

AUSTRALIA CB SITS TIGHT, GIVES NOD TO GLOBAL RISK

SYDNEY: Australia's central bank held interest rates steady yesterday even as wild swings in global markets, deepening unease over China's economy and a fresh outbreak of easing abroad suggests risks are for a further cut going forward. The Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) did leave the door open to a move after its first policy meeting of the year, saying that a background of subdued inflation meant there was scope for a reduction if needed to support the economy.

The Board specifically noted that coming data would allow it to better judge if turmoil in financial markets truly augured tougher times for the global economy, and whether recent strength in employ-

ment at home would prove long lasting. Yet, it also saw reasons for optimism. "The Board judged that there were reasonable prospects for continued growth in the economy, with inflation close to target," RBA Governor Glenn Stevens said in a brief statement.

"The available information suggests that the expansion in the non-mining parts of the economy strengthened during 2015 even as the contraction in mining investment continued."

The steady outcome was no surprise given the RBA has repeatedly questioned whether lower rates would do much good, and might cause harm by inflating a bubble in home prices.

In a Reuters poll of 32 analysts, all had expected no change in the 2 percent cash rate this week which limited the reaction in markets to a slight dip in the local dollar.

The central bank last eased in May and has since shown a preference for further stimulus to come through a weaker currency. The Australian dollar pared early gains to be down slightly at \$0.7080, but is hovering not far from 7-year lows.

MORE EASING, MAYBE

Investors still assume the global outlook argues for at least one more cut in rates, albeit not for a while. Interbank futures imply around an even chance of a

move by May and are fully priced for 1.75 percent by October. "Financial markets in early 2016 provide a strong reminder that Australia is a small and open economy, leveraged to the global commodity and growth cycle," says Su-Lin Ong, a senior economist at RBC Capital Markets.

"Accordingly, we remain with two further cuts in our profile for this year." The Bank of Japan stunned markets last week by cutting rates to less than zero, and the head of the European Central Bank has all but promised further stimulus steps by March.

The resulting drop in the yen and euro, combined with feverish talk of a possible devaluation of the Chinese

yuan, are pressuring other countries to keep policy loose so as to avoid a damaging appreciation in their own currencies. Worries about the health of Chinese demand have also contributed to steep price falls for many of Australia's major commodity exports, hitting profits, wages and tax receipts.

The RBA's own index of commodity prices sank by a quarter in the year to January, when measured in US dollar terms. Domestic inflation would be no bar to action given it is running at the very bottom of the central bank's long-term target band of 2 to 3 percent. — Reuters

INFINITI Q60 SPORTS COUPE AND QX30 PREMIUM ACTIVE CROSSOVER SET TO MAKE EUROPEAN DEBUT

GENEVA MOTOR SHOW

DUBAI: Infiniti will present two all-new expressive models at the Geneva International Motor Show on 1 March, 2016. Joining them will be the thoroughly revised Q50. All three share Infiniti's iconic design language, innovative technologies and precise driving characteristics.

All-new are the Q60 sports coupe, promising a powerful drive from a highly-advanced new V6 twin-turbo engine boasting 405 PS, and the QX30 premium active crossover, with its highly-sculpted concept-like exterior, elevated stance and asymmetric cabin design. They will be joined by the refreshed Q50 sports sedan, which features significant performance and dynamic upgrades that deliver a more empowering and rewarding drive experience.

Francois Goupil de Bouille, Infiniti Vice President, Europe, Middle East and Africa commented: "This is an exciting time for Infiniti, as we have transformed our product line-up and established sales records in Europe as we did across the globe. The new models set for their European debuts in Geneva highlight our commitment to expanding our product portfolio in new and thrilling directions, based on daring concept cars. This is the Infiniti way, and one that will help us achieve further success in 2016 and beyond."

The bold exterior of the Q60 exemplifies Infiniti's 'Powerful Elegance' design language, with distinctive proportions and taut, muscular lines. Innovative drivetrain technologies and power channeled through the rear wheels deliver an exhilarating drive.

The high performance 3.0-liter V6 twin-



turbo engine from the new and exclusive 'VR' powertrain family continues the brand's longstanding heritage of advanced six-cylinder powertrains production. The Q60 to be shown in Geneva features the higher-powered 405 PS V6 engine, providing one of the best power-to-efficiency ratings in the sports coupe class.

