia among others recorded a 1970 concept album about space travel, "Blows Against the Empire," credited to Kantner and "Jefferson Starship." Kantner, Crosby and Stephen Stills would collaborate on the escapist, post-apocalypse fantasy "Wooden Ships," which Jefferson Airplane and Crosby, Stills and Nash each recorded and performed at Woodstock.

With perfect timing for a '60s band, the Airplane began splitting apart at the end of the decade. Kaukonen and Casady founded the blues group Hot Tuna, and Balin, the

band's estranged original leader, also left. In 1974, Kantner and Slick brought in new musicians and renamed the group Jefferson Starship. Their sound softened and, with Balin back, they had hit singles with "Miracles" and "Count On Me" among others and a No. 1 album, "Red Octopus."

But by the mid-1980s, when Slick and Mickey Thomas were lead vocalists, Kantner thought the music so "mundane" that he left the Jefferson Starship and successfully forced the remaining members not to use the name "Jefferson." (His former bandmates called themselves "Starship" and had three No. 1 songs, including "Sara" and "We Built This City"). Over the past 30 years, Kantner, Balin and Casady occasionally performed as the KBC Band and a reunited Airplane briefly toured and recorded. Kantner made a handful of solo and Jefferson Starships albums and used various musicians in the studio and on the road, including daughter China on vocals and son Alexander on bass.

### The Great Society

Kantner was born in 1941, the musical and nonconforming son of a traveling salesman. He dropped out of college to pursue a career in folk music and became friendly with Crosby and future Starship member David Freiberg, spending days and nights on the beach, strumming guitars and indulging in Crosby's premium stash of marijuana. Soon after the release of the Airplane's first album, "The Jefferson Airplane Takes Off," the group underwent a fateful change: Vocalist Signe Toly Anderson left to have a baby in the fall of 1966 and was replaced by Slick, who had been a member of the Bay Area group The Great Society. Slick brought a fiery, charismatic style and, just as important, "Somebody to Love" and "White Rabbit," anthems for 1967's "Summer of Love" and highlights of the Airplane's landmark psychedelic album "Surrealistic Pillow."

Kantner, who spent much of his life in his native city, would look back years later and remember a golden age of art, free love and joyous possibility. He joked that San Francisco was a privileged haven, "49 square miles surrounded by reality." (The correct number is closer to 47). — AP

## Ex-top model holds fashion world to account on anorexia

It was the stuff of dreams: walking down a Paris street one day to walking the runway as a top 20 model in the world's fashion capital. That's exactly what happened to Victoire Macon Dauxerre at 18 as she prepared to graduate from high school in 2011. But that dream was short-lived. In just a few months Dauxerre was battling anorexia, eating three apples a day and sipping diet colas in an effort to maintain her elite model status.

"No one actually told me you have to lose weight," she remembered. "But they said to me, 'In September, you're starting Fashion Week. Sizes will be 32-34 (2-4 US) and you'll have to be able to fit into them.'" "That's when I should have left," Dauxerre said. As Paris plays host to the spring summer haute couture shows, Dauxerre is warning the world about how insidious a disorder anorexia really is. In her memoir, "Never Skinny Enough: the Diary of a Top Model" ("Jamais assez maigre: Journal d'un top model") she recounts the pressures of such high-stakes dieting.

This is not the first time that a French model has sounded the alarm on the pressure to be thin on the catwalk. After writing her own book highly critical of the fashion industry, Isabelle Caro posed for a shocking anti-anorexia billboard campaign during Milan fashion week in 2007 before dying from the disease three years later at the age of 28. For Dauxerre, besides apples and Diet Cokes, she allowed herself one small piece of fish or chicken once a week. A healthy 56 kilos (123 lbs) at 1.78 meters (5 feet 9 inches)

when she was spotted, Dauxerre went down four dress sizes to 47 kilos (103 lbs) in just a couple of months. She then embarked on her whirlwind career, modeling for such famed houses as Alexander McQueen, Celine and Miu Miu in Paris, New York and Milan.

### Bulimic and suicidal

With her flowing brown hair and electric blue eyes, she became one of the most sought-after faces. Eight months later, bulimic and suicidal, she quit. "No one understood," Dauxerre said, now 23. "Everybody was telling me I had a dream life, but I had never been so miserable." In the book, she tells of life backstage where models would nibble on food in front of cameras then race to the bathroom to throw it all up once journalists were gone. She recalls shoots where only the photographers had catering. Dauxerre was so starved and exhausted at one point she fainted in the



Victoire Macon Dauxerre

streets of New York during one fashion week.

"The models, they're nothing, they're just clothes hangers," Dauxerre said. "In the 1980s, elite models were real people. Today, you have to fade behind the labels." Dauxerre's memoir comes a month after French MPs voted through a law banning ultra-thin models. A letter by Dauxerre was read out in parliament and helped sway the vote. The ban is only the second of its kind in the world after Israel passed similar legislation, while Spain, Italy, the UK and Denmark all have looser regulations against the practice. Attempts at regulation have so far failed, however, in the United States and Belgium.

If the French law passes its final hurdles, models who want to work there will have to be cleared first by doctors. Agencies who violate the law could face six months in jail and a EUR75,000 fine (\$81,000). Dauxerre applauds the ban, even though she feels it is "10 years too late." Such a measure, she said, would have clearly barred her from the runway. "A doctor would have detected my weak pulse rate," she said. "He would have noticed that I was losing my hair, that I had osteoporosis, that I no longer had my period." "When your complexion turns sallow, borderline green, it's pretty clear there's a problem," Dauxerre added. —AFP

## Bennett showcases his jazz artistry on Grammy-nominated CD

Tony Bennett really belongs in a different category at this year's Grammy Awards than the one he's dominated for the past quarter-century. The 89-year-old Bennett once again finds himself nominated for best traditional pop vocal album for "The Silver Lining: The Songs of Jerome Kern," alongside Barry Manilow, Josh Groban, Seth MacFarlane and, surprisingly, Bob Dylan. It's a category Bennett has won 12 times since it was established in 1992, including last year for "Cheek to Cheek," his duets album with Lady Gaga.

But unlike his recent high-profile, chart-topping duets albums with Gaga and other contemporary pop stars, "Silver Lining" is a sublime, intimate collaboration with pianist Bill Charlap. "I think it should be a jazz album because of Bill Charlap, who's a great jazz piano player. That's the reason I made the album," said Bennett, interviewed at his art studio overlooking Central Park. "I just can't believe how much he understands the piano, knowing when to stop, when to go on a long run and when to keep it very simple."

Charlap, the son of Broadway composer Moose Charlap ("Peter Pan") and pop singer Sandy Stewart, shares Bennett's devotion to the Great American Songbook. They decided to do a songbook album honoring Jerome Kern, who Bennett says inspired George Gershwin and all the other great American songwriters who came after him. "Kern's the angel at the top of the tree of popular songwriters," said Charlap in a telephone interview. "He's got one foot in Europe and one foot in America." The album includes the 1914 ballad "They Didn't Believe Me," which Bennett says "still sounds like a brand-new song." There's also "Make Believe" from Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II's 1927 musical "Show Boat," whose story-driven theme about racial prejudice transformed American musical theater.

The three piano-vocal duet tracks, including "The Way You Look Tonight" and "All the Things You Are," evoke memories of Bennett's two classic 1970s albums with the introspective jazz pianist Bill Evans. Charlap and his wife, Renee Rosnes, play dual pianos on four tracks, including a poignant "The Last Time I Saw Paris," written by Kern in 1940 after the Nazis overran France. Half of the 14 tracks feature Charlap's long-time trio with bassist Peter Washington and drummer Kenny Washington. Charlap says Bennett shares the quality of the great jazz singers because he doesn't sing on top of the accompaniment but instead becomes part of the band. "On an expressive level, Tony's gotten deeper and deeper over the



This August 2015 photo released by Sony Music shows Tony Bennett, left, with pianist Bill Charlap in New York. — AP

years. ... His singing has wisdom and experience in the most beautiful way yet it's very powerful."

Bennett says he doesn't know how to categorize himself. "All I try to do when I perform is to try and make people happy," he said. "I'm so fortunate because here I am going on 90 years old and my voice is in top shape. ... I have what I call a blessed life. I'm doing what I love and I'll never retire. Till the day I die I'm going to sing and paint and try to get better and better." — AP

## Zayn gets 'so dirty and raw' in post-One Direction debut

No longer part of squeaky clean One Direction, Zayn Malik yesterday reintroduced himself as a solo artist—sexy with an urban vibe. The former boy band star, now simply calling himself Zayn, announced his first solo album, "Mind of Mine," which will come out on March 25, and released its first single, "Pillowtalk." A far cry from the innocent tracks of One Direction, "Pillowtalk" features sex, profanity and a racy video in which Zayn dances intimately with model Gigi Hadid in states of undress.

Zayn promises in the song to "be in bed all day," taking a lover to "a place that is so pure, so dirty and raw." "It's our paradise and it's our war zone," he sings. In a striking lyrical touch for one of the most prominent Muslims in Western entertainment, Zayn uses religious imagery to further the song's theme. "Pillowtalk—my enemy, my Allah," he sings.

The 23-year-old Briton recorded the album largely in Los Angeles with the



producer Malay, who is best known for his work with Frank Ocean. In a likely sign of Malay's influence, the music on "Pillowtalk" is noticeably inspired by urban American R&B, moving away from the bubble-gum pop of One Direction. The album will come out

exactly one year after Malik left One Direction, the band that emerged from "The X Factor" television contest in 2010 to become one of the world's best-selling acts. Despite packing arenas full of screaming teenagers, Zayn said in an interview just ahead of the release of "Pillowtalk" that he had long been unhappy in One Direction. "I never really wanted to be there in the band," he told Zane Lowe, the head DJ for Apple's Beats 1 radio.

"I just gave it a go because it was there at the time and then when I realized the direction we were going in—pardon the pun—with the music, I instantly realized it wasn't for me," he said. "I couldn't put my input in, I couldn't give my opinion on this or that, because it didn't fit," he said. Zayn's former band mates in November released a first album without him, "Made in the A.M.," and went on an indefinite hiatus, with member Louis Tomlinson last week becoming a father. — AFP



Visitors meander through the Bruce Munro "Water-Towers" Sonoran Light exhibition light-based installation at the Desert Botanical Garden, in Phoenix. — AP photos



This June 23, 2004 file photo shows the facade of the Heard Museum's Steele Auditorium in Phoenix.

## Phoenix Essentials

# Dining, hikes, art and sunshine

**W**ith hundreds of golf courses and 300 days of sunshine a year, it's easy to cast metropolitan Phoenix as a retiree's paradise that leaves everyone else out in the cold. But within the desert beats the heart of an actual urban core that has come into its own. There's an emerging restaurant-and-retail scene along with classic attractions like the view from Camelback Mountain, plus newfound treasures like peeking inside a little-known house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

### What's new

A house built by Frank Lloyd Wright that dodged the wrecking ball is Phoenix's latest tourist attraction. The David and Gladys Wright House, named for the architect's son and daughter-in-law who lived there, is in the Arcadia neighborhood. There are free public tours daily. The spiral walkway offers a spectacular view of Camelback Mountain. Events on the grounds range from an Easter egg hunt to yoga classes.

Changing Hands Bookstore, about 5 miles (8 kilometers) north of downtown near a light rail stop, opened in May 2014 but already feels like the place where everybody knows your name. Patrons can grab a book with some beer or wine at the store's First Draft Book Bar. Next door, the Southern Rail restaurant, named for its proximity to the light rail and its "low-country" cuisine, serves tasty Southern and Creole-influenced food like red beans and rice and fried chicken.



In this Jan 14, 2015 file photo, customers are served at the counter of The Phoenix Public Market Cafe restaurant in Phoenix.

Another new hub is DeSoto Central Market in downtown. The property, once a vacant brick building and former car dealership, is now a market with food stalls, bar and patio. It's known for happy hour, live music and swing dance nights. Drool-worthy delicacies include fried chicken-skin po'boys at the larder + the delta.

### Classic attractions

The 140-acre (57-hectare) Desert Botanical Garden boasts more than 50,000 plants and five trails that illustrate the role desert plants play in the environment. The latest exhibit incorporates eight light-based installations using colorful fiber optics.

With all the sunshine, take a hike. Two popular summits are the 2,704-foot (852-meter) Camelback Mountain and 2,608-foot (795-meter) Piestewa Peak. Both are north of downtown and offer views of the entire metropolitan Phoenix valley. A less crowded alternative is South Mountain Park 10 miles (17 kilometers) south of downtown, where you'll find ancient petroglyphs. The Heard Museum is known for art and artifacts showcasing Southwestern tribal culture, including Hopi katsina dolls, Navajo textiles and Zuni jewelry.

Frank Lloyd Wright fans may want to drive 30 minutes to tour his winter home and studio in Scottsdale. Galleries at the Musical Instrument Museum in north Phoenix are organized by world regions. Special headphones play music



A cactus wren sits atop a flowering saguaro cactus at the Desert Botanical Gardens in Phoenix.

samples when you near the corresponding display. One gallery spotlights instruments and clothes belonging to icons from Elvis Presley to Taylor Swift.

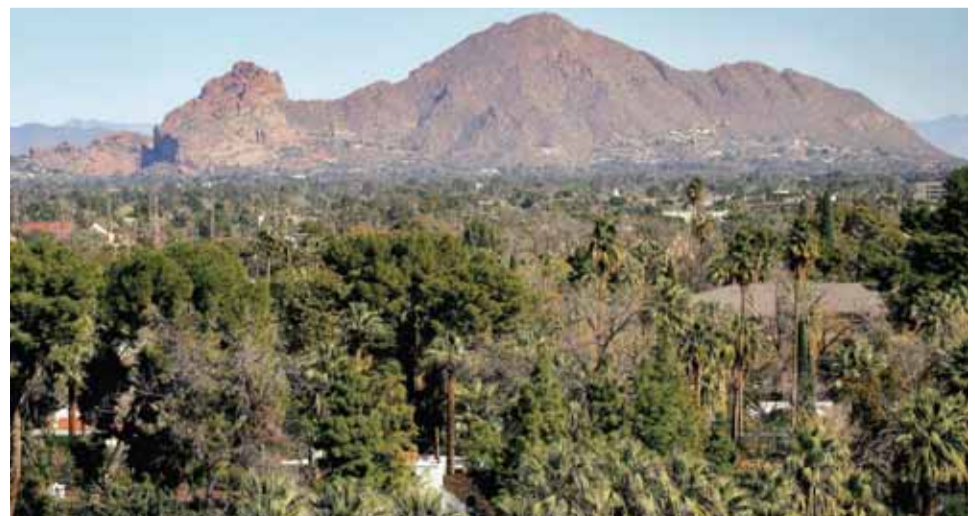
### Tips

Phoenix's roughly 23-mile (37-kilometer) light

rail system makes the ideal hop-on-hop-off tour bus with a \$4 all-day pass. Several stops have free park-and-ride areas too. The tracks run through downtown, the college town of Tempe and the suburb of Mesa. In Tempe, stroll around Tempe Town Lake, popular for jogging, fishing and even dragonboat racing. Mill Avenue is lined with shops, restaurants and bars. In Mesa, get off at the Main Street/Sycamore stop and walk five minutes to Mekong Plaza. The shopping center is a smorgasbord of authentic Asian cuisine - dim sum, pho or Taiwanese specialties like simmered pig ear. Also available: green Grid Bike Share bicycles all around central Phoenix. Download the app to find and reserve a bike. Rescues of out-of-state visitors who aren't accustomed to the heat are unfortunately not rare. If you're hiking, dress properly, go with a buddy, carry a fully charged cellphone and hydrate (pets too). Every March, spring training brings 15 Major League Baseball teams to Phoenix suburbs as part of the Cactus League. Because the stadiums are relatively small, fans who arrive early have a good chance of interacting with favorite players.

### Hanging out

Phoenix's artsy Roosevelt Row neighborhood is the best place for quirky people-watching along a seven-block stretch with restaurants, bars, galleries and street art. The first Friday of each month, the neighborhood hosts outdoor musicians, artists and vendors. —AP



This Jan 31, 2008 file photo shows Camelback Mountain in Phoenix.



Reality check



Barbie now tall, curvy and petite too

Barbie, long the stereotypical blue-eyed blonde bombshell, has been given a makeover. The iconic doll will now be available in three new body types—tall, petite and curvy. The best-selling doll's manufacturer Mattel announced the new looks Thursday, ending a 56-year-old tradition of Barbie having just one physique: unrealistically perfect. The new dolls join Barbie's Fashionista line, which will now feature four body types. It will also have seven skin tones, 22 eye colors and 24 hairstyles—an acknowledgement, belated for some, that women come in many sizes and shapes.

"Barbie reflects the world girls see around them. Her ability to evolve and grow with the times, while staying true to her spirit, is central to why Barbie is the number one fashion doll in the world," Mattel President and CEO Richard Dickson said in a statement. "We believe we have a responsibility to girls and parents to reflect a broader view of beauty," added Evelyn Mazzocco, senior vice president and global general manager of the Barbie brand.



These photos provided by Mattel shows a group of new Barbie dolls introduced in January 2016. — AP



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1980 Hispanic Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1977 Superstar Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1966 Color Magic Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1969 Twist Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1959 Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1985 Day to Night Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1973 Quick Curl Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1981 Golden Dream Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1981 Golden Dream Barbie doll.

**New dolls could boost sales**

Mattel is not the first doll maker to shatter the mold of what pretty means. In late 2014, graphic artist Nickolay Lamm introduced a doll named Lammily, which features what the company calls standard human body proportions. In 2002, Tonner Doll came out with one called Emme, after the plus-size model who went by that name. The new Barbie looks should help Mattel boost declining sales of the doll down for three straight years and by 16 percent in the first half of 2015. Last year, Mattel launched "Hello Barbie": a version that uses WiFi and voice recognition technology so kids can actually hold conversations with the toy.

This is not the first time Mattel has released Barbies with different looks, although the body types are new. In 1980, Mattel marketed Black Barbie, who had an afro-style hair-do. Mattel's failure to change Barbie's body size had drawn a lot of criticism, but the company long defended the design. "Barbie's body was never designed to be realistic. She was designed for girls to easily dress and undress," Kimberly Culmone, vice president of Barbie Global Creative, explained in 2014 in an interview with the website Fast Company. Culmone challenged the notion that Barbie dolls could play a role in how little girls might perceive women's bodies and their own.

"Clearly, the influences for girls on those types of issues, whether it's body image or anything else, it's proven, it's peers, moms, parents. It's their social circles," Culmone said. However, a British study in 2006 of girls aged five to eight found that those exposed to Barbie had a less favorable view of their own bodies. These girls ended up wanting a thinner body than did girls not exposed to the doll. After the new Barbie body types were announced on Thursday, social media lit up with messages of praise. The stock market greeted the move with cautious optimism. Shares in Mattel were up 0.65 percent to \$27.15 at around 1830 GMT. — AFP



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1968 talking Barbie doll.

This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1980 African-American Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1965 Barbie doll.

This photo provided by Mattel shows the Barbie and Ken dolls from the 1970s.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1992 Totally Hair Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1962 Red Flare Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the Barbie and Ken dolls from the 1960s.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1983 Dream Date Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 1993 Native American Barbie doll.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the 2011 Barbie and Ken dolls.



This photo provided by Mattel shows the Barbie and Ken dolls from the 1990s.

