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Local Spotlight

ACCUMULATED ERRORS



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Despite government assurances to keep electricity and water rates affordable, the Minister of Finance confirmed this week an approved plan to raise all the rates. The Cabinet's approval to raise electricity and water prices has garnered a lot of disapproval from the public.

This decision is now a matter of concern by all due to the large increase in rates and it will be implemented on everyone - Kuwaitis and expats. Now as far as I know most expats are living in flats owned by Kuwaitis so I would assume that the increases will result in higher rental prices. Kuwaiti owners will no doubt pass the hike on to their renters by raising the apartment rental fees. Imagine how devastating this can be. We all know how unfairly high rents are in Kuwait already.

To prevent citizens from too staunchly opposing this plan, the government may set up a subsidy system whereby Kuwaiti citizens are granted an extra

I wonder why no one suggested to start with controlling the waste made by government departments?

allowance to cover the cost of the electricity and water hikes. Not only will this add to the government budget but then it again unfairly targets expats to carry the burden of the financial increases by themselves.

The government justification is that, according to World Bank estimates, there is an enormous amount of waste in electricity and water usage in Kuwait. If that is the case, I wonder why no one suggested to start with controlling the waste made by government departments? We all can see how much water and electricity they waste on a daily basis.

All official statements had confirmed that low income citizens will not be affected by the rise in prices. This is surprising for several reasons: First, what exactly is the government's definition of low income people? And how they are being categorized? Are they the families with a monthly income that is less than KD 1,000? And how does the government calculate income?

According to initial statements, consumers will be divided into seven categories, according to consumption. And the government will keep the current prices for the first category that use less than 50 kilowatts per month.

I surely agree that we must rationalize spending and control waste in state budgets, expenditures and in all government bodies for once and for all. But the government should take a lot of steps to control its expenses first without making the people, Kuwaitis and expats, as a victim of its accumulated errors.



IGNORANTLY COMMITTING E-CRIMES

By Chidi Emmanuel

Kuwait's new eMedia law sets forth a slate of regulations controlling the online activities of journalists, writers and activists. Though far reaching when it comes to control issues of free speech, it fails to recognize a growing body of online crimes committed via social media, websites and blogs in Kuwait. It needs only a glance through the many online classified websites in Kuwait to see people engaged in promoting illicit activities including the selling of sponsorships and visas, selling of apartment leases and even the selling of domestic helpers.

Selling visas online

Kuwait Times visited several online classifieds and other websites to see how brazenly some are engaging in illicit activities. On one account, we found and contacted a visa trader offering to sell a work visa for KD 1,800 for Indians. After bargaining with him, he agreed to sell the visa for KD 1,600. "This is the least I can take. My profit is only KD 200. The Kuwaiti sponsor will not take anything less than KD 1,500," he claimed. When asked if he knows the consequences of selling visas, he said "no". "I don't think there is anything wrong. I am not duping people, but only trying to link them up with sponsors," he said. But after talking to Kuwait Times, he removed his contact number and replaced it with an email address.

Loans with interest

In a similar development, Kuwait Times called an Asian man

named Akhil who placed an advert on a website forum seeking KD 400 - offering to give 10 percent interest per month. When asked why he opted to source the money this way, he said that he is not eligible for a bank loan. "I have some issues. I just need this KD 400 to clear things up and get back on my feet again. I don't mind giving you my passport to keep (as collateral) until I pay you the money back," Akhil said. He also claimed ignorance over the legality of his action.

Renting

Most property crimes are also becoming 'cyber' one way or another. In an online ad, a tenant (who is leaving for good) offered to rent his two-bedroom apartment provided the person buys all his household items. "This is a good deal. I am paying only KD 180 for this flat. I can let you have it in my name. If you contact the haris (caretaker), he will take at least KD 250 from you before he even rents the apartment to you, while new tenants are now paying KD 260," Imran said as he showed Kuwait Times his household items, which he offered to sell for KD 180.

There are obvious things such as illegal drugs and weapons that are forbidden everywhere. Other items are more complicated, however. Some countries allow you to sell alcoholic beverages over the Web, while in other states (like some Arab countries), doing so is a crime. "Always do the right thing and keep safe. If you think that your online store may cover questionable legal territory, talk to an attorney - there's no point taking a chance on jail time or even fines if you break the law," advised Saleh Al-Husseini, a Kuwaiti attorney.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Flamingos in shallow water in Kuwait Bay. - Photo by KUNA/Ghazy Qafaf



In celebration of
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Stealing shade



— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

'Local 'beautification department' prunes trees just as summer arrives'



By Nawara Fattahova

In the searing heat of Kuwait, trees provide the best shade for people, animals and even vehicles from the direct rays of the sun. But just as Kuwait's spring turns to summer, trees across the country are being drastically pruned or even cut back, which seems strange given the desperate need for shade.

The beautification department of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) is in charge of this work. Abdul Mohsen Khaja, director of the execution and maintenance department at PAAAFR, spoke to Kuwait Times about preparations for the summer.

"The beautification department monitors maintenance contracts with horticulture companies that are specialized in agriculture in general during the whole year (summer and winter) including parks and plants on main roads and private houses, according to the budget for these contracts," Khaja said.

Regarding cutting or pruning trees

on the roadsides, he stated that there are many reasons for this. "The trees on the 4th Ring Road were pruned to give them a beautiful shape. Also, from the safety aspect, trees should be pruned so they won't obstruct the vision of drivers, which can be dangerous. Also, there were many complaints filed by the traffic department and the ministry of electricity and water that branches may fall during strong winds, which will cause serious problems on the road," he pointed out.

He called upon contractors in all areas to speed up necessary maintenance procedures for irrigation networks. "These contractors should be replacing all dead plants and provide cleaning and agriculture works including pruning trees, fertilization and others," added Khaja.

PAAAFR is in charge of parks and public gardens. "Kuwait is divided into nine agricultural areas in addition to the highways project. We have three-year agricultural beautification contracts for maintenance, developing and execution of landscaping of all areas by agricultur-

al companies. These companies are in charge of all the maintenance works. Sometimes some problems occur, such as during summer when we face a water shortage. The authority is doing its best to preserve plants and trees according to the available budget and resources," stressed Khaja.

Regarding Shaheed Park, and the reason behind it being in much better condition than other parks and public gardens, Khaja said this park was transferred to the supervision of the Amiri Diwan, which set a huge budget to develop this park to look as it does today. "The PAAAFR unfortunately has a limited budget and resources to take care of parks and public gardens," he rued.

The deputy director general of agricultural beautification affairs Faisal Al-Saddiqi earlier told KUNA that the number of public gardens in the country increased from 144 to 183, with a total space of 3.65 million square meters. The goal is to further increase the number of gardens to 196, with a total space of 3.9 million square meters, he added.





KUWAIT BEAUTIFUL & GREEN STUDENTS ART COMPETITION

HELLO ARTISTS...

Welcome to the Student's Art Competition. I hope you are ready to paint a beautiful painting and win wonderful prizes. The theme for your painting must be related to planting and greening, basically anything pertaining to our environment. We are looking for a great painting. So, please pick up your color pencils, paint brushes, crayons or whatever you prefer and start drawing and painting.

Good luck to you, our young artists.

- Competition is open to ages from (6 - 8) (9 - 11) (12 - 14) and (15 - 17) & Special needs.
- The competition is open for all schools in Kuwait (Government and Private)
- **The competition will start on March 10th and will continue till April 14th 2016.**
- 10 winners from each category will receive valuable prizes.
- All participants will receive a certificate of appreciation.
- All schools participating in the

- competition will receive an appreciation plaque.
- Any school or individual interested to participate in this competition is welcome to visit the office of Kuwait Times and collect the drawing sheets.
- Drawing sheets will be given to schools FREE of charge.
- Only drawing sheets provided by the Kuwait Times will be allowed.
- You can use any kind of color pencils, paint brushes or crayons.

March 10th Till April 14th, 2016

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Participation Form

If you are interested to participate fill the form and send it to Kuwait Times.

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School:

Tel: Fax:

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Total number of interested student's are
 6 - 8 years 9 - 11 years 12 - 14 years 15 - 17 years Special need

Name: Signature :

For more information contact Kuwait Times Tel: 24835616/7 Fax 24835620/1 or send an email to: ads@kuwaittimes.net



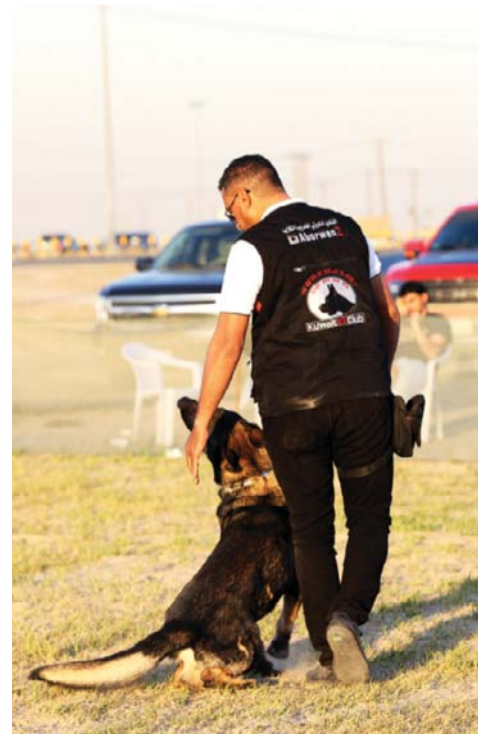
Dogs and their owners during a recent training exhibition organized by the Kuwait K9 Association. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

A chat with the founder of the **Kuwait K9** association

Exclusive Interview

By Faten Omar

The Kuwait K9 association trains dogs and provides information to owners on how to care for their animals. K9 is a numeronym that stands for “canine”, usually in reference to domesticated dogs. The term is most often used to describe working dogs, especially law enforcement and military dogs, in keeping with the military’s famous love of shorthand, acronyms and numeronyms. It may also be used in animal shelters to quickly denote “dog” on notice boards for the purpose of protection and keeping track of the animals in the facility, as the animal’s name may not always provide a clue as to which species it belongs to.





Ayman Saad Murshed

Ayman Saad Murshed, a retired army pilot who is now the head of Kuwait K9 association, spoke to Kuwait Times about the association and the art of training a dog. Some excerpts:

Kuwait Times: How long have you been a dog trainer?

Murshed: I started when I was 17 years old, and I always take my dog wherever I go. When I retired, I owned 25 dogs, 20 of them German Shepherds and five Rottweilers. I then entered the K9 world by traveling to Germany twice a year to attend the world championships and buy new breeds.

KT: When did you start the Kuwait K9 association?

Murshed: K9 is kind of an activity to train dogs to guard. As an army pilot, I had friends in K9 units who taught me this kind of work and with a lot of reading and learning, I started my own organization in 2014.

KT: What are the procedures to join the Kuwait K9 association? How many members do you have?

Murshed: We have 95 members aged 18 to 65. Membership is free, and anyone can join us, but first I have to know about their dog, date of birth and vaccinations. A copy of the civil ID is needed to check if applicants have a criminal record or not, because training dogs to attack someone could be dangerous if someone has bad intentions.

KT: What does the Kuwait K9 association do for its members?

Murshed: We have a group on WhatsApp to exchange information and our experiences about dogs. We also gather once a week to talk about what is good for dogs. We started our own competition with the participation of judges from the

global canine organization Federation Cynologique Internationale (FCI). We also have an outstanding dog show where various types of dog breeds and types take part.

KT: What mistake do you see owners commonly make?

Murshed: Owners do not understand that raising a dog is a great responsibility, especially if you have children. You must know more about the breed that you are raising. For example, a German Shepherd is a strong and friendly dog that can be raised with children, unlike a Rottweiler that considers itself as a member of the family. If you make it angry, it can attack you, and if it likes you, it will protect you. But children cannot treat it properly, so if a child plays roughly with a Rottweiler, it could attack the kid.

KT: Any advice for new owners?

Murshed: Owners must read and know more about their dogs, about the food they eat, training, habits and so on.

KT: What's the most important cue or command to teach your dog?

Murshed: Basic commands like how to come, sit, stay and even go to the toilet will nurture your relationship with the dog as well as encourage good behavior. Well-trained dogs are less likely to stray, and generally lead more comfortable and fulfilling lives compared to their untrained counterparts.

KT: Do you give private lessons or group lessons?

Murshed: We provide both, and dog owners can join us in our group to learn more and get one of our private dog trainers to train their dog.

KT: How old should children be before a family gets a dog? Are some breeds better with kids?

Murshed: A child should be at least 12 to know how to deal with and treat a dog right. Small dogs are better for children than large, wild dogs.



RESIDENCY TRANSFER AFTER 3 YEARS WITHOUT THE EMPLOYER'S CONSENT SPEAKER SAYS PROPOSED POWER CHARGES 'VERY HIGH'

KUWAIT: The Public Manpower Authority yesterday issued a new decision allowing expatriate laborers to transfer their residencies to other employers without the prior approval of their employers after three years of employment. This means that expatriates will be able to change their employers after serving for three years without the need to have their approval.

Until now, transfer of residence permits is linked with the approval of current employers or after proving unfair treatment and non-payment of salary to the Authority. The transfer of residence permits in Kuwait and other Gulf states is governed by the so-called sponsorship or Kafel system under which the employers have the upper hand in deciding the destiny of their foreign employees. The three-year decision appears to

be the first step towards easing the controls of the kafel system which Gulf states have pledged to abolish to international human rights organizations.

In another development, National Assembly Speaker Marzouk Al-Ghanem said yesterday that the government-proposed electricity charges are "very high" adding that the Financial Committee and lawmakers have other proposals. Speaking to reporters after meeting with a delegation of Moody's ratings agency, the Speaker said the National Assembly plans to study the new charges and government's economic reforms in the next session on April 12.

Ghanem said that the National Assembly will only vote on the power charges as approved by the Financial Affairs Committee which

will spare low income sections and those who rationalize consumption from the increases. The Financial Affairs Committee is scheduled to discuss the draft law for new power charges on Sunday and its head MP Faisal Al-Shaye said the panel has different plans to reduce the government proposals.

The government proposed to raise electricity charges by several-folds, especially for apartments inhabited mostly by expatriates. It was not immediately known if MPs will reduce the government proposals for citizens and expatriates as well. Several lawmakers have already criticized the government proposals saying it will constitute a major burden on consumers. Ghanem said that the Assembly will also discuss the grilling against Commerce and Industry Minister Yousef Al-Ali on April 12.

CABINET REJECTS PROSECUTIONS IN THE SOVEREIGN FUND PROBE

KUWAIT: The Cabinet has rejected recommendations by members of parliament to prosecute officials of its sovereign wealth fund for allegedly violating regulations in managing the country's oil wealth, Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh said on Wednesday evening. "I assert my confidence in those in charge of the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) until proven otherwise," Saleh told reporters after a closed meeting of parliament to discuss an investigation of the KIA's London arm, the Kuwait Investment Office (KIO).

Kuwaiti MPs travelled to London last year to probe the KIO's operations and check whether there was enough official oversight of it. On Wednesday, parliament referred a report on the investigation, as well as another report on a probe of irregularities in sales of state property, to the cabinet. Details of the reports were not disclosed, but Saleh said the cabinet had rejected a recommendation to refer the information on the KIO to public prosecutors. Instead, he said, a "neutral commission" would be formed to study the reports.