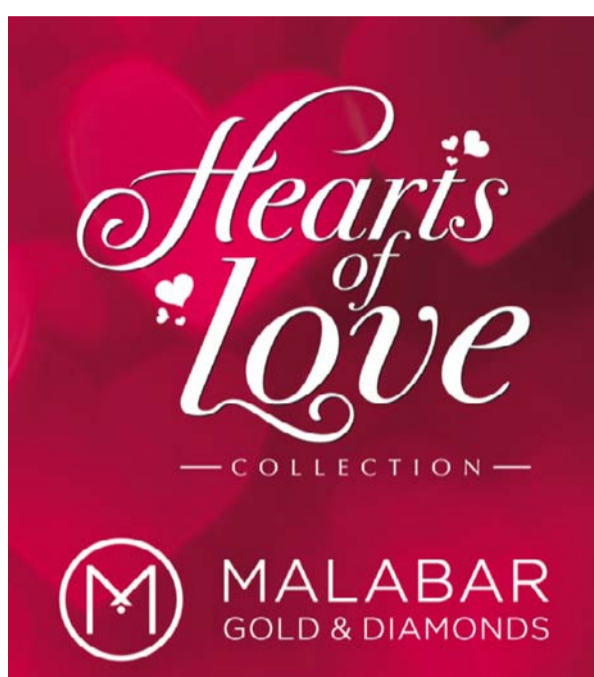
Created for a new generation of premium buyers, the all-new QX30 boasts a purposeful, elevated appearance that makes a bold visual statement, joining the Q30 as part of Infiniti's new premium compact model line-up. Remaining true to the

'Powerful Elegance' design approach that guided the original QX30 concept, the car demonstrates Infiniti's design-led approach to product development.

Alongside the Q60 and QX30, Infiniti will also reveal an upgraded version of the Q50 sports sedan, which has played a key role in the brand's sustained global growth in recent years. As well as the powerful all-new V6 engine found in the Q60 sports coupe, making its debut in the Q50 is the company's second-generation Direct Adaptive Steering - comprehensively updated from the ground-breaking first-

generation system, and Infiniti's new Dynamic Digital Suspension, which gives the new sports sedan an optimal blend of ride comfort and class-leading response and agility.

The launch of these new and upgraded models in Europe comes at a time of rapid growth for Infiniti, and in the midst of an intense global product launch period. Infiniti globally sold a record 215,250 new vehicles in 2015, representing a year-on-year rise of 16 percent. In Western Europe, 7,000 customers bought a new Infiniti last year, an increase of 45 percent over 2014.



MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS UNVEILS 'HEARTS OF LOVE' JEWELLERY COLLECTION TO CELEBRATE THE SEASON OF LOVE

Malabar Gold & Diamonds launched a special edition of diamond studded jewellery collection named 'Hearts of Love' to celebrate the season of love. Diamonds are a symbol of eternity and a timeless interpretation of love. As the demand for heart shaped jewellery boosts during this season of love, the jewellery chain launched an exclusive collection of heart shaped jewellery to cater to the customer demand.

This stunningly romantic collection of diamond jewellery is a unique way to express your feelings, affection and togetherness. Each piece in this collection is specially designed with an aura of love and is easily affordable.

Their spectacular piece of heart shaped 3 in 1 diamond pendant is a perfect gift to express true emotions to your loved ones. This pendant available in different colors like white gold, yellow gold and rose gold at a special promotional price of KD 145.

They have also unveiled limited edition of twin-heart and triple-heart pendants sparkling with diamonds ranging from KD 50 to KD 210. They also offering multiple number of amazing diamond jewellery sets to celebrate this season and each set comprises of beautifully crafted pendant, pair of earrings and finger ring. These sets are available from the affordable price of KD 155.

To add more delight to this occasion, the customers can also avail a branded Esprit or Westar watch absolutely free with this limited edition jewellery.

Apart from these, Malabar Gold & Diamonds also showcase an incredible collection of unique designs in gold and diamond jewellery from Italy, Turkey, Bahrain and India to suit the tastes and budget of its different customers. Customers can also choose gifts to their loved ones from their branded jewellery segment that includes Era - Uncut Diamond Jewellery, Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewellery, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Precia - Precious Gem Jewellery and Divine - Indian Heritage Jewellery.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds gives you the chance to give that special someone a token of your love that she will cherish for the rest of her life. These promotional sets will be available at their outlets in UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain, Singapore & Malaysia until 14 February 2015.



VIVA ANNOUNCES CR7 LIVE SERVICE WINNERS

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announces the winners in CR7 Live service draws. The winners of Samsung Note 5 are as following: Adel Shaaban Ali, Abdelaziz J M Al-Dehani, Musaed Saleh A-Dehani and Furqan Zubair Ahmed.

This exclusive and special service allow Ronaldo's fans to get updates about latest news and information concerning Cristiano Ronaldo, and view statistics that make him the best player in the world, in addition to download and watch official videos and photos for him.

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To find out more about VIVA's new prepaid packages, or any of its other competitive promotions, products and packages, visit one of the 70 VIVA branches, or the VIVA website at www.viva.com.kw, or call VIVA's 24 hour call center on 102.



EXXON'S 4Q, ANNUAL PROFIT PLUNGE WITH OIL PRICES

DALLAS: The big plunge in oil prices is taking Big Oil's profits down. Exxon Mobil Corp said yesterday that fourth-quarter profit fell 58 percent to \$2.78 billion. It was the oil giant's smallest profit since the third quarter of 2002. Exxon's core exploration and production business lost money in the US and international earnings plummeted by nearly two-thirds. One of the few bright spots, Exxon's refining operations, was more profitable than a year ago. That helped Exxon avoid the fate of rival Chevron Corp, which lost money in the fourth quarter.

