



Kuwait Times offices will be closed on Sunday, January 1, 2017. Therefore, there will be no issue of the newspaper on Monday, January 2, 2017. Our next issue will hit the newsstands on Tuesday, January 3, 2017. Happy New Year!

Happy New Year


 150 FILS  
 NO: 17098  
 32 PAGES

## CELEBRATIONS KICK OFF AS WORLD RINGS IN 2017

REVELERS BID ADIEU TO A YEAR OF CONFLICTS



Min 09°  
 Max 22°  
 High Tide 13:12 & 23:25  
 Low Tide 06:40 & 18:05



SYDNEY: Fireworks erupt over Sydney's iconic Harbour Bridge and Opera House during the New Year celebrations today morning.— AFP

SYDNEY: Australia rang in the New Year with a spectacular fireworks display in Sydney, sending rainbow-colored showers into the night sky and defying the global terror attacks that cast a pall over 2016. Around 1.5 million people packed Australia's biggest city to watch as the midnight fireworks erupted from Sydney Harbour Bridge, with the extravaganza beamed to television sets and phones across the world.

As 2016 drew to a close, revelers around the world were bidding a weary adieu to a year filled with political surprises, prolonged conflicts and deaths of legendary celebrities.

Japan ushered in 2017 in style, with thousands packing the streets of Tokyo and releasing balloons into the air in celebration of the new year. Sydney's visual feast paid tribute to some of the international musical legends who died this year, including David Bowie and Prince, with purple rain pouring off the bridge in an early display and firework "stars" soaring high above the harbour.

2016 has seen repeated bloodshed, most recently a deadly truck attack at a Berlin Christmas market, a similar incident on Bastille Day in France that killed 86 people, and atrocities in Turkey and the Middle East. But the New South Wales state premier urged "business as usual" as a larger-than-usual crowd gathered due to the weekend timing and warm weather.

"My encouragement to everyone is to enjoy New Year's Eve... in the knowledge that police are doing everything they can to keep us safe," Premier Mike Baird said.

Around 2,000 extra officers were deployed in Sydney after a man was arrested for allegedly making online threats against the celebrations. There were a number of other reported threats during the holiday period, in Asia-Pacific and elsewhere.

In Melbourne, police foiled a "significant" Islamic State-inspired Christmas Day terror plot. Indonesia said it foiled plans by an IS-linked group for a Christmas-time suicide bombing, and 52 died in the Philippines in bomb attacks blamed on Islamist militants. Israel on Friday issued a warning of imminent "terrorist attacks" to tourists and western targets in India.

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JAMMU: People watch Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the nation, on television at a grocery store in Jammu yesterday. — AP

## MODI DEFENDS DECISION TO PULL HIGH-VALUE BILLS

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi defended his government's decision to demonetize the country's highest-value currency bills last month in an unusual New Year's Eve message to the nation yesterday.

Modi called India's massive demonetization drive, which withdrew 86 percent of the country's currency bills from the system, "a historic purification ritual" to cleanse the system of tax evasion and corruption. "This will play an important role in changing the direction of the nation in times to come," he said in the speech, which was televised live.

In an announcement that caught the country by surprise on Nov 8, Modi said in a similar address to the nation that India was withdrawing 500- and 1,000-rupee bills as legal tender in order to crack down on the country's massive amounts of "black money," or untaxed wealth.

The deadline for exchanging or depositing the old currency in bank accounts passed Friday. When the government announced its demonetization plans, it also announced a cap on the amount of money people could withdraw from ATMs and bank accounts, while the central bank printed new currency bills to

fill the gap created by the erasure of a majority of the country's notes. At that time, Modi said that by Dec 30, normalcy was likely to return. However, on Friday, the Reserve Bank of India announced that it would continue to control how much money people can withdraw from ATMs and banks for now.

According to a statement from the central bank, the daily limit on ATM withdrawals will go up to 4,500 rupees (\$66) from 2,500 (\$37) rupees, but the weekly cap on withdrawals from bank accounts will remain at 24,000 rupees Saturday onward. It wasn't clear how long the limits would be in place.

Since the announcement that the old high-value bills were no longer legal tender, banks and ATMs have seen massive lines of people. It's not unusual for ATMs to not be refilled for days and for banks to run out of cash within a few hours of opening.

A majority of Indians earn and spend in cash, either due to habit or because they're too poor to have access to banks. Experts say only about 40 percent of the country's ATMs are equipped to start giving out the new 2,000- and 500-rupee bills. — AP

## IS BOMBINGS IN BAGHDAD KILL 29

### BAGHDADI ALIVE, STILL LEADING: US

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon said on Friday it believes that Islamic State chief Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi is indeed alive, despite repeated efforts by the US-led coalition to take out the jihadist group leader. Baghdadi has kept a low profile, despite having declared himself the leader of a renewed Muslim caliphate, but last month released a defiant audio message urging his supporters to defend the northern Iraqi city of Mosul.

It is not clear if he is in the besieged city, where he declared his caliphate in 2014 after the IS group seized territory covering much of eastern Syria and northern Iraq. "We do think Baghdadi is alive and is still leading ISIL and we are obviously doing everything we can to track his movements," Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook told CNN.

"If we get the opportunity, we certainly would take advantage of any opportunity to deliver him the justice he deserves," he said. "We're doing everything we can. This is something we're spending a lot of time on."

In mid-December, the United States more than doubled the bounty on the shadowy IS leader's head to \$25 million. The group has only released one video of Baghdadi, showing a man with a black and grey beard wearing a black robe and matching turban, dating back to 2014. Cook suggested that Baghdadi is isolated because coalition raids have killed many IS leaders. "He's having a hard time finding advisers and confidants to speak with because a lot of them are no longer with us," the spokesman said. According to an official Iraqi government document, Baghdadi was born in Samarra in 1971. — AFP

BAGHDAD: A pair of suicide bombings minutes apart hit a central Baghdad market yesterday, killing 29 people and wounding at least 54, prompting security forces to ban traffic from key streets at the center of the Iraqi capital, police and hospital officials said.

The twin attacks hit Al-Sinak, a busy market selling car accessories, food and clothes as well as agricultural seeds and machinery. Minutes after the first suicide bomber detonated his explosives-laden belt, the second one struck amid the crowd that gathered, according to

the officials.

All officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to release the information. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility for the attacks in Al-Sanak in a statement posted by its Amaq news agency, confirming that the blasts came from a pair of suicide bombers. Later yesterday, three separate attacks in and around Baghdad killed eight people and wounded 17. Those killed included one policeman.

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BAGHDAD: Women grieve for bomb victims Arif Muhanad (36) and his son Muhanad (8) during their funeral procession in Baghdad yesterday. — AP

## MERKEL: ISLAMIST TERRORISM BIGGEST TEST

BERLIN: Islamist terrorism is the biggest test facing Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday in a New Year's address to the nation, and vowed to introduce laws that improve security after a deadly attack before Christmas in Berlin. Merkel, seeking a fourth term as chancellor in 2017, described 2016 as a year that gave many the impression that the world had "turned upside down". She urged Germans to shun populism and said Germany should take a leading role in addressing the many challenges facing the European Union.

"Many attach to 2016 the feeling that the

world had turned upside down or that what for long had been held as an achievement is now being questioned. The European Union for example," Merkel said.

"Or equally parliamentary democracy, which allegedly is not caring for the interests of the citizens but is only serving the interests of a few. What a distortion," she said in a veiled reference to claims by the far-right party Alternative for Germany (AfD) that is stealing votes from her conservatives. Ahead of the 2017 election, polls put her conservative bloc well ahead of rivals but a fractured electoral landscape risks compli-

cating the coalition arithmetic.

"Election year 2017: For Merkel, nothing is certain any more", ran a headline in Saturday's edition of mass-selling daily Bild. The paper wrote that for an increasing number of voters the chancellor, 62, no longer appeared unassailable.

Liberals across the Atlantic have hailed Merkel as an anchor of stability and reason in a year that saw Donald Trump elected as US president, Britain vote to leave the EU and US-Russia relations deteriorate to Cold War levels.

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In Brief

AMIR EXCHANGES NEW YEAR GREETINGS WITH WORLD LEADERS

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday exchanged cables of congratulations with heads of Arab and friendly countries on the advent of the new year 2017, wishing their countries stability, peace and prosperity. —KUNA



DIWAN THANKS PEOPLE WHO EXPRESSED SORROW

**KUWAIT:** The Amiri Diwan on Friday issued the following statement: On behalf of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Al-Sabah Family, the Amiri Diwan expresses gratitude to the citizens and residents who had expressed condolences on demise of Shama Barakah Obeid Abalhawaya, widow of the late Sheikh Salem Al-Humoud Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA



KUWAIT OIL PRICE DOWN SIX CENTS

**KUWAIT:** The price of Kuwaiti oil went down by six cents to \$51.87 per barrel on Friday after being at \$51.93 pb the day before, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. At the global market, the price of oil went down due to the increase of US oil drilling rigs and platforms by 525 units. —KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Traditional dhows sail during the annual pearl diving trip held last summer. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

WORLD EYES EXECUTION OF OPEC, MAJOR STATES OIL OUTPUT REDUCTION

**VIENNA:** The date of January fifth, 2017 will be very significant as the world will focus eyes on the implementation of the decision by OPEC countries and other major global players to reduce production by about 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd). Oil and economic expert Dr Bashir Aliyah said that the decision, which took several grand meetings to reach, will hopefully lead to the constancy of the oil price after years of instability.



The lack of agreement between consumers and producers led to a sorrowful situation which could have been avoided, said Dr Aliyah who commended both parties on finally reaching a settlement which will hopefully recover the oil price to its normal level. He also stressed that the US decision to reduce its production of Shale oil was a blessing for producers, otherwise, the situation might have been much worse.

Ahead of the actual implementation of the decision, the global market is witnessing a hopeful atmosphere which will surely consolidate with the actual execution of the production reduction, said the expert.

OPEC members agreed to cut down production by 1.2 million barrels per day. Non-OPEC members also agreed to do the same, cutting production by 600,000 bpd. Russia alone will reduce its output by 300,000 bpd. — KUNA



The Central Bank of Kuwait

HORECA COOKING CLUB INVESTS IN KUWAITI YOUTH'S POTENTIALS: ANJERI

**KUWAIT:** Organizers of the Horeca 2017 exhibition are putting the final touches to host the event which takes place on 16-18 of January 2017 at the Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref. On that regard, Nabila Al-Anjeri, General Manager of the event's organizer Leaders Group, said that the event is set to include several activities, including the 'Horeca Cooking Club,' which will be a new platform that contributes in investing in Kuwaiti youth's potentials, and encouraging them to start new lines of business. "Hotel rooms' capacity in Kuwait is expected to increase to over 10,000 within three years, while restaurants are expected to increase to over 5,000 in the same period," Anjeri stressed, noting that Horeca is the perfect platform to set special strategies and plans to cope with this expansion.



Nabila Al-Anjeri

team plans to showcase, including new ideas and visions on learning cooking skills.

Hubail added that the club aims at attracting those eager for knowledge and productivity as well as giving participating young people opportunities to communicate with raw material importers as well as the companies importing various cooking equipment. "The club will be the base of encouraging youth to start mega projects and businesses," she added, noting that some young people might, for instance, excel in baking cakes, while others are more experienced in desserts or cooking, and might thus seek to start an integrated project of a family business.

Horeca 2017 exhibition is organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Company, and takes place under the patronage of Minister of Information, State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

CBK: MONEY SUPPLY DOWN 0.1% IN OCT

**KUWAIT:** Money supply (M2) plummeted by 0.1 percent to KD 35.6 billion last October, compared with the previous month, showed recent statistics of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). The private sector's deposits at local banks hiked by 0.6 percent to KD 31.1 billion in October, while deposits in foreign currencies fell by 9.1 percent to KD 2.8 billion, thus bringing the private sector's total deposits to KD 34 billion, the CBK said in a statistical report.

Local banks' claims on the CBK, involving CBK bonds and related Tawarruq, rose by 1.0

percent to KD 3.1 billion in October, while local banks' assets dipped by 0.9 percent to KD 60 billion, it added. Local banks' net foreign assets dwindled by 7.3 percent to KD 8.1 billion in October, as time deposits with the CBK jumped by 69.4 percent to KD 1.1 billion in the same month, according to the CBK's recent statistics.

Conventional investment companies' total assets dropped by 0.9 percent to KD 3.7 billion in October, as Islamic investment firms' assets edged down by 0.3 percent to KD 4.1 billion, bringing these companies' total assets

to around KD 7.9 billion. The balance of utilized cash credit facilities to residents fell by 2 percent to KD 34 billion in October, while interest rate (return) on one-year treasury bonds stood at 1.25 percent, the CBK added.

The financing of Kuwaiti imports (paid up) nosedived by 1.8 percent to KD 276.6 million in October, while the average US exchange rate against KD was 302.5 fils, it noted. The CBK's total assets shot up by 11.4 percent to KD 9.2 billion in October, and net foreign assets went up by 11.6 percent to KD 8.8 billion, it added. — KUNA



ANKARA: Kuwait Red Crescent Society's Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer distributes relief aid to the Syrian refugees in Turkey. — KUNA

Dr Hilal Al-Sayer participates in an activity oriented to the Syrian refugees in Turkey.

Local Spotlight

## DOCTORS UNDER ATTACK!

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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**H**appy New Year everyone and I hope that all your wishes come true. I was trying to enjoy the news, but I came across the report of a sad incident involving a doctor at the Amiri Hospital was allegedly attacked by a patient.

This is not the first time we read about such ugly incidents, committed by people who I don't think deserve to be called patients for attacking a doctor just because he did not prescribe him the drug he wished for, did not like the service, was simply bored from waiting too long or just because he thought he could get away with it.

I believe that the repeated bad behaviors of people against doctors at their workplace reflect the lack of ethics and morality of the society. Moreover, it also shows that doctors are not receiving the respect and protection that they need at their workplace, and that besides the fact that it encourages for further misbehavior.

A patient at the Amiri Hospital left his room and headed to the office of Dr Ali Al-Alanda, the Director of the hospital, and asked to be prescribed a prohibited medication. And while the doctor was explaining to him the hospital's regulations about this drug, how it was dangerous and can't be given without a medical prescription, the patient became furious and insisted on getting the drug. With the doctor's refusal, the man took a stick and attacked the doctor.

He broke the doctor's arm before being taken back to his room. I know some people may sympathy with the attacker, but I don't. I can't even think that an ill man can implement such a plan, in which he leaves his room, starts a fight with a hospital official and attacks him because he did not get what he wanted! That man deserves jail and not a hospital room.

Local media ran the news with several inquiries about how long these chain of attacks against doctors will continue. Not only is it a problem of brutality committed by the public or patients, but such practices also reflect a negative image about Kuwait and the Kuwaiti people in general. Please readers, don't think that all Kuwaitis are bad or abusers. These people are only representing themselves, and not Kuwait or Kuwaitis.

I need to say here that I don't think the attacker is a real Kuwaiti. There is no way he is. Not every holder of a Kuwaiti passport is a real Kuwaiti. With many people carrying dual citizenship, such ill actions reflect who they are as liars and forgers. Now, this man eventually may be set free because of *wasta* (connections) if the doctor ceded from his legal and human right of respect as a doctor and an employee who got beaten and insulted at his office and in front of everyone. We have a new Minister of Health now and hopefully this incident will not pass easily without punishment.

I have spoken with some expat doctors and I find some of them are really good and helpful, yet they don't feel comfortable at their workplace or the public behaviors. The sad thing here is the role of the public awareness and the culture, which fails to show that doctors are not servants; instead they are there to save lives and give support. How about the Ministry of Health spreading this message among the public? Doctors are not supposed to go to their work with fear and anxiety from being attacked. They are needed to save lives and give comfort. So, how can they carry out their mission if they are abused?!

# KUWAITI RED CRESCENT SOCIETY IN WIDE-SCALE ACTION TO RELIEVE SYRIANS

ANKARA: A team of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) led by Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer has been engaged in a variety of activities to support refugees and displaced from the war-ravaged neighboring country Syria.

The programed activities included hand-over of food supplies to Syrians who have been relocated to the province of Idlib, signing a number of cooperation accords with Turkish and Qatari relief associations. The KRCS was the first philanthropic association to reach the displaced in the Idlib countryside and deliver relief aid to them, as part of the campaign 'Cry of Aleppo.'

The Kuwaiti society's field team, in coordination with the Qatari Red Crescent Society, has distributed 500 food parcels, mattresses, child clothes and heating fuel to those who have taken refuge in Idlib, fleeing Aleppo and other regions in the country. The KRCS has dispatched 20 truck-loads of humanitarian supplies, including mobile clinics, from the border Turkish town of Gaziantep.

The wide-scale relief program included cooperation accords, valued at \$2.4 million, with the Qatari society, to provide relief and medical supplies to Syrians in need,

three cooperation agreements, worth \$390,000, with a Turkish relief association in Calis for the same purpose, in addition to another accord with the Turkish Red Crescent in Gaziantep to examine relief projects for Syrians who came from eastern Aleppo.

Furthermore, the society has provided backing for an orphanage house in Gaziantep. Dr Sayer himself had personally performed a surgery on a two-year-old Syrian child in Hatay. The Kuwaiti relief team is pursuing activities in the Syrian-Turkish border region, helping the refugees and organizing delivery of much needed supplies to Syrians struggling to survive.

### Distinguished roles

On Friday, Dr Sayer extolled efforts by humanitarian organizations aiming to aid the Syrians displaced from eastern Aleppo. Speaking before of leaving Gaziantep airport in eastern Turkey, he said KRCS, Qatar Red Crescent Society and Turkey's IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation had played distinguished roles in providing humanitarian aid to Syrians either inside or outside the country. KRCS

made a humanitarian example through offering aid to the displaced Syrians that includes food, health services, fuel for heating, children's clothing and mobile clinics on a daily basis, he added.

KRCS' initiatives are contributing as much as possible to alleviating the crisis of the Syrians displaced from Aleppo, he noted, describing the crisis as "complicated and critical" that requires cooperation amongst relief organizations. He stressed that the "society will continue consulting with the parties interested in the humanitarian crisis so to as provide aid to Syrians in order to put an end to the big humanitarian disaster."

Dr Sayer affirmed that the State of Kuwait under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has been offering distinguished efforts in the fields of humanitarian relief and healthcare services aiming to help our brothers in Syria. He expressed his appreciation to Kuwaiti donors for their donations that helped all Syrian people who are in dire need of most basic needs like food, means of heating and blankets for harsh winter. — KUNA



Dr Hilal Al-Sayer performs a surgical operation on a Syrian refugee.



Dr Hilal Al-Sayer distributes gifts to Syrian refugees.



Dr Hilal Al-Sayer poses with Syrian orphans.

# GCC WOMEN CONTRIBUTE TO AID EFFORTS FOR SYRIANS IN TURKEY



Saudi volunteer and activists Hawazen Al-Zahrani poses for a picture with some Syrian refugees.



ANKARA: The Tarahum volunteering team poses for a group photo. — KUNA

ANKARA: The Syrian crisis, which is entering its sixth year, had been plaguing the international community due to the atrocities committed during the ongoing war. Since March of 2011, the raging conflict resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe that led to the displacement and expulsion of millions of Syrian refugees who sought safe havens within their own country, neighboring states, as well as Europe and other parts of the world.

The GCC countries took a leading role in providing humanitarian assistance to the unfortunate Syrian refugees with Gulf States women being on the frontline of relief aid efforts. Women from the GCC bloc had been part of numerous initiatives to provide relief aid material and humanitarian assistance to Syrian refugees in Turkey. Saudi volunteer and activists Hawazen Al-Zahrani said that the presence of GCC women citizens on the ground was not a "strange thing," affirming that providing aid to the Syrian brothers and sisters was an obligation that she gladly carried out.

Voluntary work creates this social bond among people that no other form of human interaction could provide, stressed Al-Zahrani who added that GCC societies always focused on the importance of social solidarity.

With the majority of refugees being children and women, it is important for GCC women volunteers to be on the ground to provide them with necessary assistance, said the Saudi activists. Though nothing seems to be promising, these small gestures towards the Syrians will hopefully help in decreasing the suffering of those affected by the grueling conflict in Syria. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A wide variety of fruits and vegetables put on display at Al-Forda Market. — Photos by Ben Garcia

# AL-FORDA MARKET BEST DESTINATION FOR FRUITS, VEGETABLES AT BARGAIN PRICES

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: If you plan on buying large amounts of fruits and vegetables this New Year, Al-Forda Central Fruits and Vegetables Market in Sulaibiyah, near Kabd, is probably the best place to go. Since the market is a place for wholesale/retail activities, the prices are expectedly much cheaper as compared to other markets. About ten pieces of fresh cob corn were sold to this reporter for KD1, while the same quantity is sold for up to KD3 in supermarkets, if not more. The bags of onions are sold from half dinar to KD3 per sack. Cauliflower is sold at 750 fils per bundle, and if you ask for a discount, you could ultimately take it home for as low as 500 fils.

"The key to getting your desired price in Al-Forda is to negotiate," said Iftikar, a Pakistani regular customer buying fruits and veggies at the mar-

ket. "You can ask even half of the price and most of the time [the seller] will give you the discount especially if you are buying in bulk."

Tomatoes weighing between seven and eight kilograms are only sold at KD1, while in the supermarket it is sold for a much higher cost ranging between 400-500 fils per kilogram. Most of the fruits and vegetables being sold in Al-Forda are from neighboring countries like Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Lebanon. There is currently an oversupply of bell peppers, which dropped their prices to KD1 per box, probably the cheapest item in Al-Forda. "Yes, I heard from the supplier that we have abundance of those so it is cheaper," said Rajish, an Indian fresh produce vendor at Al-Forda Market. "We have many of the product from Kuwait and also from Saudi Arabia, so it is cheaper."

Oranges and apples are also sold

per box, and they are much cheaper compared to the prices you would see in the supermarkets. Oranges and apples are sold at KD2 per box, and each box weighs more than five kilograms. Supplies of fruits and vegetables are abundant. And while there are some intermittent shortages of certain items, the reaction would only be reflected in the prices. Nowadays, fruit vendors say that they are regularly getting supplies from new Asian suppliers such as Thailand and India. "Before, we used to get many supplies from Syria, but because of the war there, we are getting other sources, mostly from neighboring countries," Rajish told Kuwait Times. US and other European countries also regularly supply some needed fruits and vegetables to Kuwait, but those products can mostly be found in some high-end supermarkets in Kuwait, and understandably, they are costly.

# Recycle factory owner believes 95% of waste in Kuwait can be recycled

'Recycle Kuwait' takes recyclable material from 100+ homes

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Recycling is not very popular in Kuwait, but there are people who believe it is important to preserve our environment. Shakir Al-Essa has been working in this field since 2007. He first worked in a company that ran a factory recycling metal, and another that recycled plastic. But the company closed down, as it couldn't sustain its operations. "I worked at that company for about 11 years. In 2007, I started a project of collecting recyclable household and office waste, such as paper, plastic and metal. Later, about six or seven years, other companies were founded, but each of them only focused on one material. With time, all these companies shut down, and the last of them was the one I worked for, in 2013," he told Kuwait Times.



Shakir Al-Essa

"Customers were calling me regarding the project that we stopped, as it was not profitable. The company operated for about six years with total loss, and one of the main reasons for its losses was that it was collecting the waste for free from houses. At that time, the price of metals was high, but after the financial crisis in 2008, the government issued decisions banning exporting metals abroad, except under certain strict conditions. This made the price of metal drop, and the ministry of commerce froze prices," Essa explained.

"For instance, in the past if an old refrigerator was placed in the street, it would immediately disappear, while today, nobody wants it. In the past, prices were about five times higher than today. This has also reduced the theft of manhole covers, as they're not worth anything anymore, and will only fetch KD 2 today," he said.

completely disappearing. The government's proposal of realizing a public-private partnership (PPP) project for producing energy from recycled waste is yet to be realized. But this will kill the business of recycling factories that run on this waste as their only source," warned Essa.

The recycle process goes through multiple stages. "Some companies sift out materials from the waste collected by the municipality and deliver it to the recycling factory. We are all part of the process. The consumer can also separate waste, and the company will take and clean it, then deliver it to the recycling factory. Without the middlemen, this process will not be complete," highlighted Essa.

#### Various obstacles

Some kinds of waste need to be in a certain quantity to be recycled. "The population of Kuwait is very small to have a factory for recycling electronics. We can't be sure that the costly factory will collect enough electronic waste for the recycling process. Also, recycling factories fear new regulations that could limit their business, such as the regulation on banning the export of metals," he said.

Ninety percent of the resources of recycling factories come from landfills. "If the project for using waste for generating electricity is realized, factories and companies working in this industry will lose their resources and shut down. This project was proposed in the past and wasn't realized, but recently, the government proposed it again. It's a one-billion-dinar project. I don't think it's a great project, as plastic recycling will be most affected," Essa said.

Customers were calling me regarding the project that we stopped, as it was not profitable

#### Long cycle

According to him, the recycling process is a long cycle that starts from the consumer and ends with him again using the recycled object. "If somebody has an old glass cup and doesn't want it, he can give it away for recycling, and after it is recycled, another person will buy it. This is if we have a factory for recycling this material, otherwise it will be exported," Essa stated.

In a small country like Kuwait, there aren't factories for recycling all kinds of materials. "When the companies were operating, there were various buyers inside and outside Kuwait, which encouraged competition. But the Ministry of Commerce later issued a regulation banning the export of metals, so two local factories fixed prices, which were high and not profitable. So it's not a good business for companies to work in," he pointed out.

Kuwait is not an attractive environment for investments in recycling. "This industry is facing a danger of

In the past, prices were about five times higher than today

#### 'Recycle Kuwait'

Essa is currently the general manager of Safya International Import and Export Company and is working on 'Recycle Kuwait' - a project that was launched a year ago. "Over 100 clients deal with this project, who pay KD 80 annually for the company to take recyclable material from their homes. This waste includes metal products such as microwave ovens and refrigerators, paper, plastic, glass and used frying oil. I pick this waste weekly," he noted.

This shows that awareness is rising in the society. "People are now more aware of environmental problems, and the increasing number of diseases that spread in the community. They know that our lifestyle is not healthy, including our food. These clients are thoughtful people, and they usually eat organic food, practice sports and strive to improve the environment," noted Essa.

"In my opinion, there shouldn't be landfills, and 95 percent of waste should be recycled. Even food can be converted into organic fertilizer that can be used for agriculture, instead of wasting money on transporting it with all the foul smell. There are special machines for this type of recycling, which convert it immediately. And if people don't want to buy it, they can recycle it themselves, but this will take about a month. This organic fertilizer is liquid and can be used to improve agriculture or can be mixed with sewage to clean it. As there is no law regulating the recycling process, people are not obliged to use such machines, which if used will save both the public budget spent on waste and the environment as well," he added.

Waste is mainly of three categories: Recyclable, non-recyclable, and hazardous, out of which recyclable waste forms the majority. "We may have concerns about what to do with expired drugs, but we are now working on this issue to find a solution. Hazardous waste includes lamps and batteries, as these contain dangerous materials. We need to treat it and not bury it. Currently, we only collect recyclable waste, but we aim to become a solution provider for the rest of the waste in the future," concluded Essa.

Banning exporting metal abroad made the price of metal drop



Labels distributed by 'Recycle Kuwait' project workers to be placed on recyclable material.



Waste collected by Safya International Import and Export Company for recycling.

- This industry is facing a danger of completely disappearing
- The population of Kuwait is very small to have a factory for recycling electronics
- People are now more aware of environmental problems

الجريدة Al-Jarida

THE MP'S TREE AND THE MINISTER

By Hassan Al-Essa

Why did MP Osama Al-Shaheen feel bad about seeing a Christmas tree at Dasma Co-op Society? Why did the government, represented by the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, immediately react to his demands and order the removal of the tree just like any trash gets removed off of streets? The land on which the co-op society is built is government property.

Upon a complaint made by MP Osama Al-Shaheen had asked the minister to remove the tree and she immediately responded! It is the same MP who said during his election campaign that he believes that all freedom of expression and the rule of the law cases in Kuwait are ok, as we do not have any midnight visitors or human right violations.

Shaheen represents the nation of which some individuals put a plastic tree at the co-op society. And since his powers include removing major damage or threats from the nation's co-ops, and since the government and minister's duty include responding to MPs to set things straight, this is how major reform is done. This is how we get rid of worries about imminent economic disasters. Let us not get lost into too much detail about the major priorities of an MP in the new youth parliament. But let me ask again: why did that plastic Christmas tree cause so much psychological harm to the lawmaker or to his voters? Why did the minister immediately respond and feel sorry for hurting the lawmaker's feelings and, thus, removed the tree from government property just the same way the government uprooted some citizens and withdrew their citizenships on grounds that it had made a mistake on granting those people citizenships in the first place a long time ago? Or even the same way it deprives them of freedom of expression and jails them over a simple tweet or opinion that violates the law? Keep in mind that we are in a state ruled by laws!

Once more, why did that plastic tree hurt the MP's feelings? That tree did not prevent him from performing his religious rituals and did not distract him from practicing his freedom of religion. That tree was not behind the fall in oil prices. It did not overburden citizens nor did it stop the great economic, health and educational reforms led by the new government with participation from the minister who removed the tree!

Why that particular tree that might be trivial in itself but represents a particular occasion? It was actually the shape of a tree and not a real one. Why does such a plastic mold keep the MP, the ministers and the people preoccupied?

— Translated by Kuwait Times



القباس Al-Qabas

SCENES IN RAMALLAH

By Dr Mohammad Al-Abdeljader

I recently attended the seventh congress of the 'Fatah' movement, one of the oldest Palestinian factions that is currently headed by President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas. My participation came after I received an invitation from the movement to attend the congress, along with a group of parliamentarians, intellectuals and parties in support of human rights and backing the Palestinian cause. I was accompanied by Abdallah Al-Naibari and Dr Shafiq Al-Ghabra from Kuwait. The visit required going to Jordan and getting through the occupied territories to reach the congress hall in Ramallah. It is a beautiful town, well known to Kuwaitis before its occupation in 1967, when families used to spend the summer there. Now, it is the administrative city of the Palestinian Authority.

Lectures were held about the future of the struggle and its nature, in addition to field trips to see the painful reality and hear stories about the cause of people that struggled and still struggle to get their legitimate rights. I visited Bethlehem, Nablus, and also Hebron where the Ibrahimi Mosque is located. I saw the building of Israeli settlements that expand in front of every Arab city and village, also the electrified security barriers and the inhu-

mane separation wall. We heard stories about official and popular roles the State of Kuwait is playing, and the necessity to overcome all hurdles and obstacles that affected relations.

Kuwait's popular speech at the conference was spontaneous and reflected a Kuwaiti-Palestinian relationship that was affected during the Iraqi Invasion, and was restored officially and popularly through initiatives by all parties. It left something in all those who attended the conference, particularly those who lived in Kuwait, and we listened to supporting speeches from free people around the world.

We saw the suffering in how citizens are steadfast towards settlement and organized action by a wanton and oppressive power that supersedes any description, as seeing with your own eyes is different from looking at pictures in the media. This trip remains a link among the links of moral support of people to keep their steadfastness, and also to intensify and focus on events in occupied Palestine and all regions, as well as war and destruction being witnessed by the Arab and Muslim worlds.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

Crime

Report

KUWAITI CITIZEN KILLED IN ROBBERY AT SAUDI DESERT

KUWAIT: An Egyptian chef was recently arrested in Saudi Arabia for murdering and robbing a Kuwaiti citizen who had gone camping at the Debdebeh desert in Saudi Arabia, said security sources. The sources explained that the citizen had gone ahead of his friends, selected the camp's site, pitched the tents, hired the chef in order to serve the group during the camping period and sent the location to his friends. The sources added that taking advantage of being alone with the man in the middle of nowhere, the chef hit the citizen with a metal object, killing him, and stole away his money and vehicle. Arriving to the camp, the citizen's nephew found his uncle dead and reported the case to Saudi authorities, who managed to arrest the culprit.

Embezzlement

A citizen working for the Ministry of Utilities was recently arrested for embezzling a fortune by collecting ministry fees in cash and not depositing them to the ministry's treasury, said security sources. They noted that the suspect usually targeted big companies, adding that a person grew suspicious of his demand to do the payments in cash, and reported the matter, which led to the suspect's arrest.

Fatal crash

Two citizens were recently killed after they lost control over their vehicle and it collided into a truck along Nuwaiseeb highway, according to investigations. Separately, three citizens sustained various injuries when two vehicles collided together along Damascus street, said security sources.

Search for harassers

A female citizen reported that someone was following her around a Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh shopping mall, and then followed her to her vehicle and forced her to take his mobile phone's number, said security sources, noting that a case was filed and the suspect is being summoned. Separately, a female citizen in her thirties reported that someone had been harassing her by calls through which he kept flirting with her, said security sources, noting that the girl provided the police with the caller's number. Further investigations are in progress.

Cross-dresser caught

A male citizen dressed as a woman and wearing a wig was recently arrested in Salmiya, said security sources.

Home robbery

A GCC national reported that unidentified robbers stole contents of his Jahra apartment, including a safe containing KD 25,000 in cash, said security sources. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress. In other news, a citizen reported that unidentified robbers had stolen the contents of his Abdali camp, said security sources. Meanwhile, a Filipino man reported that his mobile phone was stolen at a barber shop in Jabriya while he was having a haircut, said security sources.

Fugitives detained

A Saudi suspect managed to escape after he was briefly left alone while being transported from Sulaibiya police station to the attorney general's office. He was later ambushed outside a relative's house in Jahra and placed under arrest, security sources said. In a separate case, a citizen wanted for a KD 14,000 financial claim was recently arrested at a checkpoint in Sulaibikhat. — Translated by Kuwait Times

KFH EMPLOYEE AWARDED 'MANSION HOUSE' SCHOLARSHIP BY THE LORD MAYOR OF LONDON

KUWAIT: Senior Risk Model Analyst, Risk Quantitative Analytics at Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Abdul Rahman Al-Duaj has been awarded the prestigious Mansion House Scholarship by the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Dr Andrew Parmley. The scholarship in business and finance has been granted to Duaj after successfully passing the required interviews under the supervision of an arbitration panel at the British embassy in Kuwait in presence of Head of Training at the Institute of Banking Studies. This confirms the competencies and the proficiency levels of KFH's national manpower.

All local banks participated in this scholarship, yet Duaj managed to win and represent KFH and the Kuwaiti banking sector in London. This prestigious award opens new horizons for further educational attainment in the banking industry. It equips scholars with skills and tools that can be properly utilized, thus optimally translated into fruitful practices in the bank.

Duaj will join one of the specialized program within the framework of the Mansion House scholarship during the year 2017. He can obtain several advantages that serve in honing his skills and increasing his experience and competency as he can have special access to Mansion House where he can be introduced to the latest developments in the business and finance sector.

Meanwhile, Executive Manager Talent Management at KFH Imad Mirza affirmed that selecting Al-Duaj for this prestigious scholarship reflects the unremitting efforts of the training and development of human resources at the bank, indicating the bank's keenness to provide all tools needed for employees to achieve success. This contributes in



Abdul Rahman Al-Duaj

improving the productivity and efficiency of employees. He added that KFH works tirelessly to beat odds and pave the way for its most valuable asset, the employees, to achieve further success and excellence in their career.

Meanwhile, Duaj extended his thanks and gratitude to KFH for this support, indicating KFH has added to him a lot of experience and skills since he joined the bank in 2011. He underlined the importance of this scholarship in honing his skills, noting that the programs of the scholarships will allow him to experience business networking oppor-



Imad Mirza

tunities that can be utilized for the interest of the bank. He reiterated that he will do his best to complete the programs with outstanding results that reflect the flagship status of the bank.

KIB NAMED 'FRIEND OF HUMANITY' BY KUWAIT RED CRESCENT SOCIETY

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) recently honored Kuwait International Bank (KIB) with the title 'Friend of Humanity', in recognition of the Bank's exemplary commitment to supporting humanitarian and social causes.