The KIA, which invests Kuwait's petrodollars around the world, is one of the biggest sovereign funds in the world and is believed to manage about \$592 billion, according to estimates by the US-based Sovereign Wealth Fund Institute, which tracks the sector. Like other sovereign funds in the Gulf, the KIA has come under greater public scrutiny over the past year following the plunge of oil prices, which has pressured state finances around the region. Kuwait's parliament is the most independent and assertive in the Gulf, and has a tradition of challenging the cabinet for influence over economic management. —Reuters

MAHBOULA RAID NETS 1023 VIOLATORS



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A police security campaign led by Interior Ministry Undersecretary Suleiman Al-Fahadad and other top officials resulted in the arrest of 1023 violators in Mahboula area. Relations and Security Information Department said the



arrested persons were sent to concerned authorities, as their violations varied between entering the country illegally, absconding, residency law violation, loose labor, drugs and other civil cases.

The authorities closed the area from 5 pm to prevent the wanted person from escaping. Some places were raided

after obtaining warrants. Lt General Al-Fahad was accompanied by Assistant Undersecretary for Operations Affairs Maj Gen Jamal Al-Sayegh, Acting Assistant Undersecretary for General Security Maj Gen Ibrahim Al-Tarrah and other field officers. Five hundred officers and policemen took part in the operation, with 120 vehicles. A team from relations and security information covered and documented the security campaign.

Damaging state property

Relations and Security Information at the Interior Ministry said officials have arrested a man accused of damaging state property. The suspect's name is Omar Fahhad Mohammad Al-Oraiman, born in 1990 and lives in Kheitan. They said the suspect had been convicted before of attacking security men. Police found paint, gloves in his house.

Military uniforms in Friday market

Police patrols carried out a campaign against those who sell stolen goods and military uniforms in Friday market. The campaign resulted in the arrest of a Bangladeshi expat as he was selling military masks.

KUWAITI BUSINESSMAN KIDNAPPED IN IRAQ

'\$1 MILLION RANSOM REQUESTED • AL SARHAN ON A 'SHEEP BUYING TRIP'

KUWAIT: Local businessman Khaled Abdulrazzaq Al Sarhan was reportedly kidnapped in Iraq while on a business trip. The 53-year-old Kuwaiti reportedly traveled from Kuwait two weeks ago to Nassiriya in Iraq where he intended to buy sheep. Brother Abdulatif told Al-Rai newspaper that Al Sarhan was due to

return a week ago Wednesday but delayed due to the business. Then on Sunday, the man's wife received a phone call from someone with an Iraqi accent saying that they had her husband and requesting \$1 million for his safe return.

"The man called again on Tuesday and threatened that my brother would be

killed if we failed to pay the ransom," Abdul Lateef told Al Rai. Both the Interior and Foreign Ministries have been informed and are in contact with Iraqi authorities to investigate the matter. "I myself called the Kuwaiti charge d'affaires in Baghdad Khalid Al Qanai and he confirmed there were contacts with the Iraqi

interior and foreign ministries to try to locate and rescue my brother," he said. Kidnapping of wealthy Khaleeji visitors is common in Iraq, especially in the southern areas of the country. Last December a Qatari hunting party with several ruling family members was kidnapped for ransom in southern Iraq.



KUWAIT ISLAND INHABITANTS USED TO INSTALL MARKS TO GUIDE SHIPS

KUWAIT: Inhabitants of the Kuwaiti island of Meskan used to install marks to guide ships' captains to evade surrounding rocky spots. The island, populated during various periods of Kuwait history, is situated three kilometers from the larger Failaka Island and 15 kms (eight nautical miles) from shores of the mainland. It is largely sandy of 1.206 kms in length and 800 meters in width.

According to historians, Meskan Island had been resided by the Kuwaiti families, namely Bou-Rashed and Al-Awwad of the Awazem tribe. Relics found on it indicated that people lived on it during the Islamic empire times. Dr Hamed Al-Mutairi, the head of archeology at the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, said in an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that artifacts were found on Meskan island during recent excavations. Among the relics, the excavators discovered foundations of small dwellings, presumed to be fishermen's cottages, some coins, potteries brought from south of the Arabian Gulf and locally-made wares that had been used for drinking and food storage. Residents of the island had mingled with peoples that lived during the Islamic empire times, he affirmed, adding that more excavations aimed at digging deeper into the ground were planned in the future. Its ownership had been shifted from Hamad Ibrahim Bin Abdullah Al-Rashed (Bou-Rashed) in a contract granted by the late Amir, His Highness Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The Bou-Rashed family used to fish around it and set up makeshift minarets to guide ships to evade rocks skirting it. Being rich in turtles and birds, the island lures photographers and cameramen. Authorities are currently pondering security plans for the island, due to its strategic location. —KUNA

STEPFATHER BEATS DAUGHTER OVER LATE NIGHT PHONE CALLS

KUWAIT: A female minor went to the Fintas police station to file a complaint against her stepfather for beating her and taking her mobile away. When he was questioned by the police regarding his actions, the stepfather complained that the young woman was 'naive', spending late nights on her mobile and that he took the phone away to protect her from harm.

Swindler accused

A citizen in her 40s accused a Saudi national of swindling her out of KD 5,000 when he convinced her to buy a car, according to a complaint she lodged at Ali Sabah Al-Salem police. A security source said the citizen was told by the Saudi that he wanted to sell his brother's car and she transferred the money to him, and asked him for the title. But after receiving the money, he ignored her calls and did not transfer the title. Detectives are investigating,

Mandoob robbed

A Egyptian mandoob had KD 950 stolen from him. A man followed him after he left a domestic help office in Hawally, then attacked him, beat him with a stick, robbed him of the money then fled. The Egyptian was helped by others who took him to Maidan Hawally police station where he lodged a complaint.

Brothers arrested for drugs

Two brothers (citizens) exchanged accusations of having drugs, and each claimed it belongs to the other, so both were sent to Drugs Control General Department. The two were stopped by police in Salmiya area were searched, and five joints were found with them. The source said the two disputed the ownership of the drugs as each claimed to be innocent, so both were sent to DCGD.

Swindler arrested

Mubarak Al-Kabeer detectives arrested a Jordanian who swindled a citizen out of KD 4,500. Detectives were able to lure the Jordanian by making him think he was going for another deal, and detectives were waiting for him. A security source said a citizen told Mubarak Al-Kabeer police that he agreed with the Jordanian to import raw cleaning material, for repacking, so he gave him KD 4,500 but the Jordanian disappeared.

Smuggler detained

Airport customs officers foiled the attempt of a citizen in her 30s, to smuggle 11 bags of marijuana and hashish in her luggage upon her arrival from Amsterdam. A security source said the citizen seemed to be confused from the minute she entered the custom hall, so she was searched. The citizen was sent to Drugs Control General Department.

KUWAIT CLASSIC CARS DISPLAYED IN QATAR

DOHA: A collection of Kuwait's elite classic cars are currently on display at the 2016 Qatar Motor Show Luxury and Classic Cars, drawing a large number of visitors at the exhibition ground. The Kuwaiti participation is distinguished, with display of classic and old cars, considered of great historic value, said Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al-Thani, Chairman of the Gulf Qatari Classic Cars Association, in remarks to KUNA, praising presence of the Kuwaiti collection.

A large number of the visitors have been attracted to the Kuwaiti pavilion, he said hailing His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah for his keenness on ensuring Qatar's participation in the Kuwaiti contests for luxurious cars, held twice previously. His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad (an expremier of the State of Kuwait) is "one of the founders of this hobby in the Gulf region," Sheikh Faisal affirmed, alluding to Sheikh Nasser's possession of a collection of classic cars, some dating back to early times of the past century.

Sheikh Nasser's collection had been put on display at several exhibitions in Kuwait. For his part, Abdulaziz Abdullah Al-Yassin, the director of the Qatari museum for classic cars, said the Kuwaitis are aspiring to rank among the top in the show contest. The contest is held for the first time in Qatar. The first edition at the international level had been hosted by Paris in 1920. Since then, millions of autos' fans follow up on the annual events. Up to 100 luxurious cars are taking part in the five-day contest that got started on Tuesday. —KUNA



DOHA: Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al-Thani, Chairman of the Gulf Qatari Classic Cars Association and Abdulaziz Abdullah Al-Yassin, the director of the Qatari museum for classic cars seen during a visit to Kuwaiti pavilion. —KUNA

International

FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2016

Innovative Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid dies at 65



Paris suspect Abdeslam 'wants to cooperate'



Under fire on abortion policy Trump fights to court women



DAMASCUS: Syrian women sit in the garden of the National Museum. —AP

SYRIANS RUSH TO RESCUE HISTORY

TIME RUNNING OUT WITH IS AT THE DOORSTEP

DAMASCUS: With Islamic State group militants on the doorstep of his hometown in eastern Syria, Yaroub al-Abdullah had little time. He had already rushed his wife and four daughters to safety. Now he had to save the thousands of ancient artifacts he loved. In a week of furious work in summer heat, tired and dehydrated from the Ramadan fast, the head of antiquities in Deir el-Zour province and his staff packed up most of the contents of the museum in the provincial capital. Then al-Abdullah flew with 12 boxes of relics to Damascus.

Few specialists

The pieces included masterpieces: A nearly 5,000-year-old statuette of a smiling worshipper. A colorful mural fragment from a 2nd-century temple for the god Bel. Thousands of fragile clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform writing, including administrative records, letters and business deals that provide a glimpse at life nearly 4,000 years ago in the Semitic kingdom of Mari. The move, carried out in 2014, was part of a mission by antiquities officials across Syria to evacuate everything that could be saved from Islamic State extremists and looters. The extent of the operation has been little known until now, but its participants described to The Associated Press a massive effort - at least 29 of Syria's 34 museums largely emptied out and more than 300,000 artifacts brought to the capital.

The pieces are now hidden in secret locations known only to the few specialists who handled them, said Maamoun Abdulkarim, who as head of the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums in Damascus oversaw the operation. "Other than that, no one knows where these antiquities are - not a politician, not any other Syrian." There's much that couldn't be saved. The damage is most symbolized by Palmyra, the jewel of Syrian archaeology, a marvelously preserved Roman-era city. IS militants captured it last year and proceeded to blow up at least two of its most stunning temples. Over the weekend, Syrian government forces recaptured Palmyra from the militants and discovered they had trashed the city museum, smashing statues and looting relics - though fortunately about 400 pieces had been hidden away by antiquities officials before the IS takeover. Across the country, the destruction has been tragic. Wherever they overran territory in Syria and Iraq, Islamic State jihadis relentlessly blew up, bulldozed or otherwise tore down monuments they consider pagan affronts. They and other traffickers have taken advantage of the chaos from the 5-year-old civil war to loot sites and sell off artifacts.

Even in the museums that were evacuated, some items were too large to move - giant statues or ancient gates and murals - and fell into IS hands, their fate unknown. But the 2,500 archaeologists, specialists, cura-

tors and engineers with Syria's antiquities department, including some who defected to join the opposition, have often risked death to protect what they can.

IS on the hunt

Guards at archaeological digs and other sites in areas now under IS control secretly keep tabs on the ruins and feed Abdulkarim photo updates on WhatsApp. Several of them have been killed. Khaled Al-Asaad, Palmyra's retired antiquities chief, was beheaded by the extremists in August after spiriting away artifacts from the city's museum. Ziad Al-Nouiji, who took over from al-Abdullah as head of antiquities in Deir el-Zour, brought a second load of relics to Damascus last June. But otherwise he has remained in the government-held part of Deir el-Zour city. He knows the danger: IS militants besieging the area are hunting for him, posting his name on their Facebook pages as a wanted man. He relocated his family abroad but is staying put. "This is my duty, my country's right. If we all left the country and our duties, who would be left?" he asked. In the rebel-held northwestern city of Maarat Al-Numan, archaeologists affiliated with the opposition protected the city's museum, which houses Byzantine mosaics. There the danger was from government airstrikes, so they erected a sandbag barrier with financial and logistical support from former antiquities direc-

torate Chief Amr Al-Azm, who sided with the opposition. Last June, just after the sandbagging was complete, a government barrel bomb damaged mosaics in the outside courtyard, he said. "The heroes here are the Syrian men and women on both sides who ... are willing to risk their lives for their heritage," Al-Azm said by telephone from Shawnee State University in Ohio, where he teaches. "That's what gives me hope for the future of Syria." In 2014, with EU funding, the UN cultural agency UNESCO began training Syrian staff in storing artifacts and helped establish a nationwide system to document their inventory. In Damascus last month, a team of archaeologists and archivists was still processing the collection brought from the Daraa Museum in southern Syria. "With a good team, a charismatic leader and our support they managed an extraordinary feat," said Cristina Menegazzi, head of UNESCO's Syrian heritage emergency safeguard project. A vital crossroads throughout history, Syria holds a legacy from multiple civilizations that traded, invaded and built cities across its territory - the Akkadians, Babylonians and Assyrians of ancient Mesopotamia, various Semitic kingdoms, the Romans and Byzantines, and then centuries of Islamic dynasties. The country is dotted with "tells," hills that conceal millennia-old towns and cities, some of which have been partially excavated and many more that are still waiting to be discovered. —AP

ONCE A BEACON, LEBANESE DAILIES LOSE REGIONAL SWAY

BEIRUT: Its slogan was “the voice of the voiceless”, but after four decades the prestigious Lebanese daily *As-Safir* is in danger of falling silent, illustrating the unprecedented crisis rocking the country’s media. Lebanese newspapers, long seen as a beacon of freedom in a tumultuous region, are suffering because of the country’s political paralysis and a slump in funding from rival regional powers.

As-Safir’s main competitor, *An-Nahar*, is also struggling to survive and its employees have not been paid for months. “Our ink has run dry,” said Talal Salman, founder and editor-in-chief of *As-Safir*. “The Lebanese press, a pioneer in the Arab world, is undergoing its worst crisis ever.”

The paper has downsized from 18 to just 12 pages, and the fate of its 159 employees remains uncertain. “We’ve run out of funds and we’re desperately looking for a partner to finance the paper,” Salman said. He blames the country’s political stalemate, with existing divisions exacerbated by the war in neighboring Syria. Lebanon is dominated by two main blocs: one backed by the West and Gulf kingdoms, and the other by Iran and Syria. The rift means there have been no parliamentary elections since 2009, and lawmakers have failed for nearly two years to elect a president. “Without politics, there is no media, and there is no politics in Lebanon today,” Salman said.

Freedom to criticize

Experts say the crisis is being driven by several factors, including an advertising revenue slump that has hit media worldwide and is exacerbated in Lebanon by a fragile security situation. The long-standing reliance of Lebanese media on political financing from the Middle East’s rival powers is also key to the problem. Many of the region’s most influential journalists have written their best stories for Lebanese newspapers, relishing the freedom to be critical that one could only dream of under other more oppressive governments. But the freedom was never complete. Some journalists have paid the ultimate price for their work, including *An-Nahar*’s Samir Kassir and Gibran Tueini who were both murdered as the Syrian army pulled out of Lebanon in 2005.—AFP



Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid

INNOVATIVE IRAQI ARCHITECT ZAHA HADID DIES AT 65

MIAMI: Iraqi-British architect Zaha Hadid, whose modernist, futuristic designs included the swooping aquatic center for the 2012 London Olympics, has died at age 65. Hadid’s firm said she died yesterday of a heart attack in a Miami hospital.