# Ancient Japanese crafts updated in exhibit

Traditional Japanese crafts like tea ceremony bowls, statuary, ornate lacquerware and precious dolls are given an edgy, individualistic update in an exhibit at the Museum of Arts and Design here. Twelve masters of these ancient crafts - or kogeï - take them in new directions, inspired by contemporary design, Japanese manga, anime and other modern art forms. "There is a technical ability inherent in kogeï that has the capacity to unleash intense, future-oriented visual imagery," curator Yuji Akimoto, director of Japan's 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, says in the accompanying catalog.

The show, "Japanese Kogeï: Future Forward," was first shown at that museum in Kanazawa, Japan, and is now on view in New York through Feb 7. The ancient crafts' "own special, original rich-

ness and beauty ... give voice to the concerns of our time," Akimoto says.

## Ancient myth

For instance, inspired in part by Japanese horror films, Kutsuyo Aoki's ceramics combine rococo elements with spooky skeletal forms that "might perhaps be viewed as prayers or exorcisms, with the power to dispel the indefinable feelings of anxiety that proliferate in contemporary society," Akimoto says. Yuki Hayama's painstakingly precise works in ceramic reflect a haunting blend of manga, dystopian vision and ancient myth. The work is so detailed it requires ultra-high definition 8k technology - a screen image allowing for a resolution of about 33 million pixels, 16 times higher than current HD broadcasts - to fully appreciate.

Tea bowls in the show are boldly graphic, sometimes shown upside down (Yuri Takemura), in bright colors featuring contrasting drippy dots of color (Takuro Kuwata), or made with an eye to transcending physical and cultural boundaries by incorporating clays and techniques from around the world, as in works by Toshio Ohi. Kohei Nakamura's works in porcelain and iron reference science fiction or apocalyptic scenarios. And Kuwata's enormous vessels feature chunky, glitzy glazes that appear to be breaking apart and descending from his vessels, with decorative elements resembling scraps of demolished buildings.

## Traditional craft

Other artists take new approaches to the ancient crafts of figurative sculpture or kutaniyaki (a style of glazed pottery from the Edo period). Two lacquer artists are also featured in the exhibit. Shin'ya Yamamura balances fine lacquer techniques with new forms using unusual materials, while Tatsuo Kitamura and his studio use newly rediscovered lacquer techniques and apply them to atypical forms, including ornate wooden eggs and Jewish and Christian religious items.

The exhibit, with wall texts in Japanese and English, features a brief biography of each artist and, in some cases, videos showing them at work. Many of the artists lead aesthetic double lives, pursuing both traditional-style crafts and these more daring and controversial contemporary works. Shinkyō Nakamura situates his work in a Japanese doll-making tradition that began in the 17th century. But he takes the craft in a new direction with highly stylized representations of Japanese courtiers in European costume, exploring the boundaries of traditional craft and contemporary sculpture. "The strong sense of individualism found in these works link them equally to art as to traditional craft," said Ronald T. Labaco, a curator at the Museum of Arts and Design who coordinated the New York show with Samantha De Tillo. "They extend the vitality of kogeï into the 21st century." The exhibit is accompanied by a catalog written by Akimoto and published by the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art. The book, "Art Crafting Towards the Future," is named for the original title of the exhibit.—AP



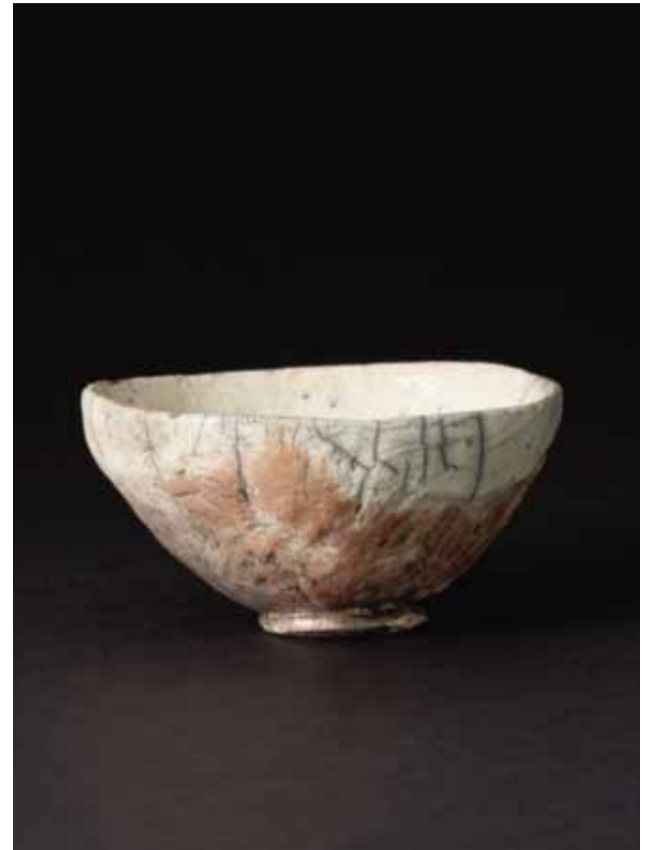
This 2015 photo provided by Museum of Arts and Design shows the yellow green-slipped gold Kairagi Shino bowl, 2012, by Takuro Kuwata, included in the exhibit, 'Japanese Kogeï: Future Forward,' in New York.—AP photos



This Oct 19, 2015 photo provided the Museum of Arts and Design, shows works from artist Katsuyo Aoki's Predictive Dream series in an installation view of the exhibit, 'Japanese Kogeï: Future Forward,' in New York.



The Drop Bowl, 2011, by Yuri Takemura.



A White Raku Tea Bowl Made With Clay from Colorado, 2005, by Toshio Ohi.



A detail of the Large Bowl with Emperor Long Sun, 2006-2007, in porcelain, by Yuki Hayama, included in the exhibit, 'Japanese Kogeï: Future Forward,' in New York.



People visiting the exhibit, "Japanese Kogeï: Future Forward," in New York.

## A 'Dog Named Jimmy' turned owner's life around

Rafael Mantesso turned 30 in an empty Brazilian apartment after divorce left every wall, floor, closet and shelf bare. The only things he had left were his cellphone and a pit bull named Jimmy Choo that his neighbors went out of their way to avoid. When he turned 33 on Jan 14, Mantesso still owned that apartment and it's still vacant. But it's for sale now. And people can't get enough of his 6-year-old bull terrier - from the Instagram sketches-plus-photos of Jimmy that went viral, the book "A Dog Named Jimmy" and a collection of Jimmy-inspired bags and purses for the high-end fashion brand Jimmy Choo. (Mantesso's ex-wife had named the dog for her favorite shoes.)

There are future plans too: a calendar, endorsements and launching the charitable Jimmy Foundation. Meanwhile, Mantesso is working at an advertising agency in Sao Paulo in his native Brazil, and doing the occasional photo shoot. The first night they were alone in the "naked" apartment three years ago, Jimmy did a happy dance through all the rooms. Mantesso picked up his phone and started shooting photos of Jimmy's contagious dance of joy.

"When I sat in my empty living room, Jimmy was happy, running from one side to the other side, in circles, crazy. The apartment was a playground to him. He was loving that empty place. That energy was amazing. I looked at him and said to myself, 'Oh my God, I was thinking everything was lost and I had the most important thing in the house - Jimmy,'" Mantesso said in his

Portuguese accented-English. Jimmy is a white dog but his ginger and red ears contrasted with the white walls, floors and ceilings. At some point, Mantesso picked up a piece of white cardboard, drew a skeleton with a red heart on it, put it in front of Jimmy and took a photo. He liked it, put it on Instagram (@rafaelmantesso) and they were in business.

### Crazy dog

The ideas came fast. Mantesso would put Jimmy in a pose and the dog would freeze while he took photos. "Everyone ask, 'How do you make a

crazy dog freeze in position you want?' I think Jimmy knows that I want him in that position and he just stay," Mantesso said. Mantesso credits a tweet by actor Ashton Kutcher for putting focus on his early Jimmy art. Kutcher retweeted a drawing depicting the spaghetti scene from "Lady and the Tramp," where the dogs are slurping strands of spaghetti. Views went from 10,000 to 100,000 that night, Mantesso said.

Jimmy also kept Mantesso going at a time when he was feeling down. Because of Jimmy, Mantesso had to take a walk twice a day. Because he had

to buy Jimmy food, he bought food for himself. And because of Jimmy, he was motivated to keep taking pictures. He liked what he was doing so much that they worked side by side for 90 uninterrupted days, he said. Eventually "A Dog Named Jimmy" was ready for the publisher, and there is also a Jimmy deck of cards. Some of Mantesso's images show the dog's paws or his pink-and-black spotted mouth. Others show him posed with a human hand, while others feature Jimmy with black-and-white sketches of simple objects or scenes - a piano keyboard, antlers, cartoon characters. They've come a long way since

people demanded that Mantesso muzzle the pit bull. "People still cross the street when they see Jimmy, but now it's to ask if they can take pictures with him," he said, adding that Jimmy's received fan mail from over 100 countries. His planned Jimmy Foundation will fund pet food drives, spay and neuter clinics and adoption campaigns at shelters throughout Brazil. He doesn't accept every endorsement offer, but he did say yes to Netflix, the Jimmy Choo fashion house and Porsche. "They want my dog to drive a Porsche convertible. I said, 'Come on, I want to drive it too.'" —AP



This August 2015 photo portion of this image by Ana Slika provided by Rafael Mantesso shows Mantesso and his dog Jimmy Choo with thought bubble added Mantesso at his studio in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.



This photo shows his bull terrier, Jimmy Choo, with a piano keyboard that Mantesso has drawn in on the floor around him, at his studio in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.—AP photos

## Murakami's aged men show Japan's post-disaster spirituality

In the gentrified kitsch landscape Takashi Murakami depicts, 500 grotesque priests parade along dazzlingly colorful giant panels. The artist's zany ukiyoe-turned-manga world takes a spiritual, but uncompromising pop art, turn in addressing the 2011 tsunami and nuclear disaster. But the old men in "The 500 Arhats" installation at Mori Art Museum in Tokyo also show reality in the world's fastest aging society. "This is a self-portrait of Japan," Murakami told The Associated Press this week. Dubbed the "Andy Warhol of Japan," Murakami is showing his first major retrospective in Japan in 14 years. After the Fukushima

disaster, Murakami felt a need to express the sense of desperation and catastrophe, and to try to contribute to healing. The motif of Buddha's disciples is common in traditional Japanese art. But Murakami's arhat figures leer back at the world, some with toothless grins, as though stuck in half-crazed greed rather than seeking enlightenment. The giant panels, 100 meters (328 feet) long in total, are covered with raging fire and glitter-speckled cosmic skies. Dragons strike contorted poses, next to elephants and a white tiger. And there are lots and lots of aging men, of various sizes and shapes, with pot bellies, bald heads

and wrinkled foreheads.

### Edo-period artists

"In another era, I'd be a grandpa," said Murakami, 53. "My art has always been about exaggerating the weird characteristics of Japanese society." Art historian Nobuo Tsuji, who encouraged Murakami to tackle the arhats theme, says the work pays homage to Edo-period artists like Jakuchu Ito, Shohaku Soga and Kazunobu Kano. But ultimately the images of the old men are nothing other than "unadorned self-portraits of Murakami himself," Tsuji said. The pony-tailed bespectacled Murakami has exhibited at the Rockefeller Center in New York, the Palace of Versailles in France and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. He uses dozens of assistants to create large-scale artworks - often with repetitive themes, be it laughing flowers, psychedelic skulls or deformed old men. They work in his version of Warhol's Factory, though he stresses gorgeous celebrities don't frequent the studio that's run more like a humble Japanese manufacturing company. His signature icon is the Mickey Mouse-like Mr. DOB. Murakami has also created huge erotic sculptures of animation-inspired female figures that have fetched enormous auction prices. In recent years, he has become a filmmaker.

criticism for his unabashed commercialism, starting his own brand Kaikai Kiki Co, which sells not just the usual postcards and art books, but also mugs, cushions, cell-phone cases and T-shirts emblazoned with his designs, as well as figures and dolls. In his typically defiance, Murakami recommends exhibit viewers keep their serious spirituality to about 30 percent of their energy, and revel in tourism, splurging and fun for the rest. The official shop that's part of the exhibit is taking orders for a 486,000 yen (\$4,000) tote bag with Murakami's skull design, complete with a certificate. Murakami designed Louis Vuitton bags about a

decade ago that sold for similarly exorbitant prices, although Murakami acknowledged at the time he had never owned such an expensive bag in his life. At the museum coffee shop, where walls are splashed with Murakami flowers and his balloon figures hang from the ceiling, visitors enjoy a selection of cakes and omelets in flower shapes. At the entrance stands a striking life-size likeness of Murakami, with rolling eyes and moving lips - except the top face is peeling off to reveal yet another face - an eerie reminder that art, like life and truth, can be illusory.—AP



Japanese artist Takashi Murakami poses with one of his works.



Japanese artist Takashi Murakami poses in front of part of his work titled "The 500 Arhats" exhibited at Mori Art Museum in Tokyo.—AP photos

**Sense of perspective**  
Murakami has won both praise and

# REGULATORS GET INPUT ON SELF-DRIVING CAR ROLLOUT

## AGENCY PLANS TO DRAFT PRECEDENT-SETTING REGULATIONS

**SACRAMENTO:** California regulators deciding how to permit the future rollout of self-driving cars have been told by consumer advocates that their cautious approach was right on, and by companies developing the technology that the current course will delay deployment of vehicles that promise huge safety benefits. The state's Department of Motor Vehicles heard the comments Thursday at a workshop as it wrestles with how to keep the public safe as the imperfect technology matures - but not regulate so heavily that the agency stifles development of the vehicles.

The agency sought suggestions of possible changes to a draft of precedent-setting regulations it released last month. Those regulations will govern how Californians can get the cars once companies move beyond their current testing of prototypes.

Because California has been a hotbed for the development and regulation of the technology, what happens in the state has ripple effects nationally.

What the DMV had hoped would be a technical discussion Thursday about legal language instead drifted toward broad statements about the technology's merits.

Most vocal were advocates for the blind - a group that has not been central to the regulatory debate. Several argued the technology could change their lives, and the agency should not get in the way.

"Please don't leave my family out in the waiting room," said Jessie Lorenz, who is blind and relies on public transit to get her 4-year-old daughter to preschool. Lorenz would prefer to use a self-driving car for that - or even a "spontaneous road trip."

She said she has taken a ride in a self-driving car that Google Inc. has been developing, "and it was awesome." DMV attorney Brian Soublet said the agency appreciates the potential benefits for disabled people, but its focus has to be on the safety of the entire motoring public.

Google wants California to clear the road for the technology - and has expressed disappointment in the DMV's draft regulations, which say self-driving cars must have a steering wheel in case onboard computers or sensors fail. A licensed driver would need to sit in the driver's seat, ready to seize control. "We need to be careful about the assumption that having a person behind the wheel" will make driving safer, Chris Urmson, the leader of Google's self-driving car project, told the agency.

Google has concluded that human error is the biggest danger in driving, and the company wants to remove the steering wheel and pedals from cars of the future, giving people minimal ability to intervene.

Urmson said that if the draft regulations are not changed, Google's car would not be available in California. While Google has been testing on roads here for several years - with trained safety drivers behind the wheel, just in case - it might deploy cars without steering wheels in Texas, where regulators hailed the technology when Google began testing prototypes there last summer.

California's DMV is still months away from finalizing any regulations. Under the draft framework, an independent certifier would need to verify a manufacturer's assurances that its cars are safe. Google and tradi-



**MOUNTAIN VIEW:** Google's new self-driving car during a demonstration at the Google campus in Mountain View. — AP

tional automakers want manufacturer self-certification, the standard for other cars.

Once a company receives that verification, manufacturers would receive a permit for three years. Consumers could lease the cars, but manufacturers would be required to keep tabs on how safely they are driving and report that performance to the state. Drivers would need special, manufacturer-provided training, and then get a special certification on their licenses.

If a car breaks the law, the driver would be responsible. John Simpson of the non-profit Consumer Watchdog commended the DMV on Thursday "for putting safety first. I think you got it exactly right" in the draft, he said. Earlier this month, federal officials announced an aggressive plan to get the technology to the public's hands sooner than later. In written guidance, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, projected that "fully automated vehicles are nearing the point at which widespread deployment is feasible."

It remains unclear just how the bullish federal approach will affect California's reg-

ulatory process.

Neither Google nor traditional automakers have said they think the cars are ready yet, but at least a dozen companies are developing the technology and nearly as many have permission to test in California. Google has suggested a model could be ready for limited use sooner than the public realizes. Several times during Thursday's workshop, DMV officials urged commenters to offer specific changes to the draft regulations, sometimes in reaction to comments that the regulations fell short.

Speaker Curt Augustine of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers said his organization did not agree with the DMV's third-party certification requirement.

DMV attorney Soublet asked for proposed fixes, invoking a saying his father told him: It only takes one wrecking ball to demolish a house, but a whole crew to build one. The agency has been working on regulations for testing and now deployment for nearly three years - and regulations on deployment were supposed to be final a year ago. — AP



**MADRID:** A man, right, looks at a robot during the Global Robot Expo fair in Madrid on Thursday. During the four days fair experts from the public and private sector show their technology achievements in the robotic sector. — AP

## SONY SAYS BRACING FOR SMARTPHONE SLOWDOWN AFTER SENSOR SALES DIP

**TOKYO:** Sony Corp, widely regarded as a key supplier of image sensors for Apple Inc's iPhones, said yesterday it was bracing for a slowdown in the premium smartphone market after sales of its sensors fell in the third quarter.

Videogame sales and cost cuts in Sony's flagging mobile unit pushed October-December operating profit up 11 percent, beating analyst estimates, but the firm confirmed a much-feared hit to a segment that in recent quarters helped it shake off years of losses. "Demand for image sensors from certain customers has slowed since November due to a slowdown in the high-end smartphone market," Chief Financial Officer Kenichiro Yoshida told reporters at a briefing, without naming the clients.

Worries about weaker iPhone sales and a slowdown in China's smartphone market - the world's biggest - have weighed on Sony shares in recent weeks. The stock closed up 6.1 percent ahead of earnings, still down around 16 percent since the start of 2016. Yoshida said Sony was planning its budget for the next year assuming a fall in global demand for high-end smartphones. Sony also said October-December sales of devices, including image sensors, fell 13 percent from a year earlier. The segment, also hit by weak battery sales, booked a loss of 11.7 billion yen compared with a 53.8 billion yen profit in the year prior.

In addition to image sensors, Sony has depended on cost cuts and strong sales of PlayStation 4 games to improve its bottom line over the past year. The two factors helped its fiscal third-quarter operating profit rise 11 percent from a year earlier to 202.1 billion yen (\$1.68 billion), beating the average 175 billion yen forecast of 8 analysts according to Thomson Reuters data.

It said quarterly sales of its game and network services division rose 11 percent, helped by strong holiday sales of PlayStation 4 videogames. It raised its full-year forecast for the division to an operating profit of 85 billion yen from an October forecast of 80 billion. — Reuters

## AMAZON DELIVERS BIG PROFITS BUT SHARES DIVE

**SAN FRANCISCO:** US online giant Amazon on Thursday reported profits doubled in the past quarter, as it attracted more customers with video and other services, but the results missed Wall Street forecasts.