This recognition came in an affirmation of the key role KIB plays in supporting KRCS and its many initiatives, in line with the strategic partnership between the two entities. Dr Abdulrahman Mohammed Al-Aoun, General Manager at KRCS, presented the honor to KIB's Chairman, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, lauding the Bank's unwavering dedication to its leading social responsibility program.

Jarrah said: "KIB has always sought to support social and humanitarian programs that strive to affect real positive change in our community, driven by our deep-rooted commitment to social responsibility and motivated by our core values as an Islamic financial institution. Within this vein, we continuously seek to collaborate with various civil society organizations across Kuwait - including KRCS, which has become one of our key strategic partnerships."



Jarrah further added: "KIB has always been a keen advocate of KRCS, as we believe that it is truly Kuwait's ambassador to the world. By spearheading numerous humanitarian programs and projects, and diligently working to support those in need around the globe, KRCS continues to be the embodiment of Kuwait's dedication to its humanitarian mission."

partnership with KRCS, as it has become a trusted and respected humanitarian organization renowned worldwide for its commitment to its altruistic vision; providing assistance to the most vulnerable people affected by social conflicts, wars or natural disasters - without discriminating against any human being on the basis of nationality, gender, color, race, religion or political beliefs," concluded Jarrah.

Advertisement for Mughal Mahal celebrating the 31st anniversary (1985-2016). It features a collage of balloons with 'Happy New Year' messages in various languages (Arabic, Hindi, English, etc.) and the year '2017' in large numbers. The text includes 'All Staff, Executive Management & The Partners Wish You All', 'Everyone's First Choice', and 'Thank you for your Unswerving Support & Loyalty!!'. It also lists branch locations and contact information.



**Caution marks  
Iraqi army  
advance in Mosul**

RUSSIA, BRUSHING OFF OBAMA, LOOKS TO FRIENDLIER TRUMP



**ATHENS:** Syrian refugee Fatima Slu (5) and her brother Banken (6) whose family fled from Aleppo look out from their family's shelter during a snowfall at the Ritsona, Greece refugee camp about 86 kilometers (53 miles) north of Athens on Friday. — AP

**RUSSIA SEEKS UN BACKING FOR SYRIA TRUCE**

REBELS SAY CEASEFIRE 'VOID' IF VIOLATIONS PERSIST

**BEIRUT:** Russia is pushing for a UN Security Council vote yesterday to support the ceasefire it helped broker in Syria, where the truce remained largely intact on its second day despite sporadic clashes. Moscow says it wants the United Nations to be involved in peace talks between Damascus and rebels in Kazakhstan in January, although the UN is negotiating its own separate peace efforts.

Rebel supporter Turkey and key regime ally Russia, which brokered the truce, say the talks in the Kazakh capital Astana aim to supplement UN-backed peace efforts, rather than replace them. They want to involve regional players like Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Jordan. Russia's UN ambassador Vitaly Churkin voiced hope that the council would vote on the draft resolution—which also endorses the planned talks in Kazakhstan—and adopt it unanimously.

Diplomats however said they did not see how a quick UN weekend vote could occur as the resolution needed to be "seriously studied" and hinted Russia might be hard-pressed to muster the nine votes needed for it to pass. Washington is conspicuously absent from the new process, but Moscow has said it hoped to bring US

President-elect Donald Trump's administration on board once he takes office in January.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a British-based monitor of the war, said that most of the country remained calm yesterday.

But limited clashes continued in some areas including Wadi Barada near Damascus and the southern city of Daraa where one opposition fighter was killed. The fighting in Wadi Barada has led to water shortages that have affected four million people in the capital, with the two sides trading blame.

Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said that five rebel fighters were killed on Friday in the opposition bastion of Eastern Ghouta near Damascus and in Wadi Barada where helicopters carried out raids on rebel positions.

A civilian was also killed by regime sniper fire in Eastern Ghouta while another died in shelling in Wadi Barada, he said. The forces in Wadi Barada include former Al-Qaeda affiliate Fateh al-Sham Front, previously known as Al-Nusra Front, which Syria's government says is excluded from the ceasefire.

**'Real opportunity'**

Syria's government and its ally Iran have both welcomed the ceasefire deal. Damascus called it a "real opportunity" to find a political solution to the war, which has killed more than 310,000 people since it began in March 2011 with protests against the regime of President Bashar Al-Assad.

Despite being left out of the process, Washington described the truce as "positive". Analysts were cautious but said the involvement of Russia, Iran and Turkey could be important. Sam Heller, fellow at The Century Foundation, said there was "real interest and urgency" from Moscow and Ankara, but expressed doubts about whether Tehran and Damascus were on board.

"All indications are that Iran and the regime want to continue towards a military conclusion," he said.

**Talks in Astana**

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Friday he would now reduce Moscow's military contingent in Syria, which has been fighting to bolster the government since last year. But he added Russia would continue to fight "terrorism" and maintain its support for President Bashar Al-Assad's government.

Despite backing opposite sides in the conflict, Turkey and Russia have worked increasingly closely on Syria, brokering a deal this month to allow the evacuation of tens of thousands of civilians and rebel fighters from Aleppo. Their ceasefire deal calls for negotiations over a political solution to end the conflict that has killed more than 310,000 people and forced millions to flee.

UN peace envoy Staffan de Mistura has said he hoped the agreement would "pave the way for productive talks", but also reiterated he wants negotiations mediated by his office to continue next year. In an interview published yesterday, de Mistura said a UN resolution that foresees a political transition in Syria was also still on the table, although the focus had shifted following territorial gains by the regime.

"We now have before us another scenario: a negotiation between the Assad regime and the rebels," he told the Italian daily Corriere della Sera. The Security Council held closed-door consultations on the Russian-proposed resolution early Friday and Moscow later amended the draft at the request of several member states.

The latest version of the resolution, a copy of which was seen by AFP, includes a reference to the talks being led by de Mistura.

**Violations**

Syrian rebel groups said yesterday they would consider a ceasefire deal brokered by Russia and Turkey "null and void" if the Damascus government's forces and their allies continued to violate it.

Russia, which supports Syrian President Bashar al-

Assad, has urged the United Nations to give its blessing to the fragile ceasefire, the third truce this year seeking to end nearly six years of war in Syria.

Clashes and air strikes have persisted in some areas since the ceasefire began on Friday, though the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a monitoring group, said on Saturday the truce was still largely holding. "Continued violations by the regime and bombardment and attempts to attack areas under the control of the revolutionary factions will make the agreement null and void," a statement signed by a number of rebel groups said.

The statement said government forces and their allies including Lebanese Hezbollah had been trying to press advances, particularly in an area northwest of Damascus in the rebel-held Wadi Barada valley. The Observatory, which is based in Britain, said government forces and the rebels had clashed on Saturday in Wadi Barada.

Rebels say the army is seeking to recapture the area, where a major spring provides most of Damascus's water supplies. Several people were killed in violence there on Friday, the Observatory said.

Blasts from government shellfire were also heard in the southern provinces of Quneitra and Daraa, the Observatory said. — Agencies



**DAMASCUS:** Syrians walk past a destroyed building in the rebel-held town of Douma, on the eastern outskirts of Damascus on Friday on the first day of a nationwide truce. — AFP

**TRUMP TWEETS  
BACKHANDED NEW  
YEAR'S GREETINGS TO  
HIS 'MANY ENEMIES'**

**WASHINGTON:** Donald Trump sent New Year's greetings to his "many enemies" in a backhanded tweet yesterday in which he gloated over his political conquests.

"Happy New Year to all, including to my many enemies and those who have fought me and lost so badly they just don't know what to do. Love!" the US president-elect wrote.

The message on Twitter, Trump's preferred mode of communication, caps a year in which he overcame long odds to vanquish 16 other Republicans vying to become the party's White House nominee.

He then upended Democrat Hillary Clinton in last month's general election her formidable political machine and bigger campaign coffers notwithstanding in a shock election upset.

Trump takes the oath of office on January 20, when he will become the 45th US president. —AFP

## VIOLENT CAMPAIGN WILL CONTINUE: BOKO HARAM

**MAIDUGURI, Nigeria:** Boko Haram's leader has declared in a new video that he is alive, denying Nigerian government claims that his Islamic extremist group has been crushed. President Muhammadu Buhari said last week that soldiers had driven Boko Haram from its last forest enclave in the northeast, boasting "the terrorists are on the run, and no longer have a place to hide."

In a video posted on YouTube, Abubakar Shekau announced: "I am here, well and alive" and that "the battle is just beginning." He urged his followers, in graphic terms, to continue the campaign.

Nigeria's military has claimed to have killed Shekau at least three times, and earlier this year declared he had been fatally wounded. This week, the army said it seized Shekau's Quran in the Sambisa Forest assault - wanting to indicate he was on the run. Each time such claims are made, the Boko Haram leader reappears in a video to mock them.

In the latest, posted on YouTube on Dec 29, he reiterates that "our mission is

to establish an Islamic caliphate" in Nigeria - whose 180 million people are divided almost equally between mainly Muslims in the north and a predominantly Christian south.

In the video, Shekau does not mention some 200 schoolgirls kidnapped from a school in Chibok town who were believed to be held in the Sambisa Forest. Nigeria is unlikely to see an end soon to the deadly suicide bombings, village attacks and assaults on remote military outposts in northeastern Nigeria. The Islamic State group, to which one faction of Boko Haram belongs, announced an attack on an army barracks "killed and wounded many" soldiers on Dec. 22 - the same day the army said it seized the forest hideout. Already, there are reports that the insurgents have been regrouping south of their northeastern stronghold. The seven-year-old Islamic uprising has killed more than 20,000 people, spread across Nigeria's borders, driven 2.6 million from their homes and created a humanitarian disaster with some 5 million people facing starvation. — AP

## EGYPT COURT BACKS GOVT IN RED SEA ISLANDS DISPUTE

**CAIRO:** An Egyptian appeals court yesterday upheld an agreement to give control of two islands in the Red Sea to Saudi Arabia, providing a boost for the government in a case that has prompted rare street protests. The territorial deal, announced in April, caused public uproar among many Egyptians who said the uninhabited islands of Tiran and Sanafir belonged to their country.

The case has become a source of tension with Saudi Arabia, which has provided billions of dollars of aid to Egypt but recently halted fuel shipments amid deteriorating relations. Last week, the Egyptian government approved the deal to hand over the islands and sent it to parliament for ratification, despite the legal dispute over the plan.

On Saturday, the appeals court in Cairo upheld a verdict by a lower court that annulled a ruling by the administra-

tive court, which had said the agreement to hand over the islands was void, judicial sources said. The administrative court had said the agreement violated Egypt's constitution, which prohibits giving away any part of Egyptian territory to another country. A more senior tribunal, the higher administrative court, is due to issue a verdict on Jan. 16. Tiran and Sanafir are in the narrow entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba leading to Jordan and Israel.

Saudi and Egyptian officials say the islands belong to Saudi Arabia and were only under Egyptian control because Riyadh asked Cairo in 1950 to protect them. Many Egyptians reject the government argument, accusing it of selling part of their homeland. Lawyers who oppose the handover say Cairo's sovereignty over the islands dates to a 1906 treaty, before Saudi Arabia was founded. — Reuters



**MOSUL:** Internally displaced people flee fighting between Iraqi forces and Islamic State militants in the Quds neighborhood of Mosul on Friday. — AP

## CAUTION MARKS IRAQI ARMY ADVANCE AGAINST JIHADISTS

### TWO ELITE IRAQI UNITS JOIN MOSUL ADVANCE

**SADA, Iraq:** The earth shook three times with the impact of air strikes targeting Islamic State positions north of Mosul. Only then did the Iraqi troops assembled on the edge of the small farming village advance. The army had gathered on Friday afternoon in a muddy street that showed signs of heavy fighting with the jihadists from a day earlier: store fronts shorn off, electricity poles pulled down, bullet casings carpeting the ground. A rooftop sentinel kept watch.

The Iraqis' tan-coloured Humvees, reinforced with steel plates around the wheels to guard against sniper fire, were dwarfed by four MRAPs (mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles) manned by US military advisers. The second phase of the operation to retake Mosul, Islamic State's last major stronghold in Iraq, began on Thursday after several weeks of deadlock in the most complex operation in the country since the 2003 US-led invasion.

Conventional US forces deploying more extensively in this phase are now visible very close to the front lines. They are backing Iraq's army, federal police and counter-terrorism service (CTS), whose levels of training and experience vary widely. Since the offensive began 10 weeks ago, CTS punched into Mosul from the east and took a quarter of the city, but regular army troops like those in Sada have made slower progress advancing from the north and south, slowing the operation. GLGL

Meanwhile, two elite Iraqi units linked up in Mosul yesterday and will form a joint front to advance westward against the Islamic State group, officers said.

The Rapid Response Division reached the northern edge of Al-Intisar neighborhood, while the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) advanced to the southern side of the adjoining Al-Quds area.

The two neighborhoods are located on the eastern side of Mosul, where security forces have retaken multiple areas from IS, but the city's west is still completely in jihadist hands.

"God willing, Al-Intisar neighborhood is completely liberated," Brigadier General Mahdi Abbas Abdullah, the commander of the Rapid Response Division's 2nd Brigade, told AFP.

"We will become one front" and will advance "towards the river," he said, referring to the Tigris, which divides Mosul in two. Lieutenant Colonel Athir Al-Basri of Rapid Response also confirmed its forces and those from CTS had reached the same main street that divides Al-Intisar and Al-Quds. Iraqi forces launched the massive operation to retake Mosul on October 17, eventually pushing into the city from the east. On Wednesday, Iraqi forces announced the "second phase" of the battle for the eastern side of the city, marking the start of a new round of intensive fighting after progress had previously slowed to a crawl.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi had pledged Mosul would be retaken by year's end.

Earlier in the week, Abadi said the country would need three months to eliminate IS-still an ambitious timeline given that it would mean retaking Mosul, clearing the jihadists out of western territory they hold, and eliminating sleeper cells in government-controlled areas.

#### Advance

Western officials from a coalition providing air support, training and advice to the Iraqi military have hailed the recovery of the army and police, which dropped their weapons and fled Islamic State's blitz across a third of the country in 2014 despite billions of dollars in US support.

"They don't have to be as good as us, they

just have to be better than Daesh," one US military official told Reuters earlier this year, using an Arabic acronym for Islamic State. That marginal advantage, though, means the Mosul campaign is likely to drag on for many months and could wreak significant destruction.

During earlier battles like the one in Ramadi a year ago, coalition officials said they often had to prod the Iraqis to advance rather than wait for aerial bombardment to eliminate all enemy positions. The Iraqi commanders in Sada huddled with the Americans for a few minutes on Friday, and after the third air strike piled into their vehicles. Half a dozen Humvees charged ahead, firing mounted machine guns and a rocket-propelled grenade. As the sound of gunfire pierced the clear blue sky, the US vehicles followed them down the road and appeared to establish overwatch positions in an adjacent field.

"The Americans came this morning. They are for guidance and direction only," said one Iraqi soldier, a bandoleer hanging around his shoulders. "They don't enter combat. They will turn and have our backs." Behind the Americans came a dozen more Iraqi Humvees, some of whose occupants fired wildly as they advanced. One soldier standing in the bed of a military truck lost balance and nearly tumbled out when the vehicle lurched forward.

Army officers said intelligence suggested about 30 Islamic State fighters were holed up inside the village with two car bombs and a truck bomb and were using tunnels between houses and into agricultural areas to furtively resupply or launch attacks. Inside Sada, reporters saw the bodies of a dozen Islamic State fighters the army said were killed in earlier clashes. A soldier held up the severed head of one, an expression of shock still on its face. — Agencies



**RAMALLAH:** Palestinian women cry during the funeral of Maan Abu Qara, 23, in the village Mazrah Ghrbeih near the West Bank city of Ramallah yesterday. Abu Qara was killed by Israeli security forces after an alleged stabbing attack at a checkpoint in the West Bank. — AP

## EGYPT BEGINS HANDING OVER CRASH VICTIMS' REMAINS

**CAIRO:** Egyptian authorities yesterday started handing the remains of those killed in the crash of EgyptAir flight 804 to their families, the airline said.

The Airbus A320 had been flying from Paris to Cairo on May 19 when it crashed into the southeast Mediterranean killing all 66 on board, including 40 Egyptians and 15 French nationals.

EgyptAir said yesterday it had begun "overseeing the handover of the remains of the M5804 plane crew members" to their families. Officials will start handing over the Egyptian passengers' remains on Sunday and the bodies of French passengers and other nationalities will follow, it said, without specifying a timeline. The airliner had been carrying two Iraqis, two Canadians and one passenger each from Algeria, Belgium, Britain, Chad, Portugal, Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

Egypt's aviation ministry said on December 15 that traces of explosives were

found on victims' remains. France's air safety agency said it was not possible to determine what caused the crash but aviation experts have said there is little chance that a mechanical fault was responsible.

The plane only entered service in 2003, making it relatively new for an aircraft that tends to have an operational life of 30 to 40 years.

Investigators determined that a fire broke out in or near the cockpit before the plane crashed between Crete and the coast of northern Egypt. The disaster came as Cairo was still investigating the October 2015 crash of a Russian passenger plane filled with tourists flying home over the Sinai peninsula. The Islamic State jihadist group claimed responsibility for bombing the Airbus A321 that crashed soon after takeoff from a Sinai resort, killing all 224 passengers and crew.

There has been no such claim linked to May's EgyptAir crash. — AFP



**BEIRUT:** A man walks past a newspaper stand, displaying the As-Safir newspaper, in Beirut's Hamra neighborhood yesterday. — AFP

## LEBANON'S FAMED AS-SAFIR DAILY PRINTS FINAL ISSUE

**BEIRUT:** Its slogan was "the voice of the voiceless", but after four decades the prestigious Lebanese daily As-Safir published its final issue Saturday amid a crisis in the country's print media. A front-page editorial entitled "The nation without As-Safir" said the paper had "become exhausted... but we continue to see some light on the horizon of the profession."

Founded one year before the start of Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war, As-Safir was known for its pan-Arab outlook and opposition to American policy in the Middle East. It gave a platform to some of the Arab world's leading intellectual and artistic voices, including Palestinian national poet Mahmoud Darwish.

In March, founder and editor-in-chief Talal Salman announced that the paper, also known for its support for the Shiite militant group Hezbollah and the Syrian regime, would be closing. "We've run out of funds and we're desperately looking for a partner to finance the paper," he told AFP at the time.

Salman blamed Lebanon's political stalemate and internal divisions exacerbated by the war in neighboring Syria. As print media around the world struggle to adapt to the digital age, Lebanese papers have also faced a slump in funding from rival regional powers. During the 1975-1990 Lebanese civil war, Libya's Moamer Kadhafi, Iraq's Saddam Hussein and the Palestine Liberation

Organization's Yasser Arafat were key financiers. As-Safir acted as the voice of Arab nationalists and defenders of the Palestinian cause while its rival An-Nahar stood for Lebanese pluralism. After the war, Saudi, Qatari and Iranian money took over, but today even Riyadh's vast coffers are running dry.

Financial hardships have also hit An-Nahar. On Friday it told 40 employees not to turn up to work from January until its money situation was resolved, an employee told AFP.

The paper has not paid salaries for almost 15 months. The Lebanese journalists' union said print media, the "national memory of Lebanon", was facing a "major national crisis". — AFP



**ANKARA:** Trees and cars are covered with snow in Ankara yesterday. — AFP

## CONGO DEAL REACHED FOR KABILA TO STEP DOWN AFTER ELECTIONS

**KINSHASA:** Congolese President Joseph Kabila will step down after elections to be held by the end of 2017 under a last-minute deal struck by political parties on Friday, the lead mediator of the talks said. Negotiators spent weeks in tense talks seeking to ensure Democratic Republic of Congo's first peaceful transfer of power since independence in 1960. But it remains unclear if elections can be organized by the end of next year, or if leading politicians, including Kabila, will keep to the terms.

"The government is asked to take all steps so that the elections are organized by the end of 2017 at the latest," said Marcel Utambi, president of Congo's Catholic Bishops' Conference, which has mediated the talks. Under the deal, which is expected to be formally signed on Saturday, Kabila will be unable to change the constitution to allow him to stay in power for a third term.

Kabila's mandate ran out on Dec 19, but authorities have effectively extended it until 2018 because the government

said it could not arrange elections before then. The parties agreed that Kabila will appoint a prime minister from the country's main opposition bloc to oversee the transition, a major sticking point in the final stages of the talks.

Neither Kabila nor the country's leading opposition leader, Etienne Tshisekedi, are expected to sign the deal, raising concerns about whether it will be respected. Spokesmen for the government and Kabila's ruling coalition were not available for immediate comment. Election experts also ques-

tioned the feasibility of organizing presidential, legislative and provincial assembly elections together by the end of 2017.

"If the accord calls for organizing the three elections together, it (shows) a common will to not organize good elections, or at least to not organize them within the planned timeframe," Sylvain Lumu, a lawyer and election expert, told Reuters shortly before Utambi's announcement. Kabila's extension of his rule has sparked bloody confrontations. Security forces killed around 40 people last week protest-

ing over the tenure of a leader who came to power in 2001 following his father Laurent's assassination.

Western and African powers feared the current impasse could lead to a repeat of conflicts seen between 1996 and 2003 in eastern Congo in which millions died, mostly from starvation and disease. A successful deal, however, is seen offering a boost to pro-democracy activists in other African countries and help buck a trend in which presidents have changed constitutions to stand for third terms. — Reuters

## BAN KI-MOON BUOYED BY CLIMATE ACCORD BUT LAMENTS CONFLICTS

HE HAS SEEN COLLECTIVE ACTION IMPROVE MILLIONS OF LIVES

**UNITED NATIONS:** Ban Ki-moon ends 10 years at the helm of the United Nations lamenting the "fires still burning" from Syria to South Sudan but buoyed by a global agreement to combat climate change and new UN goals to fight poverty and inequality. As a final act before his term ends at midnight on New Year's Eve, the secretary-general will push the button starting the descent of the glittering 11,875-pound ball in New York's Times Square in the countdown to 2017's arrival. At that moment, former Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Guterres will start his tenure as United Nations chief for the next five years.

Looking back at his stewardship of the United Nations at a farewell news conference earlier this month, Ban told reporters "this has been a decade of unceasing test." While he has seen collective action improve millions of lives, Ban expressed frustration at the failure to end Syria's war, now in its sixth year, and conflicts in South Sudan, Yemen, Central African Republic and Congo, to name a few.

And in rare criticism of world leaders, he blamed unnamed presidents, prime ministers and monarchs for the turmoil in the world today

### 'Pre-eminent 21st century fact'

Even after leaving the UN, Ban said he will keep urging new and longstanding leaders to embrace the "pre-eminent 21st century fact" - that "international cooperation remains the path to a more peaceful and prosperous world" - and to demonstrate "compassionate leadership." To reinforce this, the secretary-general's final trip this month was to visit the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois. "Lincoln was a heroic force for equality, integration and reconciliation; and desperately, we need that spirit today," Ban said of the US leader during America's Civil War.

Ban has also expressed frustration at the way the UN operates and expectations in some quarters that the secretary-general has the power "to be some almost almighty person." That's impossible, he told the AP in September, because the UN's 193 member states make decisions and the secretary-general implements them. The UN chief cannot implement his or her own policies and initiatives.

John Bolton, who was US ambassador to the UN when Ban was selected to be secretary-gen-

eral, said President George W. Bush's administration supported him because "we wanted someone who would do what the member governments wanted" - and not take the lead on issues and act as the world's top diplomat like then-

secretary-general Kofi Annan. "I think Ban Ki-moon lived up to our expectations, which is not to say I agreed with every position he took on climate change and things like that," Bolton told AP. When the former South Korean foreign minister, who grew up during the Korean War, took over as secretary-general from Annan at the start of 2007, he promised his tenure would be "marked by ceaseless efforts to build bridges and close divides." And he made tackling global warming, then on a back burner, a top priority.

During his first term, he won plaudits for helping move climate change close to the top of the global agenda, for creating UN Women to focus on the fight for gender equality, and for speaking out early and strongly for demonstrators in Tunisia and other countries that rose up in the Arab Spring.

During his second term, his campaign for a new global climate deal culminated in the December 2015 Paris agreement. He got all 193 member states to agree on 17 new UN goals and 169 targets to combat poverty, achieve gender equality, protect the environment and ensure good governance by 2030. He called early on for an end to the Syrian conflict and he strongly backed gay rights despite opposition from many countries.

But Ban also faced criticism - in his first term for not speaking out against human rights abuses in China and Russia. In his second term, the UN's handling of the cholera epidemic in Haiti and its failure to deal effectively with sexual abuse by UN peacekeepers in the Central African Republic and elsewhere were widely criticized. Ban's temporary removal of the Saudi Arabia-led coalition in Yemen from a UN blacklist for allegedly killing children after coalition supporters threatened to stop funding many UN programs was sharply rebuked as well.

### 'Sense of humility'

A workaholic, Ban traveled more than any of his predecessors on UN business. He said most Western leaders speak through statements, but he believes face-to-face meetings with world leaders are critical to getting support to end conflicts or promote action on issues like climate change and combating poverty.

Despite his decade as UN chief, Ban Ki-moon is hardly a household name. He has been criticized for his lack of charisma and communication skills crucial in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, though in private and at the off-the-record UN Correspondents Association's annual gala he has regularly displayed a good sense of humor. — AFP



**IRBIL:** In this Jan 4, 2014, file photo, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sits inside a tent belonging to a Syrian refugee family at a refugee camp. — AP

- and expressed disappointment many care more about retaining power than improving their people's lives. He singled out Syria, saying he can't understand why it is being held hostage to "the destiny" of one man, Bashar Assad.

eral, said President George W. Bush's administration supported him because "we wanted someone who would do what the member governments wanted" - and not take the lead on issues and act as the world's top diplomat like then-

## WILL UKRAINE'S 'INDEFINITE' TRUCE BRING ANY CHANGE?

**KIEV:** The skeptics are out there-and so are the shells echoing over the decimated war zone of eastern Ukraine that is supposed to be protected by a new "indefinite" truce. The announcement of latest armistice in the 31-month conflict that has roiled the EU's backyard at the cost of nearly 10,000 lives came after several days of unusually heavy clashes that killed 10 Ukrainian troops and an undisclosed number of insurgents.

Only one Ukrainian soldier has died in the week since the ceasefire began. Yet each side accuses the other of pelting dozens of missiles every night in what is supposed to be a time of peace and good will. The question is whether this deal will collapse like the two prior peace agreements and four temporary ceasefires-all tied to specific dates like religious holidays or the start of a school year-or might actually let the mortars die down.

### Geopolitical ground shift

Talk of halting hostilities in the separatist areas of Russian-speaking regions of Donetsk and Lugansk comes at a time of immense geopolitical change. The US election saw Donald Trump beat the hawkish Hillary Clinton in a drama-filled contest that was closely watched in Ukraine. The reality TV star and property magnate has professed his admiration for Vladimir Putin-the Russian leader Ukraine accuses of launching the war two months after the Moscow-backed president was ousted in Kiev in February 2014.

Some believe Putin may want to get on Trump's good side by reining in the militias in order to get US sanctions lifted from Russia's critical oil and gas sectors. The counter-argument says Putin will simply feel free to do what he pleases with Trump-who once had trouble pinning down who controlled Russian-annexed Crimea-in power. "The end of the war fully depends on Putin," said Moscow military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer. Russia itself denies any role in the conflict.

### European, rebel impatience

Germany and France have spearheaded nearly two years of peace talks that have been hit in past months by new problems such as Britain's exit from the European Union and a populist wave sweeping the continent. Several European diplomats have said in private that

both countries are tired of Kiev's resistance to even the most minor concessions agreed under a February 2015 peace deal Paris and Berlin helped broker to end the bloodletting.

The most important one would award the separatist regions limited special status that would let them set up their own local councils and police forces. Lugansk peace negotiator Vladislav Deinego admitted there has been a "significant drop in the number of attacks." But in order to see further progress in peace talks or for us to gain special status, we need a complete halt to the fire." Some European officials urge patience. "What is required is political will," said Alexander Hug of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). "They have shown in the past that they can cease fire when they want to," the OSCE's Principal Deputy Chief Monitor for Ukraine told AFP.

### Stronger Ukrainian force

Ukraine's army was in a shambles and riddled with corruption when the separatists began



**DONETSK:** Recently freed judge Anzhelika Presnyakova (L) and journalist Olga Svorak (C) talk with negotiator Volodymyr Ruban who was involved in prisoner swaps (R) during a gathering. — AFP

their revolt in April 2014. But Western military equipment such as radars as well as massive Ukrainian spending have turned the army into a well-fortified force that is no longer as easy for the Moscow-backed fighters to catch by surprise. A deal between Putin and Trump might end the flow of Russian weapons and troops that Western reporters have seen pouring into the war zone for years. "Without Russian parts and ammunition, the rebels can last a couple of weeks at the most," Ukrainian military analyst Sergiy Zgurets told AFP.

Domestic pressure on Ukraine to stop its young generation from dying in combat is also a factor. Nationalist sentiment-as well as tremendous fury at Russia-was high when the war first started and those passions still linger. But war fatigue has also set in. "People are tired of war," said Kiev political analyst Vadym Karasyov. Only 14 percent of those polled jointly by two of Ukraine's top research centers in mid-December said they wanted fighting to continue "until all the territory was returned to Ukraine." — AFP



**STRASBOURG:** In this July 14, 2009 file photo Jean-Marie Le Pen, right, and his daughter Marine Le Pen sit at the European Parliament. — AP

## FRENCH FAR RIGHT SHORT ON FUNDS

**PARIS:** Money, and how to get it, has dogged French far-right presidential contender Marine Le Pen for years. Now, as her National Front party's treasurer says it's looking "everywhere" for the 20 million euros (\$21 million) needed to fund upcoming campaigns, she may be looking to Russia for cash - again. While foreign donations to French political parties are barred, loans are not. But it's still a daring prospect for a party whose finances have already drawn unwanted scrutiny.

Alleged funding irregularities have prompted multiple legal investigations and an impending trial for several party officials and associates, and a 2014 loan from a Russian bank raised concerns over Moscow's potential influence on French democracy. Not to mention the U.S. decision this week to impose sanctions and expel Russians over alleged cyber-meddling in the U.S. presidential election.

The French National Front says it's the target of a smear campaign, and notes that other candidates have also had financial troubles. Le Pen's firm rejection of foreign influence would make fishing for finances outside French waters a no-go, were it not for her Russia-friendly stance and what party officials say is the refusal of French banks to lend money to the anti-immigration National Front.

### Working discreetly

Funds are needed to finance campaigning for the April-May presidential vote and June parliamentary elections. Party officials deny recent reports that they have already received a new loan from a Russian establishment - but no one is denying that the party may be asking for one. "We are looking everywhere. We are working discreetly," party treasurer Wallander de Saint Just told The Associated Press. The National Front needs 20 million euros for its electoral campaigns, and already has a portion of it, he said in a telephone interview, without specifying the amount in hand. They're not ruling out funding requests from sources including Russia, the United Arab Emirates, or even the United States, he said.

The party borrowed 9 million euros in 2014 from the small First Czech Russian Bank, but the bank's license was revoked this year, Saint Just said. Other Russian banks might consider a new loan. Moscow has courted far-right parties in Europe in an influ-

ence-building campaign as friction between Russia and the West has mounted over Ukraine and the Syrian civil war. Some leaders like Le Pen have hobnobbed in Moscow and at embassy events at home. Chieftains of Hungary's anti-Semitic Jobbik and Austria's Freedom Party also have made the trip.

Le Pen envisions a concept of Europe that stretches "from the Atlantic to the Urals," that would encompass Russia instead of pressuring it over Vladimir Putin's authoritarian policies. In a shifting of views in Russia's favor, some mainstream politicians, from France's conservative Francois Fillon, a top presidential contender, to US President-elect Donald Trump, are sympathetic to a friendly approach to Moscow.

Finding ways to raise money has run like a leitmotif through Le Pen's quest to make the National Front an alternative to mainstream political parties - and has led to run-ins with the law. The party treasurer, Saint Just, is among seven people called to stand trial for alleged schemes to bolster party coffers. Le Pen is not implicated, but the party has also been called in for judgment, along with two concerns run by old Le Pen friends. They allegedly helped raise funds through a complex system that judicial authorities deem illegal.

### 'Russia-phobia'

"I will be acquitted," Saint Just said. "We have absolutely done nothing wrong." A trial date has not been set, but a judicial official said it was unlikely to take place before the elections, so as not to "interfere with democracy." There is concern now that any new effort to tap Russian banks for loans could do just that, however, by making France vulnerable to influence from the Kremlin.

"There is an ambient Russia-phobia that is now leading to theories of plots," the National Front's No 2 official, Florian Philippot, said Thursday on the iTeLe TV station. US intelligence agencies suspect that Moscow hacked into private email accounts to interfere with the US political process in favor of Trump - a claim shrugged off by Putin, who said recently that the hackers could have been located anywhere. A Russia-friendly approach to geopolitics runs in the Le Pen family. Jean-Marie Le Pen, the National Front's co-founder, his daughter Marine and her niece Marion Marechal-Le Pen have all made numerous visits to Moscow over the years. — AP

## CATALAN REFERENDUM IS NOT POSSIBLE: RAJOY

**MADRID:** Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy yesterday flatly rejected the possibility of a referendum in the northeastern region of Catalonia on a split from Spain, telling pro-independence politicians to desist from attempts to hold one next year. The regional Catalan government has said it will hold a referendum on secession before September 2017, with or without consent from the central government, although they would prefer a consensual vote like the one Scotland held in 2014. Scots voted to remain part of the United Kingdom.

"It is not possible to hold a referendum that will do away with national sovereignty and the equality of Spaniards," Rajoy told a year-end news conference, adding he was open to talks over other issues but the law was clear that a referendum was illegal. "This is not going anywhere, I'm offering something which is a lot more reasonable - dialogue," Rajoy said. "I ask that no more steps are taken in the opposite direction."

High unemployment and austerity cuts following an economic crisis have intensified a long-standing separatist movement in the wealthy northeastern region. Catalans held a symbolic ballot on

independence from Spain in 2014 following a legal block by the central government against a formal vote. Nearly two million Catalans voted in favor of seceding from Spain but turnout was low.

Many senior politicians involved in that vote, staffed by grassroots pro-independence organizations, have since faced sanctions or trials for pursuing measures which were deemed illegal by Spain's Constitutional Court. Pro-independence parties came to power in the local Catalan assembly in 2015. Catalan President Carles Puigdemont said on Friday the region would hold the referendum in 2017 and carry out the people's mandate "without delay or excuses."

However, support for a break with Spain has ebbed over the past six months, a poll showed on Thursday. The number of Catalans who oppose secession stood at 46.8 percent in December, up from 45.1 percent in November and 42.4 percent in June, according to the regional authority's official pollster. Support for independence was slightly up from November at 45.3 percent, but down from 47.7 percent in June, when more people had declared themselves in favor of a split than against it. — Reuters



## SPAT OVER ELECTION HACKING JOINS LIST OF RUSSIA-US FEUDS

**WASHINGTON:** US relations with Moscow during and after the Cold War have been marred by diplomatic dustups ranging from espionage scandals to an Olympics boycott. Current tensions, highlighted by President Barack Obama's decision to impose sanctions and expel 35 Russian diplomats, are exceptional because they stem from US allegations of Russian cyber meddling in the presidential election and because they are playing out during a White House transition. They also coincide with a collapse of military-to-military relations and nervousness in Europe over Russia's annexation of Crimea and aggression in eastern Ukraine.

Some of the more significant episodes of the past three decades: **MAY 2013:** A US diplomat was expelled after the Kremlin's security services said he tried to recruit a Russian agent, and they displayed tradecraft tools that seemed straight from a spy thriller: wigs, packets of cash, a knife, map and compass, and a letter promising millions for "long-term cooperation." The FSB, the successor agency to the Soviet-era KGB, identified the diplomat as Ryan Fogle, a third secretary at the US Embassy in

Moscow. The Fogle case was a reminder that years after the Cold War ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia and the United States still spy on each other and maintain active counterespionage operations.