Born and raised in Baghdad, Hadid studied in Beirut and London, where she based the architectural firm that bore her name. She designed buildings around the world: a BMW facility in Leipzig, Germany; sleek funicular railway stations in Innsbruck, Austria; and the strikingly curved Heydar Aliyev Center in Baku, Azerbaijan.

She twice won Britain’s Stirling Prize for architecture and in 2004 became the first woman to win the Pritzker Prize, known as the “Nobel prize of architecture.” The Pritzker jury praised her unswerving commitment to modernism and defiance of convention.—AP



DAMASCUS: President Bashar Al-Assad speaking to a journalist during an interview with Russia’s RIA Novosti state news agency on Wednesday.—AFP

ASSAD INSISTS ON UNITY GOVT DESPITE OPPOSITION DEMANDS ‘NATIONAL UNITY GOVT FOR A NEW CONSTITUTION’

MOSCOW: Syrian President Bashar al-Assad on Wednesday reiterated his call for a national unity government, as the White House said his inclusion would make any such proposal a “non-starter”.

As the two sides appeared deadlocked over the political transition, UN chief Ban Ki-moon highlighted the impact of the five-year conflict by urging greater efforts to tackle the country’s refugee crisis at a conference in Geneva.

In an interview published Wednesday, Assad told Russia’s RIA Novosti state news agency it would be “logical for there to be independent forces, opposition forces and forces loyal to the government represented” in the new authorities.

He pushed back against opposition demands that it should be put in place without his participation, insisting that the transitional body they are calling for is “illogical and unconstitutional.” “Neither in the Syrian constitution nor in the constitution of any other country in the world is there anything that could be called a transitional body of power,” Assad said.

“It is the national unity government that will prepare a new constitution.” Talks led by the UN’s Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura paused last week with the sides deadlocked over the fate of Assad, who the opposition insists must leave power before a transitional government is agreed. Syria’s main opposition High Negotiations Committee flatly rejected the demand from Assad for any transitional government to include his regime. “International resolutions speak of... the formation of a transitional body with

full powers, including presidential powers,” HNC senior member Asaad al-Zoabi said, adding “Assad should not remain for even one hour after the formation” of this body.

Responding to Assad’s interview on Wednesday, White House spokesman Josh Earnest said the Syrian leader’s own participation would be a “non-starter.” “I don’t know whether he envisioned himself being a part of that national unity government. Obviously that would be a non-starter for us,” Earnest said.

‘Liberate every region’

The form of the executive body that would lead Syria until elections, which the UN says should be held in 18 months, is a key bone of contention between the two sides. A UN Security Council Resolution vaguely suggests the establishment of a body to head the political transition.

For the regime, this amounts to a government reshuffle in which the opposition is included, but for the opposition it would be a new body with presidential powers and no role for Assad. Assad has been buoyed after his forces recaptured the ancient city of Palmyra from Islamic State (IS) jihadists over the weekend, in an advance backed by Russian air strikes and special forces on the ground.

“The Syrian army is determined to liberate every region,” Assad said in Wednesday’s interview. “We are being supported in this by our friends-Russian support was central and key in achieving these results.”

Soldiers were locked in heavy fighting Wednesday with IS fighters in cen-

tral Syria as they pressed their offensive following the seizure of the UNESCO world heritage site.

A ceasefire between Damascus and non-jihadist opposition forces has broadly held since February 27, prompting slight hopes that a political solution might be possible for the conflict that has claimed more than 270,000 lives. A top Pentagon official Wednesday said a US-led coalition had the “momentum” over jihadists both in Syria and in neighboring Iraq.

“Right now, without question, the momentum against ISIS is more than at any other time in our campaign,” Deputy Defense Secretary Robert Work said, using another name for the IS group.

Little progress on refugees

At the Geneva refugee conference, UN chief Ban urged delegates to “address the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time”, which has seen an estimated 4.8 million Syrians flee their homeland.

The UN wants to secure relocation pledges within three years for 10 percent of Syria’s refugees — 480,000 people—to relieve the burden on Syria’s immediate neighbors.

The conference secured only a modest increase in pledges, up from 178,000 people to 185,000, a UNHCR statement said. More than one million migrants-about half of them Syrians-reached Europe via the Mediterranean last year, a rate of arrivals that continued through the first three months of 2016. Thousands have died making the harrowing journey, often on rickety boats run by people smugglers.—AFP



PIRAEUS: Syrian families are reflected in bus windows as they board buses taking them to camps in other parts of Greece from the port of Piraeus. —AFP

FIRST RETURN OF MIGRANTS UNDER EU-TURKEY DEAL SET FOR MONDAY

MANY OF THE DETAILS STILL REMAIN UNCLEAR

ATHENS: Migrant returns from Greece to Turkey will begin Monday under the terms of an EU deal that has dismayed aid groups, officials said Thursday as Athens struggled to manage the overload on its soil. "There is a major engagement on the part of Greece and Turkey towards sending 500 people back on April 4, barring a last-minute problem," a European Commission source told AFP, though many of the details still remained unclear.

Those being returned will include "Syrians who have not requested asylum, Afghans and Pakistanis," the official said, confirming it would be the first batch sent back under a deal reached between Brussels and Ankara on March 18.

Aid groups have criticized the agreement on ethical grounds, warning that Greek registration sites would now become de facto detention centers for people slated to be sent back to Turkey after risking their lives and spending a small fortune just to reach Europe. Philippe Leclerc, head of the UN refugee agency in Greece, said his staff wanted to ensure that "nobody is sent back without access to the asylum application procedure".

For example, over a thousand people currently on the island of Lesbos had not yet had a chance to apply and should be exempted, he said. Officials were unable to say from which of the five Aegean Sea islands the first batch of people would be returned, nor how they would be transported—whether by sea or air.

Chios or Lesbos

A Greek government source said the returns would "most probably" occur from Chios or Lesbos—the islands that have handled the bulk of arrivals from Turkey, and where thousands of people are currently being held in overcrowded registration centers. Strapped for cash due to an enduring national debt crisis, Athens has frequently had to rely on charities and volunteers to feed and clothe the newcomers.

In Brussels, EU spokeswoman Natasha Bertaud confirmed that Monday was the "target day" when those whose asylum claims had "been declared inadmissible" would be returned to Turkey. At the same time, the EU would start resettling Syrian refugees living in camps in Turkey, she said. In Turkey, Hurriyet daily cited officials as saying that a "readmission centre" would be set up near the coastal town of Dikili in Izmir province for those sent back from Greece.

Quoting a local official, the paper said the migrants would be processed within 24 hours and sent on to Izmir, or to refugee camps elsewhere in Turkey. Under terms of the agreement, all economic migrants landing on the Greek islands after March 20 face being sent back to Turkey—although the deal calls for each case to be examined individually. For every Syrian sent back from Greece, the EU has agreed to resettle one refugee directly from Turkey.

The aim of the deal is to reduce the incentive for Syrian refugees to try cross to Greece in overlaid smug-

gler's boats, encouraging them instead to stay in Turkish refugee camps to win a chance at resettlement in Europe. In 2015, more than a million migrants entered Europe, about half of them Syrians fleeing war.

'Details being finalized'

Earlier this week, Greece's deputy defense minister Dimitris Vitsas said the people would be returned to Turkey on six ships chartered by EU border agency Frontex. But yesterday, Frontex spokeswoman Paulina Bakula told AFP that the agency was "not active" in the process for the time being and that details of the procedures were "still being finalized" between Greece, Turkey and the European Commission.

Over 51,000 refugees and migrants seeking to reach northern Europe are stuck in Greece, after Balkan states sealed their borders. Hundreds more continue to land on the Greek islands every day, despite the EU deal which nominally went into effect on March 20.

Greek officials yesterday began sending hundreds of migrants from Piraeus near Athens to other facilities, including the coastal town of Kyllini in the Peloponnese which is run by a Syria-born mayor. Greece's parliament was also expected to adopt by Friday a bill bolstering its migration and asylum services, and activating a 2013 European directive which says that migrants cannot be sent to a third country where they face danger or discrimination. —AFP

RUSSIAN SAPPERS WITH ROBOTS TO CLEAR MINES IN PALMYRA

MOSCOW: Russian combat engineers arrived yesterday in Syria on a mission to clear mines in the ancient town of Palmyra, which has been recaptured from Islamic State militants in an offensive that has proven Russia's military might in Syria despite a drawdown of its warplanes.

The Defense Ministry said the sapper units were airlifted to Syria with equipment including state-of-the-art robotic devices to defuse mines at the 2,000-year-old archaeological site. Russian television stations showed Il-76 transport planes with the engineers landing before dawn at the Russian air base in Syria.

Sunday's recapture of Palmyra by Syrian troops under the cover of Russian airstrikes was an important victory over Islamic State militants who operated a 10-month reign of terror there. Lt Gen Sergei Rudskoi of the military's General Staff said Russian military advisers had helped plan and direct the Syrian army's operation to recapture Palmyra.

He said Russian warplanes had flown about 500 combat missions from March 7 to March 27, striking 2,000 targets around Palmyra, including artillery positions and fortifications. The Russian jets also hit IS militants as they tried to flee toward their strongholds of Raqqa and Deir el-Zour, Rudskoi added.

The high number of sorties flown in support of the offensive on Palmyra demonstrated Russia's ability to provide strong backing to Syrian President Bashar Assad's military despite a partial pullout of Russian combat jets from Syria earlier this month. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said the drawdown should help the Syria peace talks that began in Geneva, but he has vowed to continue fighting IS and the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front.

A Russian- and US-brokered cease-fire in Syria that began on Feb. 27 has largely held, but the Islamic State group and the Nusra Front have been excluded from it. Rudskoi said the truce helped the Syrian military intensify its operations against those two rebel groups. While some Russian warplanes were sent back home after a heavy-duty service in the air campaign that began on Sept. 30, the Russian military have deployed new weapons at the Hemeimeem air base in Syria's coastal province of Latakia, the heartland of Assad's Alawite minority. The Russians tested their latest helicopter gunship, the Mi-28, for the first time in combat.

Archaeological treasures

Rudskoi emphasized that the Russian jets used precision weapons to avoid any damage to Palmyra's archaeological treasures. He said Russian sapper teams will now have to search more than 180 hectares (445 acres) of both historic and residential areas in Palmyra for mines. He added the job is even more difficult because, along with standard military mines, the area is littered with a large number of booby traps and other self-made explosive devices.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu yesterday urged other nations to join the effort of clearing Palmyra from mines. Rudskoi emphasized that the seizure of Palmyra had strategic importance due to its location at the junction of major highways. —AP



PALMYRA: This photo released on Monday March 28, 2016, by the Syrian official news agency SANA, shows some damage at the ancient ruins. —AP

PARIS SUSPECT ABDESLAM 'WANTS TO COOPERATE'

BELGIUM POLICE CARRY OUT RAID LINKED TO TERROR PLOT

COURTRAI: Paris attacks suspect Salah Abdeslam wants to cooperate with French authorities once he is extradited from Belgium, his lawyer said yesterday, as Belgian police carried out a raid linked to a foiled French terror plot.

Soldiers and police combed through a wooded area by a busy motorway near Courtrai in north-western Belgium, the latest in a series of raids since the Paris and Brussels terror attacks exposed a tangled web of cross-border jihadist cells. The sole surviving suspect of the November 13 Paris attacks in which 130 people were killed, Salah Abdeslam was arrested in Brussels on March 18 after four months on the run.

The arrest was considered a rare success in Belgium's anti-terror fight, although he was found just meters from his family home and has refused to talk since the Brussels attacks despite having links to the attackers. "I can confirm that Salah Abdeslam wants to be handed over to the French authorities," lawyer Cedric Moisse told reporters at a court hearing in Brussels. "I can also confirm that he wants to cooperate with the French authorities."

A prosecutor was set to travel to the prison in the Belgian city of Bruges where Abdeslam is being held to discuss his extradition under a European arrest warrant. Belgian federal prosecutors "do not object" to handing the suspect

over to France, said spokesman Eric Van der Sypt. A judge is set to rule on the extradition by today at the latest. Belgium has increasingly found itself at the centre of Europe's battle against terrorism and authorities have faced strong criticism for not doing enough to keep tabs on suspected extremists.

Metal detectors

The latest raid was linked to a thwarted plot in France, in which the main suspect, Reda Kriket, was charged in France on Wednesday with membership of a terrorist organisation after police found an arsenal of weapons and explosives at his home. "A raid is

under way in connection with the (Reda) Kriket case," Van der Sypt he said.

He said it was taking place in Marke near the town of Courtrai, also known as Kortrijk, close to the French border. An AFP photographer at the scene said masked police and armed sol-

diers—some carrying metal detectors, others accompanied by sniffer dogs—appeared to be focussing on a sealed-off wooded area near a house and a petrol station along the E17 motorway.

In what could signal improved security cooperation, several European countries have made arrests in recent days over the thwarted plot linked to 34-year-old Kriket. Kriket was detained near Paris last week and a raid on his apartment netted a cache of assault rifles, handguns and TATP, the highly volatile homemade explosive favored by IS jihadists.

Another French suspect, 32-year-old Anis Bahri, was arrested in Rotterdam in the Netherlands at the weekend. And two other suspects—Abderrahmane A., 38, and Rabah M., 34 — have been charged in Belgium accused of involvement in the same plot.

CCTV appeal

Abdeslam 26, has asserted his right to remain silent since the day after his arrest, having been questioned for three hours only about the Paris attacks and not about possible further activity. The Belgian-born French citizen, who was caught unarmed after being shot in the leg in a dramatic police raid in Brussels, told interrogators he had intended to blow himself up at the Stade de France stadium in Paris but backed out at the last minute. —AFP



BRUSSELS: Police block the street outside the council chamber in Brussels, where two terrorism cases will be held behind closed doors. —AFP

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FLEEING CHILDREN UNABLE TO FIND REFUGE IN MEXICO

BOGOTA: Thousands of migrant children fleeing gang violence in Central America could qualify for refugee status in Mexico, but only a tiny fraction actually seek that legal protection, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said yesterday. The Mexican government is failing to identify and help those children escaping Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, which have the world's highest murder rates, in fear of their lives and could be eligible for refugee status, HRW said in a report.

Last year, Mexican authorities apprehended more than 35,000 children, HRW said. Most came from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, and more than half were traveling alone, it said. Yet less than 1 percent of those children were recognized in Mexico as refugees, it said. "On paper, Mexican law appears to provide every protection for children who have fled their home countries in fear of their lives," Michael Bochenek, HRW's senior children's rights counsel, said in a statement.

"But only a handful actually receive asylum," he said. "Even though Central American children and adults face serious threats, the government is not giving adequate consideration to their claims." In these Central American countries, entire neighborhoods are controlled by powerful street gangs. They use extortion, sexual violence, murder and forced recruitment of children to maintain control, HRW said.