Amazon shares dived more than 13 percent to \$551 in after-hours trade on the results, which showed a fourth-quarter profit of \$482 million, up from a \$214 million profit a year earlier. The results marked the third consecutive quarterly profit for the company, which is a heavyweight in online retail as well as cloud computing, and more recently streaming video. Overall revenue jumped 22 percent from a year ago to \$35.7 billion. Amazon was one of the "clear winners" in the battle for consumers' money during the year-end holiday season, according to Neil Saunders, chief of retail analysis firm Conlumino.

But while Amazon delivered "stellar topline performance" along with improving net income, its profitability "is still painfully weak," Saunders said. "This is a conscious decision by a company that uses a large chunk of its revenues to invest back into generating future growth," Saunders said. "Clearly this is a strategy that is working, and it is one that is accepted by the market."

He gave the example of Amazon putting competitive pressure on traditional retail players such as Walmart. Investors looking for big profits may be put off by Amazon investing heavily to build its businesses, from data centers for cloud services and shows for its streaming television service to developing drones to quickly deliver online purchases. Amazon, which earned a reputation for making little or no profit as it gained market share, managed an annual profit for 2015 of \$596 million. Revenues were up 20 percent for the year, at \$107 billion.

### 'Like day one'

"Twenty years ago I was driving the packages to the post office myself and hoping we might one day afford a forklift," said chief executive Jeff Bezos, who founded the company in 1994.

"This year, we pass \$100 billion in annual sales and serve 300 million customers. And still, measured by the dynamism we see everywhere in the marketplace and by the ever-expanding opportunities we see to invent on behalf of customers, it feels every bit like day one." Amazon has made Bezos into one of the world's wealthiest individuals, with a fortune estimated at some \$50 billion, and he has since created his own space company called Blue Origin and purchased The Washington Post newspaper. — AFP

## GOOGLE PARENT ALPHABET MAY SOON TOP APPLE'S MARKET VALUE

**SAN FRANCISCO:** As the digital advertising market booms and demand for smartphones wanes, Alphabet Inc. could soon dethrone Apple as the world's most valuable company.

If it happens, Alphabet will move to the head of the class just five months after Google reorganized itself under the holding company. The Silicon Valley rivals could trade places as early as Friday, given how rapidly the financial gap between them is narrowing. At the end of trading on Thursday, Apple's market value stood at \$522 billion; Alphabet was worth \$515 billion.

That's a dramatic swing from where things stood just 13 months ago. Apple then boasted a market value of \$643 billion, almost twice Google Inc's \$361 billion. Since then, investors have soured on Apple Inc. The company has struggled to come up with another trend-setting product amid slumping sales of its most important device - the nearly 9-year-old iPhone, which accounts for roughly two-thirds of Apple's overall sales.

Apple has already acknowledged the iPhone will begin this year with its first quarterly sales decline since it debuted in 2007. The slowdown helped push down Apple's stock price by 15 percent since the end of 2014. In contrast, Google has maintained its leadership in the lucrative Internet search and ad market while building other popular products in video, mobile, web browsing, email and mapping. That bundle of Google services brings in most of Alphabet's revenue, and is expected to deliver growth in the 15 percent to 20 percent range as marketers shift even more of their budgets to digital services.

Alphabet also has impressed investors by reining in its spending. Google hired a Wall Street veteran, Ruth Porat, as its chief financial officer last May. In addition to reversing a long expansion of Google's operating expenses, Porat also persuaded Alphabet's board to spend \$5 billion buying back its own stock. That move signaled a more shareholder-friendly approach to managing the company's cash hoard.

Investors also have applauded the creation of Alphabet,



**Google's headquarters in Mountain View, California. Alphabet Inc is poised to move to head of the corporate class just five months after Google created its new holding company. — AP**

which is structured to provide more information about the cost of the company's experimental ventures into self-driving cars, Internet access services, health science and city management. All of those factors have helped lift Alphabet's stock - previously Google's - by 41 percent since the end of 2014. It's a potentially big shift for Apple, which has held bragging rights as the world's most valuable company for most of the past four-and-a-half years. (ExxonMobil seized the high ground for a brief time in 2013.)

Alphabet would become the 12th company to rise to the most valuable spot, according to Standard & Poor's. BGP Financial analyst Colin Gillis believes the potential changing of the guard reflects a wider recognition that Alphabet is fostering a "culture of innovation" while Apple has lost some of its magic since the October 2011 death of co-founder and former CEO Steve Jobs. "I no longer see a sense of urgency at Apple," Gillis said. If Alphabet doesn't surpass Apple's market value on Friday, it could do so early next week after it releases fourth-quarter earnings on Monday. Investors expect a big quarter after Google's closest competitor in digital ads, Facebook Inc., announced that its revenue soared 52 percent in the period. — AP



**SAN FRANCISCO:** A man walks past a Microsoft sign set up for the Microsoft BUILD conference at Moscone Center in San Francisco. Microsoft reported financial earnings on Thursday. —AP

## MICROSOFT'S SECRET WEAPON FOR GROWTH IN THE CLOUD

MICROSOFT CLOUD TO DRIVE TRANSFORMATION AGENDAS: NADELLA

**SAN FRANCISCO:** In reporting better-than-expected fourth quarter earnings Thursday, Microsoft Corp CEO Satya Nadella touted his company's success in the cloud. "Businesses everywhere are using the Microsoft Cloud as their digital platform to drive their ambitious transformation agendas," he said.

What he didn't mention was the role that one of the company's much older products played in the success of this new technology: Microsoft Exchange Server, which many of the world's largest companies rely on for email services.

When companies begin moving data to the cloud, typically a network of servers managed by an outside company, a common first step is to move email, often with other office software tools but sometimes on its own. For companies already relying on Microsoft Exchange and Outlook for sending and receiving email, information technology managers say, turning to the same company to handle that data in the cloud seems like a logical move.

That's what happened at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. The school was looking to streamline its technology by moving to the cloud, starting with email, because it is "a pain to operate," said Bob Plankers, a virtualization architect at the university. "Aside from email servers, you need to worry about spam and virus scanning," he added.

For the transition, Plankers said he chose Microsoft's cloud-based Office 365 product because the university already used Outlook. "It's just a really natural thing," said Matt McIlwain, an investor at Madrona Venture Group, about companies starting their cloud transition with email and other widely used office software from Microsoft. "It's easier and can be more cost effective to run it on the cloud, and let Microsoft worry about your Exchange servers." Such thinking helps explain how Microsoft has become the second largest provider of cloud infrastructure, services and software, well ahead of Salesforce,

Oracle and Google, according to a Goldman Sachs analysis.

The company announced Thursday that it was on track to generate \$9.4 billion in annual cloud-based revenue, up from \$5.5 billion a year ago. Microsoft remains far behind market leader Amazon, but it has become the fastest-growing major cloud provider. Its key Azure business has more than doubled year on year, well above the 65 percent growth rate of market leader Amazon, according to Goldman.

Microsoft has worked hard to exploit the advantage its mail software provides. "Maybe one of the first steps is you want to move your email. That's fine," says Takeshi Numoto, corporate vice president for cloud and enterprise marketing. "That gets us more opportunity to engage with customers."

Investor McIlwain called that strategy smart, because customers who move their Outlook email to Microsoft's cloud typically use a Microsoft directory service that controls access to that email. It then becomes

simple to use that same directory to provide designated employees access to other data and services that are later moved to Microsoft's cloud. The strategy isn't fool-proof, however. Over seven months last year, Clif Bar, an Oakland, Calif.-based snack provider, moved all its Outlook email, along with other applications like document management and workflow, to Azure. The company nevertheless moved its enterprise resource management to the cloud services of another longtime partner: Oracle.

As cloud services rapidly expand, Microsoft will have to demonstrate that its products are equal to, or better than, those of its competitors in both quality and price.

Currently, many companies favor Microsoft because it offers more flexibility in terms of moving software around, say from a company's own data center to the one it has outsourced to Azure, said Frank Gillett, an analyst at Forrester Research. But Amazon's AWS offers more types of tools, and has a longer track record selling cloud services, he said. — Reuters

## APPLE RECALLS WALL PLUG ADAPTERS SOLD OUTSIDE US

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Apple on Thursday announced a recall of 12 years' worth of wall plug adapters it sold outside the United States, warning of the risk of electric shock. The recall was sparked by the danger of the two-prong AC wall plug adapters breaking and shocking people who touch them, the California-based technology giant said in an online post.

Apple said that it was aware of 12 incidents worldwide involving the adapters. The units targeted in the recall were designed for use in Argentina, Brazil, much of Europe, New Zealand and South Korea. They were sold with Mac computers, Apple mobile gadgets and in an

Apple World Travel Adapter Kit between 2003 and 2015.

Apple did not specify the number of adapters at issue, but it could be high given the 12-year span and the popularity of the company's devices. People were advised to stop using the adapters and bring them to an Apple shop for replacement. The recall did not affect Apple power adapters tailored for Canada, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Britain or the United States, according to the company.

Details about which adapters are involved and how to replace them were posted online at [apple.com/support/ac-wallplug-adapter](http://apple.com/support/ac-wallplug-adapter). — AFP



- 00:20 World's Scariest
- 01:10 Fast N' Loud
- 02:00 Street Outlaws
- 02:50 Street Outlaws
- 03:40 How Machines Work
- 06:00 Misfit Garage
- 10:10 Gold Rush
- 11:00 Gold Divers
- 11:50 Catching Monsters
- 12:40 The Liquidator
- 14:45 Storage Wars Canada
- 16:50 Alaskan Bush People
- 17:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier
- 18:30 Mythbusters
- 19:20 You Have Been Warned
- 20:10 You Have Been Warned
- 21:00 Alaskan Bush People
- 21:50 Alaska: The Last Frontier
- 22:40 Railroad Alaska
- 23:30 Superhuman Science
- 23:55 Superhuman Science



- 00:35 Mythbusters
- 01:20 How It's Made
- 01:44 How It's Made
- 02:08 Strangest Weather On Earth
- 02:55 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 03:42 How The Universe Works
- 04:29 Mythbusters
- 05:16 Strangest Weather On Earth
- 06:03 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 06:50 Prototype This
- 07:37 How Do They Do It?
- 08:00 How Do They Do It?
- 08:23 How It's Made
- 09:53 How It's Made: Dream Cars
- 10:38 How It's Made
- 12:08 Prototype This
- 15:57 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 19:50 Strangest Weather On Earth
- 20:40 Curiosity: Megastorm
- 21:25 Storm Chasers
- 23:45 How The Universe Works



- 00:40 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 01:30 The Haunted
- 02:20 Ghost Lab
- 03:10 Serial Killers
- 04:00 Deadly Devotion
- 04:45 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 05:30 The Haunted
- 06:20 Deadly Affairs
- 07:10 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
- 08:00 Fatal Encounters
- 08:50 Disappeared
- 10:30 On The Case With Paula Zahn
- 12:10 The Will
- 13:50 California Investigator
- 14:40 Dr G: Medical Examiner
- 16:20 On The Case With Paula Zahn
- 17:10 Disappeared
- 18:50 California Investigator
- 19:40 Deadly Affairs
- 23:00 Swamp Murders
- 23:50 Deadly Women



- 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 Sofia The First

- 06:50 That's So Raven
- 07:15 Gravity Falls
- 07:40 Jessie
- 08:05 Shake It Up
- 08:55 That's So Raven
- 09:45 Jessie
- 10:10 I Love Violetta
- 10:25 Meet The Robinsons
- 12:00 Violetta Recipes
- 12:20 Jessie
- 12:45 Jessie
- 13:10 Liv And Maddie
- 14:00 Austin & Ally
- 14:55 Lolirock
- 15:20 I Didn't Do It
- 16:10 Best Friends Whenever
- 17:00 Girl Meets World
- 17:50 I Love Violetta
- 18:00 Pocahontas II: Journey To A New World
- 19:20 Violetta Recipes
- 19:30 Gravity Falls
- 19:55 Dog With A Blog
- 20:20 Mako Mermaids
- 20:45 Good Luck Charlie
- 21:10 Good Luck Charlie
- 21:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
- 22:00 Binny And The Ghost
- 22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 23:10 Wolfblood



- 00:00 House Of DVF
- 00:55 The Grace Helbig Show
- 01:25 Hollywood Cycle
- 02:20 E! News
- 03:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 04:10 E! Entertainment Special
- 06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 07:50 Style Star
- 08:20 E! News
- 09:15 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
- 11:10 New Money
- 12:05 E! News
- 13:05 Stewarts And Hamiltons
- 14:05 Hollywood Cycle
- 16:00 WAGs
- 18:00 E! News
- 19:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 20:00 Dash Dolls
- 21:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
- 22:00 E! News
- 23:00 The Soup



- 00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 01:00 Ching's Amazing Asia
- 02:00 Jenny Morris Cooks The Riviera
- 02:30 Jenny Morris Cooks The Riviera
- 03:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 06:00 Chopped
- 07:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 08:00 Chopped
- 09:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes
- 10:00 The Kitchen
- 12:00 Chopped
- 13:00 Guy's Big Bite
- 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 17:00 Chopped
- 18:00 Siba's Table
- 19:00 Staten Island Cakes
- 20:00 Chopped
- 21:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 22:00 Man v Food
- 23:00 BBQ Crawl
- 23:30 BBQ Crawl



- 00:10 Vera
- 02:00 Emmerdale
- 04:45 Coronation Street
- 07:05 Pick Me!
- 08:50 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
- 09:45 Midsomer Murders
- 11:20 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 12:15 Safe House
- 13:10 Vera
- 15:00 Endeavour
- 16:45 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 17:40 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
- 18:35 Coach Trip
- 19:00 Endeavour
- 20:45 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 21:40 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
- 22:30 Coach Trip
- 23:00 Coronation Street



- 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers

- 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 18:00 The Muppets
- 18:30 Dr. Ken
- 19:30 Life In Pieces
- 20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers



- 00:00 Salem
- 01:00 Grey's Anatomy
- 02:00 Dominion
- 03:00 Top Gear (US)
- 04:00 American Idol
- 07:00 Drop Dead Diva
- 09:00 American Idol
- 11:00 Drop Dead Diva
- 12:00 Dominion
- 13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 16:00 Live Good Morning America
- 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 19:00 Grey's Anatomy
- 20:00 Stitches
- 22:00 The Blacklist
- 23:00 Minority Report



- 00:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 01:00 Good Morning America
- 03:00 Satisfaction
- 04:00 Olive Kitteridge
- 05:00 Good Morning America
- 07:00 Top Gear (US)
- 08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 09:00 Supernatural
- 10:00 Top Gear (US)
- 11:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 12:00 Resurrection
- 13:00 Shark Tank
- 14:00 Supernatural
- 15:00 Survivor: Cambodia
- 16:00 The Voice
- 18:00 Shark Tank
- 19:00 Supernatural
- 21:00 Resurrection
- 21:00 Shark Tank



- 00:00 Predator 2
- 02:00 No Tell Motel

- 04:00 Justice League: Throne Of Atlantis
- 05:45 Star Trek
- 08:00 Stranded
- 10:00 Superfast
- 12:00 Rush Hour 2
- 14:00 Justice League vs. Bizarro League
- 15:30 Star Trek
- 18:00 Stranded
- 20:00 Rush Hour 2
- 22:00 Falcon Rising



- 00:00 No Tell Motel-18
- 02:00 Justice League: Throne Of Atlantis-PG15
- 03:45 Star Trek-PG15
- 06:00 Stranded-PG15
- 08:00 Superfast-PG15
- 10:00 Rush Hour 2-PG15
- 12:00 Justice League vs. Bizarro League-PG15
- 13:30 Star Trek-PG15
- 16:00 Stranded-PG15
- 18:00 Rush Hour 2-PG15
- 20:00 Falcon Rising-PG15
- 22:00 Four Brothers-PG15



- 00:00 Stand Up Guys
- 02:00 Blues Brothers 2000
- 04:00 Mr. Wonderful
- 06:00 When In Rome
- 08:00 The Devil Wears Prada
- 10:00 Mr. Wonderful
- 12:00 Blues Brothers 2000
- 14:00 Simon Birch
- 16:00 The Devil Wears Prada
- 18:00 Tooth Fairy
- 20:00 Fading Gigolo
- 22:00 The Hooligan Factory



- 01:00 The Wee Man-PG15
- 03:00 Not Fade Away-PG15
- 05:00 10 Years-PG15
- 07:00 Late Bloomers-PG15
- 09:00 Middle Of Nowhere-PG15
- 11:00 10 Years-PG15
- 13:00 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The

- Strike-PG15
- 15:00 A Valentine's Date-PG15
- 17:00 Middle Of Nowhere-PG15
- 19:00 Ask Me Anything-PG15
- 21:00 Miss Meadows-PG15
- 23:00 Only God Forgives-18



- 00:45 Beloved
- 03:45 1911
- 05:30 Sleepless In Seattle
- 07:15 Siberian Education
- 09:00 A Civil Action
- 11:00 Sleepless In Seattle
- 13:00 The Man Who Would Be King
- 15:30 The Nightmare Before Christmas
- 17:00 A Civil Action
- 19:00 A Mighty Heart
- 21:00 Blue Ruin
- 22:45 Her



- 01:15 The Purge: Anarchy-PG15
- 03:15 Step Up All In-PG15
- 05:15 Louder Than Words-PG15
- 07:00 From Up On Poppy Hill-PG
- 09:00 Hercules-PG15
- 11:00 Into The Woods-PG
- 13:15 Night At The Museum: Secret Of The Tomb-PG
- 15:15 Postman Pat: The Movie-PG
- 17:00 Hercules-PG15
- 19:00 Edge Of Tomorrow-PG15
- 21:00 Young Ones-PG15
- 23:00 Home Sweet Hell-18



- 01:15 Worms
- 02:45 True Story Of Puss'n Boots
- 04:15 Back To The Sea
- 06:00 The Unbeatable
- 08:00 Mamma Moo And Crow
- 09:45 The Adventurer: The Curse Of The Midas Box
- 11:30 Jungle Book: Mowgli's Adventure
- 13:00 True Story Of Puss'n Boots
- 14:30 Bamse And The City Of Thieves
- 16:00 Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius
- 18:00 The Adventurer: The Curse Of



NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM- SECRET OF THE TOMB ON OSN MOVIES HD



SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 2016

The Midas Box  
 20:00 Curious George: Back To The Jungle  
 22:00 Bamse And The City Of Thieves  
 23:30 Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius

**OSN MOVIES HD**  
**PREMIERE**

00:00 Disconnect-PG15  
 02:15 Justice League: War-PG15  
 03:45 Miss Julie-PG15  
 06:00 Barefoot-PG15  
 08:00 Rio 2-FAM  
 10:00 Forget And Forgive-PG15  
 11:45 Need For Speed-PG15  
 14:00 Quartet-PG15  
 16:00 Rio 2-FAM  
 18:00 Penthouse North-PG15  
 20:00 If I Stay-PG15  
 22:00 Men, Women & Children-18

**AMC**

03:05 Shadows On The Wall  
 04:40 Of Mice And Men  
 06:30 Hoosiers  
 08:25 The Great Escape  
 11:15 Clifford  
 12:45 Music Of The Heart  
 14:50 Duplex  
 16:20 Impromptu  
 18:05 George Washington  
 19:35 Puckoon  
 21:00 Fear The Walking Dead  
 22:00 Breaking Bad  
 23:00 Capote  
 00:55 Stand By Me  
 02:25 Cold Mountain