**DECEMBER 2012:** President Vladimir Putin signed into law a ban on adoptions of Russian children by American citizens. The ban was a blow to US-Russian diplomatic relations and was imposed in response to Russian accusations of abuses of adopted Russian children in the United States. It was included in a broader Russian law retaliating for US passage of the Magnitsky Act, an effort to punish Russian human rights violators.

**JULY 2010:** In the biggest spy swap since the Cold War, 10 confessed Russian agents who infiltrated suburban America as "sleeper" agents were ordered deported in exchange for four people convicted of betraying Moscow to the West. The agents, many speaking in heavy Russian accents despite having spent years in the US, pleaded guilty to conspiracy, were sentenced to time served and were ordered out of the country. The 10 were

accused of embedding themselves in ordinary American life while leading double lives complete with false passports, secret code words, fake names, and encrypted radio.

**FEBRUARY 2001:** A veteran FBI counterintelligence agent, Robert P. Hanssen, was arrested and charged with committing espionage for Russia and the former Soviet Union by providing highly classified national security information to intelligence officers assigned to the Soviet embassy in Washington. In the aftermath, the US expelled 50 Russian diplomats. The FBI has called Hanssen the most damaging spy in the bureau's history.

**FEBRUARY 1994:** The US expelled Russian senior intelligence officer Alexander Lysenko, saying he was in a position to be responsible for the spying of CIA agency Aldrich Ames. This was just days after Ames and his wife, Rosario, were arrested on charges of selling secrets to Moscow from at least 1985 to 1993. Even in expelling Lysenko, the administration of President Bill Clinton softened the blow by emphasizing the importance of strong ties with Russia and the continuation of reforms under Boris

Yeltsin, who was seen as key to Russia's move toward democracy.

**OCTOBER 1986:** In one of the more memorable tit-for-tat expulsions for alleged espionage activities, President Ronald Reagan ordered 55 Soviet diplomats in Washington and San Francisco to leave the U.S., shortly after expelling 25 others from the Soviet mission to the United Nations. The Soviets retaliated each time, kicking out American diplomats and announcing that the US missions in Moscow and Leningrad could no longer employ Soviet workers.

**MARCH 1980:** In response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, President Jimmy Carter announced the United States would boycott the Summer Olympic Games scheduled to be held in Moscow. He acted when the Soviets refused to comply with Carter's ultimatum for the withdrawal of their troops from Afghanistan by February. The Soviets retaliated by leading a communist-bloc boycott of the 1984 Summer Olympic Games held in Los Angeles. The Soviet army did not leave Afghanistan until 1989. —AP



A police car guards at the entrance of Killenworth, an estate built in 1913 for George du Pont Pratt and purchased by the former Soviet Union in 1951, in Glen Cove, New York on Friday. Killenworth is one of two Russian compounds in Glen Cove with Norwich House, nearby, being closed to Russian officials as part of the sanctions ordered by US President Barack Obama in retaliation for suspected Russian hacking during the US elections. —AFP

## RUSSIA, BRUSHING OFF OBAMA, LOOKS TO FRIENDLIER TRUMP

### STUNNING EMBRACE OF LONG-TIME US ADVERSARY

**HONOLULU:** Stung by new punishments, Russia is looking straight past President Barack Obama to Donald Trump in hopes the president-elect will reverse the tough US stance toward Moscow of the last eight years. In a stunning embrace of a longtime US adversary, Trump is siding with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Whether Trump steers the US toward or away from Russia upon taking office is shaping up as the first major test of his foreign policy disposition and his willingness to buck fellow Republicans, who for years have argued Obama wasn't tough enough. Now that Obama has finally sanctioned Russia over hacking allegations, Putin has essentially put relations on hold till Trump takes over.

"Great move on delay (by V. Putin)," Trump wrote Friday on Twitter. "I always knew he was very smart!" He was referring to Putin's announcement that Russia won't immediately retaliate after Obama ordered sanctions on Russian spy agencies, closed two Russian compounds and expelled 35 diplomats the US said were really spies. Though Putin reserved the right to hit back later, he suggested that won't be necessary with Trump in office.

Brushing off Obama, Putin said Russia would plan steps to restore US ties "based on the policies that will be carried out by the administration of President D. Trump." Not only would Russia not

kick Americans out, Putin said, he was inviting the kids of all US diplomats to the Kremlin's New Year's and Christmas parties. "At this point, they're trolling Obama," said Olga Olikier, who directs the Russia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The Obama administration said it had seen Putin's remarks but had nothing more to say. Trump's move to side with a foreign adversary over the sitting US president was a striking departure from typical diplomatic practice. In a sign he wanted maximum publicity, Trump pinned the tweet to the top of his Twitter page so it would remain there indefinitely.

Russia denies the US intelligence community's assessment that in an attempt to help Trump win the presidency, Moscow orchestrated cyber breaches in which tens of thousands of Democrats' emails were stolen and later made public. Trump, too, has refused to accept that conclusion and insisted the country should just "move on," though he has agreed to meet next week with intelligence leaders to learn more.

Notably, after the US on Thursday issued a report it said exposed Russia's cyber tactics, Putin's aides didn't offer any specific rebuttal. The report included detailed technical information like IP addresses and samples of malware code the US said Russia uses. One utility company,

Burlington Electric Department in Vermont, reported Friday that it had detected the malware on a company laptop that was not connected to its grid systems. Burlington said, "We took immediate action to isolate the laptop and alerted federal officials of this finding."

There's little certainty about how Trump will actually act on Russia once he takes office Jan. 20. Though he's praised Putin as a strong leader and said it would be ideal for the two countries to stop fighting, he also suggested this month the US might mount a new nuclear arms race, triggering fresh anxieties about a return to Cold War-style tensions.

Ambassador Michael McFaul, Obama's former envoy to Russia, said while Trump has defined his top objective as "getting along with the Kremlin," Putin has higher goals, including the lifting of economic sanctions and, ideally, US recognition of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

"Obviously, Putin's not responding because he's waiting for Jan. 20," McFaul said in an interview. "He's got these much more important objectives to him than getting into a tit-for-tat response with the outgoing administration."

Trump's warm outreach to Putin, combined with picks for secretary of state and national security adviser who are seen as friendly to Russia, have left hawkish Republicans with a particularly unpleasant choice: look hypocritical for backtracking on their own tough talk, or risk a public rift with their party's new president.

In the House, many Republicans who have long called for tougher sanctions have been silent or vague about Obama's penalties and Trump's positions. But a handful of GOP senators have shown they have no intentions of letting up pressure on the Kremlin.

"We intend to lead the effort in the new Congress to impose stronger sanctions on Russia," said Republican Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. McCain, who chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee, scheduled a hearing next week on "foreign cyber threats" in an attempt to further spotlight Russia's actions.

Even if Trump opts to pull back Obama's sanctions and overlook hacking allegations, he may find rapprochement with Russia isn't that simple. The past two presidents both tried to reach out to Russia early in their terms but left office with relations in no better shape.

Though Trump has suggested the US and Russia should align strategies in Syria by focusing on their mutual enemy, the Islamic State group, Russia's military campaign has almost exclusively targeted American-backed Syrian rebels, the US has said. Nor is it clear whether Trump and Putin share a common approach to Europe's security issues. And if Trump follows through on his vow to renegotiate the Iran nuclear deal, he won't find a receptive audience in Moscow. Putin's government brokered the deal with the US, Iran and other world powers and has no intention of slapping sanctions back on Iran. — Reuters

## GRAND OLD PARTY? TRUMP REMAKING GOP IN HIS IMAGE

**WASHINGTON:** For eight years, a leaderless Republican Party has rallied around its passionate opposition to President Barack Obama and an unceasing devotion to small government, free markets and fiscal discipline.

No more. On the eve of his inauguration, Donald Trump is remaking the party in his image, casting aside decades of Republican orthodoxy for a murky populist agenda that sometimes clashes with core conservative beliefs. Yet his stunning election gives the GOP a formal leader for the first time in nearly a decade. The New York real estate mogul becomes the face of the party, the driver of its policies and its chief enforcer.

Despite their excitement, Republican loyalists across the country concede that major questions remain about their party's identity in the age of Trump. The simple answer: The modern-day Republican Party stands for whatever Trump wants it to. "He's a sometime-Republican," American Conservative Union Chairman Matt Schlapp said. "Donald Trump was elected without having to really put all the details out on all these questions. We are going to see in the first six months how this plays out. Does government get bigger or does it get smaller?"

Trump is eyeing a governing agenda that includes big-ticket items that Schlapp and other conservative leaders would fight against under any other circumstances. Yet some see Trump's agenda as more in line with the concerns of average Americans, which could help the party's underwhelming public standing and keep them in power. The president-elect initially promised a massive infrastructure spending bill to update the nation's roads and bridges, an investment that could dwarf the infrastructure spending Republicans opposed when it appeared in Obama's 2009 stimulus package. Trump has also vowed to put the federal government in the child care business by allowing parents to offset child care costs with tax breaks. And he has railed against regional trade deals and

threatened to impose tariffs on some imports, a sharp break from the free-market approach that has defined Republican policies for decades.

"From a policy perspective, he might be one of the more flexible Republican presidents. He's just not encumbered with 30 years of Republican ideology," said veteran Republican operative Barry Bennett, a former Trump adviser.

"If there's a win involved, he's interested," Bennett said. Republicans in Congress and elsewhere have expressed some hesitation, but most appear to be willing to embrace the incoming president's priorities - at least at first. There are indications that Trump may initially avoid issues that would divide his party. That's according to Trump's incoming chief of staff, Reince Priebus, who said in a recent radio interview that the new administration will focus in its first nine months on conservative priorities like repealing Obama's health care law and rewriting tax laws.

In a post-election interview with The New York Times, Trump acknowledged that he didn't realize during the campaign that New Deal-style proposals to put people to work building infrastructure might conflict with his party's small-government philosophy.

"That's not a very Republican thing - I didn't even know that, frankly," Trump said. Trump's confusion can be forgiven, perhaps, given his inexperience in Republican politics. He was a registered Democrat in New York between August 2001 and September 2009. And once he became a Republican, his political views were shaped from his perch in New York City, where the Republican minority is much more liberal - particularly on social issues - than their counterparts in other parts of the country.

Trump said he was "fine" with same-sex marriage in a post-election interview in November, for example. And while he opposes abortion rights, he supported Planned Parenthood's non-abortion-related women's health services throughout his campaign. —AP



WASHINGTON: In this Nov 10, 2016 file photo, President-elect Donald Trump (center) walks with Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell of Ky after a meeting on Capitol Hill in Washington. — AP

## KENNEDY KIN'S MURDER CONVICTION REINSTATED

**NEW YORK:** Connecticut's top court reinstated Friday the murder conviction of a nephew of the slain Robert F. Kennedy over the beating death of a 15-year-old girl more than four decades ago. In a 4-3 decision, a divided Connecticut Supreme Court ordered a lower court to reject an appeal by Michael Skakel, a nephew to Kennedy through the late attorney general's widow Ethel.

Defense attorney Hubert Santos did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Skakel was found guilty in 2002 of murdering Martha Moxley when both were just 15 years old in 1975.

But Skakel was released in 2013 on \$1.2 million bail after a judge granted him a new trial based on claims that he was inadequately represented by his attorney at the time. The Connecticut high court, however, concluded that Skakel's trial attorney "rendered constitutionally adequate representation."

Moxley's body was found under a tree after a pre-Halloween party on the Skakel family's Belle Haven estate. There were no witnesses to the murder and no hard forensic evidence. A golf club used in the murder was later traced to a set

once owned by Skakel's late mother.

The prosecution's case was based largely on the testimony of people who said they heard Skakel confess and boast that his famous family connections would prevent him from being brought to justice. The Skakel family spent years, and millions of dollars, appealing the guilty verdict. — AFP



STAMFORD: This file photo taken on November 21, 2013 shows Michael Skakel as he is granted bail at Stamford Superior Court in Stamford, Connecticut. — AFP

## SHOOTINGS DRIVE UP NUMBER OF POLICE KILLED IN LINE OF DUTY

**NEW YORK:** Ambushes in Dallas and Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and other shootings around the country led to a sharp increase in the number of police killed in the line of duty this year. From Jan 1 through Wednesday, 135 officers lost their lives. Some died in traffic accidents, but nearly half were shot to death. That's a 56 percent increase in shooting deaths over the previous year.

Of the 64 who were fatally shot, 21 were killed in ambush attacks often fueled by anger over police use of force involving minorities. "We've never seen a year in my memory when we've had an increase of this magnitude in officer shooting deaths," said Craig Floyd, president and chief executive of the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. "These officers were killed simply because of the uniform they wear and the job they do. This is unacceptable to the humane society that we are."

In Dallas, a sniper on July 7 attacked at the end of what had been a peaceful rally against police brutality. He killed five law enforcement officers and wounded nine others - the largest death toll among law enforcement from a single event since the 9/11 attacks, which killed 72 officers. Months later, Dallas

businesses and residents still display blue ribbons and banners declaring, "We support our Dallas police officers."

But even amid community support, the police department remains unsettled. Hundreds of officers have retired or left the force over the past six months as the city struggles to find a way to increase pay and save a failing police and fire pension system. Former Chief David Brown, who became a national figure in the aftermath, was among those who opted to retire. And interim Dallas Police Association president Frederick Frazier said that morale is "almost nonexistent."

"A lot of us are going through the motions at work. We're hoping things will get better with our struggle," he said. Frazier added that the attack was a "game changer. It changed the perception of law enforcement. It reversed the role after Ferguson. We were the pursuer and now, we're being pursued."

Less than two weeks after the Dallas attack, a lone gunman in Baton Rouge shot and killed three officers and wounded three others outside a convenience store in the weeks after a black man, 37-year-old Alton Sterling, was shot and killed by police during a struggle. —AP

## COURT UPHOLDS ORDER TO BLOCK DEATH ROW DETAILS

**COLUMBUS:** A federal appeals court on Friday upheld a judge's order blocking death row inmates from information about Ohio's new lethal injection process. The 2-1 decision by the 6th US Circuit Court of Appeals will help determine whether Ohio will proceed with its first executions in three years beginning in February. Attorneys for condemned inmates had challenged the order.

Ohio plans to execute Ronald Phillips on Feb. 15 for raping and killing his girlfriend's 3-year-old daughter in 1993. Another execution is scheduled for April. Judge Eugene Siler, writing for the majority, said a judge didn't abuse his discretion last fall when he barred the release of information about Ohio's new lethal injection process requested by attorneys for Phillips and other inmates.

Those attorneys can still pursue their challenge of lethal injection drugs in the process, including tak-

ing the state up on its offer to provide samples for testing, Siler said. Although knowledge of drug facilities and handlers could help defense attorneys test the drugs, "the harm presented by identification of those intimately involved in an execution outweighs the speculative benefit of complete understanding of an industry already heavily regulated," Siler said.

In a dissent, Judge Jane Stranch said the judge's order shields from attorneys "a vast array of information" from the qualifications of the execution team to how Ohio obtained the drugs. "In sum, they do not have the information they need to ensure that the testing is adequate or that the executions will be carried out in a constitutional manner," Stranch wrote.

### Shield information

The state prisons agency said it was reviewing the ruling and awaiting an expected follow-up deci-

sion by a lower court judge, who put executions briefly on hold until the 6th Circuit ruled. A message was left with the lead attorney challenging the judge's order. At issue before the court were new efforts Ohio is making to shield information about lethal injection in hopes of jump-starting executions, which have been on hold since January 2014. That's when it took condemned inmate Dennis McGuire 26 minutes to die from a never-before-used two-drug method while he repeatedly gasped and snorted.

Last fall, now-retired Judge Gregory Frost issued a protective order that said Ohio's need to obtain supplies of lethal drugs outweighed concerns by death row inmates that information about the drugs, including names of the manufacturers, is needed to meaningfully challenge them. Friday's ruling upheld Frost's order. Defense attorneys

argued they couldn't meaningfully challenge the use of the drugs without the information being shielded. They also said the secrecy protections are unnecessary given the history of lawsuits over lethal injection in Ohio.

The attorneys also said federal rules for obtaining evidence should take precedence over a state law trying to shield that evidence. For its part, the state cited defense attorneys' "wildly exaggerated and misplaced arguments" to say that the protective order should stay in place. The state's interest in keeping lethal injection information confidential far outweighs death row inmates' right to the release of that information, the state said. The Department of Rehabilitation and Correction in October announced plans to use a new three-drug combination - midazolam, rocuronium bromide and potassium chloride - for at least three executions. — AP



SEOUL: In this Wednesday, Dec 28 photo, high school students take a selfie in front of a screen showing Korean traditional characters at the National Hangeul Museum. — AP

## MANGLING KOREAN NAMES? IT MIGHT NOT BE YOUR FAULT

**SEOUL:** Impeached President Park Geun-hye's surname is "Park," right? Nope. In Korean it's closer to "Bahk." Park's allegedly corrupt confidante, Choi Soon-sil, pronounces her name more like "Chwey" than the way it's rendered in English. And Samsung's ailing chairman, Lee Kun-hee? That English "Lee" is more like "Yi" or "Ii" in Korean. There is a gulf, often a wide one, between the way Koreans write their names in English and the way they actually sound.

Even the ubiquitous "Kim" - the moniker of beloved South Korean Olympic figure skating champion Yuna Kim and North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un - belies: It's pronounced "Ghim" in Korean. While the flubs of foreigners who take the Romanized spellings literally cause smirks for the bilingual, the mispronunciations can also create confusion and embarrassment among visiting politicians, tourists and business people. The disputed reasons behind the discrepancies are linked to a complex mix of history, American influence, herd mentality and individual quirks. Here's a brief look:

### The history

South Korea's guidelines for converting the Korean language into the Roman alphabet were last revised in 2000 to try to get road signs, places, internet domain names, guidebooks and surnames closer to their actual Korean pronunciations.

When those rules are applied to surnames, "Lee" should be "Ii" (pronounced "li"), "Kim" should be "Gim," "Park" should be "Bak" and "Choi" should be "Choe." But because people can

decide how to spell their own names, many simply go with the way everyone else does it, which means they follow what their families have favored for generations.

So Kim, Park and Lee still dominate. Experts differ about the origins of these English spellings of Korean surnames. Some think that when South Korea was briefly under U.S. military rule following the end of Japan's 1910-45 colonial occupation, Americans chose existing English names or words - such as Kim, Lee and Park - for Korean pronunciations that sounded similar. Others say it was South Koreans who started borrowing those recognizable English words.

When there wasn't any easy match in English, South Koreans simply settled for spellings that "felt OK," according to Brother Anthony of Taize, a British-born scholar and prolific translator of Korean literature. The spellings of some names are linked to a 1939 Romanization system invented by two Americans that was widely used before the 2000 revision. Isolated, proud Pyongyang uses a variant of the old system. "Kim" is the same in both Koreas, but the southern "Lee" and "Park" are "Ri" and "Pak" in the North.

### The mistakes

English mispronunciation, of course, happens in many languages that don't use the Roman alphabet, but the list of foul-ups by foreigners relying on the confusing Korean system is long. During a joint news conference with South Korean President Park Geun-hye in Washington in October 2015, President Barack Obama called her "Park," just as it sounds in

English, not "Bahk." When he held another joint press conference with Park's predecessor, Lee Myung-bak, in 2012, he pronounced his name as "Lee," not "Ii."

If Obama, who has a staff of Korean experts, couldn't get it right, your average visitor to South Korea is doomed. In some ways, the new Romanization rules are as bad as the old ones. For instance, an affluent southern area in Seoul, and the inspiration for the world-dominating 2012 song by South Korean rapper PSY, is spelled "Gangnam." The first part of this word will look to many English speakers without any Korean like the first syllable of the word "gangster." But a better spelling is "Gahngnam."

A southern town famous for traditional red pepper paste is spelled "Sunchang." Many English speakers pronounce the first part of the word as "sun" from "sunshine"; it's actually "soonchahng." The rules are simply too far off from the reality, according to Yang Byungsun, a linguist at South Korea's Jeonju University. "It's a system that no one, except for South Koreans, can pronounce," he said. South Korean officials defend their Romanization rules by saying they are for all foreigners, not just English-speakers.

### The big three, and beyond

The National Institute of Korean Language says it's working to come up with a recommended standard for spelling surnames. But it's probably too late. The English spellings of the three surnames that account for nearly half of South Korea's 50 million people - Kim, Park and Lee - are firmly in place. — AP

## E GUINEA PLAYBOY ON TRIAL IN LANDMARK FRENCH CASE

**PARIS:** The son of Equatorial Guinea's leader, a notorious playboy with extravagant taste in cars, homes and Michael Jackson memorabilia, will go on trial for corruption next week in a landmark case in France. Teodorin Obiang, the 47-year-old vice-president of his impoverished but oil-rich African country, faces widening legal problems as authorities in France and Switzerland probe his extraordinary lifestyle.

US officials have already forced him to forfeit property bought with the proceeds of corruption and have accused him of "shamelessly" looting his country. In Europe, his luxury 76-metre (250-foot) yacht "Ebony Shine" has been seized, as has his collection of Italian supercars and a mansion on one of Paris' glitziest avenues.

That property alone on Avenue Foch, where the taps are covered in gold leaf, is estimated to be worth around 107 million euros. It includes a private cinema, spa, hair salon and sports room. When French judicial officials first launched raids in Paris in 2011, they hired trucks to haul away his Bugattis, Ferraris, Rolls Royce and other cars which were memorably photographed leaving the scene.

The trial from Monday sets a precedent for France which has long turned a blind eye to African dictators who routinely park their ill-gotten gains in Parisian real estate and luxury products. It came about after nearly a decade of lobbying by African anti-corruption campaigners and Transparency International who have targeted Obiang as well as the leaders of Gabon and Congo. "In the beginning, there was simply no political will in France to listen to us," wrote one of the campaigners, William Bourdon from the Sherpa group, in September.

### Timber wealth

French prosecutors allege that party-loving Obiang plundered nearly 110 million euros between 2004-2011 when he was

agriculture minister for his father Teodoro Obiang Nguema. The money allegedly came directly from state accounts and was used by him personally, rather than on the country's citizens - more than half of whom live in extreme poverty.

As agriculture minister he held a powerful position that gave him control over the lucrative timber industry which is Equatorial Guinea's main export after oil. A so-called "revolutionary" tax imposed on wood sales was transferred to his personal accounts, prosecutors allege.

Facing charges of laundering the proceeds of corruption, embezzlement, misuse of public funds and breach of trust, he plans to plead not guilty. He has "always said that he earned the money legally in his country," one of his lawyers, Emmanuel Marsigny, told AFP. Marsigny is planning to immediately ask for a delay in proceedings to give him more time to prepare Obiang's defence. Multiple hearings have been planned for the first two weeks of January. The defendant, who has failed with previous legal efforts to stop the trial, is not expected to attend or serve any sentence if he is convicted.

### Shameless looting

Born in 1969, Obiang was 10 when his father overthrew his bloodthirsty uncle, the dictator Francisco Macias Nguema, who liked being called "the unique miracle of Equatorial Guinea". After independence from Spain in 1968, Macias Nguema closed schools and hospitals, dismantled railway lines and banned the wearing of shoes in the deeply poor country. Now the longest-serving African ruler, Teodoro Obiang Nguema made his son vice-president in June just after being re-elected with his usual score of more than 90 percent of votes cast. During one of his appeals against the French trial, a lawyer acting for the French government said Obiang had a "compulsive need to buy." — AFP



MALABO: This file photo taken on June 24, 2013 shows Teodoro (aka Teodorin) Nguema Obiang Mongue, the son of Equatorial Guinea's president, arriving at Malabo stadium for ceremonies to celebrate his 41st birthday. — AFP

## INDIA MINE COLLAPSE BODY TOLL RISES TO 11

**NEW DELHI:** The toll from a deadly mine collapse in eastern India's Jharkhand state rose to 11 yesterday with rescue workers searching for more dead bodies under the rubble. A massive mound of earth caved in late Thursday at the Lalmatia open cast mine, around 240 miles (390 kilometers) from the state capital Ranchi.

"The search operation at the site hasn't stopped. We can confirm 11 dead and fear that one or two more dead bodies may still be under the rubble," Jharkhand police spokesman RK Mallick told AFP after rescuers recovered another body, raising the toll from 10. "15 or 16 miners had managed to escape the collapsed mine soon after the incident on Thursday with only minor injuries. The tough terrain of the region (remote forest) and dense fog has been a challenge to the rescue work," he added.

The rescue workers hope to complete their search operation by yesterday. There was no immediate explanation for the collapse, but the government has launched an investigation into the incident. Jharkhand is one of the richest mineral zones in India, accounting for around 29 percent of the country's coal deposits. However it is also one of India's poorest areas and the epicenter of a Maoist insurgency.

India has maintained a relatively safe record in mining-related accidents compared to neighbor China, which on average reports around 1,000 fatalities every year. In 2015, India recorded 38 deaths across 570 mining sites. The last major mining accident in India occurred in 1975, when 372 workers were killed following the flooding of Chasnala mine in Dhanbad. — AFP

## S KOREANS DEMAND A 'PARK-FREE' 2017

**SEOUL:** Even on New Year's Eve, large crowds of South Koreans gathered to join another rally demanding the ouster of impeached President Park Geun-hye, who's determined to restore her powers through a court trial. Carrying signs and candles and blowing horns, people packed a boulevard in front of an old palace gate that has been the center of massive but peaceful protests in recent weeks.

Protesters later marched near Seoul's presidential palace and the Constitutional Court.

Park's supporters rallied in nearby streets, surrounded by thick lines of police. The court has up to six months to decide whether Park should permanently step down over a corruption scandal or be reinstated. The judges said Friday that Park cannot be forced to testify in the impeachment tri-

al as it enters its argument phase next week.

Protest organizers estimate that nearly 9 million people took part in anti-Park rallies nationwide in the previous nine Saturdays. The historically biggest protest movement in the country pushed lawmakers to vote for Park's impeachment on Dec 9. State prosecutors have accused Park of colluding with a longtime confidante to extort money and favors from the country's largest companies and allowing the friend to manipulate her administration. Park has apologized for putting faith in her jailed friend, Choi Soon-sil, but has denied any legal wrongdoing.

### 'Our democracy has shattered'

"Choi Soon-sil has shown us that our democracy was shattered," said Lee Hae-jin, who protested for the 10th consecutive Saturday in Seoul, carrying a large South Korean flag and wearing black traditional hanbok and a black dance mask that he said was a commentary on the state of the country's democracy.

"I hope in 2017 we will see our democracy repaired," Lee said. State prosecutors have now handed over the investigation to a special prosecution team, which has been focusing on proving bribery suspicions between Park and the Samsung Group. The business giant is suspected of sponsoring Choi in exchange for government favors. On Saturday, investigators questioned Moon Hyung-pyo, the country's arrested former health minister, over allegations that he forced the National Pension Service last year to support a merger between two Samsung affiliates last year.

The deal shaved the fund's stake in one of the companies by an estimated hundreds of millions of dollars in value, but allowed Samsung scion Lee Jae-yong to promote a father-to-son succession of leadership and increase corporate wealth at the group. — AP



SEOUL: Protesters attend a candle-lit rally calling for South Korean President Park Geun-Hye's immediate departure from her office. — AFP

## INDONESIAN PILOT FIRED AFTER SLURRED ANNOUNCEMENT

**JAKARTA:** Indonesian authorities have issued a warning to airline PT Citilink Indonesia after videos circulated appearing to show an intoxicated pilot from the low-cost carrier going through security and then sounding incoherent on the aircraft's public address system. Citilink, which is a unit of national carrier PT Garuda Indonesia, said that the company had fired the pilot after a Dec 28 incident at Surabaya airport ahead of a flight to Jakarta and that two executives had offered to resign.

The pilot was replaced before the flight proceeded, according to a company statement. Fary Djemi Francis, who heads a parliamentary com-

mission overseeing transportation, said that the airline had been asked to investigate whether the pilot had been on drugs. "Second, we also ask Citilink's management to sanction the pilot who went on board the aircraft without going through the briefing room, missing checks on his fitness to fly," Francis said. The transportation ministry had sent a warning letter to Citilink and called for an internal investigation after finding that health checks and other procedures had not been followed according to regulations, said ministry spokesman Bambang S Ervan.

Citilink did not name the pilot but said in a statement that it had fired him after he had

"ignored the flight safety and security procedures which could potentially endanger the security and safety of passengers and other crew members." Chief Executive Albert Burhan and operations director, Hadinoto Soedigno, had also offered to resign over the incident, Citilink spokesman Benny Butarbutar said yesterday.

The spokesman said the resignations would require the approval of shareholders. "We would never mess around when it concerns the condition of a flight, let alone experiment with passenger safety," Butarbutar said. The widely circulated videos have caused alarm in Indonesia, which has had a patchy air safety record. One appears to be

CCTV footage of an unsteady pilot going through security, and the other appears to be shot on a phone and shows a pilot remonstrating in slurred speech with other staff members in the plane's cockpit that he was able to fly.

Reuters could not authenticate the videos and Citilink did not comment directly on them. Indonesia has been trying to improve safety in its airline sector after a series of accidents. For a while, some carriers were barred from flying to the European Union and some other markets over safety concerns. Citilink operates 34 aircraft, conducting 184 flights daily, the company's website said. — Reuters



**BEIJING:** In this photo released Saturday Dec 31, 2016 by Xinhua News Agency, Chinese President Xi Jinping speaks during a New Year greetings broadcast. — AP

## XI OFFERS A POPULIST MESSAGE IN ADDRESS

**BEIJING:** Chinese President Xi Jinping said yesterday that his government would continue to focus on poverty alleviation at home and resolutely defending China's territorial rights on the foreign front. Xi made the televised remarks in his annual New Year's Eve address, in which he touted China's scientific accomplishments, highlighting its large new radio telescope and space missions, and the country's growing role as a leader in global affairs.

Standing before a mural of the Great Wall, Xi said his administration successfully hosted a G-20 summit, pushed forward with China's "One Belt One Road" pan-Eurasian infrastructure project and established the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. China has upheld its peaceful development while resolutely defending its territorial sovereignty and maritime rights, Xi said, making a reference to an international tribunal ruling last summer against China's claims in the contested South China Sea. "If anyone makes this an issue of question, the Chinese people will never agree!" he said, one of the few points in his 10-minute address when his voice rose noticeably.

For most of his address, Xi struck a pop-

ulist tone, saying he was above all concerned about the living conditions of the people and vowed that improving employment, education, housing and health care would be a responsibility that his ruling Communist Party would never shirk from. China lifted 10 million people out of poverty in 2016, Xi said.

"On this new year, I am most concerned about the difficulties of the masses: how they eat, how they live, whether they can have a good New Year, or a good Spring Festival," Xi said, as the television broadcast cut to footage of his visits this year to impoverished rural areas.

Xi also promised to shore up Communist Party discipline and "unwaveringly" maintain his anticorruption campaign against high- and low-ranking officials alike. He said that "supply-side" economic reforms were making progress and that the party would continue to push reform and rule by law during the 19th National Congress, scheduled for late 2017. "As long as the party forever stands with the people, we will be able to walk the long march of our generation," he said. — AP

## TAIWAN LEADER URGES CHINA FOR 'CALM' TALKS AS PRESSURE GROWS

### VOWS NOT TO GIVE IN TO BEIJING'S RECENT MOVES

**TAIPEI:** Taiwan's leader yesterday urged China to engage in "calm and rational" dialogue to maintain peace, vowing not to give in to Beijing's recent moves to "threaten and intimidate" the self-ruled island. "As long as we can be calm, rational, and maintain a flexible attitude, I believe we should be able to find a solution that allows both sides to maintain peaceful and stable relations," President Tsai Ing-wen said in a year-end news conference.

Tensions have grown since China suspended contacts with Tsai's administration in June over her refusal to endorse China's claim that Taiwan and the mainland are part of a single Chinese nation. They were further amplified earlier this month when President-elect Donald Trump broke protocol by speaking with Tsai on the phone and said later he did not feel "bound by a one-China policy."

Earlier this week, China's first aircraft carrier and five other warships held drills that passed by Taiwan and sailed through the contested South China Sea, prompting Taipei to deploy fighter jets to monitor the fleet. China maintains a standing threat to use force to achieve its goal of absorbing Taiwan. Referring to such recent actions, Tsai said Beijing has been "gradually returning to the old ways of dividing, suppressing and even threatening and intimidating Taiwan. We hope that this is not a policy decision of the Beijing authorities." "We will not yield to the pressure nor go back to the old ways of confrontation," Tsai told reporters.

#### Diplomatic relations

Beijing has ratcheted up efforts to diplomatically isolate Taiwan, intervening to prevent the island's participation in international forums and establishing diplomatic relations with former Taiwan allies Gambia and Sao Tome and Principe. The moves have been seen as effectively abandoning the unspoken diplomatic truce that lasted eight years under Tsai's China-friendly predecessor. Meanwhile, the number of Chinese tourists visiting the island has drastically fallen.

Tsai said her administration expected 2017 to bring uncertainties particularly in the first half, noting that the incoming US administration could potentially bring "changes in international affairs." Trump advisers have made conflicting statements about whether Trump's call with Tsai signaled a new policy toward China but some analysts read it and other remarks critical of China as signals of a willingness to increase ties with Taiwan, which would further anger Beijing.

But such a policy could bring economic advantages for Taiwan's export-dependent half trillion-dollar economy, long-term access to senior US officials and more sales of advanced US weapons to defend against China. Tsai's office said Friday she and a delegation of Taiwanese officials will make two stops in the US as part of a visit to diplomatic allies in Central America next month. China has repeatedly urged Washington to prevent Tsai from transiting. — AFP



**TAIPEI:** In this photo released by the Taiwan Presidential Office, President Tsai Ing-wen delivers a year-end speech during an international press conference at the presidential office. — AP

## CHINA: NO SPACE FOR HK INDEPENDENCE

**BEIJING:** There is no space for Hong Kong independence in the "one country, two systems" agreement under which Beijing governs the former British colony, but there can be tolerance for differences in their systems, a senior Chinese official said. Chinese leaders are increasingly concerned about a fledgling independence movement in Hong Kong, which returned to mainland rule in 1997 with a promise of autonomy known as "one country, two systems", and recent protests in the city. The head of China's Hong Kong Macau Affairs Office, Wang Guangya, told pro-Beijing Hong Kong magazine The Bauhinia that "under 'one country, two systems' there is absolutely no space for 'Hong Kong independence'", in comments carried in the ruling Communist Party's People's Daily on Saturday.

"Hong Kong is an inseparable part of the country, and in no situation is 'Hong Kong independence' allowed. This is a bottom line that cannot be touched in 'one country, two systems'," Wang said. As "one country, two systems" is new, it has no ready-made experience to draw from, and it's normal that in this process "new

situations, new problems and new challenges" will arise, he added.

"You can't expect it to be all plain sailing," Wang said. "The central government has confidence in and patience with Hong Kong. As long as the 'one country' principle is not damaged, the differences in the 'two systems' absolutely can be tolerated and respected," he added. China's parliament last month staged a rare interpretation of the Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini-constitution, to effectively bar pro-independence city lawmakers from taking office there.

In separate comments from the same interview reported by the official Xinhua news agency late Friday, Wang said the interpretation did not harm the independence of Hong Kong's legal system, but that that independence could not limit the Chinese parliament's ability to interpret the Basic Law. "It needs to be pointed out that the independence of the legal system is an important principle of the rule of law in Hong Kong, and the central government has always cherished and protected the independence of Hong Kong's legal system." — Reuters

## SINGAPORE BLOGGER SEEKING US ASYLUM

**CHICAGO:** A Singaporean blogger who is seeking political asylum in the United States said on Friday he regretted inflammatory posts that landed him in jail twice in his home country. Amos Yee, 18, who is currently detained in Illinois, told Reuters that videos he filmed insulting Singapore's late prime minister and various religions were in bad taste. "I told you, it is hate speech, it is overly rude, it isn't good activism," Yee said by telephone from the McHenry County Adult Correctional Facility in Illinois. "I completely regret making those videos."