Edgar V., one of dozens of migrant children interviewed by HRW, said he left Honduras to escape gang members that demanded he join them. "They hit me and I fell to the ground. From then on, they didn't hit me again, but they threatened my mother," the 17-year-old is quoted as saying. "They said they would kill me and my mother."

Religious affair

Many children do not want to apply in Mexico, as they are on their way to the United States where they have family, said Humberto Roque, the Mexican government's under-secretary for population, migration and religious affairs.

"The key reason why child migrants cross through Mexico is to reach the United States, and their fundamental aim is to be reunited with their parents there. That's why so few seek to claim refugee status in Mexico," Roque told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We have no problem in recognizing refugee status among people, including children, who find themselves in vulnerable situations," he said. Roque said the Mexican government is meeting its obligation of informing migrants of their rights to claim refugee status. Families seeking to escape poverty and hoping to find work do not qualify for refugee status, HRW said.

NO PLANS FOR KILLER US MILITARY ROBOTS... YET

WASHINGTON: Robotic systems and unmanned vehicles are playing an ever-growing role in the US military—but don't expect to see Terminator-style droids striding across the battlefield just yet. A top Pentagon official on Wednesday gave a tantalizing peek into several projects that not long ago were the stuff of science fiction, including missile-dodging satellites, self-flying F-16 fighters and robot naval fleets. Though the Pentagon is not planning to build devices that can kill without human input, Deputy Secretary of Defense Robert Work hinted that could change if enemies with fewer qualms create such machines.

"We might be going up against a competitor that is more willing to delegate authority to machines than we are, and as that competition unfolds we will have to make decisions on how we best can compete," he said.

Work, who helps lead Pentagon efforts to ensure the US military keeps its technological edge, described several initiatives, including one dubbed "Loyal Wingman" that would see the Air Force convert an F-16 warplane into a semi-autonomous and unmanned fighter that flies alongside a manned F-35 jet.

"It is going to happen," Work said of this and other unmanned systems. "I would expect to see unmanned wingmen in the air first, I would expect to see unmanned systems undersea all over the place, I would expect to see unmanned systems on the surface of the sea," Work told an audience at a discussion in the capital hosted by The Washington Post. —AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: Protesters demonstrate with a banner against Brazil's current government on Wednesday. —AFP

BRAZILIANS HIT STREETS IN IMPEACHMENT ROW

WHILE RECESSION IS AT ITS DEEPEST

BRASILIA: Supporters of embattled Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff were to hit the streets in rallies across the country yesterday aimed at pressuring Congress ahead of an impeachment vote. Pro-government organizations and the leftist Workers' Party called protests in 31 cities, with the main one in the capital Brasilia, headed by controversial former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Lula, who founded the ruling Workers' Party and remains a heavy-weight figure on the left, called for supporters to hit the streets on his Facebook page. On Wednesday, Rousseff branded the attempt to bring her down as based on trumped-up charges and amounting to "a coup." She has been left dangerously isolated after the main coalition partner for her Workers' Party, the PMDB, announced Tuesday that it was pulling out and would support impeachment.

Rousseff is also dealing with the deepest recession in a generation and fallout from a huge corruption scandal at state oil company Petrobras that has snared a cross-section of the country's elite—including Lula. An Ibope poll showed approval for Rousseff's government remains around record lows of 10 percent, while her personal approval rating was 14 percent. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon expressed his concern, telling O Estado de Sao Paulo newspaper that "any political instability in

Brazil is a reason for worry."

Mathematical challenges

Rousseff faces impeachment over allegedly illegal budgetary manipulations to cover the extent of Brazil's recession during her re-election campaign in 2014. The potentially lengthy process is under way in a preliminary commission and the lower house of Congress could vote as early as mid-April on whether to send the case to the Senate for full trial.

To impeach Rousseff, 342 out of 513 deputies, or two thirds, must vote in favor. If Rousseff managed to get more than 171 votes she would defeat the measure, but it could also fail through abstentions or deputies not attending.

Until only recently Rousseff seemed likely to narrowly prevail, despite her unpopularity and the intense hostility of opponents in the increasingly divided country. With the PMDB's exit, the math gets far dicier, analysts say. "The likelihood of impeachment has greatly increased," said political analyst Michael Freitas Mohallem of the Fundacao Getulio Vargas in Rio de Janeiro. Loyalists put a brave face on Tuesday's debacle, with Chief of Staff Jaques Wagner calling it an opportunity to "renew" the government.

Put another way, the government now potentially has seven ministries and some 580 other posts to hand out and is ready to

horse-trade for support.

Rousseff hopes to employ Lula, a renowned wheeler and dealer with huge respect in some quarters, to front her fightback. However, after being accused in the Petrobras corruption scandal, Lula has also become a lightning rod for opposition attacks. "They're all on their computers counting votes, trading votes for jobs and ministries," Mohallem said.

Countdown and protests

A cross-party commission is hearing arguments and is expected to make its recommendation on impeachment on or about April 12. Rousseff's defense is expected to wind up on Monday.

The lower house would then debate and could vote April 14-16, according to a preliminary estimate of the timetable. If deputies do send the case to the Senate, then a process possibly taking months begins. A two-thirds vote would again be needed to depose Rousseff.

While Congress fights, ordinary Brazilians are becoming increasingly angry over the dismal economy and the constant drip of corruption revelations. Demonstrations both against and in favor of Rousseff and Lula are multiplying.

Rousseff loyalists held rallies with some 270,000 people, according to police estimates, on March 19. The opposition, meanwhile, staged much larger rallies on March 13.—AFP



APPLETON: Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump looks to supporters as he leaves a campaign stop on Wednesday. —AP

UNDER FIRE ON ABORTION POLICY TRUMP FIGHTS TO COURT WOMEN 'EVERY ISSUE IS A WOMEN'S ISSUE'

MADISON: Donald Trump is fighting to convince a skeptical Republican Party he can improve his standing among women, even as he takes back an explosive comment about abortion and attacks the credibility of a female reporter police say was illegally grabbed by the GOP front-runner's campaign manager.

It took Trump's campaign just hours to backtrack on Wednesday after he said that should abortion become illegal, women who undergo the procedure should face "some sort of punishment." The plan sparked an immediate backlash from both sides of the debate, prompting Trump to release two statements clarifying his position. His second statement said only those who perform abortions would be "held legally responsible, not the woman." "The woman is a victim in this case as is the life in her womb," Trump said.

The flap comes as Trump works to hold off a challenge from chief rival Ted Cruz in Wisconsin's high-stakes primary on Tuesday. With a win, Trump's grasp on his party's presidential nomination could be unbreakable. A loss would give concerned Republican officials across the nation a realistic hope of wresting the nomination away from the New York businessman at the GOP's national convention in July.

Other Republicans

Frustrated Republicans are privately grappling with fears about Trump's impact on their party's appeal among women and young people, yet few dared criticize the GOP front-runner directly when pressed this week. Their silence underscored the deep uncertainty plagu-

ing the party - particularly its most prominent women - who have few options in dealing with the brash billionaire.

"A nominee who cannot speak to women cannot win," said New Hampshire party chairwoman Jennifer Horn, though declining to rebuke Trump by name. Earlier in the week, police in Jupiter, Florida, charged Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski with misdemeanor battery after examining surveillance video of an incident in which a reporter said she was grabbed and shoved. The police report said the woman's arm revealed "bruising from what appeared to be several finger marks indicating a grabbing-type injury."

"I don't know who created those bruises," Trump said in what was a sustained effort on Wednesday to defend his adviser and discredit the reporter. Trump suggested his campaign manager was simply trying to protect him from Michelle Fields, a 28-year-old reporter then working for Breitbart News, who was trying to ask him a question after a March 8 campaign appearance.

"She's got a pen in her arm which she's not supposed to have and it shows that she's a very aggressive person who's grabbing at me and touching me," Trump said. "Maybe I should file charges against her."

As Trump assailed Fields from a television studio, Cruz surrounded himself with women as he courted Wisconsin voters. The Texas senator leads the state by 9 points among likely voters, according to a Marquette University Law School poll released Wednesday. He campaigned in Madison with his wife, mother, two daughters and even the family's nanny in

what he called a "celebration of women."

"Women are not a special interest," Cruz said. "Women are a majority of the United State of America. And every issue is a women's issue." Cruz, an aggressive abortion opponent, later seized on Trump's comments on the delicate social issue. "Of course we shouldn't be talking about punishing women," he said. "We should affirm their dignity and the incredible gift they have to bring life into the world."

Why women

Women made up 53 percent of the electorate in 2012. That year, they favored President Barack Obama by 11 points over GOP nominee Mitt Romney, a divide highlighted in the Republican National Committee's post-election study. "Our inability to win their votes is losing us elections," the report's authors wrote.

Yet Trump is poised to fare worse among women than Romney in a general election, according to recent polls that put his negative ratings near or even surpassing 70 percent among women. In Wisconsin, the Marquette poll released on Wednesday found that 76 percent of female Wisconsin registered voters have an unfavorable view of Trump, compared with 55 percent for Cruz.

Few Republican women were willing to address Trump's impact on the party publicly, however. Several female Republican officeholders declined to respond to AP requests for comment, including South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley, Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, and Reps. Kristi Noem of North Dakota and Mia Love of Utah. —AP

CALLS FOR FRENCH WOMEN'S MINISTER TO QUIT OVER VEIL 'SLAVERY' ROW

PARIS: France's women's rights minister faced growing criticism yesterday, including calls on social media to resign, after comparing women who wear the Muslim headscarf and veil to "negroes who supported slavery".

An online petition that collected nearly 18,000 signatures within hours urged Prime Minister Manuel Valls to punish Laurence Rossignol, while a leading French Muslim group accused her of aiding the Islamic State group.

It was as if she had "set out to help the recruiters of Daesh", said Abdallah Zekri, president of the National Observatory against Islamophobia, using a pejorative Arabic term for IS. The minister had "stigmatised" thousands of women, he added, and "spat in the face of the (secular) laws of the Republic by trying to interfere with the way women dressed."

The row was also trending on Twitter across France with a hashtag #RossignolDemission (#RossignolResign) demanding that she step down. The League of French Muslim Women also condemned her comments, calling them "dangerous and irresponsible" and reminding her that women who wear the veil and headscarf were the main victims of racist attacks in the street.

"It is all the more surprising because the government has just launched an (advertising) campaign against racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia," the league's statement added. Rossignol, who is also minister of family and child matters, tried to row back on the comments made during a radio interview Wednesday. She told AFP the n-word was a reference to an abolitionist tract by the French philosopher Montesquieu, "On the Enslavement of Negroes".

Her controversial remarks came as she was asked about the wave of big fashion chains that have followed the Italian designers Dolce & Gabbana in catering specifically to the Muslim market, creating lines of hijab headscarves and "burqini" all-body swimming costumes.

The gaff was also pounced on by satirists. Comedian Olivier Perrin joked that she would make a good campaign director for US presidential hopeful Donald Trump, who has drawn fire for his comments about women and Muslims.

Perrin had earlier posted a picture on Twitter of a hooded Ku Klux Klan member giving the Nazi salute with the caption, "Laurence Rossignol wishes you a good day." The cartoonist of Le Monde daily, Plantu, also came in for criticism on social media for his take on the row, showing two headscarved women asking when they could get designer explosives belts. —AFP

IN MINNEAPOLIS, DISTRUST FLARES AFTER OFFICERS CLEARED

MINNEAPOLIS: Activists from Minneapolis' black community spent four months demanding the release of videos and other evidence after a black man was fatally shot in a confrontation with two white police officers. When it finally was made public and a prosecutor announced the officers wouldn't be charged, they were enraged.

Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman on Wednesday cleared the officers, saying forensic evidence backed their account that 24-year-old Jamar Clark was not handcuffed and was struggling for an officer's gun when he was shot. Clark ignored warnings to take his hand off Officer Mark Ringgenberg's gun, leading Officer Mark Schwarze to shoot Clark as the officers feared for their lives, Freeman said. "Ringgenberg communicated to Schwarze that Clark had his firearm and that Schwarze should shoot Clark. Schwarze did. His actions were reasonable given both his observations and Ringgenberg's plea," the prosecutor said.

But Freeman's detailed version of the events early on Nov. 15, and his release of the investigative documents, drew derision even at the news conference from activists who accused him of favoring police over the accounts of bystanders who said Clark was handcuffed when he was shot. Several of the critics were among those who maintained a protest encampment outside a police station for 18 days and led marches and largely peaceful protests across the Twin Cities area after the shooting. "If we cannot find justice here, we will find it in the streets," Mica Grimm, an organizer with Black Lives Matter Minneapolis, told reporters after Freeman's announcement. —AP

INDIA'S ONCE-GLEAMING GOLDEN TEMPLE DULLED BY AIR POLLUTION

AMRITSAR: The chronic air pollution blanketing much of northern India is now threatening the holiest shrine in the Sikh religion, making the once-gleaming walls of the Golden Temple dingy and dull. There is little to be done short of replacing the 430-year-old temple's gold-plated walls - an expensive project already undertaken more than a century ago and then again in 1999.

To cut down on pollution, environmentalists and religious leaders have launched a campaign that includes persuading farmers to stop burning spent crops to clear their fields, removing industry from the area and cutting back on traffic. A community kitchen called a "langar" that serves up to 100,000 people free meals every day at the temple is also switching from burning wood to cooking with gas.

But so far the campaign hasn't had much impact, with change happening slowly and still no pollution monitoring equipment installed. "As far as pollution goes, we are paying attention," said Jaswant Singh, environmental engineer at the State Pollution Control Board, a government regulatory authority. "We are in the process of procuring equipment so that we can check the pollution area, pollution from every source on a day-to-day basis."

Officials have also banned burning trash

or cooking with certain fuels in restaurants and communities nearby, but enforcement so far remains weak. The city also wants to build an electricity station to stop people from using diesel-fueled generators, but Singh could not say when that might happen.

"The pollution degrading the Golden Temple is growing," said environmental activist Gunbir Singh, who heads a group called Eco Amritsar. "We need to do a hell of a lot of work to protect the holy city status of this city."

It's unclear how much replacing the gold plating would cost, but it would surely be high. "This is gold. The cost would be huge, but still would not be a problem," Gunbir Singh said, suggesting Sikh devotees would rally behind the cause if needed. "Most of the activity that goes on there is based on donations - people will take off their bangles and rings and leave them if work needs to be done."

Tourist attraction

Thousands of Sikh devotees and tourists every day visit Amritsar, the main city in Punjab state, to see the 17th century shrine, surrounded by a moat known as the "pool of nectar," or "Sarovar," and housing the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib.



AMRITSAR: A Sikh man holds a child as they take a holy dip in the sacred pond at the Golden Temple, Sikhs holiest shrine. —AP

Most of the world's 27 million Sikhs, whose monotheistic religion originated in Punjab in the 15th century, live in India.

The country suffers some of the world's worst air pollution, thanks to a heavy reliance on burning coal for electricity, diesel in cars and power generators, and kerosene and cow dung for cooking and lighting homes. Heavy construction amid a

decade-long economic boom has also kicked up huge clouds of dust, and farmers still regularly clear their fields with fire, sending even more black carbon into the air. The capital of New Delhi was named by the WHO as the world's most polluted city, while Amritsar - about 390 kilometers to the north - was ranked India's ninth most polluted. — AP

LAWYER RISKS EVERYTHING TO SAVE PAKISTAN'S BLASPHEMY ACCUSED

THE DANGER IS REAL

LAHORE: As Islamist protesters turned up the pressure on the Pakistani government this week to hang Asia Bibi, a Christian mother of five convicted of blasphemy, one man is risking his own life to stand between her and the gallows.