Britain's BP said yesterday that its profit tumbled more than 90 percent. Exxon shares fell 2 percent to \$74.70 in trading before the opening bell. The amount of oil on the market remains is at extraordinarily high levels and producers, with prices so low, continue to drill just to earn what they can. Exxon's production rose nearly 5 percent. In 2015, the company

pumped oil and natural gas equal to 4.1 million barrels a day.

CEO Rex Tillerson called it a "challenging environment," but said the company is generating enough cash to continue investing in the business. Exxon's profit fell from \$6.57 billion a year earlier, when oil prices were already beginning to tumble. The Irving, Texas, company was still able to put up per-share earnings of 67 cents, which was 3 cents better than beat Wall Street had expected, according to a survey by Zacks Investment Research.

Revenue fell to \$59.81 billion, beating the \$50.85 billion according to a poll by the data firm FactSet. For all of 2015, Exxon earned \$16.15 billion, or about half what it earned in 2014. Exxon shares have fallen 2 percent since the beginning of the year, while the Standard & Poor's 500 index has lost 5 percent. Exxon's shares have fallen 13 percent in the last 12 months. — AP

UBS BANK SHARES SINK AS RICH INVESTORS WITHDRAW MONEY

FRANKFURT: Swiss bank UBS saw its shares slide yesterday on news that investors were pulling money out of its division serving wealthy clients - a token of the market turbulence that has shaken the world in the past few months.

The Zurich-based bank, which nevertheless booked higher fourth quarter profits, cited "very low levels of client activity and pronounced risk aversion" as it reported 3.4 billion Swiss francs (\$3.3 billion) had flowed out of its wealth management arm, which handles money from rich people outside the US. Outflows in emerging markets and Europe outweighed inflows in the Asia Pacific region and Switzerland. Shares in UBS Group AG were down 7.8 percent at 15.37 Swiss francs in midday trading in Europe.

The share drop came despite a 10 percent rise in net profit in the October-December quarter, to 949 million francs from 858 million francs in the same period a year earlier. The result beat estimates for 867 million francs compiled by financial information provider

FactSet. Markets for everything from stocks to oil have been marked by turmoil over fears that China will not be able to support global growth as before, that emerging markets face troubles with debt and capital outflows and that low oil prices mean weakening demand in the economy.

The company's US-only wealth management division, however, saw strong inflows, with \$16.8 billion in net new money. Net profit was boosted by 715 million francs from the company's annual revaluation of deferred tax assets. It was reduced by 257 million francs from buying back some of the company's debt, and by 441 million francs in restructuring charges.

The bank recorded what CEO Sergio Ermotti called "an excellent year" for all of 2015, as net profit rose 79 percent to 6.2 billion francs, boosted by the performance of the wealth management division. The bank said management would propose a dividend of 0.85 francs for the year, up from 0.75 francs from 2014. — AP



ZURICH: Sergio Ermotti (center), CEO of Swiss banking giant UBS, Kirt Gardner (right), Group Chief Financial Officer and Hubertus Kuelps (left), Group Head of Communications attend the presentation of UBS's fourth quarter 2015 results in Zurich yesterday. — AFP

FIAT CHRYSLER SALES RISE 7% DESPITE MAJOR SNOWSTORM

DETROIT: Fiat Chrysler's January US sales rose a healthy 7 percent, a sign that the auto industry shoveled past a snowstorm that buried East Coast population centers late in the month.

The Italian-American automaker said yesterday that it sold just over 155,000 cars and trucks last month compared with 145,000 a year ago. But Fiat Chrysler wasn't led by its usual big sellers. The Jeep Cherokee and Grand Cherokee and the Ram Pickup all posted modest increases. Instead, the sales were boosted by some unlikely vehicles - including an 83 percent

increase for the heavily discounted Dodge Caravan minivan. FCA also reported a 70 percent rise in Dodge Durango SUV sales, and a 39 percent increase for the Chrysler Town & Country minivan.

Analysts are predicting a sales drop from a year ago due to the snowstorm after all automakers finish reporting numbers yesterday. Big East Coast metro areas such as New York and Washington, DC, were buried under more than 2 feet of snow the weekend of Jan. 22.

JD Power and Associates forecast a 4.5 percent sales drop from a year ago at just

under 1.1 million cars and trucks, while the TrueCar.com auto pricing site expected sales to fall 0.3 percent to 1.15 million.

"The snowstorm on the East Coast disrupted an estimated 15,000 sales," John Humphrey, JD Power's senior vice president of automotive, said in a statement. But Humphrey said those sales were merely postponed, not lost. He expected some catch-up last weekend and into February.

Last month also had two fewer selling days than a year ago when January sales hit their highest point in nine years. TrueCar predicted small sales increases for General

Motors, Volkswagen and Nissan, and a small decline for Ford. Honda and Toyota were expected to see sales fall by 5 percent or more.

Honda and Toyota rely more heavily on fuel-efficient car sales than trucks and SUVs as cheaper gas helps push buyers toward larger vehicles.

The LMC Automotive consulting firm is sticking with its prediction of a record sales year at 17.8 million sales, although the growth rate will be far slower than past years and could touch off more intense competition for buyers. — AP