**ci**

03:00 Crimes That Shook Britain  
 04:00 Crime Stories  
 05:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos  
 07:00 Frenemies  
 07:30 Frenemies  
 08:00 After The First 48  
 10:00 The FBI Files  
 12:00 Private Crimes  
 15:00 I Killed My BFF  
 20:00 I Married My Killer  
 21:00 Motive For Murder  
 22:00 Ms. Murder  
 23:00 Born To Kill  
 01:00 The Haunting Of...  
 02:00 Celebrity Ghost Stories

**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  
 09:55 The Hive  
 10:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse  
 10:35 Doc McStuffins  
 11:00 Sofia The First  
 11:30 Captain Jake And The Never Land Pirates  
 12:00 Miles From Tomorrow  
 14:00 Sofia The First  
 14:25 Doc McStuffins  
 14:50 Henry Hugglemonster  
 15:15 Zou  
 15:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse  
 15:55 Loopdidoo  
 16:10 Miles From Tomorrow  
 16:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates



**RUSH HOUR 2 ON OSN MOVIES ACTON HD**

17:00 Sofia The First  
 17:25 Jungle Cubs  
 17:50 Aladdin  
 18:15 Gummi Bears  
 18:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates  
 19:05 Miles From Tomorrow  
 19:30 Sofia The First  
 19:55 Doc McStuffins  
 20:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates  
 20:45 Sheriff Callie's Wild West  
 21:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse  
 21:35 Sofia The First  
 22:00 Jungle Cubs  
 22:25 Aladdin  
 22:50 Gummi Bears  
 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

Everything  
 20:55 K. C. Undercover  
 21:20 Supa Strikas  
 21:45 Lab Rats  
 22:10 Mighty Med  
 22:40 Super Matrak  
 23:05 Super Matrak  
 23:30 Boyster  
 00:00 Programmes Start At 7:00am  
 KSA  
 E! Entertainment  
 03:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
 04:10 E! Entertainment Special  
 05:05 E! Entertainment Special  
 06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
 06:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
 07:50 Style Star  
 08:20 E! News  
 09:15 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills  
 10:15 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills  
 11:10 New Money  
 11:35 New Money  
 12:05 E! News  
 13:05 Stewarts And Hamiltons  
 14:05 Hollywood Cycle  
 15:00 Hollywood Cycle  
 16:00 WAGs  
 17:00 WAGs  
 18:00 E! News  
 19:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
 20:00 Dash Dolls  
 21:00 Christina Milian Turned Up  
 22:00 E! News

16:30 Big Rig Bounty Hunters  
 17:00 Pawn Stars  
 17:30 Pawn Stars  
 18:00 Pawn Stars  
 18:30 Pawn Stars  
 19:00 Pawn Stars  
 19:30 Pawn Stars  
 20:00 Search For The Lost Giants  
 21:00 Ax Men  
 22:00 Swamp People  
 23:00 Storage Wars Texas  
 23:30 Storage Wars: Best Of  
 00:00 Outlaw Chronicles: Hells Angels  
 01:00 The Curse Of Oak Island  
 02:00 Search For The Lost Giants

**nickelodeon HD**

03:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
 03:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
 03:48 Henry Danger  
 04:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn  
 04:36 The Haunted Hathaways  
 05:00 Winx Club  
 05:24 Henry Danger  
 05:48 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn  
 06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants  
 06:36 SpongeBob SquarePants  
 07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
 07:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
 07:48 Sanjay And Craig  
 08:12 Harvey Beaks  
 08:36 Breadwinners  
 09:00 Get Blake  
 09:24 Rabbids Invasion  
 09:48 Henry Danger  
 10:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn  
 10:36 The Haunted Hathaways  
 11:00 Winx Club  
 11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants  
 11:48 SpongeBob SquarePants  
 12:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
 12:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
 13:00 Breadwinners  
 13:24 Breadwinners  
 13:48 Get Blake  
 14:12 Rabbids Invasion  
 14:36 100 Things To Do Before High School  
 15:00 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn  
 15:24 SpongeBob SquarePants  
 15:48 SpongeBob SquarePants  
 16:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
 16:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
 17:00 Sanjay And Craig  
 17:24 Harvey Beaks  
 17:48 Breadwinners  
 18:12 Henry Danger  
 18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn  
 19:00 100 Things To Do Before High School

School  
 19:24 Max & Shred  
 19:48 SpongeBob SquarePants  
 20:12 SpongeBob SquarePants  
 20:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
 21:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
 21:24 Breadwinners  
 21:48 Breadwinners  
 22:12 Sanjay And Craig  
 22:36 Sanjay And Craig  
 23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants  
 23:24 SpongeBob SquarePants  
 23:48 Henry Danger  
 00:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn  
 00:36 Max & Shred  
 01:00 100 Things To Do Before High School  
 01:24 Sanjay And Craig  
 01:48 Sanjay And Craig  
 02:12 SpongeBob SquarePants  
 02:36 SpongeBob SquarePants

**sundance CHANNEL**

04:15 Letter's From The South  
 06:00 Adonis  
 06:15 Movie Talk  
 06:40 Drunk Stoned Brilliant Dead  
 08:20 Miss Firecracker  
 10:00 Hopscotch  
 11:45 The Odds  
 13:15 The Strongest Man  
 16:25 Cloro  
 18:00 Hopscotch  
 19:45 The Odds  
 21:15 Writers' Room  
 21:45 The Strongest Man  
 23:25 Chorus  
 01:00 Bob And The Trees  
 02:40 The Wolfpack  
 02:55 The Wolfpack

**TLC HD**

03:15 My Strange Addiction  
 03:40 My Strange Addiction  
 04:05 World's Worst Mum  
 05:00 World's Worst Mum  
 06:00 Say Yes To The Dress: Ai Bridesmaids  
 06:25 Extreme I Do's  
 07:15 My Giant Life  
 08:05 Randy To The Rescue  
 08:55 Randy To The Rescue  
 09:45 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners...  
 10:35 7 Little Johnstons  
 11:00 7 Little Johnstons  
 11:25 Jon & Kate Plus 8

11:50 Jon & Kate Plus 8  
 13:30 My Big Fat Fabulous Life  
 14:20 Belief  
 15:10 Cake Boss  
 17:15 The Autistic Gardener  
 18:05 Oprah: Where Are They Now?  
 18:55 Cake Boss  
 19:20 Curvy Brides  
 20:10 My Giant Life  
 21:00 Belief  
 21:50 Oprah: Where Are They Now?  
 22:40 Long Island Medium  
 23:05 Botched Up Bodies  
 00:45 My Big Fat Fabulous Life  
 01:10 My Big Fat Fabulous Life  
 01:35 7 Little Johnstons  
 02:00 7 Little Johnstons  
 02:25 Long Island Medium  
 02:50 Long Island Medium

**ANIMAL PLANET HD**

00:50 River Monsters  
 01:45 Call Of The Wildman  
 02:10 Call Of The Wildman  
 02:40 River Monsters  
 03:35 Tanked  
 04:25 The Lion Man  
 04:50 The Lion Man  
 05:15 Gator Boys  
 06:02 Treehouse Masters  
 06:49 River Monsters  
 07:36 Call Of The Wildman  
 08:00 Call Of The Wildman  
 08:25 Treehouse Masters  
 09:15 Treehouse Masters  
 10:10 Treehouse Masters  
 11:05 Treehouse Masters  
 12:00 Treehouse Masters  
 12:55 Snake Sheila  
 13:20 Snake Sheila  
 13:50 Lion Man: One World African Safari  
 14:20 Lion Man: One World African Safari  
 14:45 Wild Dog Island  
 15:40 Secret Creatures Of Jao  
 16:10 Secret Creatures Of Jao  
 16:35 Natural World  
 17:30 The Lion Man  
 17:55 The Lion Man  
 18:25 Wild Things With Dominic Monaghan  
 19:20 Penguins On A Plane: Great Animal Moves  
 20:15 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet  
 21:10 River Monsters  
 22:05 Dog Rescuers  
 23:00 Penguins On A Plane: Great Animal Moves

**HISTORY HD**

07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil  
 07:25 K. C. Undercover  
 07:50 Supa Strikas  
 08:15 Lab Rats  
 08:40 Rocket Monkeys  
 09:10 Kirby Buckets  
 09:35 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything  
 10:00 Supa Strikas  
 13:00 Phineas And Ferb The Movie  
 14:20 Kickin' It  
 14:45 Kickin' It  
 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 Star vs The Forces Of Evil  
 20:00 Kirby Buckets  
 20:25 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything  
 03:00 Pawn Stars  
 03:30 Pawn Stars  
 04:00 American Pickers  
 05:00 Search For The Lost Giants  
 05:50 American Pickers  
 06:45 Down East Dickering  
 07:35 Storage Wars: Best Of  
 08:00 American Restoration  
 08:25 Ultimate Wheels  
 09:15 The Legend Of Shelby The Swamp Man  
 09:40 The Legend Of Shelby The Swamp Man  
 10:05 American Pickers  
 11:00 Mountain Men  
 12:00 Ax Men  
 13:00 Barry'd Treasure  
 13:30 Barry'd Treasure  
 14:00 Leepu & Pitbull  
 15:00 Counting Cars  
 15:30 Counting Cars  
 16:00 Big Rig Bounty Hunters



# Staying home on Valentine's Day is easy with these scallops



By Alison Ladman

**T**his Valentine's Day, take a pass on the expected. As in, ditch the restaurant reservations. You're just going to get overcharged for so-so food, anyway. Instead, stay home and show your lover how much you care by assembling this simple - but impressive - baked scallop dinner. The beauty is that this recipe - which bathes scallops in a cream sauce and tops them with crispy panko breadcrumbs - is easily prepped up to 24 hours ahead, then refrigerated until you are ready to serve.

When you are ready for romance, just heat the oven to 400 F and pop the individual servings in for about 10 minutes. The result is impressive enough that you won't miss the restaurant experience even a little. Just add some crusty bread and a salad and you'll have a complete meal.

## BAKED BAY SCALLOPS WITH LEMON GARLIC CREAM

### Ingredients

Start to finish: 30 minutes

Servings: 2

1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs

1 tablespoon butter, melted

Salt

2 tablespoons finely grated Parmesan cheese

2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 tablespoon lemon zest

Ground black pepper

1/2 cup heavy cream

2 cups (16 ounces) bay scallops, cleaned (any tough muscles removed)

### Preparation

In a small bowl, combine the breadcrumbs, butter, a pinch of salt and the Parmesan. In another small bowl, combine the thyme, garlic, lemon zest, a hefty pinch of black pepper and the cream. Divide the bay scallops between 2 individual gratin dishes. Pour half of the cream mixture over each dish of scallops, then sprinkle each evenly with the breadcrumbs. At this point, the scallops can be wrapped and refrigerated for up to 24 hours or baked immediately. When ready to bake, heat the oven to 400 F. Place the gratin dishes on a baking sheet. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, or until the cream is bubbling all over and the crumbs are browned. — AP

# The secret to a better baked pasta? Don't cook it



By Sara Moulton

If there's anything more comforting than boiled pasta in a sauce, it's got to be baked pasta in a sauce. The baking adds a crispy crust that is such a delicious contrast to the tender goodness of the dish.

The challenge is to how to get the pasta to turn out just right. Most baked pasta recipes instruct you to boil the noodles until cooked halfway before baking them. This allows the pasta to finish cooking in the oven as it bathes in the sauce. But this method has challenges. If you boil the noodles more than halfway, they'll be overcooked by the time you pull the finished dish out of the oven. I find it hard to get the pre-cooking time right.

And precooking the pasta, even halfway, takes work and dirties a large pot and colander. Then again, if you don't pre-cook the pasta and instead add it dry to the sauce for baking, it will take much longer to become tender in the oven, even as it absorbs all the liquid in the sauce. Dry pasta needs to hydrate.

So what's a home cook to do? Use my simple no-cook method of precooking the pasta. Just soak the pasta in warm salted water before adding it to the other ingredients and sliding the mixture into the oven. Presoaking is a way to begin hydrating the pasta and washing away some of its starch, even as the salt in the water pre-seasons the pasta.

Yes, you'll dirty a bowl, but given that that's the same vessel in which you'll combine all the dish's ingredients, it's the only bowl you'll need. The soak requires 45 minutes, but it's hands-off time, freeing you up to prep the rest of the ingredients in the meantime. Then it takes no time at all to assemble the dish and pop it into the oven. Just 20 or so minutes later

you can collect your reward: deeply-flavored baked pasta, creamy on the bottom and crispy on top. The perfect wintry entree. Add a salad and some crusty bread and be happy.

## BAKED PENNE WITH PROSCIUTTO AND FONTINA

### Ingredients

Start to finish: 1 hour 15 minutes (20 minutes active)

Servings: 6

1 pound penne pasta

Salt

Butter, for coating the baking pan

2 teaspoons minced garlic

1 cup heavy cream

2 cups low-sodium chicken broth

1 cup crushed tomatoes

1 to 2 teaspoons red pepper flakes, to taste (optional)

1 1/2 ounces finely grated Parmesan cheese

4 ounces coarsely grated fontina cheese

4 ounces thinly sliced prosciutto, chopped

### Preparation

In a large bowl, combine the pasta with enough lukewarm, well salted water to cover. Let stand for 45 minutes. Heat the oven to 450 F. Lightly butter a shallow baking dish (12-cup capacity with 2 to 2 1/2-inch sides). Drain the pasta and set aside. In the same bowl, combine all remaining ingredients, stirring well. Add the pasta, toss to combine, then season with a pinch of salt. Transfer the mixture to the prepared baking dish, pressing it down evenly. Bake on the oven's middle shelf until bubbly and browned, 20 to 22 minutes.





**RECIFE:** Three-month-old Daniel, who was born with microcephaly, undergoes physical therapy at the Altino Ventura foundation in Recife, Brazil. — AP

## TROPICAL ASIA BRACES FOR ZIKA AS THAILAND APPEARS TO STEER CLEAR VIRUS COULD 'SPREAD QUICKLY' IF INTRODUCED

**BANGKOK:** Tropical Southeast Asian countries said yesterday they were bracing for the mosquito-borne Zika virus, with Malaysia saying it could "spread quickly" if introduced, but Thailand appeared to be bucking the trend with just a handful of cases a year. Zika, linked to severe birth defects including babies born with abnormally small heads, is wreaking havoc in Brazil where the government has deployed more than 200,000 troops to eradicate mosquitoes.

The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Thursday that the virus was "spreading explosively" and could infect as many as four million people in the Americas. No treatment or vaccine is available. In Thailand, where just one case of Zika has been reported so far this year, the likelihood of Zika spreading was low, officials said, partly because of better

access to health care and because Thailand was dealing with a smaller area.

"Thailand is a medium-sized country with a good public health system and easy-to-access medical facilities," Amnuay Gajeena, director-general of the Disease Control Department said. Thailand detected its first Zika case in 2012 and has recorded an average of five cases a year, according to the Ministry of Public Health. Kriengsak Limkittikul, assistant professor at the Department of Tropical Medicine at Mahidol University in Bangkok, said there was inadequate information about Zika but that it was "only a matter of time" before more cases were reported. Thailand has confirmed one case of the virus so far this year. Earlier this month, Taiwan reported one case of Zika infection in a man from northern Thailand.

### 'No evidence of immunity'

The WHO said on Sunday the rapid spread of Zika in the Americas was due to a lack of immunity among a population that had not been previously exposed to the virus. Amnuay said there was "no technical evidence" of widespread immunity in Thailand but individuals exposed to the virus would "of course develop" antibodies as with other viruses. The Zika virus is spread through the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito responsible for dengue, yellow fever and other tropical diseases. The WHO's Western Pacific Region Office in Manila said as long as *Aedes* mosquitoes circulated in the region "it can be anticipated that the virus will emerge".

Malaysia's Health Ministry said Zika had not yet been detected. "If it is introduced by an infected Malaysian or by a visitor to Malaysia, it could spread quickly," said Lokman Hakim Sulaiman, Malaysia's Health Ministry deputy director-general. Neighbouring Singapore has not detected any Zika infections but the government said there was a high risk of transmission if cases were imported to Singapore, a regional travel hub.

In the Western Pacific, Zika was first reported in Micronesia in 2007. It was reported in French Polynesia in October 2013, and since then, a number of Pacific Island countries have reported cases, including New Caledonia, Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa. In Australia, the foreign ministry's travel advice website said there had been no reported cases of Zika. The New Zealand Herald reported on Friday that one local man had been admitted to hospital with symptoms linked to the Zika virus. The Ministry of Health said it had received nine Zika notifications this year, the newspaper reported. All of the travellers had been in the Pacific Islands and eight of them had recovered. — Reuters

## YOUNGEST ELEPHANT AT FAMED US CIRCUS DIES

**MIAMI:** Ringling Brothers, America's best-known circus, announced Thursday the death of its youngest elephant at a conservation center where it is retiring the animals after criticism from rights groups. Mike, a two-year-old, died of a virus "despite the heroic efforts of our veterinary and animal care staff," Ringling Brothers said in a statement. Animal rights group Peta said that the elephant's death was "no surprise." Ashley Settles, Ringling's director of veterinary care, said the illness progressed aggressively with Mike beginning to show symptoms on Saturday and dying by Monday. "No one knows why the virus manifests this way in some elephants, since most elephants harbor the virus and never become ill,"

she said.

Mike was born in June 2013 at the Ringling conservation center in Florida and was the youngest elephant there. Ringling Brothers announced two weeks ago that it was relocating all its elephants by May to the center, which develops breeding programs and research aimed at the animals' protection. "Stressful conditions have been linked to the highly fatal disease that killed this calf, which disproportionately impacts captive baby elephants," Rachel Mathews of Peta said. Peta, which for years has criticized use of elephants in circuses, repeated its call for the company to end its breeding program and put the animals in "a proper accredited sanctuary." — AFP

## BREAST IS BEST FOR BABIES, MOTHERS AND ECONOMY

**PARIS:** Breastfeeding more babies for longer could save the global economy some \$300 billion in a single year, simply by yielding smarter and higher-earning offspring, researchers said yesterday. It would also prevent more than 800,000 child deaths, and about 20,000 breast cancer deaths every year. "Breastfeeding saves lives and money in all countries, rich and poor alike," said Cesar Victora from the Federal University of Pelotas in Brazil, one of the authors of a research series published by The Lancet medical journal. "There is a widespread misconception that the benefits of breastfeeding only relate to poor countries. Nothing could be further from the truth," he said in a statement.

The findings were based on analysis of 28 scientific reviews and meta-analyses that looked at the proven health and economic benefits of breastfeeding. The authors said this was the largest and most detailed analysis of its kind ever done. It concluded that breastfeeding led to a "dramatic" improvement in life expectancy. In high-income countries, it reduced the risk of sudden infant deaths by more than a third. In low-and middle-income countries, it could prevent about half of diarrhoea episodes and a third of respiratory infections.

Altogether, about 800,000 children's lives could be saved every year—the equivalent of about 13 percent of all deaths in children under two. "It also increases intelligence," said the statement. "Modelling conducted for the series estimates that global economic losses of lower cognition from not breastfeeding reached a staggering \$302 billion (276 billion euros) in 2012." This was about half a percent of the world's gross national income. Last year, a study in The Lancet Global Health journal said breastfeeding led to increased adult intelligence, longer schooling and higher adult earnings, regardless of family background.