Police guard the house in a quiet neighborhood in Lahore where lawyer Saif-ul-Mulook lives with his daughter and wife. They were deployed, he said, "after intelligence officials said a group has carried out a recce of my office for a planned assassination". Mulook is not famous, but his client is. Bibi has been on death row since 2010 —

convicted for blasphemy after an argument with a Muslim woman over a bowl of water. Her plight has prompted prayers from the Vatican and calls from hardliners in Pakistan for her to be hanged, repeated this week by Islamist protesters in a stand-off with security forces in the capital.

To stay alive long enough to defend her, Mulook, who is Muslim, says he lives in the shadows, moving only between his office and home. "Nobody comes here," the 60-year-old said. "We don't go out to meet relatives or friends. They don't come here to meet us."

The danger is real. Blasphemy is a hugely sensitive issue in Muslim-majority Pakistan, where even unproven allegations can stir mobs and violence. Rights groups say the legislation is often hijacked for personal vendettas, with minorities largely the target. A Christian couple was lynched then burnt in a kiln in Punjab in 2014 after being falsely accused of desecrating the Koran, while Bibi was moved to solitary confinement last year over fears of vigilantes. "When I took (her) case, my fellow lawyers said 'You have hammered the last nail into your coffin,'" Mulook said.

'Attack like vultures'

But when Bibi became Mulook's client in 2014 he was no stranger to being a target: he was also the special prosecutor in the high-profile murder case of Punjab governor Salman Taseer. Taseer was gunned down by his bodyguard, Mumtaz Qadri, in Islamabad in 2011 over his call for blasphemy law reform.

The brazen killing saw Qadri feted as a hero by Islamists. Mulook was the only lawyer willing to risk their wrath to send the former police bodyguard to the gallows. The two cases are linked: part of Taseer's stance on the blasphemy law had been his call to see Bibi released. Islamabad's decision to execute Qadri on February 29 brought tens of thousands of people into the streets chanting slogans supporting the laws and calling for Bibi to be hanged.

On Sunday, Qadri supporters marched on the capital amid violent clashes with police and staged a four-day sit-in. They vowed they were ready to die unless the government meets their demands, including Bibi's execution though they dispersed Wednesday peacefully. — AFP



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani supporters of convicted murderer Mumtaz Qadri shout slogans during an anti-government protest in front of the parliament building yesterday. — AFP

VIETNAM NAMES FIRST CHAIR WOMAN OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

HANOI: Communist Vietnam named a woman for the first time to the influential role of chairperson in its rubber stamp National Assembly yesterday-the country's fourth most powerful position-state media said.

Veteran lawmaker and senior Communist Party official Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan was elected with 95.5 percent of votes after a poll in the country's 500-strong legislative body early yesterday, state-run VTV said. "I would like to thank the National Assembly for electing me," Ngan said after the ballot, which was broadcast on VTV. "I vow my resolute loyalty to the nation, the people, and the constitution," Ngan, who is from southern Ben Tre province, added.

Ngan, 61, was selected for the National Assembly chair position in January during the five-yearly Communist Party Congress, which was this year overshadowed by factional fighting. No other candidates were on the ballot paper and some 472 out of the 484 lawmakers present on voted in her favour, VTV said. Her appointment means she is the highest ranking female party official. The majority of Communist Party officials are men, but women are reasonably well represented in the ranks, with around 25 percent of National Assembly delegates being female. Vietnam is in the midst of a leadership handover after the country's top communist leader, Nguyen Phu Trong, was reelected as party secretary general in January in a victory for the party's old guard.

Reformist Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung lost out in internal party elections and is due to step down next week, when the National Assembly will vote on his replacement. This is expected to be Nguyen Xuan Phuc, currently a deputy prime minister, state media said. Tomorrow, the National Assembly will also elect a new president, expected to be Tran Dai Quang, a police general who rose through the ranks within the country's powerful Ministry of Public Security.

Political analyst Pham Chi Dung told AFP that Ngan's election as National Assembly chair was a strategic choice by the party to ensure a power balance between the country's key regions. "It's no breakthrough," for gender equality, he said. "Ngan is from (Vietnam's) south and has support from (party secretary) Trong and (Prime Minister) Dung," he said.

Only a handful of the 19-member politburo, including Ngan, are from the country's south, analyst Dung said. Vietnam fought a bitter decades long war pitting the communist north over the US-backed southern regime, which ended with a communist victory and reunification in 1975. — AFP

MYANMAR'S SUU KYI TO CEMENT POWER WITH 'ADVISOR' ROLE

NAYPYIDAW: Yesterday Aung San Suu Kyi's party moved to make her a special state adviser, giving her access to every tier of government and cementing her control over Myanmar's first civilian administration in decades.

Hopes are growing the newly sworn-in government can accelerate the country's economic and political rejuvenation after nearly half a century of military repression. Banned from becoming president by a junta-era constitution, Suu Kyi has vowed to rule "above" the president and picked her school friend and close aide Htin Kyaw for the role.

She already holds four cabinet positions, including foreign minister, after her National League for Democracy (NLD) swept to power in elections last year. A bill

proposing a new position for Suu Kyi was submitted to parliament yesterday, in her party's latest attempt to circumvent the ban on her leading the country.

Mentioning Suu Kyi by name, it says the role would give her "responsibility to the parliament regarding the performance of advice", power to conduct any meetings deemed necessary and a budget. The post would last for the same five-year term as the president and secure Suu Kyi's access to the legislature, which she was forced to step down from when she joined the cabinet.

The move is expected to receive little resistance from chambers dominated by the NLD. But it could provoke a military that has firmly stood in the way of the Nobel Peace Prize winner's path to the top

post. It also raises questions about the 70-year-old's ability to juggle several major posts in the new administration: foreign affairs, education, energy and the president's office. Critics say the roundabout arrangement could jam up a fledgling democracy stacked with novice politicians.

Popular mandate

Trevor Wilson, a former Australian ambassador to Myanmar now working at the Australian National University, said Suu Kyi needs to command her party from the front.

"If she's going to be able to achieve even half of what people expect of her, she has to be tough and disciplined," he told AFP. He added that he would be "astounded" if the new role hadn't been dis-

cussed first with Myanmar's military leaders.

Suu Kyi, the daughter of Myanmar's independence hero, has led a decades-long struggle to wrench power from a junta that jailed her and many other democracy activists-some of whom are now MPs. Last November's polls, the freest in decades, saw her party rake in 80 percent of available parliamentary seats.

Aung Kyi Nyunt, an upper house MP from central Myanmar who submitted yesterday's bill, said the role reflected the popular mandate Suu Kyi won at the polls. "The object of the proposal from the bill committee in the upper house parliament is to fulfill the wishes and interests of people who voted on 8 November 2015," he told lawmakers. — AFP



KOLKATA: Indian rescue workers and volunteers try to free people trapped under the wreckage of a collapsed fly-over bridge yesterday. — AFP

INDIA FLYOVER COLLAPSE KILLS 14; SCORES FEARED TRAPPED

KOLKATA: A flyover under construction in the bustling Indian city of Kolkata collapsed yesterday on to vehicles and street vendors below, killing at least 14 people with more than 100 people feared trapped.

Residents used their bare hands to try to rescue people pinned under a 100-metre (110-yard) length of metal and cement that snapped off at one end and came crashing down in a teeming commercial district near Girish Park. "The concrete had been laid last night at this part of the bridge," resident Ramesh Kejrival told Reuters. "I am lucky as I was planning to go downstairs to have juice. When I was thinking about it, I saw that the bridge had collapsed."

Video footage aired on TV channels showed a street scene with two auto rickshaws and a crowd of people suddenly obliterated by a mass of falling concrete that narrowly missed cars crawling in a traffic jam. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, whose centre-left party is seeking re-election in the state of West Bengal next month, rushed to the scene. "We will take every action to save lives of those trapped beneath the collapsed flyover. Rescue is our

top priority," she said.

Banerjee, 61, said those responsible for the disaster would not be spared. Yet she herself faces questions about a construction project that has been plagued by delays and safety fears. A newspaper reported last November that Banerjee wanted the flyover - already five years overdue - to be completed by February. Project engineers expressed concerns over whether this would be possible, The Telegraph said at the time.

The disaster could play a role in the West Bengal election, one of five being held next month that will give an interim verdict on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's nearly two years in power. Indian company IVRCL was building the 2-km (1.2-mile) Vivekananda Road flyover, according to its web site. Its shares closed down 5 percent after falling by up to 11.8 percent on news of the disaster. IVRCL's director of operations, A.G.K. Murthy, said the company was not sure of the cause of the disaster. "We did not use any inferior quality material and we will cooperate with the investigators," Murthy told reporters in Hyderabad where the firm is based. "We are in a state of shock."

NO ACCESS

A coordinated rescue operation was slow to get under way, with access for heavy lifting gear and ambulances restricted by the buildings on either side of the flyover and heavy traffic. Police said that 78 injured had been taken to Kolkata's Medical College Hospital after the disaster struck at around noon. "Most were bleeding profusely. The problem is that nobody is able to drive an ambulance to the spot," said Akhilesh Chaturvedi, a senior police officer.

Eyewitness Ravindra Kumar Gupta, a grocer, said two buses carrying more than 100 passengers were trapped. Eight taxis and six auto rickshaws were partly visible in the wreckage. "Every night, hundreds of labourers would build the flyover and they would cook and sleep near the site by day," said Gupta, who together with friends pulled out six bodies. "The government wanted to complete the flyover before the elections and the labourers were working on a tight deadline ... Maybe the hasty construction led to the collapse." — Reuters

AFGHAN TALEBAN DISSIDENT PLEDGES ALLEGIANCE TO LEADER

KANDAHAR: Senior members of the Afghan Taliban said yesterday that a prominent figure within the militant group who had opposed its new leadership has now pledged his allegiance, helping to close divisions within the Taliban ahead of possible peace talks with the government.

Abdul Qayum Zakir had disagreed with the appointment of Mullah Akhtar Mansoor as leader of the Taliban following the death of the movement's one-eyed founder, Mullah Mohammad Omar. Two Taliban members - Mohammad Ghaus, a foreign minister in the Taliban's 1996-2001 regime, and ruling council member Mullah Gul Rahman Saleem - told The Associated Press that Zakir had recently pledged allegiance to Mansoor. His loyalty pledge helps close one of several rifts that emerged after Mullah Omar's death was announced by the Afghan government last summer. Mansoor had led the movement in Omar's name for more than two years after he died. Kabul's announcement of Omar's death elevated Mansoor to the leadership, but led to deep mistrust among some at the top of the insurgent movement who felt betrayed.

The announcement of Omar's death also derailed a peace process that has yet to be revived. The Taliban recently announced they would not attend direct talks with Afghan government representatives, which Kabul officials had said would take place in early March.

Zakir's return to the fold follows a rallying call issued by Mansoor earlier this month, in which he called on disaffected Taliban to reunite under his leadership. This appears to be an attempt to strengthen his position ahead of any peace dialogue, consolidating battlefield gains made after the international combat mission ended in 2014 and left Afghan forces to fight largely alone for the first time in the war's 15 years.

Zakir, a former Taliban military commission leader who spent time in Guantanamo Bay prison after the 2001 U.S. invasion toppled the Taliban regime, held a number of senior roles within the group, both during its rule of Afghanistan and after it went into exile in neighboring Pakistan. He had initially opposed Mansoor's elevation to leader, but chose to keep a low profile. His power base is in southern Helmand province, where most of the world's opium is produced, and where Mansoor is believed to control the bulk of the smuggling routes. Another dissident, Mullah Mohammad Rasool - known to be close to Zakir - established his own militia in western Afghanistan, where he fought Mansoor's men. — AP



KABUL: Afghan National Police soldier leave the site of a suicide attack near the Defense Ministry compound. — AP

CHINA TO US: 'BE CAREFUL' IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

BEIJING: Beijing's defense ministry yesterday warned the US navy to "be careful" in the South China Sea and slammed a newly signed defense agreement between Washington and the Philippines.

Earlier this month, Manila agreed to give US forces access to five military bases, including some close to the disputed South China Sea, where tensions have risen over Beijing's assertion of its territorial claims. China claims virtually all the South China Sea despite conflicting claims by Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan and the Philippines, and has built up artificial islands in the area in recent months, including some with airstrips.

Washington has since October carried out two high-profile "freedom of navigation" oper-

ations in which it sailed warships within 12 nautical miles of islets claimed by China. Asked about a recent report on US patrols in the sea, defense ministry spokesman Yang Yujun told a briefing yesterday: "As for the US ships which came, I can only suggest they be careful".

The agreement between Washington and Manila applies to the Antonio Bautista Air Base on the western island of Palawan, directly on the South China Sea. Asked about the deal, Yang said: "To strengthen military alliances is a reflection of a Cold War mentality." "It is in the opposite direction of the trends of the era for peace, development and cooperation," he said, adding bilateral military cooperation "should not undermine a third party's interests".

Washington regularly accuses Beijing-which

says it has built runways on and deployed unspecified weapons to islands in the South China Sea-of militarizing the area. Beijing denies the accusations and says US patrols have ramped up tensions. "Now, the United States has come back, and is reinforcing its military presence in this region and promoting militarization in the South China Sea," Yang said.

Beijing acknowledges that the facilities on its new islands will have military as well as civilian purposes. Satellite imagery released last month showed Beijing was installing radar equipment and had deployed surface-to-air missiles and lengthened a runway to accommodate fighter jets on one islet, Woody Island, in the Parcels.—AFP



TAIPEI: A woman prays in front of a makeshift memorial offered with flowers and stuffed animals for a girl who was killed Monday by a knife-wielding assailant outside a subway station. —AP

DECAPITATION OF 3-YEAR-OLD SPARKS ANGER IN TAIWAN 'I CAN'T ACCEPT THIS'

TAIPEI: The apparently random decapitation of a 3-year-old girl in front of her mother in low-crime Taipei this week has sparked outrage, calls to save the death penalty and questions about the island's state of mental health care.

The attack on the child, who was walking behind her mother on the way to a metro station, has stunned and horrified inhabitants of greater Taipei, with the reaction at times verging on violence. Hours after the girl was killed, a crowd gathered outside the police station where the slaying suspect was taken, some of them armed with baseball bats.

"I can't accept this," said Chiu Yuan-chao, Taipei mother of a 9-year-old, said in a telephone interview. "This kind of person shouldn't be allowed to enjoy the treatment of a normal person. I think all moms and dads will have this kind of view. This sort of incident is becoming something of a trend and my feeling is that the society is amid some sort of panic."

Police work

Police arrested Wang Ching-yu, 33, who they suspect killed the child. He had been hospitalized for treatment in 2010 and 2014 after arguing with his family because of an unspecified mental illness, Central News Agency said, citing police.

Authorities have not said whether mental illness was a factor in the attack or whether Wang had been clinically diagnosed with any mental illness. City dwellers largely still consider the metro area of 5.6 million to be safe. Murders across the island have fallen from 1,765 cases in 1995 to 474 in 2014, statistics from the National Police Agency show.