Yee's posts, and subsequent trials and convictions in Singapore, have stirred debate in the conservative city-state over censorship and free speech. His trials were watched closely by rights groups as well as the United Nations. Last year, Yee was convicted on charges of harassment and

insulting a religious group over comments he made about former Singaporean Premier Lee Kuan Yew and Christians soon after Lee's death. His sentence amounted to four weeks in jail. In September, Yee was sentenced to six weeks in jail after pleading guilty to posting comments on the internet critical of Christianity and Islam.

Yee arrived at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport on Dec. 16 and told US Customs officials he was seeking political asylum. The blogger said that he wanted to live in Illinois and has no plans to return to Singapore, a Southeast Asian city-state that has compulsory military service for males, which Yee said he would not take part in. Yee should have his first hearing in front of a judge within two weeks, according to his attorney, Sandra Grossman. Yee has had no contact with the Singaporean government since arriving, he said. — Reuters

## WEDDING VOWS A BLESSING FOR CLEAN-UP OF INDONESIAN RIVER

**JAKARTA:** Only a year ago, this stretch of the Ciliwung River in Indonesia's capital was foul-smelling and clogged by a thick layer of floating plastic and other trash. Now, after a clean-up involving hundreds of volunteers, the river hosted a wedding ceremony for a young couple who grew up on its banks in a bid to inspire others to help preserve Indonesia's fragile environment.

"We have shown our love for our language, culture, now we should start to show our love for the environment," said the groom, Novanto Rahman. His bride, Sandra Fidelia Novianti, is a volunteer for the Depok Ciliwung Community that launched the clean-up with the local government in 2015. The couple made their wedding vows on an inflatable boat decorated with flowers that was paddled down the Ciliwung on Dec.

18, something that previously would have been impossible due to the piles of trash in the water.

The Ciliwung, which runs more than 100 km from its source in West Java to Jakarta bay, has played an important role in the livelihood of the city since the 17th century. Despite the dire water quality, poorer communities living by the river have used its water to wash clothes and shower. The Ciliwung, however, became a dumping ground for trash and barely able to flow into Jakarta bay. This contributed to flooding on the swampy plain of greater Jakarta, which has sunk 4 meters over the past three decades.

Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama has relocated some illegal settlements along its banks in a bid to allow the river to flow. The founder of the Depok Ciliwung Community,

Taufiq Deso, said he hoped community help in cleaning up the river would focus the city government's attention on the problem. About 4,000 city workers retrieve trash from 13 rivers and hundreds of canals zig-zagging through the city of 10 million people, according to Jakarta's Sanitation Department.

Even though there has been a reduction in surface trash on the Ciliwung, an environmentalist said better enforcement of existing laws against polluters was needed to improve water quality. "Despite evidence that showed a few companies are guilty of releasing waste into the river, these companies are still able to continue their operations," said Dwi Sawung of the Indonesian Forum for the Environment. — Reuters



**DENPASAR:** Balinese girls prepare to perform during a New Year celebration in Denpasar, on Indonesia's resort island of Bali on December 31, 2016. Various form of dances and music have made Bali's art and culture one of the most diverse in the world. — AFP

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## CELEBRITIES SEEK POSTHUMOUS PROTECTIONS

By Lisa Richwine and Jill Serjeant

**T**uesday's death of actor Carrie Fisher, who played Princess Leia in "Star Wars," set off waves of remembrance among fans - but also speculation over her character's return in yet-to-be-filmed episodes. Filmmakers are tapping advances in digital technology to resurrect characters after a performer dies, most notably in "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story." The film, in theaters now, features the return of Grand Moff Tarkin, originally played by a long-dead actor.

The trend has sent Hollywood actors in the here-and-now scrambling to exert control over how their characters and images are portrayed in the hereafter. "Celebrities are increasingly involved in making plans to protect their intellectual property rights," said Mark Roesler, an attorney and chairman of CMG Worldwide, an agency representing celebrity estates. "They understand that their legacy will continue beyond their lifetime." Roesler said at least 25 of his clients are engaged in actively negotiating the use of their or their loved ones' computer-generated images in movies, television or commercials. Employment contracts govern how they can be used in a particular film or commercial, while a performer's will can address broader issues. Some actors or heirs worry that overexposure will tarnish a celebrity's image, Roesler said. Some explicitly rule out posthumous depictions involving sex or violence, while others focus on drugs or alcohol.

"We have seen people address marijuana," he said. "We've seen liquor addressed." California law already gives heirs control over actors' posthumous profits by requiring their permission for any use of their likeness. As technology has improved, many living actors there are more focused on steering their legacy with stipulations on how their images are used - or by forbidding their use.

Robin Williams, who committed suicide in 2014, banned any use of his image for commercial means until 2039, according to court documents. He also blocked anyone from digitally inserting him into a movie or TV scene or using a hologram, as was done with rapper Tupac Shakur at Southern California's Coachella music festival in 2012 - 16 years after his murder. Virtual characters have been used when an actor dies in the middle of a film production, as when Universal Pictures combined CGI and previous footage for Paul Walker's role in 2015's "Furious 7" after Walker's 2013 death in a car crash.

But "Rogue One" broke new ground by giving a significant supporting role to a dead star. A digital embodiment of British actor Peter Cushing, who died in 1994, reprised his role from the original 1997 "Star Wars" film as Tarkin. Walt Disney Co recreated Tarkin with a mix of visual effects and a different actor. A Disney spokeswoman declined to comment on whether Princess Leia would appear in films beyond "Episode VIII," set for release in 2017. Fisher had wrapped filming for the next "Star Wars" episode before she died. She suffered a heart attack on a flight from London to Los Angeles.

Fisher had been expected to play a key role in the ninth installment of the sci-fi saga, due for release in 2019. Fisher's attorney, Frederick Bimber, did not return requests for information on any stipulations the actress may have made about use of her image.

Disney bought "Star Wars" producer Lucasfilm in 2012 for \$4 billion. The two new films since released have sold some \$2.7 billion worth of tickets and boosted sales of toys and other related merchandise.

Disney would need to negotiate "re-use fees" with Fisher's estate to resurrect her character for future films, said Mark Litwak, an entertainment attorney in Los Angeles. The rights of actors' heirs are rooted in a 1985 California law requiring filmmakers to obtain permission from a celebrity's estate to use his or her image after death. The law was enacted after a campaign by the son of Dracula actor Bela Lugosi, a lawyer who objected to widespread use of his late father's image.

With today's movie technology opening up so many possible scenarios, actors' union SAG-AFTRA is lobbying for all states to enact protections on the use of celebrity images after they die.

Minnesota began considering such legislation this year following the death of music legend Prince, who was from Minneapolis. "The issue for us is straightforward and clear: The use of performers' work in this manner has obvious economic value and should be treated accordingly," a SAG-AFTRA spokesperson said. Celebrity deaths often spur big increases in sales of music and movies. — Reuters

Focus

Washington Watch

# WHAT JOHN KERRY DID

Dr James J Zogby

**S**ecretary of State John Kerry's valedictory speech on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict unleashed a firestorm of criticism from the very same folks who had just finished hyperventilating over the US abstention on a Security Council resolution a few days earlier. The speech, itself, was divided into three parts. Kerry opened with an accounting of all that the Obama Administration had done for Israel in the past eight years. And he closed with a list of principles he said should serve as the basis for a future Israeli-Palestinian peace. The largest part, the middle, was a passionate indictment of Israel's settlement policy in the West Bank and East Jerusalem—the most comprehensive critique ever given by an American political leader.

During the past 50 years, successive US Administrations have done their best to avoid public criticism of Israel. There have been momentary outbursts of displeasure. But, for the most part, when US officials wanted to challenge Israel's behavior, they prodded, cajoled, pleaded their case, or resorted to offering "incentives". They have never "taken Israel to the wood shed". That's what Kerry did and that was what prompted the reaction.

In response, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivered the political equivalent of tantrum even before Kerry finished his remarks. President-elect Donald Trump tweeted his displeasure. And Members of Congress, from both parties, rushed to issue statements pledging their full support for Israel and its leader, while roundly criticizing their own Secretary of State.

Why the hysteria? As Kerry, himself acknowledged, the speech was not going to change realities on the ground nor would it force the Israelis to alter their behavior. And, as Donald Trump tweeted, with only a few weeks left before the end of the Obama Administration, it is clear that Israel

is not going to pay a price in terms of its relationship with Washington.

None of these reactions, of course, paid any attention to the opening or closing parts of Kerry's speech. Israel and its supporters have made a habit of treating as their due the aid and support they have received from the Obama Administration. And, as for the "Kerry Principles", they were bound to be ignored, since everyone knows what they are but see no possibility that they will be realized.

What set off the firestorm was that Kerry dared to publicly and forcefully criticize Israeli policy. And that was what the overreaction intended to snuff out. The standard Israeli approach used in situations of this sort is to launch a campaign of intimidation designed to pummel the offender into submission and to discourage others from taking similar course. I remember back in 2003, in the lead up to the 2004 presidential primaries, then Senator Kerry addressed our Arab American Institute national conference poignantly describing the daily hardships faced by Palestinians under occupation. He concluded his remarks by condemning the "separation wall" that Israel was constructing in the West Bank, calling it "a barrier to peace". For weeks, Kerry was pummeled by pro-Israeli activists and donors until he finally relented and apologized for his remarks.

Much the same happened with Justice Richard Goldstone, one of the co-authors of the United Nations report on Israeli violations of human rights and international law in its 2008/9 onslaught of Gaza. I met the man and heard him describe how painful it had been for him to see what Israel had done and then feel compelled to condemn their behavior. The response from Israel and Congress was intense and unrelenting. Most critics denounced "Goldstone" without even reading the report. Facts didn't matter, snuffing out criticism and making the critic pay a price did.

After being shamefully battered and even denied entry to Israel to visit his family, Justice Goldstone relented and wrote a Washington Post oped apologizing for some of the language he had used to describe Israeli behavior. At that point Israel announced victory and called off the attack.

This past summer, my colleagues and I went through somewhat the same experience after being appointed by Bernie Sanders to serve on the Democratic Party platform drafting committee. There was an effort to discredit and silence us even before the platform deliberations began. They didn't need to turn the heat up too high because the Clinton campaign made it clear that they would brook no criticism of Israel in the document. As a result, our efforts to add the words "occupation" and "settlements" were in vain.

And now comes Kerry's State Department speech in which he didn't just criticize Israel's occupation and settlement policy, he also demolished the arguments Israelis use to defend their actions. At the same time, he provided a tutorial on the damage done to peace by settlements. Kerry's speech will not change Israeli policy. And with Trump in the Oval Office three weeks, the speech most certainly will not affect a change in US policy. But what Kerry has done, if he doesn't relent, is shatter the taboo that has sheltered Israel from official criticism, while laying out the arguments needed to rebut Israeli efforts to justify their policies.

To some, especially Palestinians, this may seem like "too little, too late". But as someone who has been a part of the effort to create an American debate on Israeli policies, Kerry's intervention is both welcome, validating, and empowering. He laid down markers that should help liberals and progressives define a policy agenda on the Israel-Palestine conflict—exactly what we need as we enter the challenges of the Trump era.

— Dr James J Zogby is president, Arab American Institute

# TRUMP'S PRAISE OF PUTIN SIGNALS POLICY SHIFT

By Josh Lederman

**M**oscow is hoping Donald Trump will reconsider the sanctions the US is levying in response to its finding of election hacking, a wait-and-see strategy bolstered by the American president-elect's own approving words for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Putin has essentially put relations with the US on hold until Trump replaces President Barack Obama on Jan. 20. Though his foreign minister encouraged him to slap back at Washington for the sanctions imposed by Obama, Putin decided that Russia wouldn't immediately retaliate.

"Great move on delay (by V. Putin)," Trump wrote Friday on Twitter. "I always knew he was very smart!" Praise for a long-time adversary at odds with a sitting American president is remarkable for a president-elect - and the latest signal that US-Russia relations, among other policies, could be getting a makeover from Trump.

Whether he steers the US toward or away from Russia is shaping up as the first major test of his foreign policy disposition and his willingness to buck fellow Republicans, who for years have argued Obama wasn't being tough enough on Russia. In response to the election hacking he blames on Russia, Obama ordered sanctions on Russian spy agencies, closed two Russian compounds and expelled 35 diplomats the US said were really spies. Brushing off Obama, Putin said Russia would plan steps to restore US ties "based on the policies that will be carried out by the administration of President D. Trump." Not only would Russia not kick Americans out, Putin said, he was inviting the kids of all US diplomats to the Kremlin's New Year's and Christmas parties. "At this point, they're trolling Obama," said Olga Oliker, who directs the Russia program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. The Obama administration said it

had seen Putin's remarks but had nothing more to say. Russia denies the US intelligence community's assessment that in an attempt to help Trump win the presidency, Moscow orchestrated cyber breaches in which tens of thousands of Democrats' emails were stolen and later made public. Trump, too, has refused to accept that conclusion and insisted the country should just "move on," though he has agreed to meet next week with intelligence leaders to learn more. Notably, after the US on Thursday issued a report it said exposed Russia's cyber tactics, Putin's aides didn't offer any

specific rebuttal. The report included detailed technical information like IP addresses and samples of malware code the US said Russia uses. One utility company, Burlington Electric Department in Vermont, reported Friday that it had detected the malware on a company laptop that was not connected to its grid systems. Burlington said, "We took immediate action to isolate the laptop and alerted federal officials of this finding."

There's little certainty about how Trump will actually act on Russia as president. Though he's praised Putin as a strong

leader and said it would be ideal for the two countries to stop fighting, he also suggested this month the US might mount a new nuclear arms race, triggering fresh anxieties about a return to Cold War-style tensions. Ambassador Michael McFaul, Obama's former envoy to Russia, said while Trump has defined his top objective as "getting along with the Kremlin," Putin has higher goals, including the lifting of economic sanctions and, ideally, US recognition of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

"Obviously, Putin's not responding because he's waiting for Jan. 20," McFaul said in an interview. "He's got these much more important objectives to him than getting into a tit-for-tat response with the outgoing administration." Trump's warm outreach to Putin, combined with picks for secretary of state and national security adviser who are seen as friendly to Russia, have left hawkish Republicans with a particularly unpleasant choice: look hypocritical for backtracking on their own tough talk, or risk a public rift with their party's new president. In the House, many Republicans who have long called for tougher sanctions have been silent or vague about Obama's penalties and Trump's positions. But a handful of GOP senators have shown they have no intentions of letting up pressure on the Kremlin.

"We intend to lead the effort in the new Congress to impose stronger sanctions on Russia," Republican Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina said in a statement. McCain, who chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee, scheduled a hearing next week on "foreign cyber threats" in an attempt to further spotlight Russia's actions. Even if Trump opts to pull back Obama's sanctions and overlook hacking allegations, he may find rapprochement with Russia isn't that simple. The past two presidents both tried to reach out to Russia early in their terms but left office with relations in no better shape. — AP



This combination of pictures created on Friday shows file photos of US President-elect Donald Trump (left) and Russian President Vladimir Putin.—AFP

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SEOUL: A woman prays in front of lanterns to celebrate the New Year at Chogye Buddhist temple. — AP

## MEXICANS FURIOUS OVER FUEL PRICE HIKE

**MEXICO CITY:** Mexicans are bracing to kickstart the New Year on a sour note, with protests planned against the government's huge hike in gasoline prices. President Enrique Peña Nieto has promised that fuel prices will fall thanks to his landmark 2014 energy reform, which ended a seven-decade-old monopoly held by the state-run firm Pemex.

The government plans to end subsidies and let the market dictate prices in March, but Mexicans will feel the pinch at the pump before they start falling. The finance ministry announced Tuesday that the price of gasoline would increase by as much as 20.1 percent to 0.88 dollars per liter on January 1, while diesel would rise by 16.5 percent to 0.83 dollars. The price ceiling will be adjusted daily from

February 18, before letting supply and demand determine them in March.

Around 100 protestors blocked a service station in the Pacific resort of Acapulco on Friday, while Jalisco authorities investigated reports that a drug gang threatened to set fire to service stations. A protest is planned in the capital on Sunday while Mexicans were urged on social media to block service stations on Monday. People were also encouraged to boycott fuel for three days.

Before the price announcement, fuel shortages had already angered Mexicans in several states. "The fuel price increase causes outrage. People are right: it's not fair. I support each family, I share their outrage and anger," Aristoteles Sandoval, the governor of western Jalisco state,

wrote on Twitter. Sandoval's criticism drew particular attention because he is a member of Peña Nieto's centrist Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Furious opposition governors plan to meet with federal government officials next week to discuss the price hike. "We just had a security meeting (between governors and Peña Nieto) days ago and there was not one comment about this situation," said Mexico City's leftist Mayor Miguel Angel Mancera.

### Competitive prices

The protests are the latest headache for Peña Nieto, whose popularity has plummeted below 25 percent this year due to his government's failure to curb drug-related violence, disappointing economic growth and his unpopu-

lar decision to host Donald Trump before the anti-immigration Republican won the US presidential election. Finance Minister Jose Antonio Meade defended the fuel price increase, saying it would not trigger more inflation and that eventually the "final price for consumers will be among the most competitive in the world."

Mexican energy industry expert David Shields voiced doubts that the demonstrations will force the government to change its mind. "After such a blunt announcement, it's very hard for the government to back down because it has a very small margin. The country's fiscal situation is terrible and you can't keep subsidizing gasoline," Shields told AFP. The fall in global oil prices in recent years has forced the government to cut its budget and slash spending at Pemex. And the

peso has fallen to historic lows due to Trump's protectionist rhetoric against Mexico.

### Fewer tips?

The liberalization of gasoline prices was supposed to begin in 2018, but the government decided to start it now. "An immediate drop in prices was an unreal expectation. We have seen a very strong depreciation of the peso," Shields said. In Mexico City, service station worker Maria de la Luz Lopez worried that the price increases could hurt her. "I'm afraid that to compensate for the increase, (customers) will no longer give us tips," said Lopez, who like many in her field does not earn a wage and depends on the generosity of drivers. — AFP

## CHINA POLICYMAKERS PLEDGE STABILITY FOR 'COMPLEX' 2017

**BEIJING:** China's economy is on a steady growth path as 2016 ends, supported by a housing boom and billions in government investment, but the mood of policymakers is more cautious than celebratory as they face "complexity" in the New Year. Controlling risks has been a constant refrain in recent months as the focus of policymakers switches to taming asset bubbles and checking unbalanced growth stemming from efforts to fuel the economy with credit.

The central bank - while reaffirming a long-standing commitment to prudent policy - said on Friday it would pay more attention to maintaining a "neutral" stance and ensure that it is "neither too tight nor too loose". "At present, China's economic and financial operations are generally stable, but the complexity of the situation cannot be underestimated," the People's Bank of China (PBOC) said.

Bank lending is on pace to top 2015's record 11.71 trillion yuan (\$1.7 trillion), helping to stoke a housing boom that saw prices rise a historic 12.6 percent year-on-year in November, while fixed asset investment by state firms is growing more than 20 percent. But growth has become more imbalanced this year as the effectiveness of new credit declines and companies and individuals face mounting debts, economists say. Policy insiders expect monetary policy to tilt towards slight tightening in 2017 as the government tries to strike a balance between supporting the economy with ample credit and preventing a destabilising build-up in debt. Central bank adviser Sheng Songcheng told Reuters in an interview on Thursday that interest rates in China were already on an upward trend as the economy improved.

### Market stress

In the financial markets, China's blue-chip stock index

ended the year more than 11 percent lower while the Chinese yuan plumed an 8-1/2 year low. Primary money rates rose this week and were largely higher this year, driven by the PBOC's tighter liquidity stance in the second half aimed at taming risks.

The key interbank rate rose more than 25 basis points for the year, indicating tighter monetary conditions, after falling sharply in 2015. Market participants also said the falling yuan has had a large negative impact on the money market in the second half, with the central bank buying up Chinese currency and shrinking base money. The PBOC said in Friday's report it would push reforms of the yuan regime, while keeping the currency basically stable.

The central bank used the same wording about the currency in last year's report. The yuan ended 2016 with its biggest annual loss since 1994, putting it on track to be the worst-performing major Asian currency this year. Expectations for a weaker yuan have contributed to significant capital outflows as China's foreign currency reserves fall to the lowest level in more than five years.

As Chinese firms step up overseas investment, which also contributes to capital outflows, policymakers announced plans this week to further open China's markets to foreign investment. Any further opening up to foreign firms should help redress an imbalance in investment flows which is likely to rise to an unprecedented 335 billion yuan this year as outbound investment rose more than 55 percent in the first 11 months of 2016. Chinese President Xi Jinping called for more efforts to push key reforms next year with a focus on state-owned-enterprises, taxation, finance, land, urbanization, social security, ecological progress and opening up, the official Xinhua news agency reported late Friday night. — Reuters



BEIJING: Residents enjoy a clear day near the iconic CCTV headquarters. — AP

# TOP EMPLOYEE SURVEYS TO ENSURE JOB SATISFACTION

Employee satisfaction plays a vital role in the success of the company. Job satisfaction is often correlated with loyalty and subsequently productivity. Therefore, making employees feel well-rewarded and appreciated for their contributions is an essential managerial practice.

There are many ways an employer can obtain employee feedback and satisfaction levels. Employee surveys are highly effective for measuring this type of data. Using such tools helps improve relations with employees, maintains employee loyalty, and pushes towards collaborative achievement of business objectives.

Internet-based surveys have proved to be the most effective, due to their high level of confidentiality and, as a result, honest feedback. This survey method also allows the employer to instantly gather information and assess and compare satisfaction levels

over a certain period of time. The Career experts at Bayt.com, the #1 Job Site in the Middle East, share below the best types of surveys that lead to higher employee satisfaction.

## 1. Engagement Surveys

Anonymous, employees are more comfortable sharing their honest feedback. Engagement surveys encourage that, resulting in the improvement of morale within an organization. Its simplicity makes it the most common type of survey. Companies that offer their employees the opportunities to share their feedback and provide improvement suggestions and ideas have higher employee retention and job satisfaction rates.

## 2. 360 Degree Feedback Survey

This survey is divided into two parts. The first part requests feedback on the employ-

ee's performance and behavior. This part is filled out by coworkers, supervisors and customers when applicable. The second part asks the employee to assess their own performance and behavior as well as respond to the feedback received from others.

What distinguishes this type of surveys is that it takes into consideration how others view the employee. The feedback usually includes suggestions for improvement, which are vital for those seeking growth. Employers find this survey equally important, as it allows them to recognize the weaknesses and strengths of their staff. The employers can then, more accurately, reward successes and propose improvement strategies.

## 3. Employer Improvement Surveys

This survey allows employees to provide constructive criticism for their managers. Based on that, employers can plan to

improve the organizational processes and identify weaknesses. The importance of such survey is that it signals to the employees that their company is constantly looking to improve. Feedback does not only target employees, but in fact is useful to everyone regardless of their position and role.

## 4. Compensation and Benefits Surveys

Among the biggest drivers for employee retention and loyalty are compensations and benefits. According to the Bayt.com 'Salaries in the Middle East and North Africa' survey, nearly two thirds (63%) of respondents believe their salaries are lower than what other companies offer in the same industry. This is why understanding how your employees feel about these elements is important. This type of surveys will provide a clear picture of your employees' needs and wants, which subsequently helps the employer

tweak salaries and benefits accordingly.

## 5. Exit Interview Survey

It's beneficial to understand why your employees are leaving. Uncovering reasons of resignation helps you prevent future attrition through operational improvements. It might also help in reversing a valued employee's resignation. It's possible to discover that the employee is willing to stay with certain adjustments such as training, compensation or advancement opportunities. For example, according to the Bayt.com 'Employee Loyalty in the Middle East and North Africa' poll, 38.2% of respondents disclosed that the lack of growth and career advancement is the biggest reason for their resignation. Whether the reversal is successful or not, the survey collects useful information on work experience and desirable conditions that can be implemented in the company.



NEW YORK: In this Friday, Nov 13, 2015, file photo, the American flag flies above the Wall Street entrance to the New York Stock Exchange. — AP

## US STOCKS END MODESTLY LOWER ON FINAL TRADING DAY OF 2016

TECHNOLOGY, CONSUMER-FOCUSED STOCKS LED BROAD SLIDE

NEW YORK: Investors capped a year of solid gains on Wall Street Friday in a selling mood, sending the major US stock indexes modestly lower on the final trading day of 2016. Technology and consumer-focused stocks led the broad slide, while real estate companies and banks eked out small gains. As it had been for much of the week, trading was subdued ahead of the New Year's Day holiday.

Despite riding out the last week of the year with losses, halting the Dow Jones industrial average's momentum as it neared the 20,000 mark, 2016 delivered a much better finish for stock investors than most would have anticipated. All told, the Dow ended the year with a 13.4 percent gain, while the Nasdaq composite gained 7.5 percent.

The Standard & Poor's 500 index, the broadest measure of the stock market, gained 9.5 percent after an essentially flat finish in 2015. Including dividends, the total return was 11.96 percent. Small-company stocks fared the best, especially since the election. The Russell 2000 index closed out 2016 with a gain of 19.5 percent. "This was not just a market that did well, it did extremely well," said Quincy Krosby, market strategist at Prudential Financial.

The stock market weathered repeated slumps

in 2016, including the worst start to any year for stocks, the second correction for the market in five months and plummeting oil prices. A steadily improving US economy and job market, as well as more stable oil prices and better company earnings growth helped turn the market around. More recently, investor optimism following the Republican election sweep in November kicked off a rally that sent the market to new heights.

### End of year rally

Some of that enthusiasm evaporated in the final week of the year, as traders seized on the quiet period between the Christmas and New Year's holidays to do some selling to lock in profits. "So many times we look for a rally at the end of the year, particularly between Christmas and New Year's," said JJ Kinahan, TD Ameritrade's chief strategist. "But with the incredible up move we've had since the election, people are either hesitant to buy things heading into the new year or are taking a little bit of profit."

On Friday, the Dow slid 57.18 points, or 0.3 percent, to 19,762.60. The S&P 500 index fell 10.43 points, or 0.5 percent, to 2,238.83. The Nasdaq composite gave up 48.97 points, or 0.9 percent, to 5,383.12. The Russell 2000 lost 6.05

points, or 0.4 percent, to 1,357.13. Bond prices rose. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note fell to 2.44 percent from 2.48 percent late Thursday.

Global stocks mostly rose on the year's last day of trading. Britain's index rallied to hit another all-time high. The FTSE 100, which was trading for only a half day, rose 0.3 percent. That left the index 14.4 percent higher over 2016. Elsewhere in Europe, Germany's DAX rose 0.3 percent, while France's CAC 40 gained 0.5 percent. Earlier in Asia, Japan's Nikkei 225 fell 0.2 percent, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index rose 1 percent.

Benchmark US crude fell 5 cents to close at \$53.72 a barrel in New York. That translates into a 45 percent gain for the year. Brent crude, used to price international oils, slipped 3 cents to close at \$56.82 a barrel in London. In other energy trading, wholesale gasoline dropped 2 cents to \$1.67 a gallon and heating oil held steady at \$1.70 a gallon.

Natural gas futures fell 7.8 cents, or 2.1 percent, to \$3.72 per 1,000 cubic feet. The price of gold fell \$6.40 to \$1,151.70 an ounce. Silver slid 23 cents to \$15.99 an ounce. Copper rose 2 cents to \$2.51 a pound. In currency trading, the dollar strengthened to 116.78 yen from 116.65 yen late Thursday. The euro rose to \$1.0531 from \$1.0485. — AP

## VENEZUELA CEDES PRESIDENCY TRADE BLOCK AFTER DISPUTE

CARACAS: Venezuela on Friday said it was formally ceding the rotating presidency of Mercosur to Argentina, citing the end of its term as the head of the trade bloc, a move that follows acrimonious dispute over its suspension from the group. Mercosur suspended Venezuela this month after years of complaints that the socialist-run nation, whose state-led economy is increasingly out of step with the rest of the region, had failed to meet economic conditions meant to stimulate trade.

President Nicolas Maduro called the suspension a "coup" against Venezuela while Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez this month jostled with security guards in Argentina in a failed attempt to crash a

meeting of the trade bloc. "Venezuela formally hands the presidency of Mercosur over to the Republic of Argentina," wrote Rodriguez in a letter posted on her Twitter account that was addressed to the foreign ministers of Mercosur nations.

Argentina has said that Venezuela will have no representation in Mercosur until it meets the group's requirements. Venezuela was initially admitted to the bloc in 2012 and given four years to meet all the requirements. Mercosur includes Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, with Bolivia in the process of joining. Under the bloc's rules, Venezuela would need to renegotiate the terms of its membership in order to return to the group. — Reuters

## OFFICIAL: POWER WON'T BE FULLY BACK AT VEGAS CASINO FOR DAYS

LAS VEGAS: The busy New Year's holiday weekend is likely to come and go before a Rio casino hotel tower in Las Vegas fully recovers from a power outage that prompted a 900-room evacuation, officials said Friday. Spokesman Richard Broome of the Rio's parent company, Caesars Entertainment, said the company is testing to see whether rooms on the lowest 20 floors can be occupied Friday. That could mean about 500 rooms would reopen in time for the holiday, when hotel rooms are scarce.

Broome said about 400 rooms on the upper floors of the Masquerade Tower will likely be unoccupied for several more days. The chain of events that triggered the outage and evacuation started Wednesday, when a sink in a service area overflowed and shorted a fuse in the tower's power system. The hotel moved to a backup generator, but that had been compromised by water from a fire sprinkler and it gave out on Thursday morning.

Guests in the near-capacity tower were transferred to other rooms in casinos owned by Caesars, but also to competitors' rooms. "Naturally, they're frustrated,"

Broome said at a news conference on Friday. "We're trying to bend over backward to try to make that frustration as small as possible by giving them free food, by giving them as much information as we can, making sure we transport them over to the other property they'll be staying at."

The 2,500-room Rio, which was built in 1990 and is a short drive from the Las Vegas Strip, is one of the more affordable resorts in Las Vegas, with rooms that run less than \$100 on an off-peak night. It's home to magicians Penn and Teller, the Chippendales male revue and Food Network personality Guy Fieri's restaurant El Burro Borracho.

The timing of the outage is particularly problematic because it comes at one of the busiest and most lucrative weekends of the year for Las Vegas. More than 300,000 visitors are expected to ring in the new year in Sin City, which is welcoming big-name musical acts and putting on an eight-minute pyrotechnic show that features fireworks launched from casino rooftops. Broome said Caesars hasn't estimated how much the outage is costing them. — AP



LAS VEGAS: NHP and Metro Police officers block off the entrance off Flamingo Road to the Rio Hotel & Casino after reports of smoke coming from the 21st floor of the Masquerade Tower led to guests being evacuated. — AP

## EXCHANGE RATES

### AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

#### ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.612
Indian Rupees	4.532
Pakistani Rupees	2.930
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.055
Nepali Rupees	2.837
Singapore Dollar	213.190
Hongkong Dollar	39.549
Bangladesh Taka	3.880
Philippine Peso	6.158
Thai Baht	5.573

#### GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.921
Qatari Riyal	84.375
UAE Dirham	797.817
Bahraini Dinar	815.730
UAE Dirham	83.628

#### ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.750
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	15.740
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.233
Tunisian Dinar	133.890
Jordanian Dinar	432.610
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.047
Syrian Lira	2.189
Morocco Dirham	30.547

#### EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	307.000
Euro	322.350
Sterling Pound	381.140
Canadian dollar	229.620
Turkish lira	87.920

Swiss Franc	300.980
Australian Dollar	224.111
US Dollar Buying	305.800

#### GOLD

20 Gram	232.84
10 Gram	119.34
5 Gram	60.51

### DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	306.550
Canadian Dolla	230.500
Sterling Pound	384.385
Euro	322.080
Swiss Frank	300.105
Bahrain Dinar	812.640
UAE Dirhams	83.855
Qatari Riyals	85.080
Saudi Riyals	82.675
Jordanian Dinar	433.540
Egyptian Pound	16.830
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.060
Indian Rupees	4.530
Pakistani Rupees	2.924
Bangladesh Taka	3.887
Philippines Peso	6.143
Cyprus pound	168.345
Japanese Yen	3.600
Syrian Pound	2.435
Nepalese Rupees	3.825
Malaysian Ringgit	69.340

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	31.240
Thai Bhat	9.535
Turkish Lira	87.725

### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
<b>Europe</b>		
British Pound	0.371545	0.381545
Czech Korune	0.003871	0.015871
Danish Krone	0.039121	0.044121
Euro	0.316357	0.325357
Norwegian Krone	0.031270	0.036470
Romanian Leu	0.085056	0.085056
Slovakia	0.009215	0.019215
Swedish Krona	0.029340	0.034340
Swiss Franc	0.292878	0.303878
Turkish Lira	0.083732	0.094032
<b>Australasia</b>		
Australian Dollar	0.212617	0.224617
New Zealand Dollar	0.205431	0.214931
<b>America</b>		
Canadian Dollar	0.221563	0.230563
Georgina Lari	0.138615	0.138615
US Dollars	0.302800	0.307200
US Dollars Mint	0.303300	0.307200
<b>Asia</b>		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003527	0.004111
Chinese Yuan	0.042685	0.046185
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037484	0.040234
Indian Rupee	0.002785	0.005519

Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002534	0.002714
Kenyan Shilling	0.003157	0.003157
Korean Won	0.000245	0.000260
Malaysian Ringgit	0.064809	0.070809
Nepalese Rupee	0.002941	0.003111
Pakistan Rupee	0.002618	0.002908
Philippine Peso	0.006077	0.006377
Sierra Leone	0.000068	0.000074
Singapore Dollar	0.207315	0.217315
South African Rand	0.016364	0.024854
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001649	0.002229
Taiwan	0.009514	0.009694
Thai Baht	0.008222	0.008770

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.807486	0.815986
Egyptian Pound	0.013671	0.023124
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000181	0.000241
Jordanian Dinar	0.427814	0.436814
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000149	0.000249
Moroccan Dirhams	0.002032	0.044232
Nigerian Naira	0.001274	0.001909
Omani Riyal	0.790721	0.796401
Qatar Riyal	0.083486	0.084936
Saudi Riyal	0.080753	0.082053
Syrian Pound	0.001302	0.001522
Tunisian Dinar	0.129004	0.137004
Turkish Lira	0.083732	0.094032
UAE Dirhams	0.082133	0.083833
Yemeni Riyal	0.001016	0.001096

The following tables summarize last week's performance of Boursa Kuwait

Description	Week 51	Week 50	Diff %
	29/12/2016	22/12/2016	
<b>Working days</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	
<b>AlShall index (38 Companies)</b>	<b>363.0</b>	<b>360.4</b>	<b>0.7%</b>
<b>Boursa Kuwait index (price)</b>	<b>5,748.1</b>	<b>5,676.2</b>	<b>1.3%</b>
<b>Value Trade (KD)</b>	<b>89,335,848</b>	<b>62,080,150</b>	
<b>Daily average (KD)</b>	<b>17,867,170</b>	<b>12,416,030</b>	<b>43.9%</b>
<b>Volume Trade (Shares)</b>	<b>941,428,027</b>	<b>741,726,013</b>	
<b>Daily average (Shares)</b>	<b>188,285,605</b>	<b>148,345,203</b>	<b>26.9%</b>
<b>Transactions</b>	<b>20,935</b>	<b>17,027</b>	
<b>Daily average (Transactions)</b>	<b>4,187</b>	<b>3,405</b>	<b>23.0%</b>

# THE MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC EVENTS IN 2016

## AL SHALL WEEKLY REPORT

The Economist Information Unit amended its estimates of the historical performance of the local economy from minus -1.6% and -2.1% for 2014 and 2015 respectively to 0.5% and 1.8% for 2014 and 2015. It expects the GDP to continue its positive real growth by about 2.3% for 2016 but will weaken to score 1.6% for 2017; then it regains some strength to grow by about 2.6% in 2018. But under all circumstances it will remain weak growth and incapable of creating enough jobs opportunities. And it expects nominal GDP to fall to about KD 32 billion in 2016 from the record level of KD 49.4 billion in 2013, then it will rise to KD 37.9 billion in 2017 and then to KD 41 billion in 2018.