That research had tracked the development of 3,500 people in Brazil over 30 years from birth. The new series said boosting breastfeeding rates for children under six months to 90 percent in the United States, China and Brazil, and to 45 percent in Britain, would dramatically cut treatment costs of common childhood illnesses such as pneumonia, diarrhoea and asthma. In the US, the saving would be \$2.45 billion, in Britain \$29.5 million, in China \$223.6 million and in Brazil \$6 million. For women, longer breastfeeding has been shown to reduce the risk of breast and ovarian cancer, the study authors said, and estimated that some 20,000 women's deaths could be prevented per year.

### Rates are low

Yet, one in five children in high-income countries are breastfed to 12 months, and one in three in low-and middle-income countries are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of their lives. In Britain, about one percent of children are breastfed until the age of one, in Ireland about two percent and in Denmark three percent—among the lowest rates in the world. Breastfeeding is much more common in poor countries. Breast milk is free, nutritious and protective against disease, but not always practical for women who cannot be on call around the clock. In some societies, it is frowned upon to breastfeed in public.

And in some cases, it can be dangerous—breastfeeding can pass on the HIV virus that causes AIDS from infected mothers to their children. "Currently, breastfeeding promotion focuses on encouraging women to breastfeed without providing the necessary economic and social conditions such as supportive healthcare systems, adequate maternity entitlements and workplace interventions, counselling and education," said co-author Nigel Rollins from the World Health Organisation. Another problem was "aggressive marketing" of breast milk substitutes—with global sales set to reach \$70.6 billion by 2019. The researchers called for political commitment and financial investment to make it easier for women to breastfeed, and tighter regulation of the breast milk substitute industry. — AFP

# BREXIT THREAT HANGS OVER LONDON-BASED EU AGENCY

INDUSTRY FEARS DISRUPTION AT EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY

**LONDON:** Fears of a British exit from the European Union are growing in a corner of London's Canary Wharf financial district - but this time it is pharmaceutical executives rather than bankers who are worried. A so-called Brexit would threaten the future of the London-based European Medicines Agency (EMA), which approves medicines for all EU countries, potentially disrupting healthcare regulation in the world's biggest trading bloc. With a full-time staff of more than 600, the EMA is the largest EU body in Britain - which is also home to the European Banking Authority - and has overseen pan-European drug approvals since 1995 from its headquarters tucked away among global banks.

Before that, Europe relied on a fragmented system of national regulation that was cumbersome for companies seeking to reach Europe's population of half a billion potential patients. In the event of a Brexit, which could also cast uncertainty over the future of the bank authority, Europe's equivalent of the US Food and Drug Administration may have to find a new home, in a jolt to the current drug approval system. This could slow the approvals of medicines across Europe during this transition process, including in Britain if it has to re-engineer its system.

Losing Britain could also punch a big hole in the EMA's scientific capability, since British experts are the biggest single contributors to its drug assessment system. Opinion polls suggest UK voters are split almost 50-50 on whether to pull Britain out of the EU in a referendum which Prime Minister David Cameron is likely to schedule for later this year. "The uncertainty this creates is not

good for the industry," Richard Bergstrom, director general of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations said. Exactly what would happen if Britons vote "out" is unclear, since EU chief executive Jean-Claude Juncker has ordered officials not to discuss or study the impact of Brexit.

But many industry officials believe the EMA, as an EU agency governed by EU legislation, would relocate from London to a remaining member state. Bergstrom said the process would at best be "messy" and could be "very disruptive", depending on transition arrangements. The loss of British expertise would also be a major blow to the agency; in 2014, the latest year for which figures are available, British experts were leaders or co-leaders in examining 27 new drug applications submitted to the EMA, according to the agency's annual report.

That compares with 15 for Germany, 14 each for Spain and the Netherlands, and 13 for Sweden, the next most active countries. It is possible Britain could continue to participate in the EMA system as a non-EU member, as happens with Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, but this would be subject to negotiation. EMA officials said the agency would not speculate on the result of the British referendum or its potential consequences. European Commission spokeswoman Mina Andreeva said the EU's executive arm would not answer "hypothetical questions", adding "there is no other plan" than to find a deal to keep Britain in the bloc.

#### Patent court

There is also concern that the life sciences division of Europe's new Unified

Patent Court might have to move from London before it even opens - a lesser but still important setback. The court is designed to simplify patent litigation by limiting disputes to a single forum and a lease for the London branch was signed in August, ahead of a potential 2016 opening. Industry bodies representing British-based pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies have expressed concern about the Brexit threat in submissions to an ongoing House of Lords inquiry.

The issue may not be top of the agenda for Cameron but any damage to the sector would be embarrassing, since he has championed pharma as a rare industrial bright spot for Britain, led by global players like GlaxoSmithKline and AstraZeneca. While the British medicines market, accounting for just 3 percent of global sales, may be small, the country is an important base for multinationals.

"The UK is a very logical and attractive headquarters location for life sciences companies entering Europe and I would hate to see that imperilled," said Richard Barker, founding director of the Centre for the Advancement of Sustainable Medical Innovation, a partnership between Oxford University and University College London. The only other EU agency based in Britain is the European Banking Authority (EBA), established in 2011 and responsible for bank stress tests. The EBA moved to its new home in Canary Wharf in December 2014, so its lease would have been agreed when a referendum on Britain's EU membership was already a possibility. The EBA declined to comment on whether its lease had a specific Brexit break clause. — Reuters



**MUMBAI:** Onlookers gather around a 23 feet dead whale washed ashore at the Juhu Chowpatty in Mumbai yesterday. — AFP

## MASSIVE WHALE WASHES ASHORE MUMBAI COAST

**MUMBAI:** Mumbai's coastline is more used to rubbish washing ashore than dead mammals, but yesterday residents woke to the sight of a nearly 40-foot-long whale on one of its most popular beaches. Hundreds of people descended on Juhu beach in the north of the teeming western Indian city to catch a glimpse of the Bryde's whale after it washed ashore late Thursday.

"It's 11.3 metres (37 feet) long and weighs around 20 tonnes," said Makrand Ghodke, an official at the Maharashtra Forest Department who identified the type of whale. "There is no sign of any wounds. We think it died three or four days back and we will conduct an autopsy to determine the cause of death," he said. Ghodke said joggers had first spotted the dead mammal on Thursday night and called his department.

He added that a crane was being readied to help move the massive whale from the beach, which rests against the Arabian Sea. This month 45 whales died after stranding themselves on a beach in Tamil Nadu in southern India. In June, a 42-foot-long blue whale washed ashore near Alibaug, a coastal town lying around 100 kilometres (60 miles) south of Mumbai in the state of Maharashtra. Beaches line Mumbai's coast and although extremely popular with locals and tourists, they are often home to piles of rubbish, particularly during the monsoon months when high tides spew out tonnes of waste. — AFP

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PAGE



Kuwait Times  
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem  
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال  
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

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



## KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (28/01/2016 TO 03/02/2016)

<b>SHARQIA-1</b> AMERICAN HERO ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO	12:15 PM 2:00 PM 4:00 PM 6:00 PM 8:00 PM 9:45 PM 11:30 PM 1:15 AM	AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO	10:45 PM 12:30 AM
<b>SHARQIA-2</b> CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION	12:00 PM 2:30 PM 5:00 PM 7:30 PM 10:00 PM 12:30 AM	<b>MARINA-2</b> CONCUSSION ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION	11:45 AM 2:15 PM 4:15 PM 6:45 PM 9:15 PM 11:45 PM
<b>SHARQIA-3</b> STANDOFF STANDOFF STANDOFF STANDOFF THE BOY STANDOFF THE BOY STANDOFF	11:45 AM 1:30 PM 3:30 PM 5:15 PM 7:00 PM 9:00 PM 10:45 PM 12:45 AM	<b>MARINA-3</b> EXPOSED EXPOSED ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP RIDE ALONG 2 EXPOSED EXPOSED	11:30 AM 1:45 PM 3:45 PM 5:45 PM 8:00 PM 10:00 PM 12:05 AM
<b>MUHALAB-1</b> EXPOSED EXPOSED NO FRI-SAT ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP FRI+SAT ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP EXPOSED EXPOSED EXPOSED	11:45 AM 1:45 PM 3:45 PM 5:45 PM 7:45 PM 9:45 PM 11:45 PM	<b>AVENUES-1</b> RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2 LOST IN THE SUN RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2	12:45 PM 2:45 PM 4:45 PM 6:45 PM 8:45 PM 10:45 PM 12:45 AM
<b>MUHALAB-2</b> AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO SAALA KHADOOS - Hindi AMERICAN HERO RIDE ALONG 2 AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO	1:00 PM 2:45 PM 4:30 PM 6:45 PM 8:30 PM 10:30 PM 12:15 AM	<b>AVENUES-2</b> MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic	12:15 PM 3:15 PM 6:15 PM 9:15 PM 12:15 AM
<b>MUHALAB-3</b> CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION	11:30 AM 2:00 PM 4:30 PM 7:00 PM 9:30 PM 12:05 AM	<b>AVENUES-3</b> AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO	11:45 AM 1:45 PM 3:45 PM 5:45 PM 7:45 PM 9:45 PM 11:45 PM
<b>FANAR-1</b> AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO THE REVENANT AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO	12:00 PM 2:15 PM 4:15 PM 6:15 PM 8:00 PM 11:00 PM 12:45 AM	<b>AVENUES-4</b> CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION	12:00 PM 2:45 PM 5:30 PM 8:15 PM 11:00 PM
<b>FANAR-2</b> STANDOFF ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP STANDOFF STANDOFF STANDOFF	12:45 PM 2:45 PM 4:45 PM 6:45 PM 8:45 PM 10:30 PM 12:15 AM	<b>360°-1</b> ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP DARKNESS DESCENDS DARKNESS DESCENDS	1:00 PM 3:15 PM 5:30 PM 7:45 PM 10:00 PM 12:15 AM
<b>FANAR-3</b> RIDE ALONG 2 MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic RIDE ALONG 2 MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic RIDE ALONG 2	12:30 PM 2:15 PM 5:15 PM 7:00 PM 10:00 PM 1:00 AM	<b>360°-2</b> EXPOSED EXPOSED DARKNESS DESCENDS EXPOSED EXPOSED EXPOSED	12:30 PM 2:45 PM 5:00 PM 7:15 PM 9:30 PM 11:45 PM
<b>FANAR-4</b> CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION	12:15 PM 2:45 PM 5:15 PM 7:45 PM 10:15 PM 12:45 AM	<b>360°-3</b> STANDOFF STANDOFF ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP STANDOFF STANDOFF STANDOFF STANDOFF	12:00 PM 2:00 PM 4:00 PM 6:00 PM 8:00 PM 10:00 PM 12:05 AM
<b>FANAR-5</b> THE BOY THE BOY THE 5TH WAVE THE BOY THE 5TH WAVE THE BOY	1:00 PM 3:00 PM 5:00 PM 7:30 PM 9:30 PM 12:05 AM	<b>AL-KOUT.1</b> CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION CONCUSSION	12:00 PM 2:30 PM 5:00 PM 7:30 PM 10:00 PM 12:30 AM
<b>MARINA-1</b> AMERICAN HERO THE 5TH WAVE AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO THE 5TH WAVE	12:45 PM 2:30 PM 4:45 PM 6:30 PM 8:15 PM	<b>AL-KOUT.2</b> RIDE ALONG 2 ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic RIDE ALONG 2 RIDE ALONG 2	12:15 PM 2:00 PM 4:00 PM 6:00 PM 8:00 PM 11:00 PM 12:45 AM
		<b>AL-KOUT.3</b> AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic AMERICAN HERO AMERICAN HERO	12:45 PM 2:45 PM 4:45 PM 6:30 PM 9:30 PM 11:15 PM

### REQUIRED

# COOK

- Specialized in Arabic Kuwaiti Cuisine/ Recipe
- Qualification: minimum of 5 - 10 years experience
- Country of Designation: United Arab Emirates

Send your CV to: [ahmedmawadda@gmail.com](mailto:ahmedmawadda@gmail.com)  
or call 0097192229665

### CHANGE OF NAME

**I, Thomas Benny Puzhakkara** born 24-05-1966, holder of Indian Passport No. J1334036 wish to change my name to Benny Puzhakkara Thomas and my address in India is Puzhakkarayil, Palackamattom Kinginimattom Puthencurz, Ernakulam, Kerala. (C 5119)

**I, Iddinkunhi** Alias Mustapa S/o Belma Hasanabba, R/at D.No2-99-7A Koodara House, Near Kalkatta School, Mangalanthi Post, Manjanady, Mangalore, have changed my name as Musthafa Iddin Kunhi vide affidavit dated 6-8-15 before notary Sirajuddin, Mangalore. (C 5118) 28-1-2016

**Shaik Abbas Ali** (old surname), S/o Shaik Nazeeruddin, holder of Indian Passport No. G2275319, D.No. 7/111, Maruthi Street, Akkayapalli, R.V.Nagar (Po) Kadapa, Y.S.R (Dist) hence have been change my surname, my father surname Syed Abbas Ali (new surname) S/o Syed Nazeeruddin. 27-1-2016

### REQUIRED

## A driver for a manager From

7:30 - 3:30 pm  
Salary KD 140

MOBIL: 97277164

### FOR SALE

**Mitsubishi Lancer** 2015 GLS, 2000 kilometer only, free accidents, dark silver, 5 years warranty. Price KD 3600. Tel: 55305433.

(C 5115)  
26-1-2016

# EMERGENCY

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## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

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



Word Search Puzzles

Mystery Christmas Carol #2

The words listed below are from a familiar Christmas Carol. What is it? Find and circle all of the words hidden in the grid. The remaining letters will spell the name of the Christmas Carol.

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

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

Yesterday's Solution

Movie Actors 2

RUDDLABEOUFHOWARD  
NANSORBCAGEVEREIT  
KNAMEERFFERRELLIS  
NOSLTIWHESWITLITAMS  
NESNETROMOUMLEFTM  
OHEENESMARGEARSI  
TOPSGUYNAPALTCVUT  
AFYINTESNIRRRISUH  
EARORAKLITLAABUSUD  
KDESESLLEWSANSIDB  
KIENNINJANLERTJUDOSF  
LISOKOKCSHINYANNESB  
MECLLKRNGESEHNINNOO  
ELLEIDSSORUYGNEINO  
RRWWSOOWJAEOPROO  
ASITNNMARESVNROJM

- ASTIN, Sean
- BLOOM, Orlando
- BROSNAN, Pierce
- BUSCEMI, Steve
- CAGE, Nicolas
- CORNERY, Sean
- CROWE, Russell
- CRUISE, Tom
- DAFOE, Willem
- DE NIRO, Robert
- DIESEL, Vin
- DOWNEY JR, Robert
- DREYFUSS, Richard
- DUVALL, Robert
- EVERETT, Rupert
- FERRELL, Will
- FIENNES, Ralph
- FREEMAN, Morgan
- GERE, Richard
- GOSLING, Ryan
- HANKS, Tom
- HARRELSON, Woody
- HOFFMAN, Philip Seymour
- HOWARD, Terrence
- HURT, William
- JACKSON, Samuel L.
- JONES, Tommy Lee
- KEATON, Michael
- KILMER, Val
- LABEOUF, Shia
- MAGUIRE, Tobey
- MARTIN, Steve
- MORTENSEN, Viggo
- MYERS, Mike
- PATTINSON, Robert
- PENN, Sean
- REYNOLDS, Ryan
- ROGEN, Seth
- RUDD, Paul
- SMITH, Will
- STALLONE, Sylvester
- STEWART, Patrick
- VAUGHN, Vince
- WILKINSON, Tom
- WILLIAMS, Robin
- WILSON, Owen

The hidden movie title is: KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN

CROSSWORD 1153

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15				16							17		
18				19					20	21			
22			23				24	25					
26				27			28						
29	30	31			32			33			34	35	
36							37			38	39		
40							41	42	43				
44							45			46			
47				48			49		50		51		
52	53	54	55				56			57			
58	59		60					61					
62		63						64			65	66	67
68					69	70	71			72			
73					74					75			
76					77					78			

ACROSS

- Little known Kamarupan languages.
- Having hair on the cheeks and chin.
- A watery solution of sugars, salts, and minerals that circulates through the vascular system of a plant.
- Not widely known.
- Mottled curly-grained wood of Pterocarpus indicus.
- (prefix) Coming before or being preliminary or preparatory.
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- The mass of eggs deposited by fish or amphibians or molluscs v 1.
- A sloping mass of rocks at the base of a cliff.
- The cry made by sheep.
- An ancient city on the Nile in Egypt.
- A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
- A state in New England.
- A platform at the head of a foremast.
- An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- Occurring at the beginning.
- (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
- Undergo necrosis.
- Small genus of Asian trees or shrubs.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- A fluorocarbon with chlorine.
- Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
- Support column consisting of a steel cylinder filled with concrete.
- (in Gnosticism) A divine power or nature emanating from the Supreme Being and playing various roles in the operation of the universe.
- A strong emotion.
- Strike with disgust or revulsion.
- Talks a great deal about uninteresting topics.
- Before noon.
- A family of Sino-Tibetan languages spoken in southeastern Asia.
- A member of an ancient people living east of Babylonia as early as 4000 BC.
- According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- An island in Indonesia east of Java.

DOWN

- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- Predatory black-and-white toothed whale with large dorsal fin.
- A widely distributed system consisting of all the cells able to ingest bacteria or colloidal particles etc, except for certain white blood cells.
- A vigorous blow.
- Color purple.
- Lower in esteem.
- An arrangement of objects or people side by side in a line.
- Generator consisting of a coil (the armature) that rotates between the poles of an electromagnet (the field magnet) causing a current to flow in the armature.
- Half the width of an em.
- Any of several small ungulate mammals of Africa and Asia with rodent-like incisors and feet with hooflike toes.
- A chronic disorder that occurs in tropical and nontropical forms and in both children and adults.
- A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
- The part of a hammerhead opposite the flat striking surface (may have various shapes).
- Feelings of excessive pride.
- The relative magnitudes of two quantities (usually expressed as a quotient).
- Anthropologist and linguist.
- Moving or directed or tending in a backward direction or contrary to a previous direction.
- Lake in northwestern Russia near the border with Finland.
- To an ample degree or in an ample manner.
- A kiln for drying hops.
- A historical region of southwestern India on the west coast.
- A member of a nomadic Berber people of the Sahara.
- Viscera and trimmings of a butchered animal often considered inedible by humans.
- Formerly a term of respect for important white Europeans in colonial India.
- Water frozen in the solid state.
- The capital of Bahrain.
- A member of an extinct North American Indian people who lived in the Pit river valley in northern California.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly inhabiting the Black Hills of western South Dakota.
- An informal term for a father.
- The thin serous membrane around the lungs and inner walls of the chest.
- A state in northwestern North America.
- A winged often one-seed indehiscent fruit as of the ash or elm or maple.
- United States naval officer and historian (1840-1914).
- Small room on a ship or boat where people sleep.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Herb of the Pacific islands grown throughout the tropics for its edible root and in temperate areas as an ornamental for its large glossy leaves.
- In the Roman calendar.
- French filmmaker (1908-1982).
- Any place of complete bliss and delight and peace.
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- A passage with access only at one end.
- A benevolent aspect of Devi.