But the attack triggered debate about whether to keep the death penalty as a deterrent against violent crime. Legislators have been discussing reforms to the punishment, which had been effectively suspended from December 2005 to May 2008. Thirty-three people have been executed since 2008. —AP

OBAMA, ASIAN LEADERS TO HUDDLE ON NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR THREAT

WASHINGTON: Working to display a united front, the United States and key Asian countries will seek to put more pressure on North Korea as world leaders open a nuclear security summit in Washington.

President Barack Obama, the summit's host, will also seek to smooth over tensions with China over cyber security and maritime disputes as he and President Xi Jinping meet on the sidelines. The summit also offers Obama his last major chance to focus global attention on disparate nuclear security threats before his term ends early next year.

Though nuclear terrorism and the Islamic State group top this year's agenda, concerns about North Korea's nuclear weapons program are also commanding focus as the two-day summit gets under way. Those long-simmering concerns have escalated of late following the North's recent nuclear test and rocket launch.

Obama planned to have a joint meeting yesterday morning with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and South Korean President Park Geun-hye, two US treaty allies deeply concerned about North Korea. It's a reprise of a similar meeting the three countries held in 2014 during the last nuclear security summit in The Hague.

China's influence over the North will be front and center later in the day when Obama sits down with Xi. The White House said that meeting was also an opportunity for Obama to press US concerns about human rights and China's assertive territorial claims in waters far off its coast.

Frictions are high

Though frictions with China remain high, the US was encouraged by China's role in passing stringent new UN sanctions on North Korea, its traditional ally. Now the US is pressing Beijing to implement those sanctions dutifully.

"The international community must remain united in the face of North Korea's continued provocations, including its recent nuclear test and missile launches," Obama wrote in an op-ed that appeared yesterday in The

Washington Post. He added that the recent UN sanctions "show that violations have consequences."

The US and South Korea have been discussing whether to deploy a US missile defense system called THAAD, or the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, in South Korea to counter the threat from the North. China has resisted that step out of concern it would also give the US radar coverage over Chinese territory, and Russia opposes it as well. Antony Blinken, the US deputy secretary of state, said this week that China must engage with the US directly on North Korea if it wants to avoid

have struck sweeping agreements on climate change, they've remained at odds on many economic issues. Obama has also been unable to get Congress to ratify the Asia-Pacific free trade deal his administration painstakingly negotiated.

Obama also planned to meet with French President Francois Hollande yesterday, amid steep concerns about terrorism in Europe following Islamic State-linked attacks in Paris and Brussels. The summit continues on Friday with a special session focused on preventing IS and other extremists from obtaining nuclear materials and



ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE: Chinese President Xi Jinping arrives yesterday to attend the Nuclear Security Summit. —AP

the US and its partners taking steps "that it won't like."

In North Korea, meanwhile, the government has been churning out regular propaganda pieces condemning the US and South Korea, while warning it could launch a pre-emptive strike against South Korea or even the US mainland at any time.

For years, pressing security crises in the Middle East have overshadowed Obama's goal of expanding US influence and engagement in Asia, with the North Korean threat another unwanted distraction. Though the US and China

attacking urban areas.

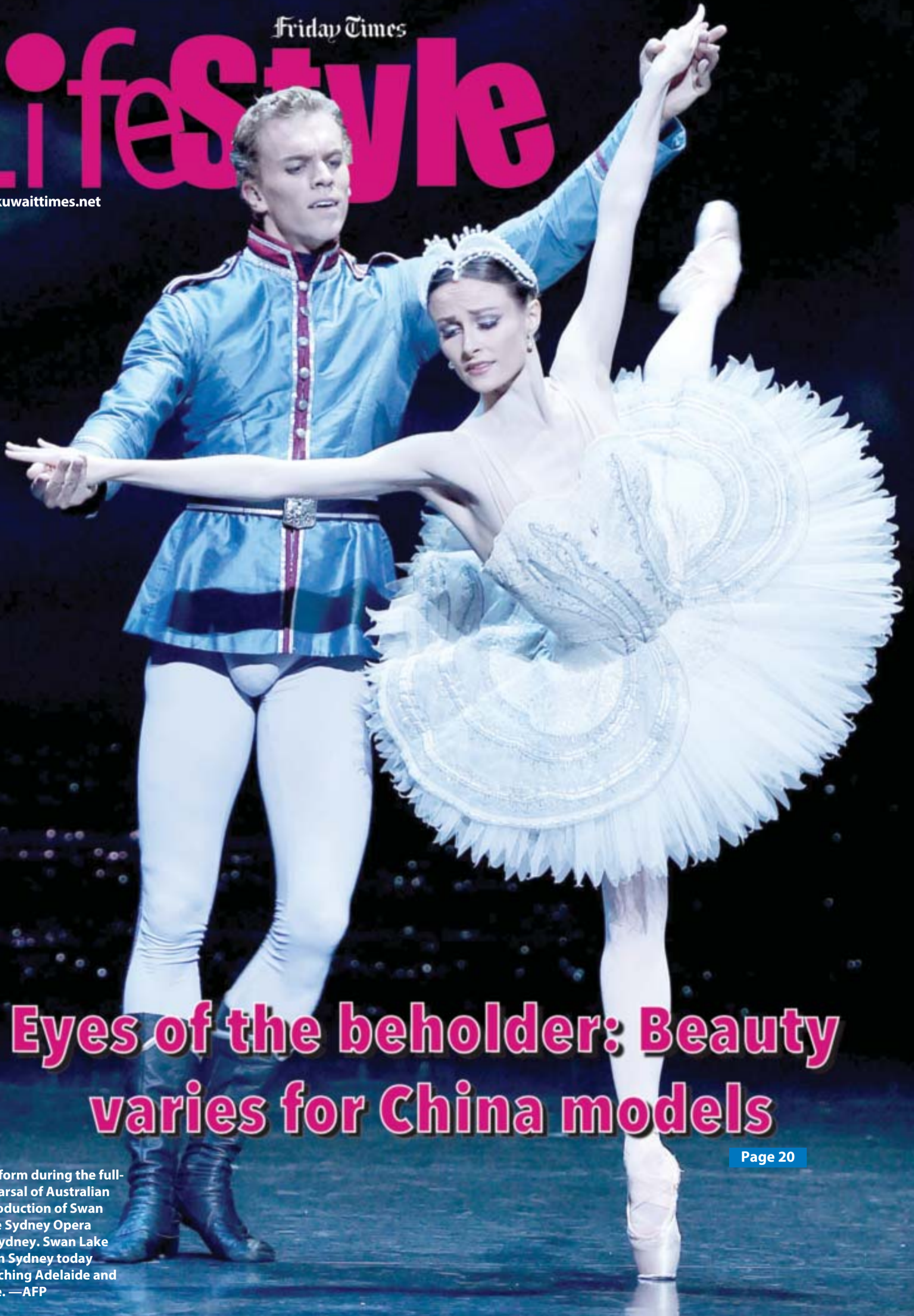
Some of the 2,000 metric tons of highly enriched uranium and separated plutonium being used in civilian or military programs worldwide could be turned into a nuclear bomb if stolen or diverted, the White House warned. Fewer than half of the countries participating in the summit have even agreed to secure sources of radiological material that could be used for a dirty bomb, though more countries are expected to announce commitments during the summit to tighten controls. —AP

Friday Times

FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2016

Lifestyle

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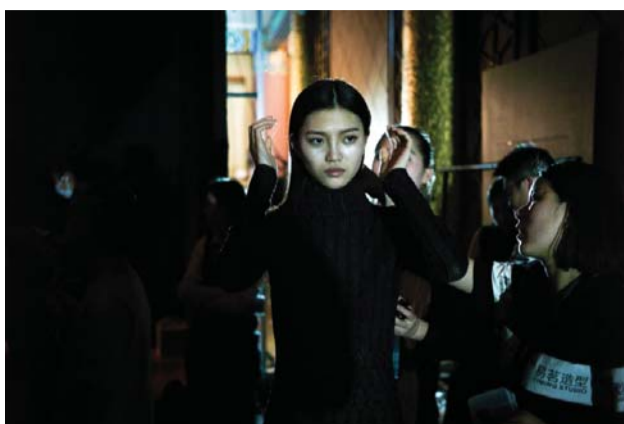
Eyes of the beholder: Beauty varies for China models

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Artists perform during the full-dress rehearsal of Australian Ballet's production of Swan Lake at the Sydney Opera House in Sydney. Swan Lake will open in Sydney today before reaching Adelaide and Melbourne. —AFP



Chinese model Xu Naiyu (center) speaks to a model backstage prior to a show at China Fashion Week in Beijing.



Chinese model Xu Naiyu prepares backstage during a show at China Fashion Week in Beijing.



Chinese model Xu Naiyu eats her meal in a fast food restaurant during a break.—AFP photos

Eyes of the beholder: Beauty varies for China models

Tall and stereotypically thin, Chinese fashion model Xu Naiyu exudes a happy optimism but is matter-of-factly realistic about the fickleness of her chosen career, and how conventions of beauty change around the world. The 21-year-old has been a frequent sight on the runways of China Fashion Week, which concluded yesterday, showing off everything from a simple green top to a pieced-together dress accessorized with protective goggles and a yellow-streaked wig.

"In this industry, luck is so important," she said in between events at the Beijing Hotel, a longstanding establishment near Tiananmen Square in the Chinese capital. "It's not even about trying hard, because there's nothing you can do to change how you look if people don't happen to like it." Concepts of beauty vary drastically across cultures, said Roye Zhang, chief agent for China Bentley Culture & Media, which represents Xu and has been operating since 2003, when China's fashion industry was in its infancy.

"There are big differences between eastern and western aesthetics—a face we find beautiful in China won't necessarily work abroad, and vice versa," he said. Overseas shows sought men with "single eyelids and small eyes, who are thinner and not so tall", and women who "look like Mulan from the Disney cartoon—she's not exactly pretty, but she's memorable at just a glance". Women like Ju Xiaowen—announced as a new face of L'Oreal Paris in

February—did well abroad because they had something unique, he said, rather than adhering to "Chinese traditional aesthetic standards, which prize very big eyes, double eyelids, and pale and serene beauty".

The gulf in perception is so wide that his agency brings in foreign CEOs and bookers to assess their pre-vetted Chinese talent. "The vast majority of our models are more suitable for the Chinese market - there's only a very few of them who will be able to go abroad," he said. Xu, her agent said, "has the kind of pretty face and eyes that appeal to Chinese people but falls somewhere in the middle; she can appeal to both people in China and abroad". Competition is fierce, as shows abroad will only use a few Asian models at most, but the middle way can be lucrative—when they return to China, those who have strutted foreign runways are able to earn double or triple their mainland-only counterparts.

Pale shadow

Xu wanted to be a model from childhood and dreams of walking shows for famed brands like Prada or Chanel. Her parents sent her to classes when she was still at school to learn to strut and pose. "I love how it feels to stand on the catwalk," she said. "Especially now, when I'm both young and pretty, I want get out there and give this industry a try, whether it works out in the end

or not." Now a second year at the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology studying modeling and design, she booked her first professional gig only in 2014 but has since walked dozens of shows both in China and abroad at the star-studded Milan and New York Fashion Weeks—her first trips overseas.

The Chinese version is a pale shadow of such events, she noted, with no major foreign brands, simple sets and just two locations. The fashion industry of the world's second-largest economy is replete with brands unknown elsewhere, and few designers are integrated with the international fashion buyer system. "If you want to get to the next level, you still have to go abroad to fashion capitals like Milan or Paris, because this profession is one that came into China from the outside world," Xu explained. The industry was "torturous" at times, she admitted. "I'm not that kind of single-eyelid girl who's instantly recognizable," she said. "You'll go to 20 castings in a day and come back with nothing, and it's devastating. It's like they're shopping for clothes - you're picked over, assessed and put aside."—AFP

CHINA FASHION WEEK



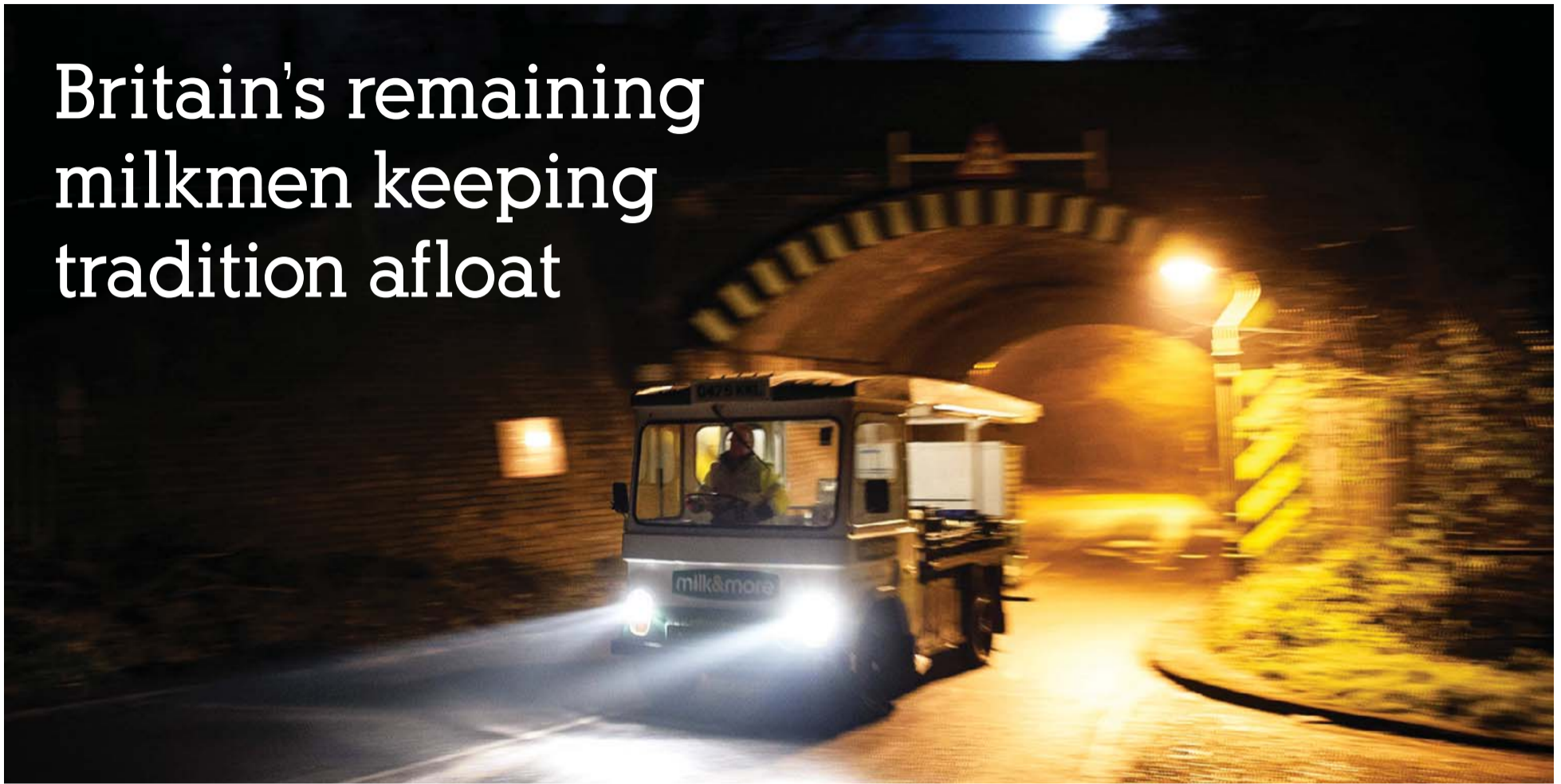


Models parading creations from the JUSERE Wedding Dress Collection at China Fashion Week in Beijing.—AP/AFP photos



Models wearing creations from Pan Yiliang x Pink Mary Haute Couture Collection designed by Pan Yiliang.