The average price of Kuwaiti oil in 2016 scored US\$ 38.9 per barrel down from an average of about US\$ 48 in 2015, losing about 18.9%. But the discrepancy in the barrel price was about 115.1% positive between its lowest average price at US\$ 23.3 per barrel in January 2016 and US\$ 50 average price for December of the same year. The year started with a very weak average price level and ended with a high level, which is good. OPEC and some producers outside it agreed to withdraw 1.8 million barrels a day from the market: -1.2 million barrels a day for OPEC and 600 thousand barrels for non-OPEC producers.

After they have been exhausted by production surplus wars. The response was short term, i.e. the rise in price by more than 20% while OPEC production losses were at 3.6% and 4.9% for Kuwait. And if the last oil agreement holds, macroeconomic performance indicators will be better -the economic growth level and conditions of external and internal balances- and vice versa. Therefore, we should be careful when we read the predictions of future performance of the domestic economy; the margin of likely error will remain significant.

### Fiscal reform measures

Expenditures allocations for fiscal year 2016/2017 -April 2016 to March 2017-scored about KD 18.892 billion, a slight drop by about 2.2% from the previous fiscal year appropriations, despite the impact of lower oil prices on reducing fuel and energy support expenses on the State budget. Financial reform project seemed among the least influential items in terms of bridging the financial gap -diesel and electricity, water and gasoline- and the most vulnerable to objection and debate. On the contrary, defense expenses and costs of treatment abroad were untethered at multiples of the impact of fiscal reform measures.

Even those actions, and after bargaining, private housing for citizens was exempted from electricity and water charges; citizens were granted 75 liters of gasoline per month. In other words, the Government lacked the exemplary role and its priorities were reversed; the reaction of the street came directly in the results of parliamentary election on November 26, 2016 which punished the 2013 National Assembly and the Government. Nevertheless, seemingly, they didn't work and the same Government returned. It is almost impossible to adopt any real or essential financial or economic reform policies. With a potential and prolonged weakness of the oil market, with the maximum potential price at US\$ 60 per barrel, which is lower than the parity price for any future budget, and with the Government's orientation to resort to domestic and global borrowing markets, in addition to liquidating assets within its financial reserves, it is now certain that the financial and economic situations will not be sustainable, but the implications of the lack of sustainability are risky to the stability and not the development country in the future.

After the US Federal Reserve Bank lifted the dollar interest by a quarter point in December 2015 and another quarter point in December 2016, The Central Bank of Kuwait has raised the discount rate to 2.25% after the first rise, and then to 2.5% after the second. This means starting a contracting monetary policy. This happens despite the difference in the position in the U.S. economic cycle from the cycle of the Kuwaiti economy. The former is witnessing the beginning of recovery that drove it to anticipate the hot economy and hedge against inflation. The latter is perching in its weak performance position and needs an expansionist monetary policy. However, the Central Bank of Kuwait's decision is correct because its targets lie in repatriating the Kuwaiti dinar, with the risks of failure to repatriate being much higher than the risks of weak economic growth. Perhaps 2017 may carry more pressures and lifting interest rates on the US dollar are likely to be repeated, together with the Kuwaiti dinar. This opens the door for more contracting monetary policies.

### Weak growth rates

With weak domestic economic growth rates and the beginning of a contracting monetary policy, coupled with an apparent inability of the public administration to adopt and apply genuine financial and economic reform policies, with the expansion of geopolitical violence in

the region, all of which led to decline in confidence and caused pressures on liquidity and prices of main assets in Kuwait. After the stock exchange lost about 35.2% of its liquidity and Al Shall index lost about 17.6% of its value in 2015, the stock exchange lost about 27.5% of its liquidity and Al Shall index lost about 0.8% of its value in 2016. As a result value of individuals' wealth continued to decline in the local market as well as banks' mortgages of stock values. The real estate market was no better; after it lost 33.5% of its liquidity in 2015, it lost approximately 28% of its liquidity in 2016 - December figures are estimates- and most market components -private, investment and residential- lost a margin of their prices. But due to the absence of price indices of these components we cannot give figures.

In summary, 2016 events were not positive in terms of their impact on the local economy. The oil market continued weak; geopolitical violence continued to escalate; and the local public administration continued its inability to reduce the level of consequences, and it is unexpected to start a construction phase. Performance of the global economy is still weak and the states which drive demand on oil like China and Asian Tigers lost a margin higher than their historical growth rates, and technological developments of producing non-traditional oil and development of preserving the environment contributed to continued weak economic growth in the long term. Only one positive shift occurred during the year, i.e. OPEC agreement and oil producing countries from non-OPEC members to control production which provided Kuwait and States which heavily rely on oil export a space of time, albeit short, to work hard on repairing their conditions; but

Speculative Companies' Share of Market Traded Value

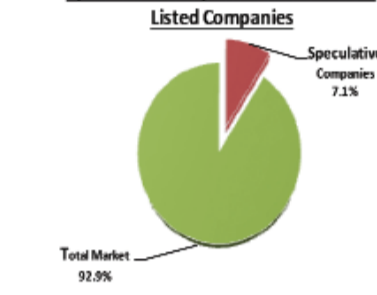


December. If we assume prices and production would remain as they are now -unrealistic assumption- oil revenues would score about KD 12.6 billion, 146% of estimated oil revenues in the budget for the entire current fiscal year which is in the amount of KD 8.6 billion. Adding an amount of KD 1.6 billion in non-oil revenues, projected budget revenues would score KD 14.2 billion for the current fiscal year.

### 3. Boursa Kuwait Liquidity Features 2016

By the end of 2016, Kuwait Boursa added to its liquidity during December -trading value- an amount of KD 321.5 million, or by 12.1% to the amount accumulated in the past eleven months of 2016, bringing the total liquidity in 2016 to about KD 2.873 billion. Total liquidity of 2016 dropped by -27.5% compared with 2015 liquidity. In fact, the Boursa liquidity measured by value of daily trading, scored its peak in 2007 and since then the Boursa liquidity has been weak and scored lowest level in 2016 2.113 billion of total market liquidity, representing about 66.3% of its total capital value. Number of speculation companies within the sample was 13 which captured 15.9% of total market trading value, i.e. KD 457.9

Speculative Companies' Share of Total Listed Companies



of its main indexes, which might positively extend to its performance in 2017.

As for the negative side, the Kuwaiti oil barrel average price lost about -18.9% of its level in 2016 compared to 2015. Events of geopolitical violence escalated and the Central Bank of Kuwait began in December a contractual policy by raising the interest rate by 0.25% point with the possibility of repeating more than once in 2017. It was the result of the performance of main indexes of the Boursa, compared with its performance in 2015, Kuwait 15 Index lost about -1.7% and scored 885 points versus 900.4 points, the weighted index lost -0.4% and scored 380.1 points versus 381.7 points, while the price index gained 2.4% and scored 5,748.1 points versus 5,615.1 points. This is a shameful index and does not reflect the reality of the change. The important negative development, was the losses of liquidity of the Boursa in 2016, scored about -27.5% from the level of liquidity in 2015, that was also scarce. The daily average value of the Boursa trading in 2016, scored about KD 11.6 million versus KD 15.9 million in 2015. Half of the listed companies (including 7 withdrawn companies from the Boursa in 2016) got 2.8%

Speculative Companies' Share of Total Market Capitalization



number of gainers whose value increased was 70 companies out of 183 companies; 106 companies recorded varying drops in their values, while value of 7 companies did not change. The Industry sector achieved the highest gain by KD 412.9 million, then the Telecommunications sector rise by KD 290.2 million, due to the rise in "Zain" value.

While the banking sector dropped by KD 779.7 million. As for listed companies, "GFH Financial Group" achieved the highest rise in its market capitalization value by KD 293.4 million, compared with its value at the beginning of the year, then "Zain" by KD 258.5 million rise, then "KFH" by KD 257.3 million. On the other hand, "NBK" achieved a decline in its value by KD 368.6 million, then "Burgan Bank" by KD 163.9 million, and then "Al Ahli United Bank" by about KD 124.4 million. The banking sector is still dominating in its contributions to the Boursa market capitalization value by 47.2% (half of which belongs to two banks, "NBK" and "KFH"). While the second largest contributing, the Telecommunications sector by 10.9% of the Boursa value. Although the two sectors obtained 58.1% of the Boursa market capitalization value, their share from its liquidity, i.e. trading value, scored 44.6% while the financial sector contribution by 9.6% of its share from the Boursa market capitalization value scored 19.8%. If we accept profitability in the first nine months of 2016, as index for the profits of the entire year, we not a drop in profitability by -3%, by scoring KD 1.328 billion versus KD 1.369 billion for the same period in 2015. The number of gaining companies which are common in the two periods was 136 companies out of 176 companies, which declared their financial statements. Gainers achieved KD 1.394 billion, deducted about KD 65.8 million, which represent 40 companies scored losses. The banking sector contributed 51.9% of Boursa profits, then the telecommunications sector by 14%, while the 8 sectors contributed out of 12 sectors active in supporting these profitability and 4 sectors achieved absolute losses. As for companies, "NBK" was the leader in profits by KD 219.3 million, then the "Al Ahli United Bahraini Bank" by KD 133.5 million. While "Al-Mal Investment Co." achieved the highest losses by KD 14.1 million and "National Industries Group (Holding)" by KD 5.1 million losses.

When analyzing the financial performance indicators for listed companies, according to the profit levels until end of September 30, calculated on an annual basis, compared with the end of 2015, according to the schedule, we note that the price multiplier index market profitability (P/E) retreated -improved- to about 14.6 times compared with 15.4 times. The price index to book value (P/B) retreated to 0.9 times compared with 1 times, while the return on equity (ROE) increased to 6.5%, compared with 6.3%, and return on total assets (ROA) increased slightly, to about 1.43% compared with 1.39%.

### 5. The Weekly Performance of Boursa Kuwait

The performance of Boursa Kuwait for last week was more active compared to the previous one, where all indexes showed an increase, the traded value index, the traded volume index, number of transactions index, and general index, AlShall Index (value weighted) closed at 363 points at the closing of last Thursday, showing an increase of about 2.6 points or about 0.7% compared with its level last week, while it decreased by 2.9 points or about 0.8% compared with the end of 2015.

Company Name	THU	THU	DIFF %	CLOSE 2015	DIFF %
	29/12/2016	22/12/2016			
1 The National Bank Of Kuwait	362.9	357.0	1.7	401.1	(9.5)
2 The Gulf Bank	195.0	196.7	(0.9)	211.3	(7.7)
3 Commercial Bank Of Kuwait	349.7	354.0	(1.2)	402.3	(13.1)
4 Al-Ahli Bank Of Kuwait	196.4	196.4	0.0	245.5	(20.0)
5 Kuwait International Bank	214.7	218.8	(1.9)	235.5	(8.8)
6 Ahli United Bank	361.0	347.8	3.8	424.2	(14.9)
7 Burgan Bank	283.4	288.1	(1.6)	359.6	(21.2)
8 Kuwait Finance House	1172.1	1147.6	2.1	1052.0	11.4
<b>Banking Sector</b>	<b>379.3</b>	<b>374.6</b>	<b>1.3</b>	<b>409.7</b>	<b>(7.4)</b>
9 Commercial Facilities Co	112.6	112.6	0.0	125.6	(10.4)
10 International Financial Advisors	251.3	251.3	0.0	235.1	6.9
11 National Investments	119.5	122.1	(2.1)	110.7	7.9
12 Kuwait Investment Projects	1114.2	1136.5	(2.0)	1292.5	(13.8)
13 Coast Investment & Development	52.6	52.6	0.0	43.7	20.4
<b>Investment Sector</b>	<b>311.7</b>	<b>316.5</b>	<b>(1.5)</b>	<b>347.4</b>	<b>(10.3)</b>
14 Kuwait Insurance Company	61.7	56.2	9.8	67.3	(8.3)
15 Gulf Insurance Company	382.1	353.6	8.1	427.7	(10.7)
16 Al-Ahleia Insurance Company	170.9	161.5	5.8	199.0	(14.1)
17 Warba Insurance Company	83.6	83.6	0.0	88.5	(5.5)
<b>Insurance Sector</b>	<b>145.0</b>	<b>135.0</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>162.9</b>	<b>(11.0)</b>
18 Kuwait Real Estate Company	100.1	101.8	(1.7)	88.6	13.0
19 United Realty Company	191.7	191.7	0.0	193.7	(1.0)
20 National Real Estate Company	238.5	233.9	2.0	187.8	27.0
21 Salhiyah Real Estate Company	1433.4	1473.8	(2.7)	1494.0	(4.1)
<b>Real Estate Sector</b>	<b>195.8</b>	<b>197.2</b>	<b>(0.7)</b>	<b>184.3</b>	<b>6.2</b>

the return of almost the same core Government dissipated a lot of hope for reform.

### 2. Oil and Public Finance - December 2016

By the end of December 2016, the 9th month of the current fiscal year 2016/2017 ended and by the end of last summer and the talk about an agreement on the oil market prices began to rise. The Kuwaiti oil price during October scored US\$ 46.5 per barrel, and achieved the highest price during the year at US\$ 51.91 per barrel on December 12, 2016. The lowest price during the month was at US\$ 47.68 per barrel on December 1, 2016.

The average Kuwaiti oil price for most of December scored US\$ 50 per barrel rising by US\$ 8.5 per barrel, or 20.6% above November average which scored US\$ 41.5 per barrel. It is also higher by US\$ 15 per barrel, 43%, than the hypothetical budget price at US\$ 35 per barrel and is higher by US\$ 5 than the hypothetical budget price for last fiscal year at US\$ 45 per barrel. December 2015 price scored US\$ 31.1 per barrel and the past fiscal year 2015/2016 which ended by the end of March 2016 achieved average price for the Kuwaiti barrel of oil at US\$ 42.7. This means that the average price for December 2016 rose by 17.1% above last fiscal year and rose by 60.9% above December 2015 average.

The State's Financial Administration did not issue any monthly follow up report since December 2015. As estimate, Kuwait is supposed to have achieved actual net oil revenues in December in the amount of KD 1.1 billion. Therefore, Kuwait would have achieved about KD 9.3 billion in oil revenues until the end of last

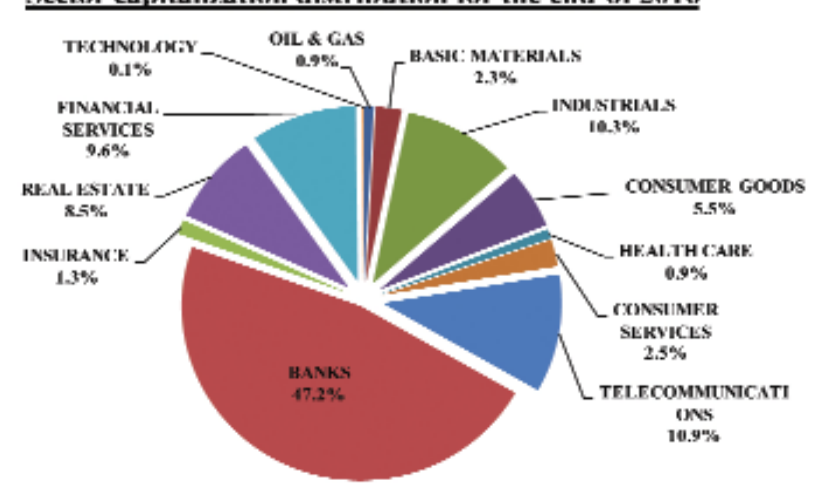
million, while their market value equaled 2.2% only of total value of Boursa companies compared with 12 speculation companies in 2015, which captured 1.9% of total market trading value and 17.7% of market liquidity.

The average turnover of the share may provide us with a different perspective to look at that speculation sharpness. The index measures the percentage of the company trading value divided by its market value. While the turnover average of shares for all market companies continued weak for all market companies at about 10.9%, and the Boursa needs twice this number at least to be liquid, and weak within the 30 top liquidity companies with the highest liquidity at about 11.9%, it scored about 79% for the 13 companies. The highest company scored 833.1%, 567.4% for the second highest company, and 289.4% for the third highest. Despite their high rise they remain less than the turnover average of this sample (30 company) of the companies in 2015 which scored 16.2%.

### 4. Performance of Boursa Kuwait 2016

Boursa performance was affected by a number of changes during 2016, some positive variables, though its impact does not appear yet and most of it negative variables that left its impact during the year. As for the positive side, the Boursa turned into a private company in the spring of the year, though it did not finalize its measures and its performance supposed to improve by time. By the end of the year, conditions of the oil market improved and in the last two months in the year, the Boursa witnessed increase in its liquidity and decrease in the losses

Sector capitalization distribution for the end of 2016



# ENTERTAINMENT STOCKS HAD WILD RIDE IN 2016

**LOS ANGELES:** Merger and re-merger mania, worries about cord-cutting, concerns about the strong dollar overseas and fretting about the erosion of TV's traditional advertising market all contributed to an eventful year for media and entertainment stocks. Most of showbiz's core conglomerates finished out the year on an up note with Viacom, Lionsgate and AMC Networks being notable exceptions. The Dow index was up 13.4% for the year, thanks in part to a strong run that began in early November. The Nasdaq gained 7.5% for the year while the S&P 500 spiked 9.5%.

Time Warner was the big winner for the year with a 49% boost coming as AT&T surprised the biz with its aggressive and whirlwind courtship that ended with the \$85.4 billion merger announcement on Oct. 22. But Time Warner shares were buoyant for most of the year before

AT&T came into the picture.

CBS also benefitted from the market speculation about deals afoot, coupled with strong earnings and momentum demonstrated for its CBS All Access streaming service. The drama surrounding the fate of CBS controlling shareholder Sumner Redstone's empire took a toll on the stock in early February but it began to recover the following month.

CBS shares never sagged again despite the potential for the re-merger with its ailing corporate sibling Viacom—a flirtation that was called off by the Redstone clan earlier this month. Like other media conglomerates, CBS began a steady climb in early November that padded its double-digit year-to-date gain.

Viacom, on the other hand, felt the pinch of all the turmoil surrounding the management of the

company. Shares were down more than 20% in early February as the Redstone-related pressure began to heat up. The stock felt the seesaw effect through the summer and fall but it has held mostly steady since late September.

### Disney's bumpy year

Disney had a bumpy year after a big "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" run-up in the second half of 2015. Concerns about subscriber losses and mounting costs at ESPN dogged the stock for most of the summer and fall, but Disney managed to stay essentially flat for the year after a jump in early December as the release of "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" approached.

Comcast, on the other hand, rode positive news for its cable unit, growth at NBCUniversal and the acquisition of DreamWorks Animation to

a steady upward march for most of the year, with the exception of a brief dip just after the Time Warner-AT&T union was unveiled.

Lionsgate's ho-hum year at the box office took a toll on the stock but the closing of its acquisition of Starz gave it a late-year bounce to cut its year-to-date loss down from 19% in early December to about 14% as of Dec. 30.

AMC Networks was stalked throughout the year by concerns about its dependence on "The Walking Dead" franchise as an earnings driver. Although the AMC drama remains TV's highest-rated scripted series in the adults 18-49 demo, viewership declines after several seasons of explosive growth raised red flags for Wall Street. The sharply lower ratings for season two of the spinoff series "Fear the Walking Dead" also were a bad omen for AMC. — Reuters



**NEW JERSEY:** In this Wednesday, Oct 26, 2016, file photo, an attendant at a Shell gas station pumps gas for a motorist in Hasbrouck Height. — AP

# ENERGY COMPANIES AND BANKS LED RALLY ON S&P 500 IN 2016

## HOW THE 11 INDUSTRY SECTORS IN THE S&P 500

**NEW YORK:** In 2016, the Standard & Poor's 500 index jumped 9.5 percent and bounced back from a flat result the year before, and energy companies and banks made some of the largest gains as investors bet on a stronger economy that will lead to more lending and spending. Health care companies slumped as drug prices came under intense scrutiny. Here's a look at how the 11 industry sectors in the S&P 500 fared for the year:

### ENERGY: Up 23.7 percent

At the beginning of the year it looked like 2016 would be another painful one for energy companies. In February oil traded at \$26 a barrel, down from more than \$100 in mid-2014. But over the next few months oil prices rose gradually above \$50, which reduced the scope of their losses. Late in the year, OPEC and other oil producers agreed to cut their production in 2017. The price of US crude finished the year up 45 percent. Oil and gas company Oneok more than doubled in value for the year while Chevron had its best year since 1989.

### FINANCIALS: Up 20.1 percent

Banks and other financial companies sank early in 2016 as investors worried about slowing global economic growth. After that they struggled as the Federal Reserve continually held off on raising interest rates. But the sector caught fire leading up to the election and afterward, as investors felt banks will be major beneficiaries of a Donald Trump administration. Banks stand to benefit from increased government spending and borrowing connected to greater spending on infrastructure, as well as faster economic growth, looser regulations and rising interest rates. Huge gains in the weeks after the election took bank stocks to their highest levels since 2008.

### INDUSTRIALS: Up 17.8 percent

Companies that make construction equipment, engines and aircraft also made large gains as the U.S. economy picked up steam. Investors bet that the election of Trump, and a Republican Congress that could approve his spending proposals, will lead to more spending on construction, manufacturing, and transportation. The sector, which includes companies like Boeing and General Electric, reached all-time highs at the end of the year. Caterpillar was the best-performing Dow Jones industrial average component in 2016 while farm equipment maker Deere rose to an all-time high.

### TELECOMMUNICATIONS: Up 16.1 percent

Phone company stocks surged early in 2016 as the market got off to a historically bad start. Investors bought those stocks, which are often compared to bonds because of their large dividend yields and relative stability. Low bond yields have helped make the small sector attractive as well, drawing in investors who sought income. Later the stocks gradually lost steam as investors saw signs the economy was picking up and hoped for faster growth. Thanks to AT&T's biggest gain since 2006, the stocks ultimately bounced back from two years of declines.

### MATERIALS: Up 14.1 percent

Companies that make materials like packag-

ing, specialty chemicals and mine for metals also rebounded, partly because precious metals prices bounced back in 2016 after several years of losses. Copper, which is linked to expectations for economic growth because of its uses in construction, climbed 17 percent. Higher metals prices led to big gains for gold and copper producer Freeport-McMoran, gold miner Newmont Mining and steel maker Nucor. Building materials companies like Martin Marietta also climbed.

### UTILITIES: Up 12.2 percent

With government bond yields at their lowest levels in many years and investors nervous about the state of the economy, utility companies were in the unusual position of leading the market in early 2016. Electric and gas utilities were a safe harbor for worried investors. But as confidence in the economy picked up, they lost that leadership position. Overall they recovered the previous year's losses and rose a bit more than the S&P 500.

### TECHNOLOGY: Up 12 percent

Technology companies rose for the eighth year in a row. The stocks surged this summer as the U.S. economy appeared to gain strength, while critical overseas markets also looked healthier. The technology sector didn't do as well following the election, however, as investors wondered if Trump's trade and immigration policies and his inflammatory rhetoric would hurt their sales overseas. Graphics processor company Nvidia more than tripled in value and performed better than any other S&P 500 stock, while Hewlett-Packard's breakup left two stocks that both did well.

### CONSUMER DISCRETIONARY: Up 4.3 percent

Consumer discretionary stocks, including retailers, media companies and other companies that rely on consumer spending, rose for the eighth year in a row as shoppers remained a critical part of the still-growing US economy. But

the gains were smaller than last year. Athletic apparel makers Nike and Under Armour both slumped as their competition appeared to grow more costly, while fallout from food safety scares continued to hurt Chipotle Mexican Grill.

### CONSUMER STAPLES: Up 2.6 percent

Companies that make and sell common household goods are generally considered a safe investment. But in 2016, investors preferred stocks that will benefit more from faster economic growth. The stocks did rise for the eighth consecutive year, however. Food distributor Sysco climbed 35 percent after it acquired European competitor Brakes, and Wal-Mart made a partial recovery after a 27-percent drop last year.

### REAL ESTATE: Up less than 0.1 percent

Real estate has been one of the strongest-performing asset classes in recent years. That's been good news for real estate investment trusts, which were split off as a separate sector this year. Investors poured money into REITs starting in February, when the market reached its recent lows. But starting in the summer, faster growth in the U.S. economy made other types of investments more appealing.

### HEALTH CARE: Down 4.4 percent

Drug makers were pummeled in 2016 as their pricing strategies came under repeated criticism and Congressional scrutiny. Investors wondered if the government will intervene to reduce those hikes. Biotechnology companies like Vertex and Alexion were hit especially hard. Endo slumped thanks to legal costs and weak earnings and Mylan fell during a controversy over the rising price of its EpiPen allergy shot. Some insurance companies, including UnitedHealth and Aetna, traded higher. One reason is that Wall Street thinks the possible repeal of the Affordable Care Act will strengthen their profits. Overall, health care stocks fell for the first time since 2008. — AP

# OIL DOWN, ENDS YEAR WITH BIGGEST GAIN SINCE 2009

**NEW YORK:** Oil prices settled slightly lower on Friday, the year's last trading day, but attained their biggest annual gain since 2009, after OPEC and partners agreed to cut output to reduce a supply overhang that has depressed prices for two years. A two-rig rise in the oil rig count in the United States, the ninth weekly increase in a row, as reported by oilfield services provider Baker Hughes Inc, added to bearish sentiments. But the total count of 525 for the week, the last for the year, was still below last year's level by 11 rigs.

US benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were down 5 cents, or 0.1 percent, at \$53.72 a barrel, while Brent fell 3 cents, or 0.1 percent, to \$56.82. "Some profit-taking ... very light trading - a lot of people have already done what they needed to do for the year," said Elaine Levin, president of

Powerhouse, an energy-specialized commodities broker in Washington. Brent rose 52 percent this year and WTI climbed around 45 percent, the largest annual gains since 2009, when the benchmarks rose 78 percent and 71 percent respectively.

Oil prices have slumped since the summer of 2014 from above \$100 a barrel. The price rout, due to an oversupply thanks in part to the US shale oil revolution, was accentuated later that year when Saudi Arabia rejected any deal by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to cut output and instead fought for market share. But a historic OPEC agreement struck over three months from September that will reduce production from Jan 1, marked a return to the 13-country group's old objective of defending prices. — Reuters

# BRAVE INVESTORS RAKE IN BIG RETURNS ON BRAZIL STOCKS

**SAO PAULO:** It was a surprisingly great year for investors brave enough to put money in Brazilian stocks, even though the country spent 2016 floundering through its worst recession in a century and rocked by political instability. Paradoxically, this year of economic crisis, presidential impeachment and unending corruption scandals in Latin America's largest economy was also a boom year for the Sao Paulo stock exchange.

The Ibovespa index gained 38.9 percent on the year, its first year in the black since 2012. That happened despite the political turbulence caused by the impeachment of president Dilma Rousseff, a massive corruption scandal at state oil giant Petrobras, and the economy shrinking an estimated 3.49 percent-its second year of deep recession.

The market may have gotten a confidence boost from the resolution of the drawn-out impeachment drama, which ended with the installation of center-right President Michel Temer in August. But more importantly, analysts say, signs of a rebound for Brazil's key commodity exports gave companies like Petrobras and mining giant Vale a major shot in the arm. Petrobras shares gained 121.9 percent on the year. Shares in Vale, the world's largest iron ore producer, rose 129 percent. And shares in steel producer Gerdau soared 189.2 percent.

"The stock market and the Brazilian real took off in 2016 compared to other world markets. I don't think that has to do with domestic matters like the political crisis or impeachment. That played a part, but it's really about commodity prices, especially oil," said Andre Perfeito, chief economist at consulting firm Gradual Investimentos.

"The Brazilian market is very sensitive to external variations because it's very large. The Brent crude price rose by 50 percent in 2016. If you compare its progress with the Sao Paulo stock market's gains in dollars, you'll see the two graphs are very similar."

### Uncertain 2017

Brazil's currency also registered big gains. After hitting a record low on January 21 — 4.166 to the dollar-it finished trading Thursday at 3.252, up more than 20 percent on the year. That made it the best-performing currency against the dollar in a worldwide basket followed by Gradual Investimentos. But the firm warned the trend could be reversed in 2017.

"The average projection for end-2017 is 3.5 reals to the dollar in the (Brazilian central bank's) Focus report. And the consensus among international analysts is that the arrival of (US President-elect Donald) Trump should translate into a stronger dollar because of the US Federal Reserve's reaction to his fiscal ambitions," said the consulting firm.

Looking inward, Brazil is facing a tricky year, too. Markets may have breathed a sigh of relief when Temer took over from Rousseff, ending months of instability. Temer quickly launched austerity reforms meant to get the troubled economy back on track. But his own government was soon caught up in the Petrobras scandal, which has felled several ministers accused of playing a part in the multibillion-dollar fleecing of the state oil company.

The ongoing investigation appears to pose a growing threat to Temer. "There's a certain optimism with the new government. But the reforms are still at a very early stage, and the political question is still very delicate because of Operation Carwash," the Petrobras investigation, said Perfeito. Brazil looks poised to finally exit recession in 2017. But it is still a long way from the emerging markets boom of the 2000s, when it was an investor darling thanks to a "commodity super-cycle" that fueled breakeven growth. The government is forecasting the economy will grow 0.8 percent next year. Economists are predicting just 0.5 percent, according to the latest survey by the central bank. — AFP



**HONULULU:** In this June 18, 2015 file photo, an ahi tuna sits packed in ice waiting to be auctioned at the United Fishing Agency. — AP

# US ISSUING NEW RULES TO CURB ILLEGAL FISHING, SEAFOOD FRAUD

**PORTLAND:** The Obama administration is issuing new rules it says will crack down on illegal fishing and seafood fraud by preventing unverifiable fish products from entering the US market. The new protections are called the Seafood Import Monitoring Program, and they are designed to stop illegally fished and intentionally misidentified seafood from getting into stores and restaurants by way of imported fish.

The rules will require seafood importers to report information and maintain records about the harvest and chain of custody of fish, officials with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said. The program will start by focusing on "priority species" that are especially vulnerable to illegal fishing, such as popular food fish like tuna, swordfish, Atlantic cod and grouper. The government hopes eventually to broaden the program out to include all fish species, NOAA officials said.

"It sends an important message to the international seafood community that if you are open and transparent about the seafood you catch and sell across the supply chain, then the US markets are open for your business," said Catherine Novelli, a State Department undersecretary. Estimates of the economic damage of illegal fishing vary, but conservation group Oceana reported in a 2013 study that ille-

gal fishing causes more than \$10 billion in global losses every year. Some other estimates are higher.

The rules will help make sure that importers are able to supply "the who, what, why, when, how of fishing," said Beth Lowell, a senior campaign director with Oceana. "For the first time ever, some imported species will be held to the same standard that domestic wild caught species are," Lowell said. The new rules are an outgrowth of a presidential task force established in June 2014 to crack down on illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and seafood fraud. NOAA officials said the new requirements will allow regulators to trace seafood from its point of entry into the US to the point when it was harvested from the sea.

The information submitted by importers to comply with the rules will be kept confidential, and there is not a consumer labeling component. The National Marine Fisheries Service, an arm of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, will administer the program, NOAA officials said. The rules go on the books Jan. 9 and compliance from importers is expected by Jan 1, 2018. Shrimp and abalone are included in the plan, but implementation for those species will come later because of gaps in availability of information, NOAA officials said. — AP



## FIGHTING CHOLERA OUTBREAK IN HAITI REQUIRES MORE FUNDS

**PORT-AU-PRINCE:** The cholera outbreak that hit Haiti after Hurricane Matthew slammed the island has been contained but persists due to lack of funding, according to the United Nations. An epidemic of the waterborne disease—which spread after a massive earthquake shook the nation in 2010 — saw a resurgence after Matthew devastated the country in early October. The number of recorded cholera cases more than doubled in Haiti between September and October. Almost half of the patients were in the two southern departments hardest hit

by the hurricane-areas that until now were not major focal points of the fight against cholera. Suspected cases of the disease fell 25 percent from 2,400 to 1,800 — between October to November, according to the latest report from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Haiti. The UN says the situation has improved thanks to a three-fold increase in the deployment of emergency teams, the delivery of drinking water aid and a vaccination campaign. But funding is critical to support the humanitarian needs

of the poorest country in the Americas, said Mourad Wahba, the deputy special representative for the UN's stabilization mission in Haiti. No funds have been set aside yet beyond the first quarter of 2017, which OCHA said could lead to a heightened risk of hospital mortality if none are ultimately allocated. "The rainy season will return and inevitably there will be an increase in the number of cholera cases," said Wahba. "I'm optimistic, but it all depends on the funding." Cholera struck nearly 40,000 patients between January and November, killing 420 of

them. On a global scale, Haiti's cholera epidemic is the most vicious in recent history. The disease causes acute diarrhea and is transmitted through contaminated drinking water—a major challenge in a country with poor sanitary conditions. According to numerous independent experts, cholera was introduced to Haiti by infected Nepalese UN peacekeepers sent to the Caribbean country following the earthquake. Since October 2010, the epidemic has killed more than 9,400 Haitians and infected more than 800,000 people. —AFP

## CHINA TO CUT COAL CAPACITY BY 800 MILLION TONS BY 2020

**BEIJING:** China has set a target of reducing its annual coal capacity by 800 million tons, according to a government plan reported yesterday by state media. Despite the target, Beijing expects total coal output to rise to around 3.9 billion tons by 2020, compared to 3.75 billion tons in 2015, the official Xinhua news agency said, citing a document issued by the country's top economic planning body. The plan aims to "improve coal production safety and efficiency, as well as reducing impact on the environment", Xinhua said, suggesting that low-capacity mines were likely to be the target of closures. The reduction in outdated capacity reflects the slowdown in demand in China.

By 2020, the world's second largest economy will burn around 4.1 billion tons compared to 3.96 billion tons last year—a very moderate growth rate. Overall, China's energy consumption is now growing at only 3 percent per year, compared to 10 percent a few years ago, after a sharp slowdown in economic growth. Coal, of which

China is the world's largest consumer, remains an indispensable part of its economy, supplying 60 percent of its electricity. However, Beijing must also consider the environmental impact of the fossil fuel, in a country where cities are regularly shrouded in a polluted haze that has sparked anger among the population.

The government had already promised to reduce its coal production capacity by an estimated 250 million tons this year and to reduce the share of coal in its energy mix to 62.6 percent by 2016. The country also intends to modernize its coal-fired power plants by 2020 to reduce emissions of "major pollutants" by 60 percent and is committed to stabilizing its CO2 emissions "around 2030." Environmental NGOs are nonetheless cautious, worried in particular about the unbridled construction of new coal-fired power plants in China, at the rate of almost two new projects per week in 2015 alone—even though there may ultimately be little need for the extra capacity. —AFP



**HONGKONG:** This file photo shows seized ivory cut in pieces for incineration being displayed in Hong Kong. — AFP Photos

## CHINA TO BAN IVORY TRADE BY END OF 2017

'THIS IS A GAME CHANGER FOR AFRICA'S ELEPHANTS'

**BEIJING:** China will ban all ivory trade and processing by the end of 2017, the government said, in a move hailed by conservationists as a "game changer" for African elephants. African ivory is highly sought after in China, where it is seen as a status symbol, with prices for a kilo (2.2 pounds) reaching as high as \$1,100. "To better protect elephants and better tackle the illegal trade, China will gradually stop the processing and sale of ivory for commercial purposes" by the end of 2017, the State Council, China's cabinet, said in a statement late Friday. "Before then, law enforcement agencies will continue to clamp down on illegality associated with elephant tusks," the official Xinhua news agency said, quoting a government official as saying.