Daily SuDoku

4	3			8		6	5
5							
9	6		7			8	
	9			1			
1			2		7		3
				6			2
		9			6		1
							4
							6
6	4		1			3	2

medium

Yesterday's Solution

7	9	1	8	6	2	3	5	4
8	3	6	4	9	5	7	1	2
4	2	5	3	7	1	8	6	9
9	6	8	7	1	4	2	3	5
1	7	3	2	5	8	9	4	6
2	5	4	6	3	9	1	7	8
5	4	7	9	8	3	6	2	1
6	8	2	1	4	7	5	9	3
3	1	9	5	2	6	4	8	7

very hard

Yesterday's Solution

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



## MANNING WON'T SHARE CAREER PLANS ON EVE OF SUPER BOWL



**ENGLEWOOD:** Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning takes the podium to respond to questions after an NFL football practice at the team's headquarters. —AP

**ENGLEWOOD:** What's whispered into Bill Belichick's ear stays in Bill Belichick's ear. Peyton Manning may have told him, "This might be my last rodeo," but he's not telling anyone else anything about his thoughts on retirement. NFL Network cameras caught an intriguing exchange between Denver's quarterback and New England's coach after Denver's 20-18 win over the Patriots in the AFC championship game on Sunday.

Manning didn't want to talk about the eavesdropped exchange. He joked, "I don't know if it's been confirmed or not, you know? What happened to private conversations on the 50-yard line? I guess they just don't exist anymore. So, no confirmation on that whatsoever. ... We're on to Carolina."

The Broncos (14-4) face the Panthers (17-1) in Super Bowl 50

on Feb 7. What Manning said to Belichick is apparently more than he's told his own coach regarding his thoughts on retirement as this 18th and very trying season comes to a conclusion.

"He hasn't said anything to me," Gary Kubiak said. "I know he's enjoying the playoffs and enjoying this opportunity with this football team. I can't speak for him. He'll have to answer those questions. But I know it's special to have him back in the huddle leading the way and I'm just very proud of his work getting back to be in this position." Manning's favorite target, receiver Demaryius Thomas, said Manning hasn't said anything to his teammates, either. "Not at all. We're assuming," Thomas said. "You never know with him. He hasn't said anything, so I really don't know what he's going to do." — AP

## BOLD EAGLE TO SOAR IN PRIX D'AMERIQUE

**PARIS:** Home-trained Bold Eagle is a short-priced favorite to star in Sunday's Prix d'Amerique, the trotting showpiece named in homage to the help the United States' gave France in World War One. The 95th edition of trotting's equivalent to Australia's Melbourne Cup, England's Epsom Derby or the USA's Breeders Cup Classic, boasts a purse this year of one million Euros (\$1 million, £761,000).

Staged at French trotting's headquarters at Vincennes on the edge of Paris the Prix d'Amerique's roll of honor reads like a who's who of trotting greats since its first running in 1920. The 2016 edition, due to be played out in front of a sell-out 40,000-crowd, is destined for Bold Eagle, judging by his cramped odds.

The five-year-old owes his position at the head of the betting to a scintillating display in the Prix du Belgique, where he outclassed his older rivals. The son of Ready Cash, Prix d'Amerique winner in 2011 and 2012, he is trained by Sebastien Guarato in Normandy with Franck Nivard in the sulky.

The winner of 20 of his 23 starts and just short change shy of one million Euros in prize money is a class apart, according to his trainer. "Bold Eagle is a horse that understands everything," Guarato told AFP. "He knows his work to the letter, I've never come across a horse like him. He's been racing for a long time at the highest level and stands above the rest.

"He can go in front just as well as coming from behind," he said, although adding that the plan on Sunday was for Nivard to hold him up and come with a late rattle down the straight. If he succeeds Bold Eagle will be the first winner to start from stall 10 in 30 years. Bold Eagle's opposition is headed by Up and Quick, last year's French winner driven by Jean-Michel Bazire who was claiming his third Prix d'Amerique.

Norway is doubly represented by Lionel, so named by his breeder Terje Jensen in honor of Barcelona's five time Ballon d'Or superstar Lionel Messi, and Support Justice. Italian contender Voltiguer de Myrt returns to try to go one better. He is joined by compatriot Oasis Bi. Also figuring in the 18-strong cast is Timoko. The winner of a dozen Grade 1s and a survivor of Lyme disease he is out to improve on last year's third in his fifth attempt at cracking trotting's blue riband. — AFP



**SINGAPORE:** This handout photo taken and released by Lagardere Sports on January 29, 2016 shows Jordan Spieth of the US playing a shot during round two of the Singapore Open at the Sentosa Golf Club. — AFP

## THUNDERSTORM STOPS SPIETH AS KOREA'S SONG LEADS IN SINGAPORE

**SINGAPORE:** South Korea's Song Young-Han led the pack at the SMBC Singapore Open yesterday as bad weather interrupted play for the second day running. A total of 78 players, including world number one Jordan Spieth, were unable to complete round two of the four-day, \$1 million competition because of a thunderstorm at the Sentosa Golf Club. Play is scheduled to resume early Saturday.

Song, who leads Japan's Shintaro Kobayashi by a stroke, carded an outstanding eight-under-par 63 after the end of the morning session to equal the Serapong Course record set by Argentine jngel Cabrera in 2007. It propped the South Korean at the head of the leaderboard after he languished in the top 20, with one-under-par 70, the previous day.

### Excellent putting

Teeing from the front nine, Song putted two straight birdies before shooting an eagle on the 4th hole. He ended his day with five more birdies and bogeyed only once on the 12th. "It was a superb round and I really have to thank my excellent putting," said the world number 204. "The goal is to win the tournament this week and for now, I just want to take a good rest before I come back again and hopefully play well like what I did today." US Open and Masters Champion Spieth was only able to complete six holes, shooting a birdie in the second. He missed a par opportunity on the fourth after his shot from the tee landed on a lie between two palm trees. The American fumbled on the seventh as well, but as rain had already hit the fairways, it was not tallied into his score.

"Didn't get off to a great start but made a

good birdie on number two," said Spieth. "I had a couple of bad putts, missed a short one on number four. On seven I got a bit unlucky. I had a perfect distance to the hole, the par five, and just when I hit my second the wind changed," he added. "My ball came up just short of the green and when I went to play my putt, that's when the rain came in hard almost horizontally... That's golf, that's weather, you can't control that." The 22-year-old is playing in the city-state for the first time and said his goal is to win the Singapore Open, but the field is replete with challengers, including some of Asia's best players. The Texan, however, is playing without regular caddie Michael Greller, who is recovering from an ankle injury sustained at the Hyundai Tournament of Champions in Hawaii earlier this month. His agent, Jay Danzi, is standing in as his replacement. — AFP

## 19TH CENTURY BASEBALL PIONEER'S CONTRACTS HIT THE AUCTION BLOCK

**BOSTON:** One of the nation's first professional baseball players lies largely forgotten by history in an unmarked grave in Boston. Now, nearly 150 years after Andrew Jackson Leonard began his professional career, his grandson hopes to raise enough money for a marker to honor his relative and his contributions to the game by auctioning his grandfather's contracts, which are among the oldest known in existence.

"He was one of the original boys of summer and we need to do what we can to promote his legacy," said Leonard's grandson, 82-year-old Charles McCarty, a Boston native who is now retired in Folly Beach, South Carolina. Leonard was born in County Cavan, Ireland, in 1846 and moved to the United States with his mother and siblings when he was 2 years old to escape the potato famine, McCarty said.

The family settled in Newark, New Jersey, where Leonard started turning heads as a baseball player. He played for the Cincinnati Red Stockings in 1869, baseball's first professional team. But it's an 1871 contract Leonard signed to play for the Washington Olympics that is perhaps the most historically significant artifact, said Chris Ivy, director of sports at Dallas-based Heritage Auctions, which is handling the sale.

**Societal rift**

It was signed at a time when there was a societal rift over whether baseball should pay its top players or remain amateur. Written on US Treasury Department letterhead and signed by the acting Treasury secretary, the 40-word contract promises Leonard \$720 for one year to be a department messenger. "That contract sheds light on what's long been believed but not proven, which was that there were professional baseball players posing as amateurs who were getting paid under the table for no-show jobs, and this is tangible evidence that the government was involved," Ivy said.

The \$720 was about twice what a government messenger made annually in the 1870s. "Andy didn't do a lick of work for the Treasury," McCarty said. After one season with the Olympics, Leonard played seven seasons with the Boston Red Stockings, helping the team win six pennants. The Red Stockings eventually became the Boston Braves, the team that exists today as the Atlanta Braves.

Leonard died in 1903 at age 57 and is buried in New Calvary Cemetery in Boston. The contracts and a diary Leonard kept during an 1874 baseball tour to England and Ireland could fetch at least \$100,000 at auc-



**DALLAS:** In this photo made Tuesday, Jan 26, 2016, Chris Ivy, director of sports auctions at Heritage Auctions displays professional baseball contracts that are up for sale. — AP

tion Feb. 20, Ivy said. Leonard deserves a spot in the pantheon of the game's pioneers, said John Thorn, the official historian of Major League Baseball. "Leonard was a very good player, not a great player, but the fact he was recruited to become a charter member of the Cincinnati Red Stockings

makes him an important historical figure," he said. "I am entirely behind the idea of marking his grave." And while Leonard may be unfamiliar to many Americans, his legacy lives on in his homeland - the MVP award for the modern-day Irish national baseball league is named for Leonard. — AP

# RAYS GET OF DICKERSON FROM ROCKIES FOR RELIEVER MCGEE

**ENGLEWOOD:** Colorado's crowded outfield just wasn't big enough for Corey Dickerson. The Tampa Bay Rays acquired Dickerson from the Rockies for left-handed reliever Jake McGee in a trade Thursday that also sent a minor leaguer to each team. The Rays got third baseman Kevin Padlo and Colorado got right-hander German Marquez. In another move, Tampa Bay reached a one-year, \$4.75 million deal with free agent first baseman/outfielder Steve Pearce.

Colorado had an abundance of left-handed hitting outfielders with the recent signing of Gerardo Parra. In the end, Dickerson - who is not yet eligible for salary arbitration - was deemed expendable over the likes of Carlos Gonzalez and Charlie Blackmon.

The 26-year-old Dickerson hit .304 last year with 10 homers and 31 RBIs in 65 games. He was limited early in the season because of plantar fasciitis and then later due to broken ribs he sustained while diving for a ball. He's joining a team that also has a surplus of outfielders. Tampa Bay's roster includes Desmond Jennings, Kevin Kiermaier, Steven Souza Jr. and Brandon Guyer. Barring some sort of move, someone will be headed to the role of designated hitter. "It's a crowded lineup we have ... but you can never predict how the season will unfold," Rays president of baseball operations Matt Silverman said. Silverman said Tampa Bay not only addressed a need to bolster a sputtering offense but figures to enter spring training with more depth than usual among position players.

**'Major league hitter'**

Dickerson played mostly left field while with Colorado, a spot where Jennings has been playing. Jennings has been slowed by injuries past two seasons. Silverman called him "an established major league hitter"



**FLORIDA:** This July 11, 2015 photo shows Tampa Bay Rays reliever Jake McGee pitching against the Houston Astros during a baseball game in St Petersburg. — AP

who potentially fill a hole in the middle of the batting order McGee becomes another piece as the Rockies try to revamp their bullpen. He turned in his best season two years ago when he went 5-2, with a 1.89 ERA and 19 saves in 73 appearances. He started last season on disabled list after undergoing offseason elbow surgery. He went 1-2, 2.41 ERA and six saves in 39 appearances in 2015.

The 29-year-old agreed this month to a \$4.8 million, one-year contract. "The departure of Jake leaves a big hole. It will be hard to fill," Silverman said. "It's going to require a couple of guys stepping up ... for us to have the type of lock-down bullpen it's going to take to make the playoffs."

Colorado already brought in former closers to two-year contracts, guaranteeing Jason Motte \$10 million and Chad Qualls \$6 million. Right-handed reliever Adam

Ottavino is expected back sometime around the All-Star break after undergoing Tommy John surgery last May.

The 19-year-old Padlo spent his first full pro season in Class A. He was a midseason and postseason All-Star in the Northwest League. The 20-year-old Marquez went 7-13 with a 3.56 ERA at Class A Charlotte. Colorado designated pitcher Christian Friedrich for assignment. The 28-year-old lefty was 0-4 with a 5.25 ERA in a team-high 68 relief appearances last season.

The 32-year-old Pearce hit .218 with 15 home runs and 40 RBIs for Baltimore last season. He can earn \$1.25 million in performance bonuses based on plate appearances: \$125,000 each for 400 and 425, and \$250,000 apiece for 500, 525, 550 and 575. He also would get a \$250,000 assignment bonus if traded. — AP

## BRANTLEY: OPENING DAY 'TARGET' AFTER SURGERY

**CLEVELAND:** There are dates for Michael Brantley's return from shoulder surgery ranging from April to August. The Indians star outfielder doesn't have one circled. "I don't think it's fair to give myself a target," Brantley said Thursday night while appearing at the Greater Cleveland Sports Awards. "My target is opening day, it's not that I'm going to go any slower or any faster but I'm going to do everything the training staff asks me to do. I'll follow their schedule and do it to the best of my ability and whatever happens, if opening day I make it, great. If I have to wait a couple weeks or whatever it is I'll be ready to go."

Brantley needed an operation to repair a tear in his non-throwing shoulder in November. Following the surgery, doctors estimated it would take him 5 to 6 months to get back, putting the start of his season in jeopardy. It was expected he would miss at least one month. And although it's probable he won't be ready for the April 4 opener against Boston, Brantley isn't rushing things.

Before attending the event with more than a dozen teammates, Brantley did agility drills and threw. His next step is swinging a bat. "I went through almost a full workout," he said. "I did agility, I ran, I threw. Everything is going great. I'm excited with where I'm at right now." Brantley injured his shoulder trying to make a diving catch in Minnesota on Sept. 22. He received a cortisone shot and tried to play as the Indians hung around in the AL wild-card chase, but was eventually shut down.

Brantley said he would dive for the ball again. "One hundred percent," he said. "Absolutely. I only know one way to play, and that's as hard as I can. I'm never going to change the way I play or not dive because I had a problem. That's letting down my teammates and I can't do that." The 28-year-old battled injuries throughout last season, but still batted .310 with 15 homers and 84 RBIs in 137 games. He hurt his back during spring training and battled problems in both shoulders.

"It happens," he said. "You have to be mentally tough. You have to grind through it. I love playing this great game. Nothing is ever going to hold me out. If I can walk and feel like I can help my team and not hurt it, I'm going to be out there." — AP

# KOHLI POWERS INDIA TO T20 SERIES WIN

**MELBOURNE:** India took an unbeatable 2-0 lead over Australia in their three-match Twenty20 series with a 27-run win in the second match at the MCG yesterday. The tourists won the first match in Adelaide by 37 runs and the second encounter followed a remarkably similar script.

After India made 184 for three, almost an identical score to the game in Adelaide, Australia once again looked in a strong position in the chase as it neared a century with the openers Aaron Finch and Shaun Marsh still at the crease. However, as was the case in Adelaide the home side faltered, with their middle order unable to continue the good work of the openers. Australia was cruising at 94 for none in the 10th over, but the dismissal for Marsh for 23, caught from the bowling of Ravi Ashwin for 23, turned the tide.

Wickets started to tumble and when the captain Finch, who was battling a recurrent hamstring strain but shaped up as Australia's

last hope, was run out for 74 from 48 balls the tourists were in total control. Finch had ridden his luck until then, having been dropped three times in quick succession just after reaching his half-century. To make matters worse for the skipper, he appeared to severely aggravate the injury to his hamstring in being run out, placing his immediate playing future in doubt.

### 'Feels wonderful'

Australia lost 8-63 as India took the game and series away from them. Shane Watson, who stood in for the injured Finch at the post-match presentation, said the home side blew a great foundation for the second time in as many matches.

"We got a really good start, but the middle order weren't able to get the momentum up," he said. "We lost too many wickets through the middle." Against surely one of the weakest Australian sides to take the field in an



**MELBOURNE:** Indian batsman Rohit Sharma hits a six during their T20 International match against Australia at the MCG. — AFP

## SCOREBOARD

**MELBOURNE:** Scoreboard from the second Twenty20 between Australia and India at the MCG yesterday:

India		Australia	
R. Sharma run out (Maxwell)	60	A. Finch run out (Jadeja)	74
S. Dhawan c Lynn b Maxwell	42	S. Marsh c Pandya b Ashwin	23
V. Kohli not out	59	C. Lynn c Dhoni b Pandya	2
M.S. Dhoni c Watson b Tye	14	G. Maxwell st Dhoni b Singh	1
S. Raina not out	0	S. Watson c & b Jadeja	15
Extras (lb7, w1, nb1)	9	M. Wade not out	16
Total (3 wickets: 20 overs)	184	J. Faulkner st Dhoni b Jadeja	10
<b>Fall of wicket:</b> 1-97 (Dhawan), 2-143 (Sharma), 3-181 (Dhoni)		J. Hastings b Bumrah	4
Did not bat: Y. Singh, H. Pandya, R. Jadeja, R. Ashwin, J. Bumrah, A. Nehra.		A. Tye b Bumrah	4
<b>Bowling:</b> Watson 3-0-17-0 (1w), Hastings 3-0-35-0, Boland 4-0-30-0, Faulkner 3-0-35-0, Tye 4-0-28-1, Lyon 1-0-15-0 (1nb), Maxwell 2-0-17-1.		Extras (b1, lb2, w5)	8
		Total (eight wickets; 20 overs)	157
		<b>Fall of wicket:</b> 1-94 (Marsh), 2-99 (Lynn), 3-101 (Maxwell), 4-121 (Watson), 5-124 (Finch), 6-137 (Faulkner), 7-152 (Hastings).	
		<b>Bowling:</b> Nehra 4-0-34-0, Bumrah 4-0-37-2, Jadeja 4-0-32-2, Ashwin 4-0-27-1 (2w), Pandya 2-0-17-1 (1w), Singh 2-0-7-1.	
		Result: India won by 27 runs.	

international match since the World Series Cricket split, featuring three T20 international debutants and minus star batsmen David Warner and Stephen Smith, India's top order batsmen again produced a commanding total.

Opener Rohit Sharma took nine balls to get off the mark, but made good on the slow start to top score with 60 from 47 balls. Virat Kohli, who made an unbeaten 90 in the first game, backed that up with 59 not out from 33 balls. Shikhar Dhawan chimed in with a personal best of 42 from 32 balls, putting on 97 with Sharma at the top of the order. Kohli was named man of the match and said he was able to capitalize on the groundwork of the

opening pair. "Sealing the series feels wonderful," he said.

"Those two (openers) have been striking the ball well. "They are taking the game away from Australia in the first few overs, I think it demoralizes the bowlers a bit and they have been laying a great platform for me."

Although Yuvraj Singh failed to get a bat for the second match in succession, he had a major impact with the ball, coming on in the middle overs and conceding just seven runs in two overs, and claiming the crucial wicket of Glenn Maxwell for one. Spinner Ravi Jadeja also played an important role with the ball, claiming a stunning return catch to remove Watson and claiming two wickets. — AFP

# SRI LANKA HIRE FORD TO DEFEND WORLD T20 CUP

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka's cricket board yesterday confirmed it would rehire Graham Ford as head coach to help the national team defend its World Twenty20 title in India, after his English club announced his departure. The 55-year-old South African previously coached Sri Lanka from 2012 until 2014 before taking over the reins at English county championship title-holder Surrey.