Britain's remaining milkmen keeping tradition afloat



Once a daily sight on every British street, a dwindling but resilient band of milkmen still go out at the crack of dawn to deliver bottles of fresh milk to the nation's doorsteps. The overwhelming majority of milk used to be sold at the front door until the supermarket revolution all but wiped out this very British institution. But by selling more than milk and embracing the Internet, the few thousand remaining milkmen, including Neil Garner, have breathed new life into the cherished tradition. "It has given us a big boost and brought us into the 21st century. The future's looking bright," said Garner, the customer-nominated Milkman of the Year at Milk and More, the country's biggest doorstep delivery firm.

The 57-year-old has driven his milk float—an electrified, open-sided delivery van—through towns and villages in the dead of night since 1994, placing glass pint (half-liter) bottles of milk on the doorstep ready for when customers wake for their morning cereal and cups of tea. "Nowadays, you don't do as many houses in each street. But we sell a lot of other stuff to the people we do have," he told AFP. It's not just breakfast staples like tea bags, bread, butter, eggs and bacon that Garner now has on the back of his float. Jam, cranberry juice, pet food, potatoes and toilet roll are all available. Even bird seed and compost can be dropped off on the round.

Supermarket boom

In 1980, 89 percent of all the milk bought in Britain was

delivered to the door, according to trade association Dairy UK. That figure plunged to 30 percent during the 1990s out-of-town supermarket boom. In 2015, just 2.8 percent of milk still went to the door, a total of 154 million liters, with 5,000 milkmen and women delivering to around 2.5 million homes. Garner's round sees him deliver six days a week to St Albans, a small commuter city northwest of London. At the depot in nearby Watford, milkmen load up crates, containing 20 one-pint bottles each, before heading into the cold at around 2:00 am.

The blue, green, red, gold and orange foil bottle tops mark different types of milk. Garner's no-frills electric milk float is slow and exposed to the elements, but the brisk walker likes the ease of hopping on and off for his 200 to 250 deliveries. "Snow, ice, floods, in 22 years I've never not been out due to the weather," the 57-year-old said. The early drops are in pitch darkness, Garner needing a torch to find his way up the garden paths. "This is the best part of the day. The air's fresh and clean, there's no traffic," he said.

The round takes Garner down tiny country lanes; along suburban avenues; up narrow streets of cottages and inside blocks of flats. He delivers to industrial estates, schools and even a garden shed. Some customers leave rolled-up notes with instructions such as "no milk today" or "one extra pint, please", but most now go online. "That's the way ahead," said Garner. "Online facilities have attracted younger people. A pint of milk, typically 50

pence (\$0.70, 65 euro cents) at a supermarket, costs 81 pence. "There's nothing else you can order online at 9:00 pm and get delivered in a couple of hours," Garner added. Customers can also phone in orders via a Philippines call center.

Pillar of community

"The secret is being punctual. People like to know their milk will be there at the same time every morning," said Garner. He relies on the few other people around to check his timing, including a man he sees getting on his bicycle each morning. "Am I early?" Garner asks. "One minute early!" the cyclist replies before setting off. The last delivery is done at 7:30 am, before Garner returns through rush-hour traffic to unload his empties at the depot. Garner reckons milkmen are a special breed. "The milkman is respected. People look upon you as a friend," he said. "A lot of the elderly like a chat and I do things like change lightbulbs for them. Quite often I might be the only person they see all week. "It's part of this country's traditions and people don't want to lose it." — AFP



Neil Garner, a milkman for the Milk&More delivery company, works on his daily round in the Watford area, north of London. — AFP photos



Asia's top film fest in crisis

The future of Asia's top film festival is being threatened by a bitter dispute over what organizers are calling an unacceptable political challenge to their artistic independence, with moviemakers pushing an "empty red carpet" boycott of this year's event. The Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) — held every October in the South Korean port of Busan — marked its 20 anniversary last year, but celebrations were soured by a lingering row that has since snowballed into a full-blown crisis.

A flurry of official probes targeting its organizers and an unprecedented cut in state funding have raised serious doubts over the event's artistic and financial viability. Artistic director Lee Yong-Kwan was forced to step down in February, even as his counterparts from other top international film festivals like Cannes and Berlin wrote an open letter warning that political pressure was threatening BIFF's future. Organizers say they have become targets of political retaliation for screening a film in 2014 — in defiance of state opposition — about the government's handling of the Sewol ferry disaster. The scathing, highly emotive documentary slammed Seoul's botched rescue efforts in the immediate aftermath of the ferry sinking in April 2014 that claimed more than 300 lives, most of them school children.

'Hefty price'

"We are paying a hefty price for screening the movie that the government disliked," a BIFF spokeswoman, Kim Jung-Yun, told AFP. "Everyone is concerned about artistic and political independence of the BIFF... this is the biggest crisis we have ever faced," Kim said. "Diving Bell" (or "The Truth Will Not Sink With Sewol") had its world premiere at the 2014 BIFF, against the wishes of the Busan city mayor, Suh Byung-Hoo,



This file photo taken on October 1, 2015 shows visitors walking past a banner for the Busan International Film Festival (BIFF) at the Busan Cinema Center in Busan. — AFP

who serves as festival chairman and who deemed the movie "too political". The premiere went ahead after a barrage of protest from filmmakers who accused Suh of compromising the festival's independence.

But state funding was nearly halved to 800 million won (\$700,000) for the 2015 event, while BIFF director Lee became the target of a series of probes by state auditors and prosecutors over the festival's financial dealings. Lee was eventually compelled to leave in February after Suh refused to renew his contract.

Global industry support

The same month saw the publication of an open letter of protest to the mayor, signed by more than 100 prominent overseas cineastes including the directors of the Cannes, Berlin and Venice film festivals. "Our concern leads us to call on you... not to damage the festival or its independence, and to stop applying political pressure to the festival's leaders and programmers," the letter said. "The events of the past year not only threaten that independence but also put the entire future of BIFF at risk," it added.

Hundreds of South Korean actors, directors and producers have staged street rallies for months urging the authorities to back off. "This festival is not a personal possession of state officials, but a valued cultural heritage nurtured and enjoyed by movie fans," an amalgam of Korean filmmakers' associations said in a joint statement released in March. The group vowed to boycott the 2016 event unless the Busan city council — a major BIFF sponsor and stakeholder — accepts changes to the festival rules that they say would ensure its artistic independence.

'Empty red carpet'

"The world will witness the empty red carpet for the first time in 20 years of BIFF's history and the audience from all over the world will stop coming to Busan for the festival anymore," the statement said. The council rejected the ultimatum, insisting the government probes and Lee's departure had nothing to do with the controversial documentary. "I was simply trying to overhaul the unreasonable operations of the festival that have been dominated by a few," Suh told a press conference. "These people are trying to frame my efforts as political oppression and deceive many citizens," he said.

With the dispute showing no signs of abating, the festival organizers fear its integrity is in peril. "For now we are trying our best to prepare for this year's event but we are afraid the crisis is greatly hurting our reputation," said spokeswoman Kim. "Who would want to come to see a film festival with no freedom of expression?" — AFP



British comedian Ronnie Corbett poses with his medal after he received the honor Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) from Britain's Queen Elizabeth II during an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace in central London on February 16, 2012. — AFP

British comedy great Ronnie Corbett dies aged 85

Ronnie Corbett, one of Britain's most successful comedians best known for "The Two Ronnies", his double-act show with Ronnie Barker, has died aged 85, his publicist said yesterday. The show ran on the BBC from 1971 to 1987 and was one of the most popular light entertainment shows of the era. Its opening titles featured the two sets of spectacles worn by its stars and it regularly closed with one of the best-known catchphrases on British television: "It's goodnight from me... and it's goodnight from him."

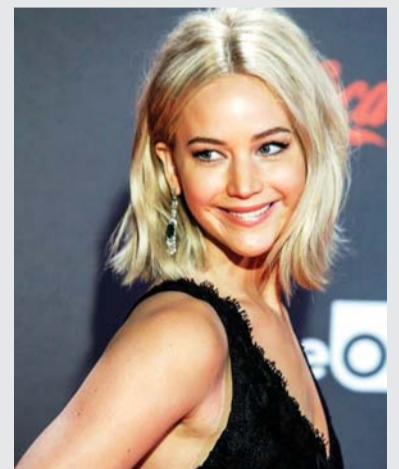
A statement from his publicist said: "Ronnie Corbett CBE, one of the nation's best-loved entertainers, passed away this morning, surrounded by his loving family. "They have asked that their privacy is respected at this very sad time." Corbett's other celebrated roles included in 1960s satirical comedy show "The Frost Report" and "Sorry!", a 1980s sitcom about a fortysomething librarian who lives with his domineering mother and timid father. Prime Minister David Cameron and British comedians rushed to pay tribute to Corbett following his death.

Lawrence is 'Dying' to make more 'X-Men' movies

Jennifer Lawrence revealed that she's eager to star in more "X-Men" films. "I am dying to come back," the Oscar-winning actress told Empire in an interview. "I love these movies, I love being in them. I love ensemble movies because it's not on anyone's shoulders." Lawrence's admission comes as a surprise, considering that last May she confirmed that the spring 2016 release of "X-Men: Apocalypse" would mark her final appearance in the sci-fi franchise. She's played sexy blue mutant Mystique in "X-Men: First Class" (2011), "X-Men: Days of Future

Past" (2014) and now in "X-Men: Apocalypse," the latest chapter in the film series.

Related 'X-Men: Apocalypse' First Official Trailer Promises Death and Destruction In the ninth "X-Men" installment, which is set a decade after the events of "X-Men: Days of Future Past," the X-Men must unite to face immortal supervillain Apocalypse (played by Oscar Isaac), who awakens after thousands of years with a plan to extinguish humanity. —Reuters



Leonardo DiCaprio

DiCaprio's Appian Way signs first look deal with paramount

Leonardo DiCaprio's Appian Way Productions has signed a three-year first-look deal with Paramount Pictures. Paramount Pictures and Appian Way have four projects currently under development, including: "The Devil in the White City," based on the book by Erik Larson with the screen adaptation by Academy Award-nominated screenwriter Billy Ray, which will reunite DiCaprio with Scorsese; "Sandcastle Empire," a film adaptation of the novel by Kayla Olson which depicts an apocalyptic future with society on the brink of collapse from climate change; a yet untitled film based on a book proposal by New York Times journalist Jack Ewing about the recent Volkswagen diesel emissions scandal; and a limited television series based on A. Scott Berg's Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Charles Lindbergh.

"I've had the pleasure of working with Brad and the team at Paramount Pictures on numerous projects throughout my career. I cannot think of a better home for Appian Way as we continue our growth," said DiCaprio. Paramount CEO Brad Grey added: "Leo is one of the great talents of our time. He is a masterful actor, storyteller and producer, with impeccable taste and skill that has shaped his extraordinary career. Our first project together was 'The Departed,' before I came to Paramount. Since then, working with the legendary Martin Scorsese, we have partnered on two wonderful pictures, 'Shutter Island' and 'The Wolf of Wall Street.' We are both proud and excited to grow our relationships with him, Rick Yorn, Jennifer Davisson and the entire team at Appian Way." —Reuters



Looking for a comforting chicken dish? Look to India's kadhi

By Meera Sodha

Type “chicken recipe” into Google and watch as millions of suggestions line up, page after page, at your beck and call. There is no shortage of ways to cook our favorite bird. But often what I really want when I crave chicken is something that will comfort and soothe: a meal that is the equivalent of a good blanket, cup of tea, or a bath of the perfect temperature. For me, this buttermilk chicken kadhi is that dish.

Kadhi is one of India's most popular dishes, the taste of home for so many Indians. At its most basic, it is buttermilk or yoghurt spiced with fenugreek and turmeric, laced with green chilies, garlic and ginger, then bound together with chickpea flour. The flour thickens the buttermilk, turning it into a silky, deeply savory and addictive sauce.

It is a frugal dish, which is much cherished. And even though it never graced the boilerplate Indian restaurant menus around the world, it is cooked weekly, if not daily, in our homes.

Poaching chicken in the kadhi is not traditional (Google searches

return nothing) but, since putting the two together, I have never looked back. Pan-frying the chicken legs first brings out the delicious sticky caramel flavors in the skin before the buttermilk bath, which tenderizes the leg meat magnificently. The result is impossibly soft chicken, which falls off the bone easily, ready to dunk into a creamy, but tart and gently spiced sauce.

As far as chicken recipes that hit the spot go, for flavor, speed and ease, this one is hard to beat.



BUTTERMILK CHICKEN KADHI

Ingredients

Start to finish: 40 minutes

Servings: 6

2 tablespoons canola oil
4 pounds chicken thighs and drumsticks
1 teaspoon black mustard seeds
2 pinches fenugreek seeds
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
20 fresh curry leaves
1 1/2-inch chunk fresh ginger, grated
6 cloves garlic, crushed
2 green finger chilies, finely chopped

1 1/2 tablespoons chickpea flour
1/2 teaspoon turmeric
1 teaspoon kosher salt
1 quart buttermilk

Preparation

In a large skillet pan over medium-high, heat the oil. When hot, add the chicken and brown until evenly golden on all sides, about 10 minutes. Remove the chicken from the pan and set aside.

Spoon off all but 2 tablespoons of the fat in the skillet. Return the skillet to medium heat, then add the mustard, fenugreek, cumin and curry leaves. Allow to sizzle for 1 minute, then add the

ginger, garlic and chilies and cook for a few minutes, or until soft and golden.

Reduce the heat to low and add the chickpea flour, turmeric and salt. Mix and slowly whisk in the buttermilk. Bring the buttermilk up to a very gentle simmer, then return the chicken to the skillet. Coat with the sauce, then cover and cook for 30 minutes, or until the chicken is soft and cooked through.

Although the chickpea flour acts as a good stabilizer, don't be alarmed if the buttermilk curdles while cooking. It makes no difference to the flavor and the little curds add a lovely texture to the sauce. Serve with rice and a side salad.

For foolproof baked salmon, reach for foil and make packets

By Melissa D'Arabian

We all know that eating fish several times a week is a healthy goal. But a lot of otherwise accomplished home cooks still find cooking fish a bit intimidating. The biggest worry? Drying it out.

I'd love to say that this fear is unfounded, but truth is that it's easy to overcook fish. This is why I always pull the fish out a minute or two before I think it's done. Usually, that will result in perfectly moist and tender results.