A first batch of workshops and retailers would be forced to close by the end of March. The move comes after Beijing said in March it would widen a ban on imports of all ivory and ivory products acquired before 1975, after pressure to restrict a trade that sees thousands of elephants slaughtered every year. Xinhua said the complete ban would affect "34 processing enterprises and 143 designated trading venues, with dozens to be closed by the end of March 2017." "This is great news that will shut down the world's largest market for elephant ivory," Aili Kang, executive director of the Wildlife Conservation Society in Asia, said in a statement. "I am very proud of my country for showing this leadership that will help ensure that elephants have a fighting chance to beat extinction. This is a game changer for Africa's elephants."

### 20,000 elephants killed

Conservationists estimate that more than 20,000 elephants were killed for their ivory last year, with similar tolls in previous years. The WWF campaign group says 415,000 of the animals remain. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which took effect in 1975, banned the ivory trade in 1989. China permits the resale of ivory bought before the 1989 ban and also has a stockpile purchased with CITES approval in 2008, which it releases for sale with certification. Beijing would continue to allow auctions of ivory

antiques deemed to have come from legitimate sources, under strict supervision, the government added. WWF also praised China's move to a complete ban but called on the Chinese territory of Hong Kong to bring forward a plan to end its ivory trade by 2021. WWF said legal research published by the conservation group shows an ivory ban could be imposed "much sooner under current Hong Kong law". "With China's market closed, Hong Kong can become a preferred market for traffickers to launder illegal ivory under cover of the legal ivory trade," said Cheryl Lo, senior wildlife crime officer at WWF. —AFP



**BEIJING:** This file photo shows carved ivory being shown to the media before being destroyed in Beijing.



**HONG KONG:** A shop owner shows a customer a live chicken for sale in the Wanchai markets of Hong Kong. —AFP

## SECOND HUMAN CASE OF BIRD FLU IN HONG KONG

**HONG KONG:** Hong Kong on Friday confirmed its second human case of bird flu this season, days after an elderly man died of the virus. A 70-year-old man, who had travelled to the Chinese cities of Shenzhen and Zhongshan earlier in December, tested positive for the H7N9 strain of the virus, the government said in a statement. He said he had come across mobile stalls selling live poultry in Zhongshan, but authorities said they were still investigating the source of the infection.

The patient has been hospitalized in stable condition. Those who have been in close contact with him have been put under medical surveillance although none have yet reported any symptoms. Cases of

bird flu were "expected to increase in winter based on its seasonal pattern," the government statement added. Another elderly man, who had bought a chicken from a market in Guangdong province, died on Sunday, less than a week after testing positive for H7N9.

Hong Kong is particularly alert to the spread of viruses. Bird flu was first reported in humans in Hong Kong in 1997, when six people died, and subsequent outbreaks have killed hundreds more worldwide. An outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) swept through the city in 2003, killing 299 people. Bird flu scares in the past two years have seen mass culls of up to 20,000 birds in the city. —AFP

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GOSSIP



## Zsa Zsa Gabor was laid to rest at an intimate ceremony

The 'Moulin Rouge' star - who passed away on Sunday after suffering a heart attack - had her funeral broadcasted live to the world as her close family and friends paid their last respects to the actress. Gathering at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Beverly Hills, the congregation took part in the Catholic service, which was led by a priest. Gabor's husband Frederick Prinz von Anhalt - who she tied the knot within 1986 - spoke about how he and his wife first met when he paid \$5,000 to take a picture with a celebrity. He recalled how they saw each other for four or so years on and off before they decided to get mar-

ried and were up the aisle no less than three days later. The late star's ashes were deposited in a gold box, which was placed next to a beautiful vase of pink roses. A photo of Gabor was also displayed with the words 'Farewell My Love' written on a sign next to it. It is thought her ashes will be placed at the Westwood Village Memorial Park in Los Angeles, which is where her daughter Francesca - who died in January 2015 - and her younger sister Eva Gabor, who passed away in 1995, were laid to rest.

## Camila Cabello to perform with Fifth Harmony one last time

The 'I Know What You Did Last Summer' hit maker is set to reunite on television with her former band mates - Lauren Jauregui, Ally Brooke, Dinah Jane Hansen and Normani Hamilton - for a one-off performance on Dick Clark's Rockin' Eve With Ryan Seacrest yesterday, which was pre-recorded before Camila left the group earlier this month, E! News reports. Since Camila departed, the two sides have been engaged in a war of words after the remaining members of the band claimed they were only informed of Camila's decision by her representative. A post uploaded on the group account read at the time: "After 4 and a half years of being together, we have been informed via her representatives that Camila has decided to leave Fifth Harmony. We wish her well." But Camila soon fired back with her own statement, saying: "I was shocked to read the statement the Fifth Harmony account posted without my knowing. The girls were aware of my feelings through the long, much needed conversations about the future that we had during tour. "Saying that they were just informed through my representatives that I was 'leaving the group' is simply not true. Just like the other girls said in their statement about their plans, I had also planned to continue with my own solo endeavors in the New Year, but I did not intend to end things with Fifth Harmony this way."

## Dwayne Johnson bought his father a car for Christmas

The 'Baywatch' star took to Instagram to reveal the gift he bought for his dad Rocky as a thank you for all his love and support. Captioning a picture of the pair of them standing by the luxury vehicle, he wrote: "Bought my dad a Christmas gift and surprised him. He's had a hard life. This one felt good. My dad, Rocky Johnson is a minimalist. "Always has been. Never asks me for much and over the years his needs are always the barest ... Just

a small way of saying thank you dad and Merry Christmas! #DwantaClaus (sic)" The 44-year-old actor and former wrestler - who has Simone, 15, with his ex-wife Dany Garcia and Jasmine, 12 months, with his partner Lauren Hashian - also shared a story from his father's childhood. He added: "Crazy story, my dad's dad died when he was 13yrs old. That Christmas, my dad's mom had her new boyfriend over for Christmas dinner. Her boyfriend got drunk on the turkey. My dad went outside, got a shovel, drew a line in the snow and said if you cross that line I'll kill you. The drunk crossed it and my dad laid him out cold as a block of ice. Cops were called. They told my dad's mom that when her boyfriend regains consciousness, he's going to kill your son so one of them has got to go. "In front of the entire family, my dad's mom looked at him and said get out. He was 13yrs old and now homeless. That true story happened in Amherst, Nova Scotia, Canada in 1954. He needed the bare minimum then, just like does now. Over the years, I've moved him into a big home, got him trucks to drive - which he'll literally drive into the ground until I get him something else. Hell, I'll get him anything he wants, but the SOB just won't ask!)"



## JENNIFER LOPEZ COULD STILL RECONCILE WITH CASPER SMART

The 47-year-old singer has reportedly struck up a romance with the rapper, 30, and sources now say that whilst she is enjoying her time with her new beau, she hasn't ruled out the idea of rekindling her romance with the actor. A source told E! News: "She's having fun. "I think she and Casper will get back together. He's a great guy and she's knows it. They just need a break right now." And the news of the 'Shades of Blue' actress' approach to her time with the 'One Dance' rapper comes after they were recently spotted kissing at a prom party in Las Vegas on Thursday night. The pair - who have yet to publicly confirm they are dating - didn't hide their love as they enjoyed each other's company at Winter Wonderland Prom in Las Vegas, United States. In a series of short video clips uploaded to social media, Jennifer

was seen dancing intimately with Drake whilst another video shows them locking lips. Later in the evening, the couple were also named Prom King and Queen. Meanwhile, sources previously claimed that Jennifer was very smitten with the 'Hotline Bling' musician. They shared: "Jen is looking forward with excitement to the new year. She keeps hanging out with Drake, and he has visited her house. She has nothing but nice things to say about Drake. "They do work on music together [but are] clearly enjoying each other on another level too. Jen loves the attention and she seems very happy to be spending time with him. Drake is very charming. He treats Jen with lots of respect. She seems very smitten."



## Khloe Kardashian feels like she's grown so much this year

The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star reflected on the past 12 months, which has seen her finalize her divorce from Lamar Odom after she initially called it off to support him in his recovery after a drink and drug binge. Writing on her app, she shared: "I like to make goals in life, but I make sure that the goals aren't too crazy because if you ever fall off the horse, you will beat yourself up. It's good to set small goals, and I never set a crazy time limit for myself. The new year is a good time to reflect on the baby steps I've taken, and how I've evolved. "Not everything is a race - it's the marathon of life! I think it's so important to acknowledge the evolution. It took me a long time to get here. I feel like I've grown so much this year, with what I can handle and how I react to situations." Meanwhile, the 32-year-old television personality - who is dating Tristan Thompson - previously revealed how she is "honest to a fault" when it comes to relationships. She shared: "I'm honest to a fault, and if something isn't working, I will straight-up tell the person I'm seeing. Instead of ghosting, be real about what you want - or what you don't want. It might be awkward, but disconnecting from someone you've been seeing without giving a reason is just rude. It messes with their spirit and doesn't let them get closure. "The only time that I think this could be OK is if you've said, 'This isn't working for me' and they still aren't getting the point. If they're still bothering you, just cut it off. That's the only time when being unresponsive is OK! Otherwise, just suck it up and tell the truth."



## ZENDAYA IS PLANNING A MOBILE PHONE DETOX

The 'Spider-Man: Homecoming' star shared her new year's resolutions that she hopes to stick to for the next 12 months and is hoping to stop herself from using her phone so much. Taking to her official website, she wrote: "I'm definitely not the worst when it comes to looking at my phone. Like, if I'm chilling with somebody, I won't be staring at my screen the whole time. "But my mom recently took a picture of me looking down at my phone when were out to dinner. She captioned it, "dinner with @zendaya and her phone." Sorry, mom! I just start scrolling and tune everybody out. Seriously, I've got to do a detox. (sic)" However, it might prove a little tricky as another one of her new year's resolutions is to stop ignoring calls. She shared: "It's a bad habit, I know. But I get so many dang phone calls. I'll see I have a missed call and straight up won't respond for days. "I just don't feel like talking sometimes. My manager will literally call me five times in a row and I will decline every time. But, I don't like to leave people hanging, so I'm going to work on it! (sic)" Elsewhere on the list was to stop eating ice cream for breakfast, to do her chores and to tidy up any mess she makes around the house. She added: "Don't eat Haagen Dazs for breakfast! I do this on the regular and most of the time I'll eat my ice cream with a fork. "My assistant Darnell will have a full on breakfast sandwich there for me and I'll go straight for the ice cream. It might be time to start eating real breakfast. Probably something that doesn't come in a pint."

## John Legend says the world needs Kanye West

The 'All of Me' hit maker hopes his pal - who was hospitalized earlier this year with exhaustion and sleep deprivation - is on the mend. He said: "This is a very difficult life and a difficult business. I don't want to try to play pop psychologist, so I'm not going to try to analyze what's happening with him. "I just want him to do whatever he needs to do to feel better and to feel like he's ready to go again, because music needs him. The world needs him. I think he's such an important talent." And the 38-year-old singer - who has eight-month-old Luna with his wife Chrissy Teigen - admitted it can be tough balancing a career and family life. He added to Rolling Stone magazine: "We need him at full strength. How do you balance everything you do - acting, producing, music, fatherhood? You start with knowing what's most important to you. My family is most important and then second is music. "My music career is the reason I have the power to do everything else. There's a lot of power in celebrity. I obviously use it to sell my own projects and produce TV, and, you know, I use it to get reservations at restaurants too. But you try to use it for something that'll benefit the world too." His comments come after John admitted he is "disappointed" with Kanye for meeting with US President elect Donald Trump. He shared: "I don't think it's impossible to talk to [Donald Trump] about issues, but I won't be used as a publicity stunt. I think Kanye was a publicity stunt. "I think Trump has been corrosive, his message has been corrosive to the country. I think the things he's promised to do have been very concerning for a lot of people, and for Kanye to support that message is very disappointing. Whatever's in his mind, I disagree with him."



## FEATURE



A fragment of an Assyrian-era relief shows the image of a genie holding a pine cone at the ancient site of Nimrud that was destroyed by Islamic State group militants near Mosul, Iraq.



A stone tablet with cuneiform writing is seen in the foreground as UNESCO's Iraq representative Louise Haxthausen documents the damage wreaked by the Islamic State group at the ancient site of Nimrud, Iraq.

# 3,000 years ago, it ruled the Mideast, now blown to pieces

The chilly December wind whipped rain across the strewn wreckage of a city that, nearly 3,000 years ago, ruled almost the entire Middle East. Rivulets of water ran through the dirt, washing away chunks of ancient stone. The city of Nimrud in northern Iraq is in pieces, victim of the Islamic State group's fervor to erase history. The remains of its palaces and temples, once lived in brilliant reliefs of gods and kings, have been blown up. The statues of winged bulls that once guarded the site are hacked to bits. Its towering ziggurat, or step pyramid, has been bulldozed.

The militants' fanaticism devastated one of the Middle East's most important archaeological sites. But more than a month after the militants were driven out, Nimrud is still being ravaged, its treasures disappearing, imperiling any chance of eventually rebuilding it, an Associated Press team found after multiple visits in the past month. With the government and military still absorbed in fighting the war against the Islamic State group in nearby Mosul, the wreckage of the Assyrian Empire's ancient capital lies unprotected and vulnerable to looters.

"When I heard about Nimrud, my heart wept before my eyes did," said Hiba Hazim Hamad, an archaeology professor in Mosul who often took her students there. In three of the AP's four visits, its team wandered the ruins alone freely for up to an hour before anyone arrived. No one is assigned to guard the site, much less catalog the fragments. Toppled stone slabs bearing a relief that the AP saw on one visit were gone when it returned. Perhaps the only vigilant guardian left is an Iraqi archaeologist, Layla Salih. She has visited multiple times, photographing the wreckage to document it and badgering militias to watch over it.

Walking through the ruins on a rainy winter day, she pointed out things that were no longer in place. Still, Salih finds reasons for optimism. "The good thing is the rubble is still in situ," she said. "The site is restorable." To an untrained eye, that's hard to imagine, seeing the destruction caused by the Islamic State group. Salih estimated 60 percent of the site was irrecoverable. The

site's palaces and temples were spread over 360 hectares (900 acres) on a dirt plateau on the edge of the Tigris River valley. A 140-foot-high ziggurat once arrested the gaze of anyone entering Nimrud. Now there is only lumpy earth.

#### Absolutely devastating

Archaeologists had never had a chance to explore the now-bulldozed structure. Past it, in the palace of King Ashurnasirpal II, walls are toppled into giant piles of bricks. The palace's courtyard is a field of cratered earth. Pieces of the two monumental winged bulls are piled nearby - their heads missing, likely taken to be sold. Off to the left are the flattened remains of the temple of Nabu, a god of writing. During a Dec 14 UNESCO assessment tour, a UN demining expert peered at a hole leading to a seemingly intact tomb and warned that it could be rigged to explode.

From 879-709 BC, Nimrud was the capital of the Assyrians, one the ancient world's earliest empires. In modern excavations, the site yielded a wealth of Mesopotamian art. In the tombs of queens were found troves of gold and jewelry. Hundreds of written tablets deepened knowledge about the ancient Mideast. Touring the site, UNESCO's representative to Iraq, Louise Haxthausen, called the destruction "absolutely devastating." "The most important thing right now is to ensure some basic protection," she said. But the government has many priorities. It is still fighting IS in Mosul, and the list of reconstruction needs is long.

Tens of thousands of citizens live in camps. Much of the city of Ramadi is destroyed. More than 70 mass graves have been unearthed in IS territory. Other ancient sites remain under IS control. None of the various armed groups around Nimrud - whether the military or various militias - has been dedicated to guarding it. During the UNESCO tour, Salih noticed that some of the ancient bricks from the rubble had been neatly piled up as if to be hauled away - perhaps, she suspects, to repair homes damaged in fighting. Stone tiles at the palace entrance vanished from where she saw them



last. Two locals were arrested with a marble tablet and stone seal from Nimrud, presumably to sell. The men are in custody.

But it's unclear where the artifacts seized from them are. The police insisted they were at a lab in the northern city of Irbil. The lab said it knew nothing about them. The Antiquities Ministry in Baghdad said they were safe in the Nineveh government offices. An official there said they were with the police awaiting transit to Baghdad. That circle of confusion makes theft

easy. Salih is seeking international funding to pay someone to guard the site. But she recognizes the job will have to go to one of the militia factions, and she has no illusions they will provide full protection. She'll have to cajole them into doing as much as they can. "There isn't another choice, as you see," she said. — AP

This photo shows the statues of the lamassu, the winged, human-headed bulls that stood at the gates of the palace and were believed to ward off evil in the ancient city of Nimrud, near Mosul, Iraq. — AP photos



The remains of a large stone figure of a lamassu, an Assyrian winged bull deity, are piled near the gates of the ancient palace where they once stood at Nimrud, Iraq.



UNESCO's Iraq representative Louise Haxthausen documents the damage wreaked by the Islamic State group at the ancient site of Nimrud, Iraq.



Iraq archaeologist Layla Salih, left, confers with UNESCO's representative in Iraq Louise Haxthausen, right, at the ancient site of Nimrud, Iraq.



Balinese dancers perform during a New Year celebration in Denpasar, on Indonesia's resort island of Bali yesterday. — AFP photos

# 'La Festa del Pi'



Galejadors (flaunters) celebrate after hanging a pine tree from the church's ceiling during 'La Festa del Pi' (The Festival of the Pine Tree) in the village of Centelles near to Barcelona. — AFP photos



Galejadors (flaunters) pull ropes to fell the selected pine tree during 'La Festa del Pi'.



A Galejador (flaunter) chops the selected pine tree down during 'La Festa del Pi'.



Galejadors (flaunters) light bonfires to prepare breakfast in the forest during 'La Festa del Pi'.



In this file photo, a Christmas tree and skyscrapers illuminated for the New Year celebrations are seen in downtown Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, Russia. — AP

## CARNEGIE DELI, A NEW YORK INSTITUTION, CLOSES ITS DOORS

'A well-known name and nostalgic food aren't enough to keep a place going'

For 79 years it reigned as a New York culinary institution: the Carnegie Deli, frequented by locals and visitors for its sandwiches, and immortalized in the Woody Allen movie "Broadway Danny Rose." Now, it's closed, relegated to nostalgic photos and memories—another sign, many say, that America's biggest city is losing its old charms and succumbing to exorbitant property prices and the encroachment of ever more Manhattan hotels. On its last day, Friday, dozens braved the cold to line up at the 7th Avenue eatery across the street from the famed Carnegie Hall, close to Central Park.

They were determined to get one last bite in the most emblematic of New York's Jewish delicatessens, a place whose walls boast hundreds of old photos of theater stars from nearby Broadway. Paul Zatek, a young finance executive, was representative of many now living in what is one of the world's most expensive cities. "I've lived here for 10 years and had never come," he said. But the realization that it was the last chance to taste the

deli's enormous, \$30 pastrami sandwich—called the "Woody Allen," in honor of the director/actor who gave the place much of its cachet—prompted him to drop by and wait for a seat.

### 'Incredibly difficult decision'

"It's just a New York institution—you see from the pictures on the walls how many people have come here," said his fiancée, Jackie Fennessey, looking around at the walls. The owner of the establishment, Marian Harper, said it had been a very difficult decision to close the deli, which she inherited from her father, who had bought it with a partner in 1976. "I'm at that certain age where I want to enjoy my life," Harper told public radio network NPR. "And all good things must come to an end." According to the New York Daily News, Harper rejected an offer from one of her former employees, a dishwasher who now owns a Mexican restaurant, to buy the restaurant for \$10 million.

He had hoped to preserve the address, which he considered as "much a part of New York City as the Statue of Liberty and the Empire State Building." But its business—and management—had gone through some rough patches, including a messy divorce for Harper, a nearly year-long closure because of a reported gas leak, and a court ordering the deli to pay workers \$2.6 million in back wages. Harper said none of those snags factored into her decision to close.

### 'Cities change'

Forbes magazine portrayed the deli's end-of-an-era as part of the greater change of New York's makeup. "A well-known name and nostalgic food aren't enough to keep a place going on forever, even with tourists as a customer base. As cities change, the restaurants that reflect their character have to change, too," it said. For one of the waiters, Ali Tarique, it was sad to see the place he had worked in the past 14 years shut its doors.

"Every day you met new people, sometimes funny people, sometimes celebrities...very nice people," he reminisced as he tended to the final-day rush.

At one table, two young Chinese women, students at the University of California, Santa Barbara, admitted they had never heard of Carnegie Deli until just hours earlier. But now inside, waiting to be served, they marveled that a place so cozy could close down. "The feeling is so good, it feels so warm," said one of them, Ann Zheng. But while the deli no longer exists, aficionados of its pastrami and almost-as-renowned cheesecake need not go hungry. Harper says she intends to keep producing them in her New Jersey factory, supplying Carnegie Deli-branded eateries that are operating in Madison Square Garden, Las Vegas, and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. — AFP



People line up to get into the Carnegie Deli in New York. — AFP photos



New Yorker Paul Zatek (L) waits to take his first bite of a Woody Allen pastrami sandwich at the Carnegie Deli in New York.





### ACK HOSTS INNOVATION SEMINAR

The Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) hosted a seminar featuring guest speaker Fawzi Al Aradi, a Bahraini Enterpriser Strategist. The seminar was entitled: 'Distributive Innovation and Return on Investment'. Fawzi focused on two key aspects which were finding innovative people for our nation and how to provide them with the right tools and environment to make them innovate, while expressing thoughts on the contemporary challenges overcoming the region, the possible causes associated with the chain effect of these key driving forces on a number of key industries within the GCC, including oil, power and building development.

In addition, Aradi presented a Harvard Business Review study, discussing what differentiates innovators from the rest: the ability to engage both left and right sides of their brain gives them leverage in the fine skills needed to innovate: associations, questioning, observing, experimenting and networking. ACK will continue to deliver similar seminars to its staff and students to provide unique and innovative insight direct from such successful entrepreneurs, in turn providing students with the skills and knowledge to further enhance their development and prepare them for their professional careers.



Sheikha Omnia Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah recently visited people with special needs at the Kuwaiti Society for the Disabled, which is an annual habit she started a few years ago in cooperation with the Indian Women Association (IWA).



### AIP HONORS MERITORIOUS STUDENTS

By Sajeev K Peter

Association of Indian Professionals (AIP), Kuwait organized a grand function on Friday at the Indian Community School (Senior), Salmiya to felicitate the meritorious Indian students of class XII. Awardees were selected based on the CBSE examination results declared for the academic year 2015 - 2016, from all Indian schools in Kuwait which are affiliated to the CBSE system of education of India. Gold/silver medals and certificate of merit were presented to the students who scored highest and second highest aggregates in science and commerce streams. Silver medals with certificates were presented to the students who scored 100 percent marks in any subject. Bronze medals and certificates were dispersed to those awardees who scored an aggregate of 90 percent or above. Indian Embassy Second Secretary A K Srivastava was the chief guest while Abhay Chaturvedi on behalf of Kuldeep Singh Lamba (a prominent businessman), Dr V Binumon - Principal of ICSK Senior Branch, Salmiya, Dr CG Suresh- Consultant Cardiologist at Mubarak Hospital, Rajesh Nair-Principal of ICSK Amman Branch, Rajpal Tyagi-Managing Director and Partner of International Interiors, T Premkumar - Principal of Indian Educational School (Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan), Nagraj Avula on behalf of Ajay Goel-COO of City Center were the guests of honor.

Chairman, Umesh Sharma stressed the need of education and motivation of the younger generation for multidimensional development of the society. Sharma highlighted that the sudden /eleventh hour changes in life should be taken as challenges and opportunities. One must continue to move on keeping his / her aim



focused. Srivastava appreciated the efforts of AIP for promoting Indian students through motivation, exposure and career guidance programs. He specifically mentioned that although, meritorious students in Kuwait are usually separately honored at a single occasion. Srivastava congratulated awardees and advised all students to pursue their career of their own choice.

AIP General Secretary Kamlesh Kumari welcomed the guests and audience. She highlighted that the AIP awards have now become a symbol of excellence. Dr Kamlesh extended her appreciation and thanks to all principals of Indian schools in Kuwait who provided official information which facilitated the final selection of meritorious awardees. A colorful souvenir which included awardees' photographs and depicting AIP's vision and mission was released by the chief guest and executive committee of

AIP. Indian Educational School (Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan) was adjudged as the winner of 'AIP Best Academic Performance Award' for class XII of year 2015-16 and Fahaheel Al-Wataniyah Indian Private School-FAIPS (DPS) as the runners up. Best performing schools are selected on the weighted average method. Rolling trophies and mementos were presented to these schools by Srivastava and Sharma.

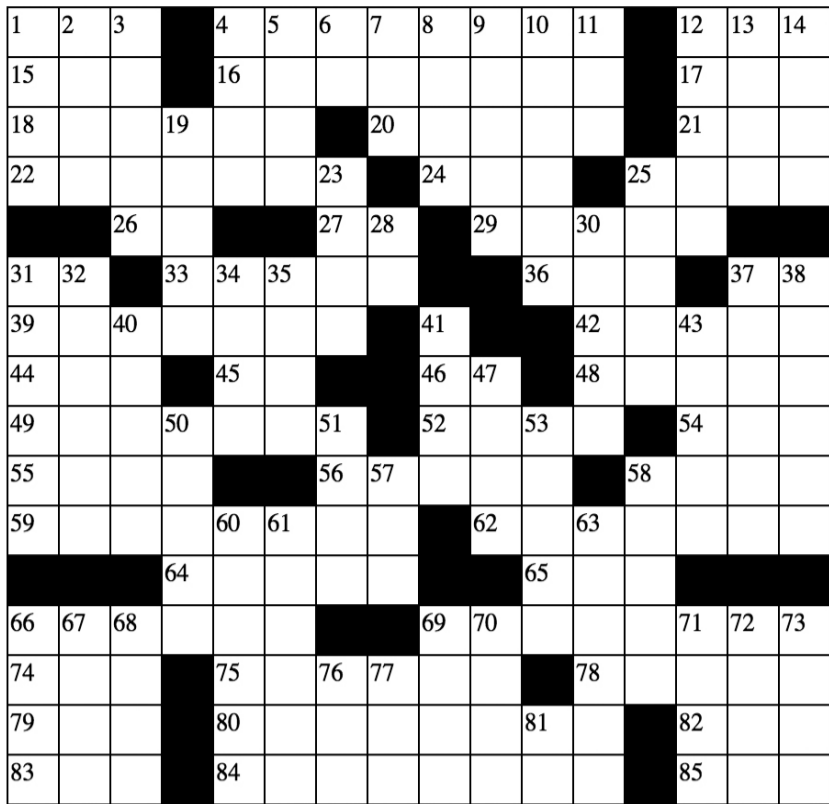
Srivastava, Abhay Chaturvedi, Dr V. Binumon, Dr CG Suresh, Rajesh Nair, Rajpal Tyagi, T Premkumar, Nagraj Avula, Umesh Sharma, Dr Kamlesh Kumari, Umesh Shahani, Sajeev K. Peter, Jagdish Joshi, and AR Subbaraman distributed medals, certificates, rolling trophies and mementos. Vrischika V Nair, Mohammed Mishal, Rachel Edwin, Nevin Mathew, Advika Mittal, Diya Ajay, Sharon Elizabeth, Dhannya Reji, Nitya Kapoor, Gayatri Nair, Aakash Vaithyanathan, Adithaya Rajesh, Kalyani Rajesh and Abel Chris compered the awards distribution ceremony in an excellent manner.







CROSSWORD 1478



ACROSS

1. A tight-fitting headress.
4. Be iridescent.
12. An operating system that is on a disk.
15. A nucleic acid that transmits genetic information from DNA to the cytoplasm.
16. Sauce for pasta.
17. A drug combination found in some over-the-counter headache remedies (Aspirin and Phenacetin and Caffeine).
18. Attach a yoke or harness to, as of a draft animal.
20. A river of central Italy.
21. A colloid in a more solid form than a sol.
22. Island country in the Atlantic east of Florida and Cuba.
24. An informal term for a father.
26. A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.
27. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
29. (Old Testament) The minister of the Persian emperor who hated the Jews and was hanged for plotting to massacre them.
31. A metric unit of length equal to one hundredth of a meter.
33. Established by or founded upon law or official or accepted rules.
36. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
39. Sect of Orthodox Jews who follow the Mosaic Law strictly.
42. Walk or tramp about.
44. Of southern Europe.
45. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
46. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
48. A gambling card game in which chips are placed on the ace and king and queen and jack of separate suits (taken from a separate deck).
49. A person who delays.
52. Freedom from difficulty or hardship or effort.
54. The cry made by sheep.
55. Any of various strong liquors distilled from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.
56. Declare or acknowledge to be true.
59. The large yellow root of a rutabaga plant used as food.
62. A secret society in Naples notorious for violence and blackmail.
64. A sloping edge on a cutting tool.
65. A reproach for some lapse or misdeed.
66. A percussion instrument consisting of a pair of hollow pieces of wood or bone (usually held between the thumb and fingers) that are made to click together (as by Spanish dancers) in rhythm with the dance.
74. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
75. A region of northeastern France famous for its wines.
78. Botswanan statesman who was the first president of Botswana (1921-1980).
79. Flower arrangement consisting of a circular band of foliage or flowers for ornamental purposes.
80. Italian painter and sculptor and engineer and scientist and architect.
82. Used in combination to denote the middle.
83. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
84. A great raja.
85. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.

DOWN

1. Baby bed with high sides.
2. A former copper coin of Pakistan.
3. A civil or military authority in Turkey or Egypt.
4. (Islam) The man who leads prayers in a mosque.
5. Type genus of the Ranidae.
6. A heavy brittle metallic element of the platinum group.
7. The shorter of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
8. A town in north central Oklahoma.
9. A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
10. Of or relating to a creed.
11. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
12. (Mesopotamia) God of agriculture and earth.
13. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
14. The clock time given by a clock carried on board a spacecraft.
19. United States physicist (born in Austria) who proposed the exclusion principle (thus providing a theoretical basis for the periodic table) (1900-1958).
23. A fraudulent business scheme.
25. An expensive vessel propelled by sail or power and used for cruising or racing.
28. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
30. A shot in billiards made by hitting the cue ball with the cue held nearly vertically.
32. The capital of Lesotho.
34. Founder of Christian Science in 1866 (1821-1910).
35. An aggressive remark directed at a person like a missile and intended to have a telling effect.
37. The act of putting something in working order again.
38. A city is east central Sweden north north-west of Stockholm.
40. A single splash.
41. A complex red organic pigment containing iron and other atoms to which oxygen binds.
43. Of or relating to or affecting a lobe.
47. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
50. Jordan's port.
51. A feeling of intense anger.
53. Rock star and drummer for the Beatles (born in 1940).
57. A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
58. A populous province in northeastern China.
60. Make steady.
61. Any of numerous ornamental shrubs grown for their showy flowers of various colors.
63. South American plant cultivated for its large fragrant trumpet-shaped flowers.
67. In bed.
68. A sudden short attack.
69. A mark left by the healing of injured tissue.
70. Queen of the Olympian gods in ancient Greek mythology.
71. God of love and erotic desire.
72. An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
73. An informal term for a father.
76. The syllable naming the fifth (dominant) note of any musical scale in solmization.
77. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
81. A person who announces and plays popular recorded music.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

A competitive mood is obvious today. Keep the fun in the competition and enjoy your friends. Some sort of a temporary obstacle may appear this afternoon but you will do well when you stay with the facts and not the emotion. Thank goodness this should not last too long and should all work out to your benefit. You are interactive with the public and have no difficulty in serving those who need your help. Use any quiet time today to examine your inner motivations, desires and needs in order to plan any changes for the future. Such changes are easily made at this time. You derive great satisfaction from your accomplishments now. In personal encounters, you excel. An elderly couple has your attention this evening, if not your parents, a neighbor.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may find a friend involved in gossip and it should not take you too long to lend kind disapproval. You are progressive and in a helpful mood today and although this friend may shun you the rest of the day, ignore it and smile. Your problem-solving abilities are in top form and directing others in your fine manner could have someone older seeking you out for help in performing a particular chore. It is a great time to be with friends and interact with each other. Those around you should have no problem in following your lead, as you are very persuasive. You are very natural in your self-expression. Expect a very engrossing conversation with someone you love this evening. Laughter and fun conversations bring about fond memories.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may find that this is not the most appropriate time to make important decisions that affect your living situation or life circumstances. Someone may challenge your ideas or the direction that you want to take. It is a good time for everyone to write down what they want and then plan a time to review the ideas later. This could mean a new home or plans to refurbish the home in which the family lives now. You dislike sloppy ways of getting things done and will be creating a new remedy to make some of the tasks you employ easier to handle. Family objectives are very important to you. Family time is made easier by bringing dinner home tonight. This gives everyone a little extra time to read, chat and perhaps take a little walk out-of-doors.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Soon it will be time to communicate your ideas to a city meeting. A call early this morning may even remind you of some meeting coming up soon that will encompass the communication between the communities. This may mean it will soon be your opportunity to communicate ideas for improved walkways, animal laws, eliminating some extreme noise because of the highway or parking spaces of nearby businesses, etc., etc. Professionally, you will find yourself involved a bit more with writing and concentrating on some ongoing business. If you honestly believe in what you are saying, you will be very persuasive-at any time, but particularly at this meeting. You are respected by family and neighbors and you have lots of support.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Something may help you discover some new ways to go forward with a plan or decision in regard to your life situation. You may find yourself serving to guide someone younger than you in matters of importance. Here is your opportunity to set a good example. This is a vital day with lots of energy and much action. You may feel focused and even a bit radiant. You could find yourself able to really communicate with others. You instinctively want to be powerful and in control but you wisely stand aside and wait for the right opportunity to excel. This could all lead to a magnified interest in healing or investing. You and a loved one make plans for celebrating new beginnings and may decide on your very own special celebration.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

There could be a situation where you feel as though you are butting heads with another and there could be a great deal of disagreement with what you say or think. The situation that you find yourself in may require some rethinking or else could challenge your ideas. It may be very difficult for you to communicate what you mean to others. Stop-this is probably not the best of times to attempt to get your ideas across to anyone, emotionally or otherwise. It is the best of times to do some writing about what you want to accomplish and where you want to see your life experiences develop or your ideas blossom. A get-together after the holiday celebrations will give you new ideas about how you want to develop a few new goals.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your schedule today is an old routine; you may look for new and different responsibilities. You may truly feel the need to make a change, wanting to break away from old-fashioned things of the past. Rejecting a situation and working to make a difference are admirable. Making a difference requires good timing and having the ability to detect a positive path. You can give advice and support in the most difficult of times. Consider continuing education in order to become a counselor or guide. This afternoon you take some time to change out your wardrobe from one season to another. Perhaps others have noticed your new clothes. You are determined to see that things become better organized this afternoon. Relax with your feet up this evening.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Having figured out new ways to communicate or a temperate manner will make conversations and interactions go well. You may find yourself more verbal than usual. A dialogue with an older person may take place this afternoon. It is possible that you will need to check on this person on your way home later. You are pleased at the improvements and positive changes of your friends and you may plan to express this to them soon. You are appreciated for your feelings and ability to take action and get things done. Your emotions or the feelings of those around you should be very clear. Considering this is a very busy time of the year, this is a nice day, possibly filled with some renewed appreciation for all that is attractive and refined.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

An opportunity to visit with neighbors this morning is too good to pass up. Compassion and comprehension are emotional qualities that take on a greater significance. It's wisdom, not knowledge, that really counts the most. Coming to accept the past or getting in touch with the mystical and spiritual are the things that give a sense of satisfaction and completeness. A very important bond, perhaps with an older person or someone in authority, may come into focus this afternoon. You may feel a bit of tension or sense of opposition that will require compromise or negotiation on your part. A fine opportunity for understanding and possibly even growth is at hand. Some good advice from an unexpected source may be forthcoming. This is a good day.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You are aware of the effect your ideas have on others. You may have two occupations at the same time and be successful, but it is demanding. Now, you may not want to take on such responsibility, especially long-term. A normal routine, however, will not interest you just now. You want to create opportunities to explore new places, people and ideas and this may call for a little time away from the workplace or perhaps, a new job. If you were not going anywhere today, this would be a good time to spend in review of your goals and plans. Talk over your ideas with a professional, peer or loved one that can help guide you in the direction that would best suit your talents. This evening there is plenty of time to celebrate.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You identify strongly with those around you. Others could find it very easy to follow your lead-you are an eloquent speaker and can communicate well. Things are natural for self-expression and luck in love and money may just seem to fall in your lap. Your ego will get a boost today, but be prepared for more responsibilities. Questions from young people are easy for you to answer and you will find the people asking you questions, will have an easy time in understanding your answers. You enjoy an insightful conversation with someone you love this afternoon. You are comfortable with your surroundings and enjoy a bit of laughter and joking with friends later today. You can expect the positive from all directions this holiday season.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

There could be many temptations today to chat with friends and pass the day along. You are in a clear thinking sort of mood. Perhaps you can write your ideas down in a list type of style. This will help you to remain focused on the main flow of events. Ideas are flowing and come easily. Taking care of personal business, however, could be your number one priority for now. You desire organization and practicality as you begin to close the books on a variety of projects. Health issues take on more importance, especially as you begin to think about your personal goals for next year. If you do not have plans for celebrating with your friends, you could make them now. Those around you find you especially witty this evening.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Nursing Home 3

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 40 letters spell an Albert Einstein quotation.