"The new board of Sri Lanka Cricket head-hunted Ford to be the new head coach and prepare the team for the World T20," an SLC official told AFP. "His term will be for 45 months starting Monday." The contract period would also cover the 2019 World Cup hosted by England and Wales.

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) declined to give further details of the contract. Local officials said he would start by preparing the team to defend the World T20 title, with its recent poor form leading it to fall to second position in the T20 rankings, after the West Indies. The World T20 will be held at stadiums throughout India from March 8, with the final to be played at the historic Eden Gardens in Kolkata on April 3.

Sri Lanka has also been hit by the retire-

ment of cricketers such as Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara. Ford worked with Sangakkara at Surrey and last season guided the club to the county championship second division title. "As the national team continues its transition following high-profile retirements, Ford's reputation for being good with young players was among the reasons for the new Executive Committee to secure him for the job," the board said in a statement.

### 'Back to glory days'

Ford's main task would be to rebuild the national team, the board said. It added that his hiring was part of a "plan towards restoring Sri Lanka Cricket back to its glory days." Since winning the 1996 Cricket World Cup, Sri Lanka has made it to the finals twice but failed to win. Surrey said it was unhappy to lose Ford.

"We are extremely disappointed to be losing Graham Ford, who has not just been an outstanding head coach but has played an integral role in the progress that we have achieved over the last two years," Surrey director of cricket Alec Stewart told the

club's official website Thursday. "He has worked tirelessly with the players and his efforts can be seen in their individual performances and the team's results, culminating in promotion back to the first division," Stewart said.

"It was a very tough decision for Graham to leave Surrey but we understand that the opportunity to go back and coach at international level with Sri Lanka was too good to turn down."

Sri Lanka's new cricket management earlier this month decided to step up its search for a new head coach, with the job temporarily held by interim coach Jerome Jayaratne, who replaced Marvan Atapattu. Jayaratne, 49, the head of coaching at SLC, was appointed for the West Indies Series in October and November 2015 and extended to cover Sri Lanka's tour of New Zealand.

Jyaratne's appointment came after Atapattu quit before his contract was due to expire following India's 2-1 win of a Test series in Colombo in September. Since 2010, Trevor Bayliss, Stuart Law, Ramesh Ratnayake, Geoff Marsh and Ford have also had periods as Sri Lanka coach. — AFP

## SHANE WARNE'S CHARITY TO CLOSE AFTER PROBE

**SYDNEY:** Australian cricketer legend Shane Warne's charitable foundation announced yesterday it would close after a consumer watchdog launched a probe into its financial affairs. The charity hit out at "unwarranted speculation" over "its distribution of funds" following local media reports that most of the money it raised went on expenses such as for staging events.

Warne, the charity's chairman, has complained about "malicious attacks and false allegations" in a Facebook post. Consumer Affairs Victoria said Sunday it had ordered an independent audit into the foundation's fundraising activities, with the regulator saying the financial information submitted by the charity had been insufficient.

In the Facebook statement announcing its imminent closure, the charity defended its financial performance. "In response to recent, unwarranted speculation about The Shane Warne Foundation and its distribution of funds, we confirm we have distributed \$3.67M to date with an additional and final substantial cheque to be distributed on March 18, 2016," it said.

"At that time, we hope to have distributed over \$4M dollars. All accounts have been fully audited by KPMG, and our final accounts will also be audited for the March 18th cheque presentation." Warne has previously said the foundation has donated an average of 50 percent of money raised over 12 years, according to reports. He launched an outspoken attack on the foundation's critics in a Facebook post on Saturday. "Go through everything you want at anytime as we have nothing to hide," he wrote. "The foundation puts on events to raise money pure and simple like all charities do, but unfortunately some events just don't raise as much funds as we would like." — AFP

# LOWRY INSPIRES RAPTORS TO RECORD 10TH STRAIGHT WIN

**TORONTO:** Kyle Lowry had 26 points and 10 assists, DeMar DeRozan also scored 26 points and the Toronto Raptors set a franchise record with their 10th consecutive victory, 103-93 over the New York Knicks on Thursday night. Jonas Valanciunas added 11 points and 18 rebounds for Toronto. Arron Afflalo had 20 points for the undermanned Knicks, who matched a season high with a fourth straight defeat. New York was without starters Carmelo Anthony, Kristaps Porzingis and Jose Calderon. The Raptors surpassed their nine straight victories between March 22 and April 9, 2002. They left the Indiana Pacers, Washington Wizards and Orlando Magic as the only NBA teams without a winning streak of 10 games or more, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.



**TORONTO:** Toronto Raptors' Kyle Lowry (7) drives toward New York Knicks' Sasha Vujacic (18) and Robin Lopez (8) during the first half of an NBA basketball game. — AP

### BULLS 114, LAKERS 91

Jimmy Butler had 26 points and 10 assists, and Chicago opened its longest road trip of the season with a victory over the spiraling Lakers. Pau Gasol had 21 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists while facing Kobe Bryant for the final time at Staples Center and the first time anywhere since the 7-foot Spaniard left the Lakers as a free agent in 2014. Bryant scored 10 points on 4-for-13 shooting after sitting out the previous game for the Lakers, who lost their season-worst eighth straight game to drop to 9-39. Bryant and Gasol had a seven-year partnership that produced two NBA championships and three trips to the finals.

### PELICANS 114, KINGS 105

Ryan Anderson tied his career high with 36 points and New Orleans beat Sacramento for its sixth victory in eight games. The Pelicans won despite the absences of newly named All-Star Anthony Davis, who suffered a concussion on Monday night, and Tyreke Evans, who has right knee tendinitis. Jrue Holiday had 25 points and eight assists for New Orleans, while Norris Cole had 17 points and 10 assists. Bryce Dejean-Jones, making his first NBA start, added 14 points. DeMarcus Cousins had 26 points and 10 rebounds for the Kings, who have lost three straight. Ben McLemore added 26 points for Sacramento and Rajon Rondo 17 points and 15 assists. Kings associate head coach Chad Iske stood in for head coach George Karl, who was out sick.

### GRIZZLIES 103, BUCKS 83

Jeff Green scored 21 points, Marc Gasol added 15 points and eight rebounds, and Memphis pulled away in the second half to beat Milwaukee. Courtney Lee, Tony Allen and Matt Barnes added 13 points for Memphis, with all Barnes' coming in the fourth, when he connected on four 3-pointers. Greg Monroe led the Bucks with 21 points and Khris Middleton added 15 points and six assists. Michael Carter-Williams finished with 10 points. Memphis shot 48 percent for the game, including 10 of 28 from outside the arc.

Meanwhile, the Bucks missed 15 of their 16 3-point shots and finished at 37 percent overall.

### NUGGETS 117, WIZARDS 113

Danilo Gallinari scored 26 points and

hit four of his five 3-pointers to lead Denver over reeling Washington. After the Wizards, who have lost five of six, clawed back from an 18-point, third-quarter deficit to tie the game at 99-all, Gary Harris and Gallinari hit consecutive

3-pointers for a 105-99 lead with 3:16 to go. Emmanuel Mudiay added 20 points for the Nuggets, who rebounded from Wednesday night's loss in Boston with a sharp performance from the 3-point line, going 9 for 18. Garrett Temple had 20 points for Washington, which put seven players in double figures. John Wall, chosen an NBA All-Star for the third time in his career, had 17 points, nine assists and seven rebounds. Wall was just 5 for 17 from the field and missed five of his seven 3-point attempts.

### PACERS 111, HAWKS 92

Monta Ellis scored 25 points and Myles Turner added 20 in his first NBA start to lead Indiana past Atlanta. The Pacers snapped a three-game losing streak by outscoring the Hawks 23-2 over the final 5 minutes, 34 seconds. Atlanta was led by Indianapolis native Jeff Teague, who had 20 points, and Al Horford, who had 14. It was the Hawks' second loss in two nights. After spending most of the final three quarters playing catch-up, the Hawks finally took a 90-88 lead when Horford made a nifty cut for a dunk with 5:55 left in the game. But the Pacers retook the lead with a 12-0 run flurry and limited Atlanta to only one more basket. — AP

## NBA results/standings

Indiana 111, Atlanta 92; Denver 117, Washington 113; Toronto 103, NY Knicks 93; Memphis 103, Milwaukee 83; New Orleans 114, Sacramento 105; Chicago 114, LA Lakers 91.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Toronto	31	15	.674	-	Oklahoma City	35	13	.729	-
Boston	26	21	.553	5.5	Portland	21	26	.447	13.5
NY Knicks	22	26	.458	10	Utah	20	25	.444	13.5
Brooklyn	12	34	.261	19	Denver	18	29	.383	16.5
Philadelphia	7	40	.149	24.5	Minnesota	14	33	.298	20.5
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	32	12	.727	-	Golden State	42	4	.913	-
Chicago	26	19	.578	6.5	LA Clippers	30	16	.652	12
Detroit	25	21	.543	8	Sacramento	20	26	.435	22
Indiana	24	22	.522	9	Phoenix	14	33	.298	28.5
Milwaukee	20	28	.417	14	LA Lakers	9	39	.188	34
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Atlanta	27	21	.563	-	San Antonio	39	7	.848	-
Miami	25	21	.543	1	Memphis	27	20	.574	12.5
Charlotte	22	24	.478	4	Dallas	26	22	.542	14
Washington	20	24	.455	5	Houston	25	23	.521	15
Orlando	20	24	.455	5	New Orleans	17	28	.378	21.5

## ARSENAL AIM TO CASH IN ON COQUELIN BOOST

**LONDON:** Francis Coquelin's return to the Arsenal squad for the FA Cup fourth round tie with Burnley will hand Arsene Wenger's side a major lift following last Sunday's league defeat by Chelsea. Burnley visit the Emirates six days after Diego Costa's match-winning goal prevented the Gunners returning to the top of the Premier League.

The way Wenger's FA Cup holders respond against a side challenging for promotion from the Championship will be a test of character. And Coquelin's return two months after suffering knee ligament damage at West Bromwich Albion will help Arsenal recover from their latest stumble.

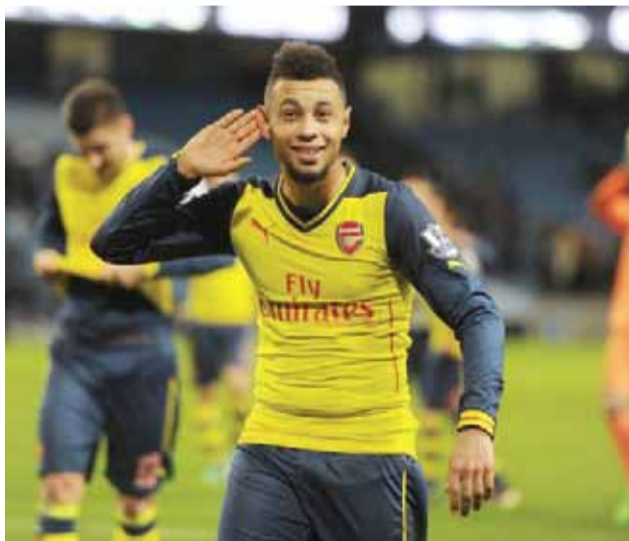
Wenger's side have stuttered in recent weeks, winning just two of their last six league games. And while the championship is clearly the club's priority this season, progress towards a third successive FA Cup triumph will provide a welcome confidence boost. Coquelin is expected to start on the bench and could be joined by Tomas Rosicky who made a 45-minute appearance for the club's Under-21 side last week. With Alexis Sanchez having returned following a hamstring problem as a second half substitute against Chelsea and Danny Welbeck returning to full training, Arsenal's injury list is finally shrinking.

### 'Mentally stronger'

Midfielders Jack Wilshere and Santi Cazorla remain the two most notable absentees while Per Mertesacker is suspended after being sent off against Chelsea. Mertesacker believes the way the side has coped with a succession of injuries reflects the growing strength of Wenger's squad.

The centre-back told Arsenal.com: "Players have stepped up, brought their energy and we've got the results as well. We won't look back on players being injured as a negative because other players have stepped up, especially this season. "The team is much stronger and mentally stronger as well. There are a few steps to go, the season is always long and to get consistency is never easy. "There are challenges ahead of us but they make us even stronger, and I must say that the team spirit in the squad is huge at the minute."

Burnley are chasing an instant return to the Premier League but manager Sean Dyche insists he would still love to achieve another cup shock. Dyche was a defender in the Chesterfield side that reached the semi-finals of the competition as a third-tier club in 1997 before losing to top-flight outfit Middlesbrough in a replay at Old Trafford.—AFP



Francis Coquelin



**MANCHESTER:** Manchester City's Belgian midfielder Kevin De Bruyne (left) reacts as he talks with Everton's Spanish goalkeeper Joel Robles before being stretchered off during the English League Cup semi-final second leg football match between Manchester City and Everton the Etihad Stadium. —AFP

## CITY EAGER FOR CUP TRIUMPH WITHOUT CRUCIAL DE BRUYNE

**MANCHESTER:** Kevin de Bruyne will miss 10 weeks of Manchester City's bid for success on four trophy fronts, starting with the visit to Aston Villa in the fourth round of the FA Cup today. The Belgian international twisted his knee badly in an off-the-ball incident during the League Cup semi-final second leg victory over Everton on Wednesday, a win which carried City through to next month's final against Liverpool.

But the knee ligament injury will keep de Bruyne out of that Wembley date, as well as both legs of City's Champions League last 16 tie with Dynamo Kiev. The 24-year-old could also miss the Champions League quarter-finals in April should City get that far. However, his team-mate Fernandinho insists City can focus on the FA Cup and put concerns about injuries-and the final date against Liverpool-to one side when they visit Villa.

"It's always difficult when you have a game in midweek to get to a final," he said. "It's hard to keep concentration but our team is very experienced to control this. "We know the FA Cup is important for the team and fans. Villa is a tough team, on a

tough pitch in a tough stadium."

### 'Passion and concentration'

The Birmingham club are bottom of the Premier League table but Fernandinho said: "They are not having a good time in the Premier League but in 90 minutes anything can happen. We have two days to prepare and will see which players the manager (Manuel Pellegrini) chooses. "I hope we can show the same passion and concentration in defending, and attacking as well. Our fans like it like that, especially in these knockout games."

Fernandinho's semi-final performance against Everton was all the more impressive given that the Brazilian had spent three weeks on the sidelines with a hamstring injury, although he hopes to be involved at Villa Park. "It's tough to be out," said Fernandinho. "I don't want a rest. "My injury was not serious but I had a talk with the doctor and we agreed it was best for me to stay out and have a couple of weeks just training so I could recover 100 percent. I hope that by doing that I can play until the end of the season without injury."

Villa enter today's game on the back

of a recent improvement in performances but with results showing only a marginal upturn. They collected draws against Leicester City and West Bromwich Albion either side of the third-round replay win over Wycombe that set up today's tie.

That followed Remi Garde's first win as Villa manager against Crystal Palace. They remain odds-on for relegation, however, and will hope another extended run in a competition where they were beaten in the final by Arsenal last season will provide welcome relief for their long-suffering supporters as well as a confidence boost for their league campaign.

Villa are unbeaten in five games and defender Jores Okore said: "We need to go out and keep that run going. As long as we create chances we can go out and win. "Last season's run to the final was really special. It was amazing to go to Wembley and go that far in a tournament with some quality teams. "The semi-final win over Liverpool gave us a little spark and we showed we can beat any team on our day. "It gave us a spark and we went and won the game - it helped us retain our Premier League status-hopefully that can happen again this time round."—AFP

## RWANDA FACE DR CONGO IN 'GAME OF THE TOURNAMENT'

**KIGALI:** Rwanda's African Nations Championship (CHAN) quarter-final with DR Congo today has been billed as "the game of the tournament" by the host's Irish coach Johnny McKinstry. Thousands of home fans are expected to swamp the capital city Kigali's Amahoro National stadium to support their team.

McKinstry was named the Amavubi Wasps coach in March 2015 and he succeeded in molding a winning outfit, guiding them into second in the Cecafta Senior Challenge cup in

Ethiopia in December. But the 30-year-old McKinstry knows their quarter-final opponents will be a tough nut to crack, despite beating them 1-0 in a pre-CHAN friendly.

"DRC is the most difficult opponent we could have faced. They have started the tournament in scintillating form", the Irishman told the Rwanda Football Association (Ferwafa) website. "Despite our 1-0 win in the pre-CHAN friendly, it was clear from that game in Rubavu that DRC would be one of the favourites from the way they have played. We have to be at

our best to beat them," added McKinstry. "It's the game of the tournament."

Both Rwanda and DR Congo prepared for today's clash by resting key players in their closing group games - both suffering heavy defeats as a result. A total of 62 goals were scored in the first round group matches, with DR Congo, Ivory Coast, Tunisia and the now-eliminated Nigeria leading the way. Cameroon, who meet the Ivory Coast in the second quarter-final at stade Huye in Butare and Tunisia, the 2011 champions, who play

Mali tomorrow by contrast made a slow start before rediscovering their scoring prowess in the last matches.

Cameroon defeated DR Congo 3-1 to top Group B while Tunisia crushed Niger 5-0 to leapfrog debutants Guinea and Nigeria in a tough group C. Zambia only managed two goals in their three matches but the 2012 Africa Cup of Nations champions, who are also tipped to win the tournament, ended up winning Group D which included Mali, Uganda and Zimbabwe.—AFP

## PSG CONTINUE LIGUE 1 STROLL AT SAINT-ETIENNE

**PARIS:** Fresh from setting a new club record of 12 straight wins, Paris Saint-Germain take on Saint-Etienne this weekend, the latest step in their seemingly unstoppable march to the Ligue 1 title. Goals from Ezequiel Lavezzi and Angel Di Maria earned Laurent Blanc's all conquering side a 2-0 win over Toulouse in the League Cup semi-final to leave only Lille in their way of a third straight League Cup title.

And with a yawning 21 point lead it is surely only a matter of when not if they secure a fourth consecutive league title and sixth overall. Blanc cut a contented figure after Wednesday's game, declaring: "I'm especially happy, because no matter who

plays, the team is winning. I congratulate my players." And it appears that those players are happy in Paris with two players previously expected to leave at the end of this season, Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Thiago Motta, both now looking to stay. "I'd like to end my career in Paris," Motta told AFP this week, while Ibrahimovic has just accepted a telling and sizeable pay rise.

As Chelsea's Champions League visit on February 16 looms the only blemish was the sight of Brazilian defender David Luiz hobbling off in stoppage time with an injured knee. PSG must travel to the Stade Geoffrey-Guichard without their fans who have been banned from attending the

game after "serious incidents between the team's respective fans in recent years".

Saint Etienne, blown away by PSG 4-1 at the Parc des Princes in October, squandered a chance to climb into the top four when they gave up a last minute goal at Reims in last Sunday's 1-1 draw. PSG's League Cup final opponents Lille routed Bordeaux 5-1 in their semi-final and will be out to continue that form at Marseille on Friday.

Marseille are six points shy of the top three, with new coach Michel telling AFP: "A podium finish is our dream, not our objective. If last year's side couldn't do it how can people demand of us to do it with few-

er players and a smaller budget?" Second-placed Monaco are at Angers who are dusting themselves off after last weekend's 5-1 drubbing by the runaway league leaders.

