

SUBSCRIPTION

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RABI ALTHANI 1, 1435 AH

No: 16064

Knox defiant after murder verdict upheld



Bieber: Latest child star battling (very public) fall



McIlroy retains Dubai lead, Woods toils



150 Files

CARNIVAL KICKS OFF HALA FEB FESTIVITIES

SALEM AL-MUBARAK ST BEDECKED IN KUWAIT COLORS



Max 21°
Min 11°

ISRAEL ALARMED BY INTERNATIONAL BOYCOTT THREATS

JERUSALEM: Israeli government and business leaders are alarmed by a growing international boycott movement and the likely effect of EU measures against exports from Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank. Cabinet ministers are to meet next week to hammer out a strategy against a growing international campaign to boycott trade linked to settlements, Haaretz newspaper reported yesterday. And a group of top Israeli businesspeople has launched a publicity campaign urging Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to make peace with the Palestinians for the sake of the economy.

In the latest developments, Norway's sovereign wealth fund blacklisted Thursday two Israeli companies involved in building settlements in Israeli-occupied east Jerusalem and US actress Scarlett Johansson stepped down as Oxfam ambassador amid a storm over her ad campaign for a firm operating in a settlement in the occupied West Bank. These incidents highlight the creeping success of a campaign to boycott trade linked to settlements built on Palestinian land seized during the Six Day War of 1967, and viewed by the international community as illegal.

Meanwhile, the European Union recently moved to block all grants and funding to any Israeli entity operating beyond the 1967 lines, sparking growing alarm in Israel. Lars Faaborg-Andersen, the EU's ambassador to Israel, told AFP last week that, in addition to coordinated action by the body, Israel's constant settlement construction was fuelling private moves to boycott products and services linked to the settlements. He said initiatives in Europe to require separate labelling for goods manufactured in the settlements were gathering pace every time Israel announced a new round of construction.

While some Israeli companies set up in occupied territory to take advantage of tax breaks, low rents and soft loans, others do so for ideological reasons, believing in the Jewish religious imperative to settle the biblical land. SodaStream, the home soft-drink machine maker that hired Johansson this month, says it hadn't chosen to set up in Maale Adumim settlement, east of Jerusalem, but simply inherited the facility when it acquired the business in 2007. In fact, CEO Daniel Birnbaum told New York Jewish weekly The Forward the plant's location was "a pain in the a**". But he added: "We will not throw our employees under the bus to promote anyone's political agenda," saying he "just can't see how it would help the cause of the Palestinians if we fired them." Senior executive Yonah Lloyd told the Jerusalem Post that would mean making 800 Palestinians and 500 Israelis jobless. — AFP



KUWAIT: Revelers are seen on Salem Al-Mubarak St in Salmiya during the launch of Hala Feb celebrations yesterday. — Photos by Joseph Shagra (See Pages 2 and 3)

KUWAIT: Salem Al-Mubarak Street in Salmiya wore a festive atmosphere yesterday to mark the launch of the month-long 2014 Hala February celebrations. Hundreds of people attended a parade that featured folklore displays, competitions and other activities featuring contributions from the public and private sector. Kuwait's flags and portraits of national figures adorned the street all the way to a platform that was set up to announce the beginning of the 15th annual event. The crowds sang along as the national anthem was played following the announcement.

Waleed Jassem, the general coordinator of the festival, appreciated people's positive reaction to the event, and expressed hope that the carnival "reflected a bright image of Kuwait and its people". Jassem also expressed gratitude to the interior and information ministries "for their great efforts in making the festi-

val successful," further applauding in statements to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) companies and embassies "who played major roles in the festival's success".

Meanwhile, a festival organizer said that the attendance yesterday surpassed all expectations. "The large attendance increases our responsibility to ensure that the festival continues to live up to people's expectations throughout its duration," said Waleed Al-Saqobi, who heads the committee promoting this year's festival. Hala February has become an annual spectacle featuring concerts by top entertainers in the Arab world, as well as poetry recitals and folklore-inspired stage presentations. Hala February coincides with Kuwait's major national celebrations including National Day (Feb 25) and Liberation Day (Feb 26th). — KUNA