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

AGED ELDERLY ICE CREAM PARTIES SHAMPOO  
ALZHEIMERS ENEMA ILLNESS PERSONAL CARE SHOTS  
ATTENDANTS EXERCISES KITCHEN PHYSICIAN SHOWERING  
BATHTUB FALSE TEETH LIBRARY PHYSIOTHERAPY STETHOSCOPE  
BEDROOM FAMILY LUNCH PLAYING CARDS SYRINGES  
BINGO FATHERS MEDICATION QUILT TOOTHBRUSH  
BREAKFAST FOOD MOTHERS RAILINGS VISITORS  
CARDS FRACTURE MUSIC THERAPY RECREATION WALKER  
CHAIRS GAMES NAPS REPORTING RESTRAINT WASH HAIR  
CHRONIC GARDEN NEWSPAPER RESTRAINT ROOMS WOUND CARE  
DEPRESSION GLUCOMETER OXYGEN TANK SAFETY

Yesterday's Solution

Canada

ALBERTA BEARS BRITISH COLUMBIA CARIBOU CHARLOTTETOWN CURLING EDMONTON FORESTS FREDERICTON GEESE HALIFAX HOCKEY IQALUIT LABRADOR LAKES LOONIE MANITOBA MAPLE LEAF MAPLE SYRUP MOOSE MOUNTAINS NEW BRUNSWICK NORTHWEST TERRITORIES NOVA SCOTIA NUNAVUT OIL ONTARIO OTTAWA PRAIRIES PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND QUEBEC RCMP REGINA SASKATCHEWAN SNOW ST. JOHN'S TOQUE TORONTO VICTORIA WHITEHORSE WINNIPEG YELLOWKNIFE YUKON

The hidden message is:  
THE CAPITAL CITY OF THE PROVINCE OF QUEBEC IS QUEBEC CITY

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

hard

Yesterday's Solution

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

hard



SINGAPORE: Fireworks explode above Singapore's financial district at the stroke of midnight to mark the New Year's celebrations today.— AP

## CELEBRATIONS KICK OFF AS WORLD RINGS IN 2017

Continued from Page 1

Despite the terror fears, revellers in Hong Kong and Taipei were expected to throng city streets to watch firework performances.

Shoppers in Japan had earlier filled markets to buy tuna and crabs seen as expensive items for special feasts for New Year's Day family gatherings.

### Truck blockades

Security concerns have hit many New Year events with truck blockades a new tactic to try to prevent vehicles ploughing into crowds, with Sydney using garbage trucks. The German capital has beefed up security after the December 19 carnage, deploying more police, some armed with machine-guns.

"This year, what's new is that we will place concrete blocks and position heavy armored vehicles at the entrances" to the zone around Brandenburg Gate, a police spokesman said. Visitors seemed undeterred by recent events as they began to gather under a cold blue sky for a series of concerts ahead of large midnight firework display in the area. In Paris, there will be a firework display again, after muted 2015 celebrations following the massacre of 130 people by jihadists in the French capital. Nearly 100,000 police, gendarmes and soldiers will be deployed across France against the jihadist threat. Brussels has reinstated its firework show after last year's was cancelled at the last minute due to a terrorist threat.

With more than a million people expected to turn out to watch the ball drop in Times Square, New York is deploying 165 "blocker" trucks and some 7,000 police. Rome has deployed armored vehicles and greater numbers of security forces around the Coliseum and St Peter's Square, where Pope Francis will celebrate a "Te Deum" hymn of thanksgiving.

Moscow police will deploy more than 5,000 officers backed by thousands more from the new national guard and volunteer militia to maintain order. Thousands traditionally gather in Red Square, but for the second year in a row, the area will be open solely to 6,000 invitees.

London will have 3,000 officers on patrol with crowds flocking to line the banks of the Thames to watch the fireworks. Up to two million people are expected to party at Rio's Copacabana beach. But with Brazil mired in its worst recession in a century, the fireworks have been cut to just 12 minutes.

Normally boisterous Bangkok will see in the new year on a more sombre note as the nation grieves for King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who died in October.

And, at the stroke of midnight, the celebrations will last one second longer—a leap second—decreed by the International Earth Rotation and Reference Systems Service to allow astronomical time to catch up with atomic clocks that have called the hour since 1967.

### Las Vegas

More than 300,000 visitors are expected to descend on Las Vegas for an extravagant New Year's Eve celebration. Nightclubs are pulling out all the stops with performances from DJ Calvin Harris, rappers T-Pain and Kendrick Lamar and artists Drake and Bruno Mars. The city's celebrity chefs have crafted elaborate prix fixe menus complete with caviar and champagne toasts.

An eight-minute fireworks show will kick off at the stroke of midnight, with rockets launching from the tops of half a dozen casinos.

Federal officials have ranked the celebration just below the Super Bowl and on par with the festivities in Times Square. FBI and Secret Service agents will work alongside local police departments that are putting all hands on deck for the big night.

### Germany

In Berlin the mood was more somber than celebratory. "I don't like the way politics is going," said Daniel Brandt. "Fears are being fanned and people are so angry with each other."

The tone of public debate in Germany has become shriller over the past two years with the influx of hundreds of thousands of migrants. Some Germans blame Chancellor Angela Merkel for attacks such as the recent rampage in Berlin, where a failed asylum-seeker from Tunisia rammed a truck into a crowded Christmas market, killing 12 people and injuring dozens more.

As the country heads for a general election in which the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany party is expected to poll strongly, Brandt said he was hoping for "proper solutions to our problems."

Two Israeli tourists, on a visit to the German capital, seemed at a loss when asked about their wishes for 2017. "Peace on Earth. Just happiness, really," said Nathan and Libat, declining to give their last names.

Berlin hosts Germany's biggest open-air New Year's Eve celebration near the city's iconic Brandenburg Gate. Security, as in previous years, was tight Saturday, with police checking the bags of those entering the party zone. Authorities have also increased police presence at hotspots in other major cities, including Cologne, where a string of robberies and sexual assaults last year that were blamed largely on migrants from North Africa prompted nationwide outrage.

### Turkey

Neslihan Dogruol, a restaurant owner in a chic Istanbul neighborhood, said she hopes for peace in 2017 following a year filled with "unrest and death." "2016 affected everyone badly," she said, referring to major attacks that hit Turkey in the past year.

The restaurant, adorned with snowflakes and tiny decorative lights for the evening, will have fewer people for dinner. "There is a serious gap between 2015 and 2016 in terms of business, people are going out less," Dogruol said, adding that she expects more people to come for drinks.

Security measures were heightened in major Turkish cities. Traffic leading up to

key squares in Istanbul and the capital, Ankara, will be closed, police said. In Istanbul, 17,000 police officers have been put on duty, some camouflaged as Santa Claus and others as street vendors, Turkey's state-run Anadolu news agency reported on Friday.

Ankara and Istanbul were targeted by bomb attacks in 2016, killing more than 180 people. Turkey has been in the throes of violence, combatting the Islamic State group, Kurdish militants and a coup attempt blamed on the US-based cleric Fethullah Gulen.

### China

Residents in Beijing and Shanghai, China's two largest cities, will pass New Year's Eve in a relative state of security lockdown, according to Chinese media reports citing police. The Bund waterfront in Shanghai will not have any celebrations, authorities announced this week, while the sale, use and transportation of fireworks in central Shanghai will be prohibited altogether. Large buildings that often display light shows will also stay dark. More than 30 people died two years ago in a deadly stampede on Shanghai's waterfront, where 300,000 people had gathered to watch a planned light show.

Beijing police also said countdowns, lightshows, lotteries and other organized activities will not be held in popular shopping districts such as Sanlitun and Guomao. Beijing police advised citizens to avoid crowded areas, closely watch elderly relatives and children, and be aware of exit routes in venues.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said in his annual New Year's Eve address that his government will continue to focus on poverty alleviation at home and resolutely defending China's territorial rights on the foreign front.

### South Korea

Hundreds of thousands of South Koreans ushered in the new year with a massive protest demanding the resignation of disgraced President Park Geun-hye. It was the 10th straight weekend of protests that led to Park's impeachment on Dec. 9 over a corruption scandal.

The evening rally was to overlap with Seoul's traditional bell-tolling ceremony at the Bosonggak pavilion at midnight, which was also expected to be a political statement against Park. The city's mayor, Park Won-soon, invited as guests a man whose teenage son was among more than 300 people who died during a 2014 ferry sinking, and a woman who was forced into sexual slavery by Japan's World War II military.

Park came under heavy criticism over the way her government handled the ferry disaster. "So many unbelievable things happened in 2016. It didn't feel real; it felt like a movie," protester Lee Hyeon said about the bizarre scandal that brought Park down. "So I hope 2017 brings a movie-like ending to the mess. Everything getting solved, quickly and all at once, leaving us all happy."

### India

For most people in India, New Year's Eve is a time for family. In New Delhi and many other cities, newspapers are full of big advertisements for lavish parties at upscale hotels and restaurants. The big draws at the hotel parties are song and dance performances from Bollywood and television stars.

Police with breath analyzers check for drunk driving, and security is tightened in malls and restaurants. The western city of Mumbai will host big street parties with thousands of people at the iconic Gateway of India, a colonial-era structure on the waterfront overlooking the Arabian Sea. There'll be music and dancing and occasional fireworks.

### The Philippines

The Philippines' notorious tradition of dangerous New Year's Eve celebrations persisted after President Rodrigo Duterte delayed to next year his ban on the use of powerful firecrackers, often worsened by celebratory gunfire. Powerful firecrackers and gunfire have maimed hundreds of people and killed some each year across the Philippines despite government crackdowns, an annual government scare campaign and efforts by officials to set up centralized fireworks displays, like on Saturday night.

Duterte's southern Davao City hasn't been tainted by the bloody record because of a largely successful firecracker ban he enforced when he was still the city's crime-busting mayor. Last month, he said he would delay his plan to replicate his Davao ban nationwide by a year because many have already invested in firecrackers and he was concerned by the impact of an abrupt ban on poor Filipinos employed in the industry.

In a preview of what may likely be another bloody New Year's Eve, the Department of Health said Saturday that 139 people have already been injured by firecracker blasts in recent days, mostly children under 15. More than 800 revelers were injured last year.

### UAE

In Dubai, hundreds of thousands of people were expected to watch as fireworks shoot from the sides of the world's tallest building, the 828-meter (2,716-foot) Burj Khalifa. The show also will be streamed live online. But authorities hope they won't see a repeat of last year's excitement, when police say faulty wiring sparked a fire several hours before midnight at The Address Downtown, a 63-story skyscraper nearby. The high-rise tower still remains under repair.

The United Arab Emirates, a staunch Western ally that hosts US military personnel fighting against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria, remains a peaceful corner in the otherwise turbulent Middle East.

However, the US Embassy in Abu Dhabi issued a warning Thursday to Americans that "extremist sympathizers or self-radicalized extremists may conduct attacks worldwide during this period with little or no warning." — Agencies

## MERKEL: ISLAMIST TERRORISM...

Continued from Page 1

In her address, Merkel compared Brexit to a "deep incision" and said that even though the EU was "slow and arduous," its member states should focus on common interests that transcend national benefits. "And, yes, Europe should focus on what can really be better than the national state," Merkel said. "But we Germans should never be led to believe that each could have a better future by going it alone."

She was alluding again to the populist AfD, which wants Germany to leave the EU and shut its borders to asylum seekers, more than one million of whom arrived in the country this year and last.

The record number of migrants has hurt Merkel's popularity and fuelled support for the AfD, which says Islam is incompatible with the German constitution. But her conservatives are still expected to win the general election in nine months. Merkel has made security the main election platform for her Christian Democrats (CDU). In her speech, she said the government would introduce measures to improve security after a failed Tunisian asylum seeker drove a truck into a Christmas market in the capital on Dec. 19, killing 12 people in the name of Islamic State. He was shot dead by Italian police in Milan on Dec. 23 and investigators are trying to determine whether he had accomplices. — Reuters

## IS BOMBINGS IN BAGHDAD KILL 29

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, a third blast later in the day killed four people in the eastern New Baghdad district, where a minibus packed with explosives blew up in a busy commercial street, police and medics said.

Islamic State has continued to launch attacks in the heavily fortified capital, even after losing most of the northern and western territory it seized in 2014. The recapture of Mosul would probably spell the end for Islamic State's self-styled caliphate, but the militants would still be capable of fighting a guerrilla-style insurgency in Iraq, and plotting or inspiring attacks on the West.

The second phase of a US-backed offensive launched on Thursday following weeks of deadlock has encountered fierce resistance. Conventional US forces deploying more extensively in this phase are now visible very close to the front lines. The third day of the renewed push saw heavy clashes on the southeastern and northern fronts. An army officer deployed in the southeast said there was fierce fighting on the edge of Intisar district on Saturday and advances were slowed by heavy machine gun fire, snipers and rockets attacks by militants entrenched in houses.

The officer said Islamic State fighters were firing from houses with white flags

raised over the roofs, falsely indicating they are civilians to avoid being targeted by Iraqi forces and coalition airstrikes.

"The more we advance the tougher it becomes. The job of differentiating between fake and real houses with civilians inside is becoming more painful to our troops," he told Reuters by phone.

An elite Interior Ministry unit continued to push yesterday through the Intisar district, where a US-trained army unit had struggled to advance far after entering the southeast district last month. Heavy gunfire was audible and attack helicopters fired overhead as hundreds of civilians fled their homes, a Reuters cameraman said.

In the north, a separate army unit pressed towards the border of Mosul proper after recapturing several outlying villages in the past two days. "There is a battle in Argoob area, which is considered the gateway to Hadba," Lieutenant Colonel Abbas Al-Azawi said by phone, referring to a strategic northern neighborhood.

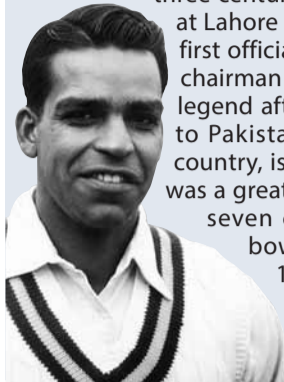
Since the offensive began on Oct 17, elite forces have retaken a quarter of Mosul in the biggest ground operation there since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein. Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi has said the group would be driven out of Iraq by April. — Agencies



TOKYO: People hold balloons during the New Year celebrations at Prince Park Tower in the Japanese capital Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

### PAKISTAN'S FORMER TEST CRICKETER IMTIAZ DEAD

**ISLAMABAD:** Imtiaz Ahmed, Pakistan's former Test wicketkeeper-batsman who became a chief selector after his playing career, has died. He was 88. The Pakistan Cricket Board said Ahmed, Pakistan's oldest living test cricketer, died Saturday in Lahore following a chest infection. Ahmed played 41 tests from 1952-62, scoring 2,079 runs at an average of 29 and taking 77 catches. He hit three centuries, including a career-best 209 against New Zealand at Lahore in 1955, three years after touring India with Pakistan's first official test side. "This is a sad day for Pakistan cricket," PCB chairman Shaharyar Khan said in a statement. "Losing another legend after Hanif Mohammad in the same year is a great loss to Pakistan's cricket. The entire cricketing fraternity, in this country, is in sorrow over the sad demise of Imtiaz Ahmed. He was a great gentleman and will be missed." Ahmed notably took seven catches off the pace bowling of Fazal Mehmood's bowling to help Pakistan beat England at the Oval in 1954. He served as chief selector from 1976-78 and was a consultant for the PCB's women's cricket activities from 2005-08. — AP



### GUARDIOLA LAUDS KLOPP'S 'HEAVY METAL' FOOTBALL

**LONDON:** Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola heaped praise on Juergen Klopp, saying his Liverpool counterpart was the best when it comes to instilling an attacking style of play at a club. Since joining the club from Borussia Dortmund in 2015, Klopp has transformed Liverpool from Champions League qualification hopefuls to Premier League title contenders, with the Merseyside club second in the table, six points behind leaders Chelsea after 18 games. City are a point behind Liverpool and will hope to leapfrog them with a victory in Saturday's clash at Anfield. "Maybe he is the best manager in the world creating teams who attack the back four, with this amount of players, this intensity, with the ball without the ball," former Bayern Munich manager Guardiola told British media. "I like a lot the way they play because in three or four seconds they are attacking. It is not easy to do that. I think there is not another team in the world attacking this way with so many players. "When he speaks about his football being heavy metal, I understand completely, it is so aggressive. — Reuters

### BROOM REPLACES INJURED GUPTILL IN NZ T20 SQUAD

**CHRISTCHURCH:** New Zealand opener Martin Guptill will miss the Twenty20 series against Bangladesh with a hamstring injury and will be replaced by in-form batsman Neil Broom, the country's cricket board said yesterday. Guptill will be sidelined for up to four weeks after he sustained the injury while running between the wickets in the third one-day international against Bangladesh at Saxton Oval in Nelson yesterday. Broom was in fine form during the ODI series against Bangladesh, scoring 109 (not out) and 97 runs in his last two innings as the hosts completed a 3-0 series sweep. "We needed to replace an attacking opening batsman and with Neil's experience opening in the T20 format and his current form — he was a ready-made replacement," coach Mike Hesson said in a statement. "Martin also leads our fielding in white ball cricket and so we're expecting Neil to be a big contributor in that area as well." New Zealand will begin their three-match Twenty20 series against Bangladesh at McLean Park on Tuesday. — Reuters



## WOODS GETS 'AT LEAST ONE WIN' NEXT YEAR: BEGAY

**BAHAMAS:** Tiger Woods celebrated his 41st birthday on Friday and long-time friend and fellow professional Notah Begay III predicts he will have more to celebrate in a triumphant return to the PGA Tour in 2017. Though Woods has competed only once over the past 16 months due to chronic back problems that required multiple surgeries, Begay was encouraged by that solitary tournament appearance earlier this month in the Bahamas.

Woods made his long anticipated return at the Hero World Challenge which he hosts and despite delivering mixed form he ended the week with a tournament-high aggregate of 24 birdies.

"I don't think anybody in the inner circle, including Tiger, could have been happier," Begay told Reuters about Woods' performance in the elite, limited-field event.

"There was a lot of curiosity around what was going to happen, what his swing was going to look like how his mind was going to adjust to the tournament environment because it's just so different, you can't recreate that focus in practice.

"For him to go out and make more birdies than anybody else in the field after being on the shelf for 15 months was quite remarkable. He's seeing some definite returns on the time that he's put in with regard to his recovery."

Woods has already committed to playing in the PGA Tour's Genesis Open at Riviera Country Club from Feb. 16-19 and is also expected to tee it up three weeks earlier in the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines.

#### PEAKING BY SPRING

Begay, a 44-year-old Native American who won four times on the PGA Tour, has forecast that Woods will hit top form by the opening major of the year, the April 6-9

Masters. "I expect him to win, and I expect him to have at least one win next year based upon what I've seen," said Begay, who played with Woods on the Stanford University golf team. "It's just a matter of getting some more tournament rounds. I'm not going to say it's going to happen early in the year but I think you should expect to see Tiger peak during the spring time." For all the birdies accumulated by Woods over the four rounds of the Hero World Challenge, the roller-coaster nature of his form was illustrated by the fact that he also led the field with six double-bogeys. Former PGA Tour winner Brandel Chamblee, who like Begay works as a Golf Channel analyst, was impressed by Woods' wedge game from outside 70 yards but said that his chipping and driving needed fixing. "There wasn't anything that took place in the Bahamas that wasn't fixable," said Begay. "I don't think Tiger was comfortable with his three-wood but that's fixable." Begay said he thought it was too early to tell about Woods' accuracy off the tee. "He hit something like 52 drivers in the Bahamas and you've got to see at least a few hundred before you start figuring out what the patterns and trends are."

Woods bladed a few bunker shots over greens during the Hero World Challenge but Begay saw no indication of the chipping yips that afflicted the former world number one in early 2015.

"The majority of chips that I saw around the green that might cause some problems he executed very well, his bunker game was solid, his little feel shots around the green were good," said Begay. "I'm not going to say there was perfect execution across the board but, for the most part, the shots you would want to have and the outcomes you would expect from a world-class player were all right there." — Reuters



**LAS VEGAS:** Amanda Nunes, right, throws a punch at Ronda Rousey in the first round of their women's bantamweight championship mixed martial arts bout at UFC 207, Friday, in Las Vegas. Nunes won the fight after it was stopped in the first round. — AP

## BRAZIL'S NUNES PUMMELS ROUSEY IN UFC TITLE FIGHT

**LAS VEGAS:** Ronda Rousey's UFC comeback didn't even last a minute. Rousey was stopped 48 seconds into her first fight in 13 months Friday night, losing to bantamweight champion Amanda Nunes at UFC 207. Rousey (12-2) never managed to get her footing against Nunes (14-4), who rocked Rousey with her very first punches. Rousey showed little defensive acumen as she staggered and stumbled backward with Nunes relentlessly pursuing her and landing 27 punches in the brief bout.

"Forget about Ronda Rousey!" Nunes shouted to the sellout crowd. "She's going to go do movies. Forget about her. She has a lot of money already." Indeed, Rousey's future in the sport is clearly in question. The biggest star in the women's game, who left the arena without giving an interview, is likely considering retirement shortly before her 30th birthday. "That's it for her," Nunes said. "For sure, she's going to retire." Referee Herb Dean stopped the bout with Rousey still on her feet, and Rousey briefly protested the stoppage before leaving the cage in her mother's arms. Nunes put her finger to her lips and circled the cage after the stoppage, pausing to taunt Rousey's much-maligned coach, Edmond Tarverdyan.

"Her coach put some crazy things in her head, and her career started going down," Nunes said. "I'm the real striker here."

Cody Garbrandt won the men's bantamweight title in the penultimate bout at UFC 207, battering champion Dominick Cruz to earn a surprising decision victory at T-Mobile Arena in the promotion's traditional end-of-the-year show in its hometown. But the sellout crowd left shocked when Rousey couldn't compete in her first fight since losing her belt to Holly Holm 13 months ago in her first career defeat. Rousey became arguably the world's most famous female athlete and a combat sports trailblazer while she rocketed

atop the UFC, but a year away from the sport apparently did little to heal the holes in her game. She made a guaranteed \$3 million for her comeback bout, while Nunes' guaranteed payday was just \$200,000.

"I knew I was going to beat (Rousey)," Nunes said. "I'm the best on the planet." Rousey hadn't fought since November 2015, when Holly Holm stopped her with a head kick in one of the biggest upsets in MMA history. Rousey had never lost or been in much trouble while the former Olympic judo medalist earned a series of one-sided victories, but Holm's veteran striking made Rousey look unprepared.

#### QUICKER

Rousey's return fight was similar, but even quicker. Nunes claimed the belt at UFC 200 in July with a violent stoppage of Miesha Tate, who had beaten Holm in March. Nunes made an impressive ascent after losing three fights earlier in her career to opponents beaten easily by Rousey.

Rousey nearly vanished from public view after her first loss, taking time away from the gym and attending to her acting career. The UFC also was sold during her absence to WME-IMG, the entertainment conglomerate that also represents Rousey's career. But Rousey refused to promote this pay-per-view show, leaving Cruz, Garbrandt and Nunes to do most of the work. While Rousey's media blackout will hurt her cut of the pay-per-view revenue, it didn't affect her guaranteed payday, which matched Conor McGregor for the biggest disclosed check in UFC history.

Earlier, Garbrandt (11-0) remained unbeaten with a virtuoso performance to claim the belt held for the past 11 months by Cruz (22-2), who ended up with a gaping cut over his left eye. Garbrandt used precise striking, multiple takedowns and remarkable charisma to win over the judges, who all favored him by

scores of 48-46, 48-46 and 48-47. Cruz hadn't lost an MMA fight since March 24, 2007, winning 13 straight bouts in a career marked by multiple comebacks from major injuries.

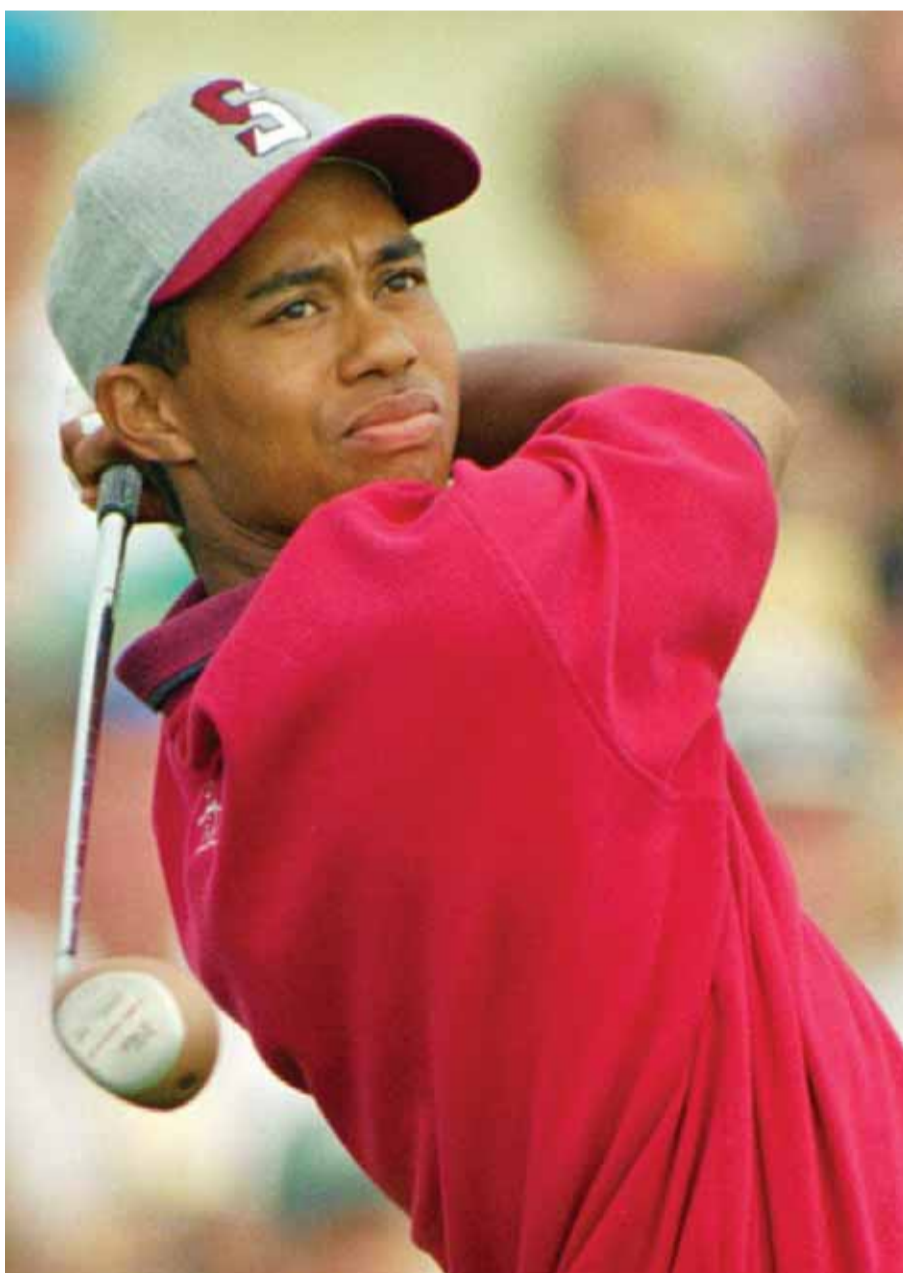
The 25-year-old Garbrandt is a native of Uhrichsville, Ohio, who trains in the Sacramento-area gym of veteran fighter Urijah Faber. Cruz and Garbrandt taunted each other repeatedly during the promotion of their bout, and their genuine dislike translated into a frenzied five-round fight. Garbrandt lived up to his boundless promise with a resourceful effort against Cruz, who was favored to defend his belt.

#### DOMINATED

"If you don't lose, you don't grow," Cruz said. "We're all competitors here, and it's a game of inches. He beat me by a couple of inches tonight, and that's OK. ... There wasn't one second of this fight I wasn't trying to win. I chased him around the cage the whole night." While Cruz threw 100 more strikes, Garbrandt landed a higher percentage of his shots and did more damage.

Both fighters landed significant strikes in the first two rounds, but Garbrandt turned the fight in his favor early in the third during the exchange that opened the cut on Cruz's face. Garbrandt put on a performance in the fourth round, repeatedly knocking down Cruz when he wasn't dancing away from the champion.

After receiving his belt, Garbrandt wrapped it around the waist of Maddux Maple, a 10-year-old leukemia survivor from northern Ohio who has been his motivational talisman. Garbrandt's first title defense could be against T.J. Dillashaw, who dominated John Lineker in a unanimous-decision victory moments earlier at UFC 207, winning 30-26 on all three cards. Dillashaw (15-3) showed off precise striking and a superior ground game to trounce the Brazilian brawler. "Come try me!" Garbrandt shouted at Dillashaw afterward. — AP



Tiger Woods

## INDIA HALTS FUNDING OF NOC FOR HONOURING ADMINISTRATORS

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian Olympic Association's (IOA) move to honour two controversial administrators has infuriated the government with the sports ministry cutting off funding and the use of other facilities extended to the body.

The IOA named its former presidents Suresh Kalmadi and Abhay Singh Chautala as life presidents on Tuesday, a decision that has been heavily criticised after both are facing allegations of corruption.

Kalmadi spent nine months in jail after the allegations, stemming from the 2010 Commonwealth Games in Delhi. He was released pending an appeal to Delhi High Court and has steadfastly denied any wrongdoing.

Chautala is also facing unrelated corruption charges in an ongoing court case. He has also denied the allegations.

"IOA will cease to enjoy the privileges and prerogatives bestowed on it by the

Government as the National Olympic Committee (NOC)," the sports ministry said in a statement.

"All Government assistance, financial or otherwise, to IOA will also be stopped." Kalmadi has declined the post until his case has been heard, while Chautala, who was initially adamant to stay on in the patron's role, has hinted at stepping down.

The IOA sought time until Jan. 15 to reply to a sports ministry notice, citing its presi-

dent Narayana Ramachandran was abroad, but the ministry dismissed it as a "ploy" to buy time.

"Although the Government has utmost respect for the Olympic Charter and is committed to protecting the autonomy of sports, it cannot remain a mute spectator to blatant violation of principles of ethic and good governance by IOA..." the ministry said. Former shooter Abhinav Bindra, India's first individual Olympic gold medalist, wel-

comed the suspension of the IOA, which is perceived in cricket-mad India as a clumsy organisation relying mostly on government largesse and run by politicians who are opposed to new faces and fresh ideas.

"The @Olympics movement and specially the movement in India can no longer hide behind autonomy. It's the age of good governance and ethics," tweeted Bindra, who won the 10m air rifle gold in 2008 Beijing Olympics. — Reuters

## LEHMANN BACKS AGAR'S ALL-ROUNDER CLAIMS FOR TEST RECALL

**MELBOURNE:** Coach Darren Lehmann views Ashton Agar as a "genuine all-rounder" putting him in line to be part of Australia's spin tandem in Tuesday's final Test against Pakistan in Sydney.

Agar, 23, is on track to play his first Test since his unheralded debut in the 2013 Ashes series in England, where he scored 98 in his first Test at Trent Bridge batting at No.11.

But the West Australian left-hander is now being assessed as a "genuine" all-rounder, impressing selectors Greg Chappell and Mark Waugh and has a first-class batting average of 26.

Agar was added to a 13-man Australia squad Friday along with fellow spinner Steven O'Keefe with one of them likely to partner Nathan Lyon on a

spin-friendly SCG pitch for the "dead" third Test. Lehmann said after Friday's innings and 18-run second Test series-clinching win over Pakistan in Melbourne that if Australia went into the final Test with two spinners the team would also need an all-rounder.

Selectors have also included Zimbabwe-born all-rounder Hilton Cartwright in the Sydney squad, but Lehmann highlighted Agar's all-round qualities. "He's made Shield hundreds and batted well for us in that (Ashes) Test match at 11," Lehmann told reporters. "He's certainly got the talent to be a batting all-rounder or a spinning all-rounder, either way."

"We wanted a left-arter to go away from all their right-handers as well to

give us options. He also got 10 wickets in a Sheffield Shield game in Sydney.

"He's improved, we get feedback from (WA coach) Justin Langer and the guys have been watching him, they've been impressed with him," Lehmann said. "If you play two spinners you normally need an allrounder, so that's what we're looking at."

### O'KEEFE FITNESS CHALLENGE

Agar says he sees himself as an all-rounder to fit the mould Australia are seeking. "I guess I've been selected in this squad as a spinner, but I think I'm capable with bat and ball," Agar told reporters yesterday.

On potentially batting at No.7, Agar added: "I think I would be able to if I was

given that opportunity.

"You just have to make good decisions, and that's what I'm learning more each time I'm batting in first-class cricket, is the best players consistently make good decisions."

Lehmann said O'Keefe had to stay fit after the 32-year-old's recent run of injuries. O'Keefe injured his hamstring in the first Test against Sri Lanka and was set to replace Lyon in the third day-night Test against South Africa in Adelaide last month before succumbing to a calf injury.

"He wouldn't want too many more injuries, he'd want to make sure he's playing cricket," Lehmann said. "That's the greatest thing we have now, we've got young players coming through who

are fit and well. "Steven did a really good job for us in Sri Lanka before he got injured, did a good job last year in Sydney as well. He knows he's got to be fit and ready to play each and every game." Lehmann praised Lyon's bowling in the second innings of the Melbourne Test where he snared the crucial wickets of Younis Khan, captain Misbah-ul-Haq and in-form No.6 Asad Shafiq to crack the game wide open.

"I thought Nathan Lyon was outstanding, he bowled consistent line and length, which was up and down in the previous few Test matches," Lehmann said. "Three or four balls an over have been there, but today (Friday) was a lot better. "He got through the middle order and so I'm pleased for him." —AFP

## S LANKA'S CAPTAIN PONDER CHANGES FOR SECOND TEST

**CAPE TOWN:** Sri Lankan captain Angelo Mathews spoke about the need for his team to be mentally tough when they meet South Africa in the second Test starting at Newlands tomorrow-but they may need also need some changes in personnel.

In losing the first Test in Port Elizabeth by 206 runs, Sri Lanka showed weaknesses in both batting and bowling. While South Africa seem certain to go into the match with an unchanged team, Mathews admitted there would be debate in the Sri Lankan camp about the composition of their side.

Kusal Perera's role as an attacking number three batsman could come in for particular scrutiny. He was out for seven and six in Port Elizabeth, on both occasions playing ill-judged cut shots.

With Perera having been compared to Sanath Jayasuriya, on whom he has based his game, Mathews said he would not like to see the young left-hander abandon his attacking instincts.