Monaco's Portuguese trio Bernardo Silva, Fabio Coentrao and Helder Costa were all on target in the Principality side's 4-0 defeat of Toulouse to strengthen their hold on second place. Bastia host former multiple champions Lyon with a change of personnel in the dug out. The Corsican outfit, hovering three points above the relegation zone, sacked manager Ghislain Printant on Thursday, with assistant Francois Ciccolini stepping in as caretaker coach. — AP



**GENOA:** Napoli's midfielder Marek Hamsik from Slovakia celebrates after scoring during the Italian Serie A football match Sampdoria Vs Napoli on January 24, 2016 at 'Luigi Ferraris Stadium'. — AFP

## HIGUAIN SCARE AS MISFIRING INTER TARGET DERBY VICTORY

**MILAN:** The importance of record-setting striker Gonzalo Higuain has been brought home to Serie A leaders Napoli but most eyes tomorrow will be on Inter Milan's bid for a crucial derby win at AC Milan. Napoli tightened their lead at the top of Italy's top flight last week to remain two points ahead of champions Juventus before welcoming Empoli to the San Paolo tomorrow.

But the Azzurri, who won the last of their two league titles in 1990 when Diego Maradona was still in his heyday, suffered a scare when Higuain narrowly avoided a serious injury knock on Thursday. Higuain, who has hit 21 league goals in as many games this season, hobbled off the pitch with a sore ankle during a friendly match with San Vito Positano. Although he is expected to be fit, all eyes were on coach Maurizio Sarri at Napoli's Castel Volturno training ground on Thursday. Sarri was slapped with a two-game Cup ban for a recent homophobic rant at Inter Milan coach Roberto Mancini but, to show he meant no ill feeling towards homosexuals, he accepted to play a friendly game against the local, fifth division side, whose president Alessandro Cecchi Paone is openly gay.

The gesture almost backfired, but served to underline Napoli's reliance on their main source of goals this season. Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis, one of 64 people targeted by Naples prosecutors for alleged false accounting and tax evasion in midweek, said: "I always wanted us to play a midweek match against a lower league team, now we have this friendly thanks to Cecchi Paone and Sarri. The unknown factor is what has happened to Higuain."

As Higuain looks to maintain his impressive goals quest, compatriot Mauro Icardi is among sev-

eral Inter Milan strikers under pressure to perform as the club's title ambitions hang increasingly in the balance. Inter have scored only four times in their past five league outings, losing two, drawing two and winning only once to slip to fourth in the table at six points behind Napoli.

### Milan still struggling

"I'm 50 years old, and even I would have scored from some of the chances we had," Mancini lashed out last week after 10-man Carpi hit a late leveler to snatch a 1-1 draw at the San Siro. If Mancini was hoping to embarrass his men into action, he may now be looking for a different approach after another setback in midweek. A 3-0 defeat to Juventus blew a hole in Inter's Italian Cup hopes in the first leg of their semi-final, when Icardi was left on the bench in favor of Stevan Jovetic. Inter will look to appease fans with a second consecutive derby win tomorrow against a Milan side that, going on their own Cup semi-final display, has little to shout about. A first-half penalty from Mario Balotelli, the striker's first Milan goal in over four months, earned Sinisa Mihajlovic's men a patchy 1-0 first leg win over third division Alessandria. But Mihajlovic was less than impressed, berating his players for their "failure to put several early chances away". He declared there will be no place for Balotelli in his starting XI tomorrow.

"Mario won't be playing the derby because he's not match fit. We've got four days to prepare for this game and the best team possible will be on the team sheet," said the Serbian, a former midfielder with Inter. Defeat for Inter would be a significant blow to their title hopes, and leave Napoli and Juventus with one less rival to worry about. — AFP

## BARCELONA HOST ATLETICO IN LIGA TITLE SHOWDOWN

**MADRID:** First meets second as Barcelona host Atletico Madrid today looking to tighten their grip on the La Liga title race. The sides are level on 48 points at the top of the table, but Barca have a game in hand on Atletico and can take a huge step towards a fifth title in seven years with an eighth consecutive win in all competitions.

Indeed, Luis Enrique's men remain on course for a repeat of the treble of La Liga, Champions League and Copa del Rey they won last season after progressing to the semi-finals of the Cup with a come from behind 3-1 win over Athletic Bilbao in midweek.

Yet, the European champions have been far from their best in the past week as they were outplayed by Malaga and Bilbao in the first-half before being salvaged by individual moments of magic after the break. "We are aware of the errors we need to correct," said Luis Suarez after taking his tally for the season already to 30 with the equalizer against Bilbao.

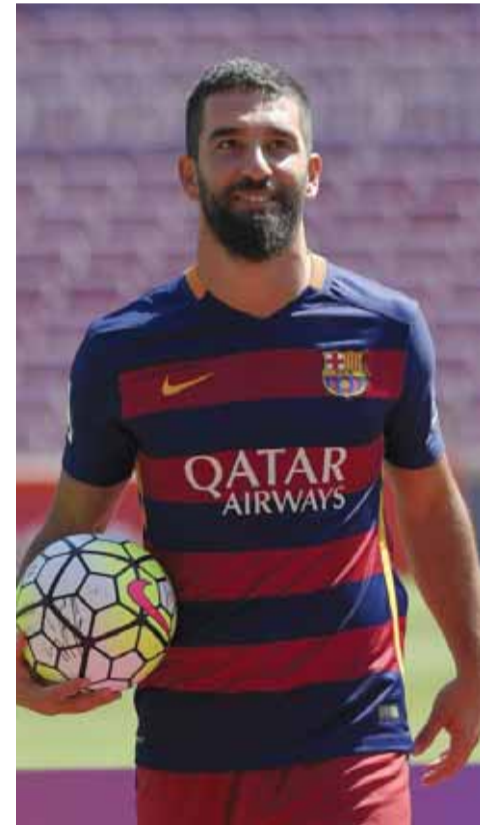
However, Atletico are also not in great form as they return to the scene where they won the title in the 2013/14 season. Diego Simeone's men were dumped out the Copa del Rey in midweek by Celta Vigo as they conceded three goals for the first time since Barca won by the same 3-2 scoreline at the same stage of the competition exactly a year ago. Yet, it is at the other end of the field that Atletico have tended to have problems this season-scoring just 30 goals in their 21 La Liga games so far.

### Turan on the other end

"This defeat is not going to affect us today," said Atletico captain Gabi. "We are used to having to fight for everything and today you will see the best Atletico Madrid." The visitors are also likely to be confronted with a familiar face as Arda Turan takes on Atletico for the first time since making the switch to the Camp Nou following a four-year spell at the Vicente Calderon.

"I have had this match in mind for some time," the Turkish midfielder told Barca's website. "You always have to respect the opponent and Atletico are no different in that aspect. Despite changing a lot of players, they have maintained the same style." Both sides will be close to full strength with Barca set to recall Turan, Sergio Busquets and Andres Iniesta after they were rested in midweek, although Jordi Alba remains a doubt with a hamstring injury.

Atletico are without long-term injury absentee Tiago and Fernando Torres, whilst Angel Correa is suspended. Real Madrid trail



**BARCELONA:** Barcelona's new player Turkish Arda Turan poses wearing his new jersey during his official presentation at the Camp Nou stadium, after signing his new contract with the Catalan club. — AFP

the leaders by four points-having also played a game more than Barca-but have a golden opportunity to make ground on one or both of their title rivals when they host Espanyol tomorrow.

Zinedine Zidane suffered his first setback in charge of Los Blancos in a 1-1 draw at Real Betis last weekend. However, in contrast to their away form, Real have been lethal at home in recent months, scoring 35 goals in their last six games at the Santiago Bernabeu.

They also hit Espanyol for six when the sides met at Cornellà-El Prat earlier in the season with Cristiano Ronaldo scoring five. Gareth Bale is expected to miss out once again for Real despite stepping up his recovery from a calf strain, so James Rodriguez is expected to deputize for the Welshman. Elsewhere, Gary Neville has a great chance to finally record his first league win as Valencia boss at the eighth attempt when Los Che host a Sporting Gijon side that have lost their last eight away games. — AFP

## SERENA WARNS KERBER: I'M BETTER THAN LAST YEAR

**MELBOURNE:** Serena Williams yesterday warned she was playing better now than when she won three Grand Slams last year as Angelique Kerber attempts to halt the American juggernaut's record-equalling attempt in the Australian Open final. The world number one was in a different class in 2015 as she swept to the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon titles, losing just three matches out of 56 all season.

Despite being virtually untouchable, the 34-year-old believes her game is now on another level, with a near flawless first set against Agnieszka Radwanska in the semi-finals ample evidence. Williams hit 18 aces to just four unforced errors in the 6-0 slaughter that the fourth-seeded Pole, who won only seven points in the set, declared was the best tennis she had ever faced.

"I would say this is probably the best Slam I've played in a year, and I've won a lot in a year," said Williams, the top seed. "Again, I haven't won this one. But even if I don't win, I really can take away that I've been really consistent, and I want to continue that." Williams dropped sets en route to all her major titles in 2015 but she is yet to do so at Melbourne Park ahead of her 26th Grand Slam final today.

She is attempting to equal Steffi Graf's Open-era record of 22 Slam triumphs, having snared her first major title half-a-lifetime ago in 1999, and said she can still get better. "I definitely can play more consistent and be more mentally stable," she said on how her game could be improved still further.

### Nothing to lose

Kerber's never-day-die attitude-inspired by Graf, who hit with her last year and messaged her after the semis-has helped her into the first major final of her career, and she plans to enjoy the occasion. She said all the pressure was on her opponent, who has won all six of her previous Melbourne finals.

"Nothing to lose means I can go out there and try to play like I'm playing, without pressure, without nothing," said the 28-year-old, who sent two-time champion Victoria Azarenka packing on her way to the decider. "I think when you ask a lot of people, I think most will say, 'Okay, Serena will win'. "But this is the challenge I can take. I go out there, I don't have nothing to lose. I don't have so much pressure like she has."

Kerber is the first German in the Australian final since Anke Huber in 1996, with Graf the last winner from that country in 1994. Williams has a 5-1 record against Kerber but after losing to her in Cincinnati in 2012, the American is wary of the threat she poses.

"I thought she played unbelievable in that match. That's something that I'll never forget. I just remember her serving really well, her moving well, her being determined to win that," she said. "I think from then on out I've been really focused that she's someone that I really, you know, and everyone, has to take very serious."

Last season Williams was on the verge of becoming the first player since Graf in 1988 to win a calendar-year Grand Slam, before Italy's Roberta Vinci stunned her in the US Open semi-finals, a defeat that cut deep. She has used it as inspiration to come back better after a lengthy break to recharge the batteries-and plans to atone for the defeat today. "Everyone has expectations. I'm the favorite. I was the favorite in New York," she said. "I feel like I could have done better in New York. But that was a learning experience. "So I'm going to hopefully take that to the court for not only this tournament but for the rest of these Slams (in 2016)." — AFP



**MELBOURNE:** Serena Williams of the United States speaks during a press conference, ahead of today's women's singles final against Angelique Kerber of Germany at the Australian Open tennis championships. — AFP



**MELBOURNE:** Switzerland's Martina Hingis (left) and India's Sania Mirza hold the trophy as they celebrate victory against Czech Republic's Lucie Hradecka and compatriot Andrea Hlavackova after their women's doubles final on day twelve of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament. — AFP

## HINGIS, MIRZA WIN DOUBLES TITLE

**MELBOURNE:** Martina Hingis and Sania Mirza have continued what Hingis calls their "fairytale" run as a doubles combination. Hingis and Mirza maintained their perfect record in Grand Slam doubles finals, beating the Czech pair of Andrea Hlavackova and Lucie Hradecka 7-6 (1), 6-3 at the Australian Open yesterday to extend their winning streak to 36 matches on the way to a third major title.

Hingis, a three-time singles champion at Melbourne Park, and Mirza dominated the first-set tiebreaker preceded by eight service breaks, four by each team. The winners added to their Wimbledon and US Open titles last year and the pair also won at Brisbane and Sydney this month. They started playing together at Indian Wells in March of last year.

Hingis is now a four-time doubles champion at the Australian Open. Mirza, who won the 2009 Australian mixed doubles title with fellow Indian player Mahesh Bhupathi, couldn't extend her run in mixed doubles this year, losing with her partner Ivan Dodig of Croatia 7-

5, 7-6 (4) to Elena Vesnina and Bruno Soares. Vesnina and Soares will play American Coco Vandeweghe and Horia Tecau of Romania in Sunday's final.

Hlavackova and Hradecka are now 2-3 in Grand Slam doubles finals. They won major doubles titles at the 2011 French Open and 2013 US Open. Hingis's singles titles came in 1997, 1998 and 1999 when the tournament had only one stadium with a roof - Rod Laver Arena, where the doubles final was played Friday. It now has three.

### Mirza an amazing champion

"I feel like sometimes we struggle through the heat here in Australia, (but) we struggled through the rain," Hingis said at the trophy presentations under a closed roof because of day-long inclement weather "But since I played that (singles) final you made three covered courts." "Thank you to my partner, we've had an incredible year, we just keep going and going," Mirza said. "She's an amazing champion, but I've

gotten to know her as a person and it's a privilege to play with her."

Hingis appeared at a later media conference without Mirza, who was playing the mixed semifinal. "I feel lonely without my partner," she said, smiling. "Our fairytale continues. It's amazing since winning Wimbledon. After that we only lost two more matches. It keeps going." Hingis said their decision to play only doubles helps. "We're really focused, that's our strength, that we can practice together and we make each other better, even from the start when we played our first tournament in Indian Wells and Miami," Hingis said. "There's not that many people who can match her in the forehand rallies and me on the backhand side and at the net. That's what we try to do every match." Her doubles successes haven't convinced her to make a return to singles, which she hasn't played in nearly 10 years. She came out of retirement to play doubles in 2013. "I've had this question for the last year," the 35-year-old Hingis said. "I always said no." — AP

## BIGGEST BATTLE IS WITHIN: DJOKOVIC

**MELBOURNE:** Novak Djokovic says his biggest battle is internal as he fights to extend his domination of men's tennis—even if his supremacy is not always appreciated by the fans. The Serbian world number one hit a level rarely seen in tennis as he yet again dismissed the great Roger Federer to reach his fifth straight Grand Slam final at the Australian Open.

Djokovic destroyed Federer in two opening sets which he described as "flawless", on the way to a consummate 6-1, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 victory on Rod Laver Arena late on Thursday. The 10-time major winner said the first two sets were the best he has ever played against the Swiss legend, who looked helpless against the onslaught before staging a short-lived rally in the third set. Djokovic, 28, coming off an astonishing 2015 which fell only one win short of a calendar-year Grand Slam, continues to put a space between himself and the rest, includ-

ing the record 17-time Grand Slam champion Federer, 34.

For the first time in his long-running rivalry with Federer, which includes 45 matches and dates back a decade to 2006, he has edged to the front with 23 wins to 22. Djokovic, who will play Andy Murray for a record-equalling sixth Australian Open crown, said it was more a case of struggling with himself than his opponents on court.

"At the end of the day you are battling yourself the most. There are so many players out there who are hitting the ball well," said Djokovic, now in his 183rd week as the world number one.

"Whether or not you're able to cope with the pressure in these particular moments, fighting against some of the best players in the world for the major trophy, of course there's a lot at stake.

"Emotions are going up and down. It's important to keep it together. You go

throughout the match, and even before the match, through different thought processes. "Even though sometimes it seems unnatural, you need to keep pushing yourself to be on the positive side."

### Popular Roger

Djokovic, who will match Rod Laver and Bjorn Borg with 11 Grand Slam titles if he wins Sunday's final, leaving only four players ahead of him on the all-time list, said he intended to stay on top for as long as he can. "To sustain that level and throughout the year to be actually consistent requires a lot more than just a good game," he said.

"I'm going to try to stay here as long as possible. That's from my perspective what I can influence, what I can do. "Whether or not I'm going to be dominant in the years to come, I don't know. I cannot give you an answer on that. I can try to do my best to try to keep playing on this level." —AFP

# Sports



**Kohli powers India to T20 series** **43**



**MELBOURNE:** Britain's Andy Murray plays a backhand return during his men's singles semi-final match against Canada's Milos Raonic on day twelve of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament. (INSET) Andy Murray shakes hands with Canada's Milos Raonic after victory. — AFP

## MURRAY BEATS RAONIC IN GRUELING FIVE SET DUEL

**MELBOURNE:** Andy Murray twice fought back from a set down to win a grueling five-setter against injury-hampered Milos Raonic yesterday and reach his latest Australian Open final against five-time champion Novak Djokovic. The four-time runner-up reached his fifth final at Melbourne Park after overcoming the gallant Canadian 4-6, 7-5, 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-2 in four hours, three minutes on Rod Laver Arena.

Djokovic has already beaten Murray in three Australian Open finals and the world number one will get the advantage of an extra day's rest after he knocked out Roger Federer in four sets in Thursday's semi-final. It will be Murray's ninth Grand Slam final as the Briton, up against the dominant Serb once again, chases an elusive third major title after winning the US Open in 2012 and Wimbledon in 2013.

### Much-improved Canadian

"It was tough because he (Raonic) didn't miss one first serve in the (third set) tiebreaker

and he has one of the best serves in tennis," Murray said. "I started to get a better read on his serves as the match went on as I was making a few more returns, that was the key."

It will also be the first time two brothers have played the singles and doubles finals at the same Grand Slam after Jamie Murray reached the men's doubles final with his Brazilian partner Bruno Soares.

Andy Murray's win over Raonic was the 28-year-old Scot's fourth win in seven encounters with the much-improved Canadian, who slowed in the final set and completed the match grimacing from a right groin injury. "That's something I've learned over the years of playing. When I'm playing a match, I'm not thinking about what he was going through," Murray said of Raonic's plight.

"I'm just trying to use what he's giving me on the court and try to make adjustments to my game if needs be. "Obviously if the injury affected him significantly at the end, then that's

tough, especially at this stage of an event." Murray broke Raonic's big serve four times, twice in the fifth set, and hit 38 winners, while Raonic served up 23 aces among his 72 winners, but made 78 unforced errors. Raonic, who beat former winner Stan Wawrinka and Gael Monfils to reach his second major semi-final, was bidding to become the first Canadian man to reach a Grand Slam title match.

### Racquet tantrum

Raonic, who has gained composure and purpose under the coaching of Carlos Moya, began confidently, breaking Murray to love in the opening game of the match, and he went on to take the first set in 36 minutes. The Canadian was jamming up Murray with his serving to his body, but the world number two finally broke his serve in the 12th game of the second set to level the semi-final 7-5.

In the third, Raonic comfortably held his serve and had break point on Murray's service

in the 11th game, only for the Scot to hold on. But the Canadian played a strong tiebreak, hitting two return winners and he brought up two set points which he clinched with an ace to take a 2-1 sets lead in a tense match.

Raonic left the court for treatment for a right groin injury at 1-2 in the fourth set. Murray broke the Canadian for the second time in the match in the seventh game, with Raonic wincing in pain. He sought treatment from the trainer again at another changeover. The fired-up Scot fought off two break points and then locked up the match on his second set point to take the semi-final into a fifth set.

Raonic was broken in the opening game of the final set and he slammed his racquet twice into the court at the changeover, breaking the frame, as his frustrations boiled over. Wounded Raonic bravely resisted but Murray broke a second time to steam home against the underpowered Canadian and set up a fifth attempt to win the Australian title. —AFP