But Mathews said that slashing at South Africa's fast bowlers on pitches with pace and bounce "wasn't the right game plan". He said he was not sure whether changes would be made but acknowledged that Upul Tharanga, a more conservative left-hander, was an option. "He can bat from one to seven."

Whereas in sub-continental conditions Sri Lanka usually base their bowling attack on spin, they opted in Port Elizabeth for three pace bowlers and only one specialist spinner in veteran Rangana Herath. Although Suranga Lakmal bowled well, taking five wickets in the first innings, the fast bowlers seldom threatened in the second innings, when South Africa made 406 for six declared.

Dusmantha Chameera was disappointing, taking only one wicket in the match

and conceding 153 runs at more than five runs an over. Mathews indicated, however, that Chameera could be given another chance. "He is coming back from injury," said Mathews. "He has not got his rhythm back but he can do better in the second Test." Although there has been an extended period of hot, dry weather in Cape Town, the pitch is still likely to offer more pace and bounce than Port Elizabeth, although spinners could play a role later in the match. An option for Sri Lanka might be to play to their traditional strength by picking two spinners, with off-spinner Dilruwan Perera coming into the side. Perera would also strengthen what in Port Elizabeth proved to be a lengthy batting "tail".

Newlands has been a fortress for the South African team, who have won 19 of the 29 Tests played there since 1993, with their only four defeats all having been against Australia.

The New Year Test is traditionally the biggest occasion in South African cricket and the ground is sold out for the first day. Coming on the back of a series victory in Australia last month and a convincing win in Port Elizabeth, South Africa will be favourites to wrap up the three-match series.

### Teams:

South Africa (likely): Faf du Plessis (captain), Stephen Cook, Dean Elgar, Hashim Amla, JP Duminy, Temba Bavuma, Quinton de Kock (wkt), Vernon Philander, Keshav Maharaj, Kyle Abbott, Kagiso Rabada.

Sri Lanka (from): Angelo Mathews (captain), Dinesh Chandimal (wkt), Kusal Mendis, Kusal Perera, Dimuth Karunaratne, Kaushal Silva, Dhananjaya de Silva, Upul Tharanga, Dilruwan Perera, Rangana Herath, Lahiru Kumara, Nuwan Pradeep, Dushmantha Chameera, Suranga Lakmal, Vikum Sanjaya. — AFP



**NELSON:** New Zealand players pose with the ODI series trophy after winning the third one day international cricket match between New Zealand and Bangladesh at Saxton Oval in Nelson yesterday. — AFP

## NZ CRUISES PAST BANGLADESH TO COMPLETE SERIES SWEEP

**NELSON:** New Zealand captain Kane Williamson made an unbeaten 95 and deployed his bowlers expertly on a slow pitch to steer the hosts to a comfortable eight-wicket win over Bangladesh in the third one-day international yesterday, completing a clean sweep of the series.

Williamson shared a record 185-run partnership with Neil Broom (97) for the second wicket which guided New Zealand to 239-2, winning with 8.4 overs to spare, in response to Bangladesh's inadequate total of 236-9.

Their partnership was the highest for the second wicket by New Zealand in one-day internationals against all nations. Broom was dropped before he had scored at first slip by Imrul Kayes from the bowling of Mustafizur Rahman. He took full advantage of the reprieve and was approaching back-to-back centuries when he gave Mustafizur belated revenge by edging a ball from the young fast bowler to captain Masrafe Mortaza at gully.

By that stage, New Zealand was 195-2 and well on the way to victory against a Bangladesh team that was again undone by a middle-order collapse, as it was in the previous game. The visitors were 102-0 after winning the toss and batting, with Tamim Iqbal (59) and Imrul Kayes (44) sharing a century opening stand. But the top order crumbled to 170-6.

Bangladesh's bowlers applied early pressure, dismissing opener Tom Latham for 4 and then seeing Martin Guptill retire hurt with a hamstring strain, leaving the home team effectively two wickets down with 16 runs scored.

Had Broom's chance to slip been taken, New Zealand would have been hard-pressed to stave off its first-ever loss to Bangladesh in a one-day international in New Zealand. Instead, Broom came within three runs of back-to-back centuries following his 109 not out in the second match; celebrating his recall to the one-day team after a six-year absence.

Williamson had a chance to score his ninth one-day international century but allowed Broom, and then James Neesham (28 from 23 balls) to take the scoring initiative late. "We improved throughout each match and today was far more the complete performance that we were after," Williamson said. "That's a lot of credit to our boys in the way they were smart on the surface but a lot of credit to Bangladesh."

"Coming over here in conditions they're not entirely used to they put up a good fight and put us under pressure." Bangladesh failed to capitalize on a strong start after winning the toss and batting.

The century opening stand seemed to have set up the tourists for a big score but the visitors rapidly lost the next six wickets.

Williamson again deployed his bowlers well on a Saxton Oval pitch which was too slow to allow confident shot-making. He handed the new ball to the 36-year-old off-spinner Jeetan Patel, who was playing his first one-day international since 2009, and gave 28 of the 50 overs to slow bowlers, personally taking 1-24 from eight overs of off-spin.

"There were some good individual performances but as a team we couldn't go through with it," Mortaza said. "After five years coming to play in New Zealand we're improving lots. There are some issues but we have to prove as a team we're a lot better." — AP

### SCOREBOARD

**NELSON, New Zealand:** Complete scoreboard in the third one-day international between New Zealand and Bangladesh at Saxton Oval in Nelson yesterday.

Bangladesh		New Zealand	
Tamim Iqbal c Broom b Neesham	59	M. Guptill rtd hurt	6
Imrul Kayes c Broom b Southee	44	T. Latham lbw Mustafizur Raham	4
Sabbir Rahman c Ronchi b Henry	19	K. Williamson not out	95
Mahmudullah c Neesham b Southee	3	N. Broom c Mashrafe Mortaza b Mustafizur Rahman	97
Shakib Al Hasan run out (Ronchi)	18	J. Neesham not out	28
Mosaddek Hossain lbw Patel	11	Extras (lb3, w6)	9
Nurul Hasan c&b Henry	44	Total (2 wickets; 41.2 overs)	239
Tanveer Haider b Williamson	3	Fall of wickets: 1-10 (Latham), 1-16 (Guptill rtd hurt), 2-195 (Broom)	
Mashrafe Mortaza c Patel b Santner	14	Did not bat: Colin Munro, Luke Ronchi, Mitchell Santner, Tim Southee, Matt Henry, Jeetan Patel.	
Taskin Ahmed not out	4	Bowling: Mashrafe Mortaza 7-0-36-0 (4w), Mustafizur Rahman 9.2-2-32-2 (1w), Taskin Ahmed 7-0-41-0 (1w), Shakib Al Hasan 8-0-55-0, Tanveer Haider 2-0-20-0, Sabbir Rahman 3-0-20-0, Mosaddek Hossain 4-0-26-0, Mahmudullah 1-0-6-0	
Mustafizur Rahman not out	0	Result: New Zealand won by eight wickets.	
Extras (b1, lb7, w9)	17		
Total (9 wickets; 50 overs)	236		
Fall of wickets: 1-102 (Imrul Kayes), 2-127 (Sabbir Rahman), 3-133 (Mahmudullah), 4-141 (Tamim Iqbal), 5-168 (Shakib Al Hasan), 6-170 (Mosaddek), 7-179 (Tanveer Haider), 8-212 (Mashrafe Mortaza), 9-229 (Nurul Hasan)			
Bowling: Southee 10-2-45-1 (2w), Patel 10-0-40-1 (1w), Henry 8-0-53-2 (4w), Neesham 4-0-28-1 (1w), Santner 10-0-38-2 (1w), Williamson 8-1-24-1			

## JENNINGS PREPARED TO TAKE ON FORMER COMPATRIOTS

**LONDON:** England opener Keaton Jennings is not fussed about the possibility of facing his fellow South Africans in a test series next July, he told The Times yesterday. The 24-year-old-son of former South Africa wicketkeeper Ray Jennings-added that should he be selected he is prepared for a lot of attention being focused on him.

Barring a drop in form for his county Durham—who have been relegated to the second tier after being bailed-out by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) — he should be selected after making a century on his debut in the recent fourth Test against India and a half century in the fifth and final Test. His performances were a rare highlight in the series which England lost 4-0 and cast doubt on whether his opening partner Alistair Cook will remain as captain.

"I don't think it will feel weird playing against South Africa, but I know that the intensity around that will be heightened," said Jennings, who will probably also face some old team-mates from the Gauteng Province side whom he played for in 2011 and in the same year skippered the South Africa Under-19 side on a tour of England.

"There will be all the chat again about my nationality. And if I do play I will have to make sure I handle that and be calm, settled and focused." Jennings, who is playing for his 'home county' as his mother hails from Sunderland in the north east of England, said he is prepared to drop down the order should his services not be required to open. "I'd be happy to bat at No

10 and be a fielder," said Jennings, who will skipper the England second team squad the Lions on their tour of Sri Lanka next month. "Just to have the opportunity to play Test cricket, whether I'm playing in my preferred role or something slightly out of the norm. "If the opportunity is there in July to bat at No 3 and that is what (England coach) Trevor Bayliss or Cook want me to do then I will bite their hand off." Jennings, who qualified for England through the old four year residency rule, admitted he had been taken aback by some of the reaction to his agreeing to represent England and not the Proteas.

"I think social media gives people an opportunity to voice opinions that I don't really want to read," he said. "Social media is great but people voice their opinions in the wrong way sometimes. There was a backlash to my background but mostly I have had a lot of support."

Jennings protests that it is not South Africa which he considers his home but Durham. "South Africa isn't home any more actually," said Jennings, who is also studying for an accountancy degree.

"My mum and dad said the other day about me 'going back to the UK' and I corrected them. 'No. I am going home, that's my home,' I said. "The northeast of England is where I have bought property and where my local pub is and I have my usual order in the local pub and I know my way around."

"When I come back to South Africa now, I drive round using GPS because I don't know my way." — AFP



**Keaton Jennings**



**NELSON:** Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan (R) is run out by a throw from New Zealand's keeper Luke Ronchi (C) as Jeetan Patel (L) celebrates during the third one day international cricket match between New Zealand and Bangladesh at Saxton Oval in Nelson yesterday. — AFP

NO 10 FSU WINS WILD ORANGE BOWL OVER NO 6 MICHIGAN, 33-32

MIAMI GARDENS: Deondre Francois threw a 12-yard touchdown pass to Nyquan Murray with 36 seconds remaining, and No 10 Florida State beat No. 6 Michigan 33-32 in a wild Orange Bowl on Friday night.

injury early in the second quarter.

SUN BOWL NO. 16 STANFORD 25, NORTH CAROLINA 23

Bryce Love took over for the absent Christian McCaffrey in the Stanford backfield, running for 119 yards and catching a 49-yard touchdown pass to help the Cardinal beat North Carolina.

Stanford safety Dallas Lloyd intercepted two of Trubisky's passes, returning the second 19 yards for a touchdown to give Stanford a 22-17 lead early in the fourth quarter.

MUSIC CITY BOWL

TENNESSEE 38, NO. 24 NEBRASKA 24

Joshua Dobbs ran for three touchdowns and 118 yards and threw for 291 yards and another score in Tennessee's victory over Nebraska.

fourth to pull the Cornhuskers within 31-24. Dobbs answered with a 59-yard TD pass to Josh Malone for the final margin.

LIBERTY BOWL GEORGIA 31, TCU 23

Nick Chubb ran for 142 yards and a touchdown, sending Georgia past TCU for the Bulldogs' third bowl victory in three years.

ARIZONA BOWL AIR FORCE 45, SOUTH ALABAMA 21

Arion Worthman threw for 207 yards to balance out Air Force's run-heavy offense, Jacobi Owens scored two touchdowns and the Falcons overcame a sluggish start to beat South Alabama.

NHL Results/Standings

Vancouver 3 Anaheim 2 (OT); San Jose 2 Philadelphia 0; Nashville 4 St. Louis 0; Carolina 3 Chicago 2.

Table with NHL standings: Western Conference Central Division, Metropolitan Division, Pacific Division, Eastern Conference Atlantic Division. Columns: Team, W, L, OTL, GF, GA, PTS.

THOMAS SCORES 52 FOR CELTICS IN 117-114 WIN OVER MIAMI

BOSTON: Isaiah Thomas scored 29 of his career-high 52 points in the fourth quarter, setting a club record for points in a period and leading Boston to a 117-114 victory over the Miami Heat on Friday night.



BOSTON: Miami Heat guard Josh Richardson (0) steals the ball from Boston Celtics guard Isaiah Thomas (4) in the second half of an NBA basketball game, Friday, in Boston. —AP

Zach LaVine added 24 points and Shabazz Muhammad had 22 points in 18 minutes off the bench for the Wolves. They shot 55.8 percent from the field and hit 13 of 25 3-pointers.

and scoring 20 points in the first half. Trevor Booker had 16 points and seven rebounds for the Nets.

PACERS 111, BULLS 101

Paul George scored 11 of his 32 points in the final 4 1/2 minutes to help Indiana beat Chicago to snap four-game losing streak.

WIZARDS 119, NETS 95

Trey Burke scored a season-high 27 points, John Wall had another double-double and Washington beat Brooklyn to win its third straight game and reach .500 for the first time this season.

HAWKS 105, PISTONS 98

Paul Millsap scored 26 points and Kyle Korver had a season-high 22 to lead Atlanta past Detroit.

DELL GETS FIRST CAREER SO IN SHARKS' 2-0 VICTORY

SAN JOSE: Rookie Aaron Dell stopped 21 shots to get his first career shutout and the San Jose Sharks beat the Philadelphia Flyers 2-0 on Friday night.

for Carolina while improving to 8-0-1 during the Hurricanes' home ice roll.

PREDATORS 4, BLUES 0

Juuse Saros made 25 saves for his first career shutout, Filip Forsberg got a goal and an assist and Nashville beat St. Louis.

CANUCKS 3, DUCKS 2, OT

Henrik Sedin scored 4:01 into overtime and Vancouver beat Anaheim.

ROCKETS 140, CLIPPERS 116

James Harden had a triple-double with 30 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists and Houston routed Los Angeles.

WARRIORS 108, MAVERICKS 99

Kevin Durant had his first triple-double for Golden State with 19 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists and first in more than a year.

SPURS 110, TRAIL BLAZERS 94

Danny Green and Tony Parker each had 18 points and the San Antonio Spurs overcame another listless first half to beat Portland.

76ERS 124, NUGGETS 122

Ersan Ilyasova had a career-high 23 points and 13 rebounds and Philadelphia survived a flurry in the final seconds to beat Denver.

PELICANS 104, KNICKS 92

Anthony Davis had 23 points and 18 rebounds, and New Orleans beat New York for its fourth straight victory.

TIMBERWOLVES 116, BUCKS 99

Andrew Wiggins scored 31 points and Karl-Anthony Towns had 18 points and 16 rebounds to help Minnesota beat Milwaukee.



ST LOUIS: Viktor Arvidsson, Jake Allen, Jay Bouwmeester, Colton Parayko Nashville Predators' Viktor Arvidsson, (38), of Sweden, scores a goal past St. Louis Blues goalie Jake Allen (34) as Jay Bouwmeester (19) and Colton Parayko (55) defend during the second period of an NHL hockey game Friday, in St Louis. The Predators won 4-0. —AP

NBA Results/Standings

Golden State 108, Dallas 99; Philadelphia 124, Denver 122; San Antonio 110, Portland 94; New Orleans 104, NY Knicks 92; Houston 140, LA Clippers 116; Minnesota 116, Milwaukee 99; Atlanta 105, Detroit 98; Boston 117, Miami 114; Washington 118, Brooklyn 95; Indiana 111, Chicago 101.

Table with NBA standings: Eastern Conference Atlantic Division, Central Division, Southeast Division, Western Conference Northwest Division, Pacific Division, Southwest Division. Columns: Team, W, L, PCT, GB, and various performance metrics.

# HUDDERSFIELD EDGE UP CHAMPIONSHIP TABLE

**LONDON:** Huddersfield Town edged up to fourth spot in England's Championship yesterday, rescuing a point in a 1-1 draw at home to Blackburn Rovers with a stoppage-time equaliser from striker Nakhi Wells.

Rovers were denied victory by a Wells free kick in the 94th minute, having

gone ahead in the 81st when Danny Graham headed in his seventh goal in his last eight games.

The draw left Blackburn in the relegation zone ahead of their Monday meeting with table-topping Newcastle United. None of the leading three teams in the second tier were playing on

Saturday. Birmingham City salvaged a 2-2 draw at Barnsley after going in a goal down at the break.

Early strikes from Tom Bradshaw and Sam Winnall, who headed home his 11th goal of the season, put the home team in charge before Jacques Maghoma pulled one back for

Birmingham with a left-footed strike from the left side of the box. Lukas Jutkiewicz levelled the scores for City from the penalty spot in the 52nd minute after Marc Roberts was sent off for bringing down Che Adams. Queens Park Rangers snatched a 2-1 win at Wolverhampton Wanderers thanks to a

late strike from Pawel Wszolek, pulling themselves away from the relegation zone. Preston North End drew 1-1 with Sheffield Wednesday, with Wednesday's Adam Reach netting in stoppage time to spare the blushes of his team mate Sam Hutchinson who earlier scored an own goal. — Reuters

# BARKLEY DENIES HULL CRUCIAL WIN

 Hull	2
 Everton	2

**KINGSTON UPON HULL:** Everton's mercurial talent Ross Barkley's header secured them a 2-2 draw with struggling Hull in their Premier League clash on Friday.

Barkley, who has lost his place in the England squad and been in and out of the Everton first team under manager Ronald Koeman, allowed the visitors to level for the second time.

Hull skipper Michael Dawson and then Robert Snodgrass, with his eighth of the season, had given Hull the lead on two occasions. An own goal by Hull keeper David Marshall at the end of the first-half had gifted Everton their first equaliser.

The point sees Hull, who have not won in their last eight, climb off the bottom and go a point ahead of managerless Swansea who play later this weekend.

Everton, with just two wins in their last nine games, remain marooned in seventh spot, six points adrift of Manchester United. Dawson pounced with a lovely strike for his third goal of the season although Everton would look askance at veterans Phil Jagielka and Gareth Barry.

Jagielka was beaten to a header at the near post by Curtis Davies while Barry reacted too slowly when the ball fell to Dawson.

Everton awoke to give Hull a few scares, Kevin Mirallas's deflected shot being scrambled away for a corner by Marshall and a superb Barry cross being headed against the post by Seamus Coleman.

Barry, belying his 35 years, was at the heart of most of Everton's attacking play and he went close himself from long range. Hull, though, looked to be set to go in to the break with a rare lead until Marshall's awful blunder instead gave Everton the

psychological advantage as they levelled with the last action of the half.

Marshall had his hands warmed early in the second-half but this time he made a sharp save from Romelu Lukaku's deflected effort, tipping it onto the bar.

Marshall was also equal to the task when Barkley ran on to Lukaku's flick on but the England international shot straight at the goalkeeper.

Hull went agonisingly close to regaining the lead in the 55th minute as leading scorer Snodgrass' superb freekick beat Joel Robles in the Everton goal but was denied by the post.

Robles, who has earned a run in the team with the injury to Maarten Stekelenburg, did well to prevent Dawson doubling his tally on the hour mark when the centreback was found by Egyptian Ahmed Elmohamady.

However, there was nothing Robles could do with Snodgrass's second superb freekick. It was awarded after Leighton Baines had fouled the impressive Harry Maguire who had seized on an error by Idrissa Gueye and run deep into Everton territory.

Hull were edging towards an invaluable victory when Barkley struck, heading home from Baines's pinpoint cross.

Everton could have stolen all three points in the final minute of normal time as Coleman's superb cross was met by substitute Dominic Calvert-Lewin but his header flashed wide of the post. —AFP

**Live Matches on TV**  
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Watford v Tottenham Hotspur	16:30
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	
Arsenal v Crystal Palace	19:00
beIN SPORTS 2 HD	



**LEICESTER:** West Ham United's English striker Andy Carroll (2nd R) vies with Leicester City's Danish goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and West Ham United at King Power Stadium in Leicester, central England yesterday. — AFP

# LEICESTER EDGE CLEAR OF RELEGATION ZONE

Andy Carroll, who also did enough to deny Shinji Okazaki from the rebound, then Ogbonna's goal-bound header was blocked as City hung on for a vital win. —AFP

 Leicester	1
 West Ham	0

**LEICESTER:** Premier League champions Leicester City eased their relegation fears as Islam Slimani's headed goal gave them a much-needed 1-0 victory over West Ham yesterday.

Boosted by the inclusion of Riyad Mahrez, Robert Huth and Danny Drinkwater, Leicester looked every inch the side who battered Manchester City just a few weeks ago in one of this season's rare high points for the Foxes.

Claudio Ranieri's side now travel to Middlesbrough on Monday looking to pull further clear of the bottom three whilst Slaven Bilic's West Ham host Manchester United

The home side could easily have been a couple of goals ahead in a fast and frantic opening and were only denied by fine goalkeeping from West Ham's Darren Randolph and the post.

Randolph worked wonders in tipping Mahrez's left foot shot over the crossbar following a fine Leicester move. A minute later Marc Albrighton outpaced Dimitri Payet and sent over a pin-point cross which the unmarked Slimani could only head directly against the woodwork.

A rare scare for Leicester followed when Aaron Cresswell's ball from the right saw Wes Morgan flick the ball into Michail Antonio's path. The winger though had to stretch and skied his effort well over the crossbar.

What turned out to be the winner arrived in the 20th minute when Albrighton produced a superb cross and Slimani planted a firm header across Randolph and into the net.

It was nearly 2-0 moments later when Demarai Gray's left wing cross was directed towards his own net by Angelo Ogbonna only for Randolph to block with his right knee at close range.

The visitors claimed a penalty when Albrighton slid in on Payet, who crumpled to the ground. They came closer still to finding an equaliser when Payet's free-kick, following a block from Daniel Amartey, led to a mad scramble inside the penalty area.

Mark Noble's pass was cut out by a sliding Simpson and Kasper Schmeichel saved from Payet with his feet. The in-form Antonio then fired against the crossbar with a spectacular effort from Cresswell's cross.

Huth was booked for winning the ball but sliding dangerously into Payet and from the free-kick a diving Schmeichel preserved City's lead in diving down low to his left to push the ball around the post.

The first half ended with Slimani hooking a shot onto the roof of the net from Mahrez's cross. The second half lacked much of the goal-mouth action but not the intensity or passion. Amartey was booked for a foul on Noble two minutes after the restart and Noble was soon forced off through injury.

A high, late and ugly challenge earned a yellow card for West Ham's Hvard Nordtveit with his victim Ben Chilwell caught by studs into the midriff. Schmeichel raced 30 yards out of his area to join Leicester protests which promptly earned the goalkeeper a caution for dissent.

The visitors were looking much the stronger as referee Anthony Taylor's card continued to rise at a rapid rate. Simpson was booked from kicking the ball away after tripping Antonio before Manuel Lanzini also saw yellow for hauling back Amartey.

Chilwell's goal-bound shot was blocked by

# BRILLIANT ROBSON-KANU STUNNER FIRES ALBION

 Southampton	1
 West Brom	2

**SOUTHAMPTON:** West Bromwich Albion forward Hal Robson-Kanu ended his long goal drought with a brilliant strike to seal a 2-1 win against Southampton yesterday.

Robson-Kanu marked his first Premier League start for Albion with his first goal since his memorable effort for Wales in their shock Euro 2016 quarter-final win over Belgium.

Having joined Albion on a free transfer after his heroics with Wales, Robson-Kanu had failed to convince Baggies boss Tony Pulis that he was deserving of a single league start until the trip to St Mary's.

But he made up for lost time after 13 substitute appearances with a superb long-range finish in the second half after Matt Phillips had cancelled out Shane Long's opener for Southampton.

Southampton's Virgil van Dijk sent off was sent off in the closing moments as his team slumped to a second successive home defeat. Just three days after watching his side thrashed 4-1 by Tottenham, Saints boss Claude Puel made six changes, including dropping three defenders, but the changes brought little improvement.

Sofiane Boufal will be leaving

Southampton to play in the Africa Cup of Nations for Morocco shortly and he looked in the mood to bow out on a high.

He was a constant menace, firing narrowly over from long-range and then set up Dusan Tadic for a volley that raced wide. Boufal went close again when he whipped over a cross that curled just past the far post and the hosts' pressure was finally rewarded in the 41st minute. Tadic swung in a corner that picked out Long at the near post and the Irish striker's header was too powerful for Albion goalkeeper Ben Foster.

Yet in virtually their first incisive move of the half Albion equalised two minutes later.

Claudio Jacob fed Chris Brunt and his first-time pass was flicked on by Robson-Kanu to Phillips, who took a touch before side-footing into the bottom corner.

Albion doubled down on their shock response with a second goal five minutes after half-time.

Robson-Kanu's brilliant 'Cruyff turn' and cool finish against Belgium is likely to remain the highlight of his career whatever else he does, but his first goal for Albion in his first Premier League start in over three years was pretty memorable as well.

Running onto a Phillips pass, Robson-Kanu set his sights from an angle 18 yards from goal and unleashed a stunning left footed strike that flashed into the top corner. A dispiriting day for Southampton ended on a suitably downbeat note when centre-back van Dijk was dismissed for hauling down Salomon Rondon in the 89th minute. — AFP



**SOUTHAMPTON:** Southampton's English goalkeeper Fraser Forster (R) watches before saving a shot from West Bromwich Albion's English-born Scottish midfielder James Morrison during the English Premier League football match between Southampton and West Bromwich Albion at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton, southern England yesterday. — AFP

# KING CROWNS RUDDERLESS SWANSEA ANOTHER MISERY

 Swansea	0
 Bournemouth	3

**SWANSEA:** Joshua King rounded off another miserable day for managerless Swansea yesterday as his goal secured Bournemouth a 3-0 victory over the Premier League tailenders.

King's goal two minutes from time added to those of England Under-21 striker Benik Afobe and Scottish midfielder Ryan Fraser condemned Swansea-who sacked manager Bob Bradley last Monday-to their eighth defeat in the last 12 matches.

The Swans are a point adrift of Hull-who drew 2-2 with Everton on Friday and four shy of safety. Victory brought Bournemouth their first away win in four matches and came on the eighth anniversary when present manager Eddie Howe took over in a caretaker capacity and with them 91st in the 92 member league.

Now they sit comfortably in mid-table 10 points above the relegation places. Junior Stanislas, one of Bournemouth's standout players this season, had the Cherries first chance, his dazzling solo run getting him into the box and his audacious chip was just

tipped over the bar by Lukasz Fabianski.

Swansea had few chances but Fernando Llorente, all of whose six goals this term have come at home, beat Artur Boruc with a header only for it to clip the post.

However, the hosts morale dipped when a few minutes later Afobe was on hand to knock the ball home after Jordi Amat had come close to scoring an own goal, the ball rebounding off the inside of the post and eagerly snapped up by the Bournemouth striker. Amat's frustrations boiled over shortly afterwards as his clattering challenge on the impressive Fraser earned him a booking.

Fraser, whose introduction as a substitute engineered their remarkable comeback from 3-1 down to beat Liverpool 4-3 recently, provided the perfect riposte doubling the visitors lead on half-time.

Stanislas was the provider after playing a 1-2 with the outstanding Jack Wilshere. Wilshere, who has flourished during his on loan spell from Arsenal, was at the heart of everything, teeing up Stanislas in the second-half, his shot drifting just wide of the post.

The England midfielder then set up Afobe, who should have done better from the edge of the box, his shot ballooning over the bar.

However, Swansea couldn't muster any sort of fightback and King rubbed in the visitors superiority right at the end with the home fans having been heading for the exits well before then. — AFP



**SWANSEA:** Swansea City's Kyle Naughton, left, tackles Bournemouth's Ryan Fraser during their English Premier League soccer match against Bournemouth at the Liberty Stadium, Swansea, Wales, yesterday. — AP

# Sports

Brazil's Nunes pummels Rousey in UFC title fight

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NZ cruises past Bangladesh to complete sweep

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DELL GETS FIRST CAREER SO IN SHARKS' 2-0 VICTORY

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LONDON: Chelsea's Marcos Alonso, left, and Stoke City's Mame Biram Diouf battle for the ball during their English Premier League soccer match at Stamford Bridge, London, yesterday. —AP

## WILLIAN POWERS CHELSEA TO RECORD-EQUALLING WIN

	Chelsea	4
	Stoke	2

LONDON: Chelsea equalled Arsenal's record of 13 consecutive Premier League wins in a season as Willian's brace inspired a 4-2 win over Stoke yesterday. Antonio Conte's side had a difficult afternoon after twice being pegged back at Stamford Bridge,

but they still managed to match Arsenal's feat in 2001-02 to ensure they enter the new year with a sizeable advantage at the top of the table.

Gary Cahill's header put Chelsea ahead at the break but Bruno Martins Indi levelled immediately after the restart before Willian restored the lead. Peter Crouch then gave Stoke a second leveller, only for Willian to pop up moments later before Diego Costa sealed the win. The leaders were able to recall France midfielder N'Golo Kante and Spain striker Costa after the suspended pair missed the 3-0 home win over Bournemouth on Boxing Day.

They went close to taking the lead as the injured Eden Hazard beat two men before seeing a shot deflected wide. Lee Grant came to Stoke's res-

cue as he brilliantly kept out a deflected Costa piledriver after he had chested down a Cesc Fabregas cross. Grant then saved again to deny Cahill from a Fabregas corner, but Stoke looked dangerous when they attacked and Charlie Adam missed a good chance, heading wide from Xherdan Shaqiri's corner. However, it was Chelsea who put the pressure on with Grant denying Costa and then Hazard on the rebound.

### ANIMATED

And from Fabregas's resulting 33rd-minute corner, England defender Cahill headed home to give Conte's side the lead with his fourth goal of the season. Chelsea continued to attack with a Costa free

kick just missing the target but Stoke went on to surprise the hosts within a minute of the restart.

Adam's free kick was headed on by Crouch for Martins Indi to volley home for his first Stoke goal.

Willian drove wide for Chelsea in response as Conte got increasingly animated, while the Brazilian midfielder soon missed the target again.

But the Chelsea manager was soon looking far happier as his team regained the lead on 56 minutes. Victor Moses got the better of Erik Pieters down the right and Hazard's touch fell perfectly for Willian to score. Chelsea continued to attack with Costa driving left footed over the bar following another lay-off from Hazard.

But it was Stoke who were level again on 64

minutes as Crouch caused problems in the box before Bojan Krkic fed Mame Diouf, who crossed for Crouch to convert on the line.

They were level for less than 60 seconds though as Fabregas played in Willian to score his second of the game and fifth of the season with an emphatic finish. That again had Conte dancing with delight on the touchline as he celebrated amongst the home fans. Willian missed a chance for a hat-trick as he scuffed his shot wide while Costa missed an even better one, blazing over from Hazard's pass. But Chelsea could eventually breathe easily five minutes from time as Costa latched onto a stray Adam header before driving home left footed past Grant for his 14th goal of the campaign. —AFP



ABU DHABI: Spain's Rafael Nadal receives his trophy from Sheikh Nahyan bin Zayed al-Nahyan, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Sports Council, after defeating Belgium's David Goffin in the final match of the Mubadala World Tennis Championship 2016 in Abu Dhabi yesterday. —AFP

## NADAL WINS FOURTH UAE TITLE

ABU DHABI: Rafael Nadal ended an injury-plagued 2016 on a high by lifting the Mubadala World Tennis Championship title for a fourth time yesterday.

The 30-year-old Spaniard defeated 11th-ranked Belgian David Goffin 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) after world number one Andy Murray earlier ousted Canada's Milos Raonic 6-3, 7-6 (8/6) to take third place. "I'm very happy to return to competition again. These three days have been good for me. These three days, playing at this level, are going to stand me in good stead for the rest of the season," said Nadal. Nadal's 2016 campaign had been ruined by a wrist injury that forced him out of Roland Garros after the second round and saw him miss Wimbledon.

But he looked in form throughout the exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi, beating Czech Tomas Berdych in the quarter-final and Raonic in the semi-finals. "He put a lot of pressure on me," said Goffin of his first clash against the

Spaniard. "You can feel how strong he is when he is in front of you. Mentally he is very impressive and he looks really strong to start the new season." Nadal will now head to Australia for the Brisbane International, with Goffin travelling to Doha for the Qatar Open.

Wimbledon and Olympic champion Murray, who was knighted in the New Year Honours list, lost to Goffin in Friday's semi-final, his first defeat in the Belgian in six meetings.

"It was good to finish the year with a win," said the 29-year-old Scot. "I still feel like Andy Murray - that feels more normal - but I am happy with the knighthood and it is a nice way to start the new year." Murray's next stop is neighbouring Qatar for the opening week of the ATP season and two weeks out from the Australian Open, the first Grand Slam of 2017.

In the match for fifth-place in the six-man field, France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga beat Czech Tomas Berdych 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 10-3. —AFP

## POGBA CROWNS MAN UTD LATE FIGHTBACK

	Man United	2
	Middlesbrough	1

MANCHESTER: Paul Pogba capped Manchester United's thrilling fightback as the France midfielder struck in the closing moments to seal a 2-1 victory over Middlesbrough yesterday.

Grant Leadbitter's second half goal put Middlesbrough on course for an unlikely win against Jose Mourinho's side, but brilliant late strikes from Anthony Martial and then Pogba saw United earn their fifth successive league win in the most dramatic fashion. United's gritty revival maintained their momentum heading into 2017 as they look to secure a top four finish and possibly mount a late title challenge. Middlesbrough boss Aitor Karanka was Mourinho's assistant for three years at Real Madrid and the two share a genuine friendship borne from that period between 2010 and 2013.

Their relationship was, of course, placed to one side for 90 minutes in Manchester as United were looking to go unbeaten in 12 matches, a situation Middlesbrough can only dream about as they look set for a protracted battle to beat the drop this term.

United, again missing the injured Wayne Rooney, had two early corners that amounted to nothing but it was Middlesbrough who squandered the first glorious chance just three minutes in.

Adama Traore broke through the middle and had both Stewart Downing and Alvaro Negredo free in acres of space close to the edge of the box but he opted to shoot and embarrassingly scuffed wide.

United looked to attack repeatedly early on as Antonio Valencia and Anthony Martial threatened, but they could not really trouble Victor Valdes until the 14th minute when Pogba's stunning overhead kick hit the post from close range.

Middlesbrough again showed their ability as

Traore remained in heart of the action.

He beat Daley Blind and delivered a fine cross that eventually landed at the feet of George Friend, whose drilled effort was well blocked by Marouane Fellaini.

The game hit a lull as Middlesbrough looked strong at the back and United offered little, although one left footed Henrikh Mkhitaryan effort forced Valdes into a decent low save after half an hour.

United kept pushing and were unlucky not to take the lead just before the break.

Firstly, Martial rifled an effort against the post from 30 yards before Zlatan Ibrahimovic bundled the ball home past Valdes. However, as Old Trafford celebrated, the goal was overruled as the United player was deemed to have fouled Valdes in the process of out-jumping him to score, although replays showed that

Ibrahimovic had done little wrong.

Four minutes after the interval, Ibrahimovic was denied by Valdes, who saved his close-range effort with his feet while Adam Forshaw briefly threatened at the other end. A goal was needed and few in the stadium could believe it would arrive for the visitors.

However, after 67 minutes, Leadbitter popped up to latch onto a fine Negredo knock-down header and he smashed past David De Gea. The goal kickstarted the home side as substitute Marcus Rashford started to cause trouble.

Middlesbrough seemed determined to hold on but eventually, United's dominance proved too much.

Martial swept past Valdes to equalise after 85 minutes before Pogba scored a fine header 90 seconds later to confirm the astonishing turnaround. —AFP



OLD TRAFFORD: Manchester United's Paul Pogba, right, performs a scissor kick during their English Premier League soccer match against Middlesbrough at Old Trafford, Manchester, England, yesterday. —AP