Another trick: en papillote, or packet method of cooking. Cooking fish en papillote is a super-easy way to

increase (significantly!) the margin of error, that window when the fish is cooked, but not overcooked. That's because cooking the fish in a tightly sealed packet creates a dome of steam that gently cooks the fish (and any other ingredients in the packet), keeping all those tasty juices right inside.

That cooking time forgiveness is pure culinary gold! En papillote traditionally is done using kitchen parchment, but foil packets are handy and can get tossed on the grill in summer. Just be aware that foil can react with acid, so if you are using a lot of lemon juice for an en papillote recipe, it's better to go with parchment (but not for the grill).

For each packet, spray a heavy-duty piece of foil with cooking spray. Then set a serving of fish on top, following by any other ingredients you like. I like to include a sauce or paste for flavor (maybe pesto or a little white wine), an aromatic (such as minced onion), and some finely chopped veggies. If the veggies are heartier (such as sweet potatoes), parcook them first (a quick microwave steam is fine).

Fish foil packets are versatile and weeknight-friendly. You can assemble them in advance and just toss them in the oven when you get home from work. You'll find it much easier to hit that fish allotment each week.

SALMON PACKETS WITH CURRY AND GREEN BEANS

Ingredients

Start to finish: 30 minutes

Servings: 6

Six 5-ounce salmon fillets
Salt and ground black pepper
2 tablespoons red curry paste
2 teaspoons fish sauce
1/4 cup chopped pineapple
1 teaspoon Asian chili sauce (optional)
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon chopped basil
1 teaspoon lime zest
1/2 cup light canned coconut milk
3 shallots, thinly sliced
1/2 red bell pepper, sliced into matchsticks
1/2 pound thin green beans (haricots verts), trimmed

Preparation

Heat the oven to 375 F. Coat 6 large rectangles of heavy foil with cooking spray. Season the salmon with salt and pepper, then set aside. In a small bowl, mix the curry paste and fish sauce. Add the pineapple, chili sauce, garlic, basil, lime zest and coconut milk. Mix well.

Divide the shallots evenly among the prepared sheets of foil, spreading them evenly in the center of each rectangle. Set a salmon fillet over the shallots on each sheet, then spoon

some of the sauce over the salmon, dividing it evenly between the servings. Top each with red pepper slices and green beans, then fold up the sides of the foil to create loose packets. Be sure to crimp the packets well so they contain any steam. Place the packets on a baking sheet and bake until the salmon is cooked through, 15 to 20 minutes. Be careful when opening; the packets will release hot steam.

Nutrition information per serving: 310 calories; 140 calories from fat (45 percent of total calories); 16 g fat (5 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 70 mg cholesterol; 660 mg sodium; 11 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 5 g sugar; 30 g protein.





Friday Times
Travel



24 hours in
Czech Republic's little known Brno



Matched with a beauty queen like Prague - and without its own Charles Bridge to boast about - Brno is the Czech Republic's perennial underdog. But spend just 24 hours in the country's second-biggest city and you'll quickly discover it has a lot going for it.

Capital of the Czech Republic's eastern province of Moravia, Brno was one of the leading centers of experimental architecture in the early 20th century. Its cultural credentials can still be admired across the city today, and perhaps nowhere more so than at the Unesco-protected triumph of Functionalist design, Vila Tugendhat. Meanwhile the city's student population, tens of thousands strong, ensures cafe and club scenes to rival the liveliest of cities. From descending into the past on a tour of the city's medieval underworld, to dining on locally sourced produce in vibrant cafes, here's how to make the most of a day in Brno.

Morning

Start your morning at the colorfully retro Bistro Franz (bistrofranz.cz). They take their coffee seriously here, taking pride in serving only sustainably grown blends from Brazil and Ethiopia, along with organic egg dishes, locally sourced butter, and homemade bread. A great spot for breakfast, this place is equally good for lunch or dinner too.

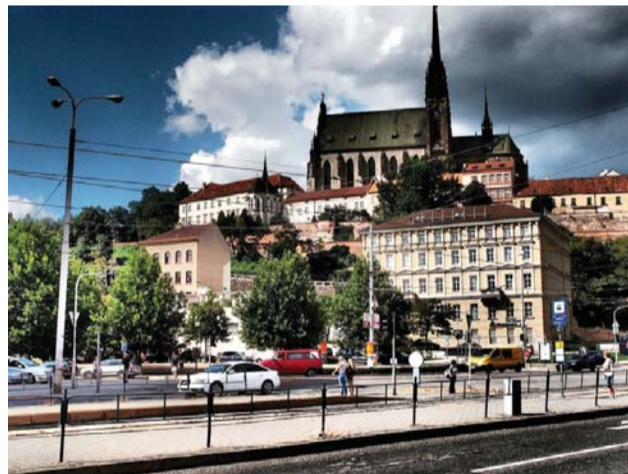
Next, it's time to marvel at Vila Tugendhat, about 2 km northeast of the centre. Arguably Brno's most important sight, to peek inside you'll have to book a guided tour days - even weeks - in advance. Provided you've arranged a tour, walk or take tram 3 or 5 to the stop Detska nemocnice ('Children's hospital') and walk north along Cernopolni ulice. At first glance, the angular Tugendhat looks like just another ordinary modern house, but many count this 1930 family villa among Bauhaus master Mies van der Rohe's greatest works. Mies broke new ground here with, among other things, a fully open floorplan and huge wall-sized windows at the back. The villa served as the inspiration for the bestseller *The Glass Room* (2009), by British author Simon Mawer.

Make your way on foot back towards the centre, where most of the other major sights are located. If you need a coffee or light bite before carrying on, pop in at Spolek, an old-school student cafe with a great selection of coffees and teas, as well as delicious soups and salads. Alternatively, the nearby Indian restaurant Annapurna is a local institution; the eminently reasonable sum of 100K? buys a set curry lunch of soup, main course, and rice.

Afternoon

Brno's Gothic Town Hall is the perfect base to start an afternoon of exploration. The helpful tourist information office (ticbrno.cz) is located here, as well as a veritable curiosity unique to the city: the legendary Brno Dragon, a full-sized stuffed crocodile hanging from the ceiling of the Town Hall's foyer.

Many of Brno's attractions could be filed in the 'ghoulish' category, and one of the most morbidly fascinating is the crypt in the Capuchin Monastery, a 100m walk south of the Town Hall. Those of a nervous disposition may wish to exercise caution, as here the mummified remains of dozens of former monks and Austrian noblemen lie on the floor of the crypt in their final repose. The crypt's special ventilation helps to maintain the corpses in their original state.



The nearby Cabbage Market (Zelny trh) is a lively square which plays host to a farmers' market most days. It's also home to the fascinating Labyrinth Under The Cabbage Market. Guided tours of around 40 minutes take visitors through tunnels several meters below ground, where Brno's medieval roots lie undisturbed.

Head across busy Masarykova ulice (Brno's main artery where pedestrians share narrow real estate with passing trams) to the impressive Church of St James for another macabre sight: an ossuary displaying the bone fragments of 50,000 people who, over the cen-

tures, died from wars, famines and plagues. Book tours of both the labyrinth and ossuary at the tourist information office at the Town Hall.

Round off a busy afternoon with a hike up to Spilberk Castle. No matter how many coats of fresh paint they put on this castle, there remains something deeply sinister - and alluring - about it.

The castle began life innocently enough as a royal residence in the 13th century, but its impenetrable walls proved to be a menacing asset for Brno's Hapsburg overlords who, in the 18th and 19th centuries, turned it into a kind of Moravian Alcatraz. Later it was used by the occupying Nazis to hold political prisoners during World War II. There are several sights up in the castle, including Brno City Museum and a lookout tower, though the greatest pleasure may simply be the hike up through the trees, with views out over the city as a backdrop. Reward your climb down with a coffee, beer or glass of wine at Cafe Podnebi, a hidden oasis at the foot of the hill.

Evening

A tour of Vila Tugendhat may have whetted your appetite for modern architecture, and the stylish Pavillion restaurant offers high-end dining in an uncluttered, sophisticated space that draws on the best Functionalist traditions.

For live music, two favorites are found north of the centre, along Stefanikova ulice. Stara Pekarna is geared towards the ethno, blues and jazz crowd, while Fleda, down the street, features DJs playing contemporary electronica, indie and occasional hip-hop sounds.

Where to sleep

Overnighting in Brno needn't cost the earth. Hostel Mitte, just a few meters from the Town Hall in the centre, is a clean, well-run hostel, occupying a historic 17th-century building, with two six-bed dorm rooms and a handful of private singles and doubles.

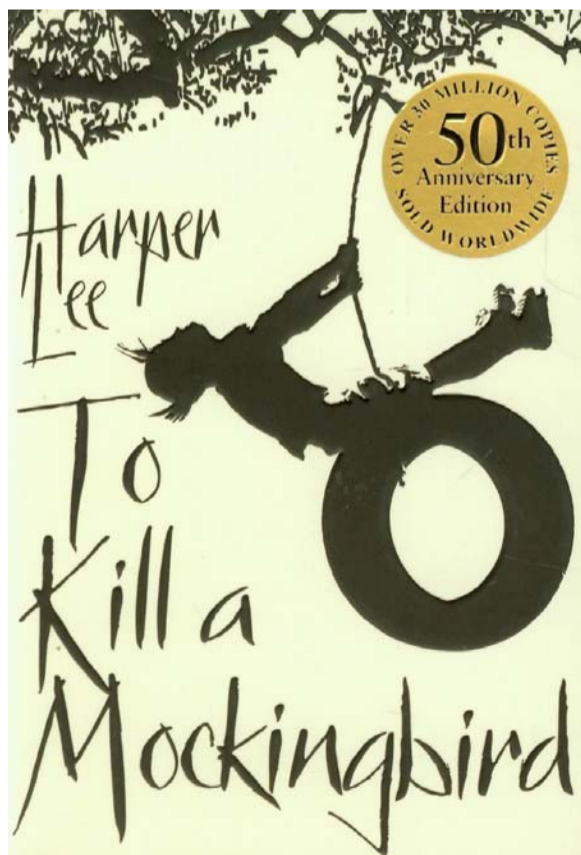
Further up the food chain, Hotel Europa is a stylish mid-level option, located on a quiet residential street about 10 minutes on foot from the centre, and within easy walking distance of Vila Tugendhat. Rooms come in 'standard' and 'superior' varieties, though there's little difference beyond size. At the luxury end of the scale, the Barcelo Brno Palace offers spacious rooms in a fully modernized 19th-century neoclassical palace. — www.lonelyplanet.com





15 books that will make you a more well-rounded person

Do you aspire to be one of those people who knows at least a little bit about a lot of things? One way of doing it is to read as much as you can, and across as wide a range of genres as possible. You can't just stick to the thrillers, or anthologies, or biographies you've grown partial to. If you really want to become a more well-rounded person, you'll need to force yourself out of your comfort zone at the bookstore. If you're not sure where to start, you've come to the right place. Take a look at these 15 timeless books on all different topics - politics, science, history, culture, and more - that may help you become the well-rounded person you strive to be.

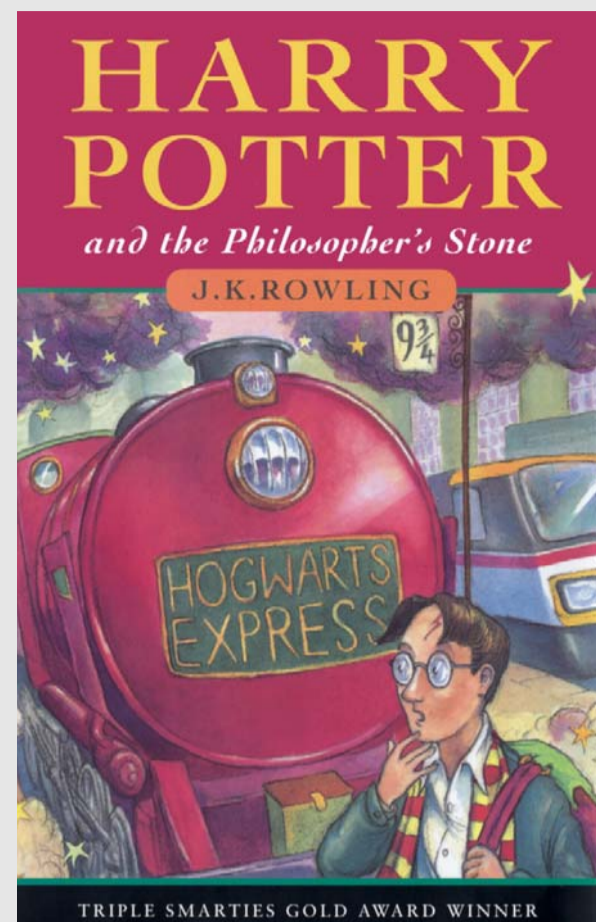
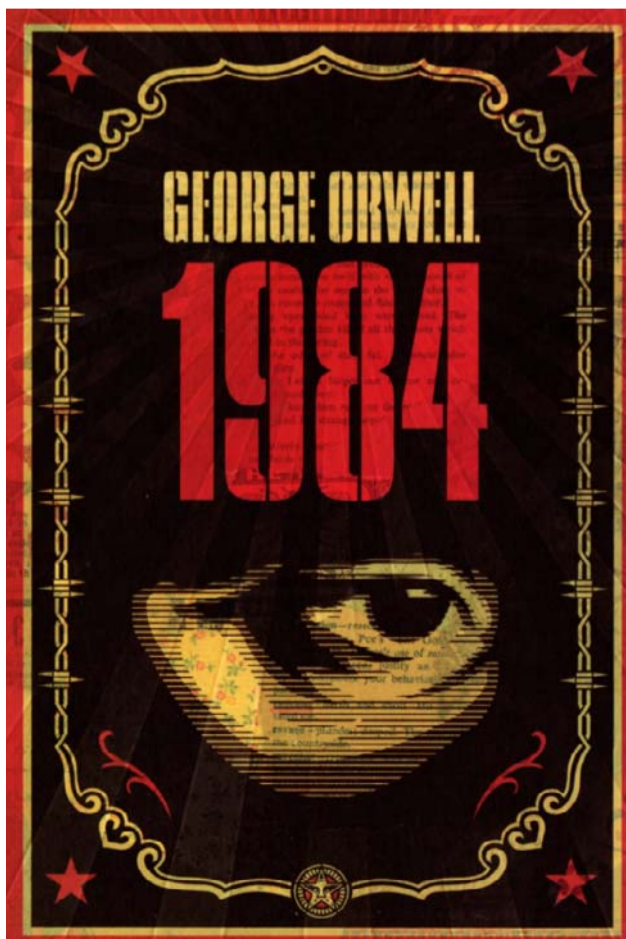


First published in 1960 and winner of the 1961 Pulitzer Prize, *To Kill a Mockingbird* was an overnight success. In its first week, it sold 1.1 million copies, and in its lifetime sold more than 40 million copies and has been translated into more than 40 languages.

In this American classic, lawyer Atticus Finch agrees to defend a black man who was accused of raping a white woman. The fictional story takes place in the town of Maycomb, Alabama, and is told through the innocent perspective of Finch's tomboy daughter, Scout. The novel's exploration of racism and parenting remains timeless, and it continues to be taught to children in schools around the world.

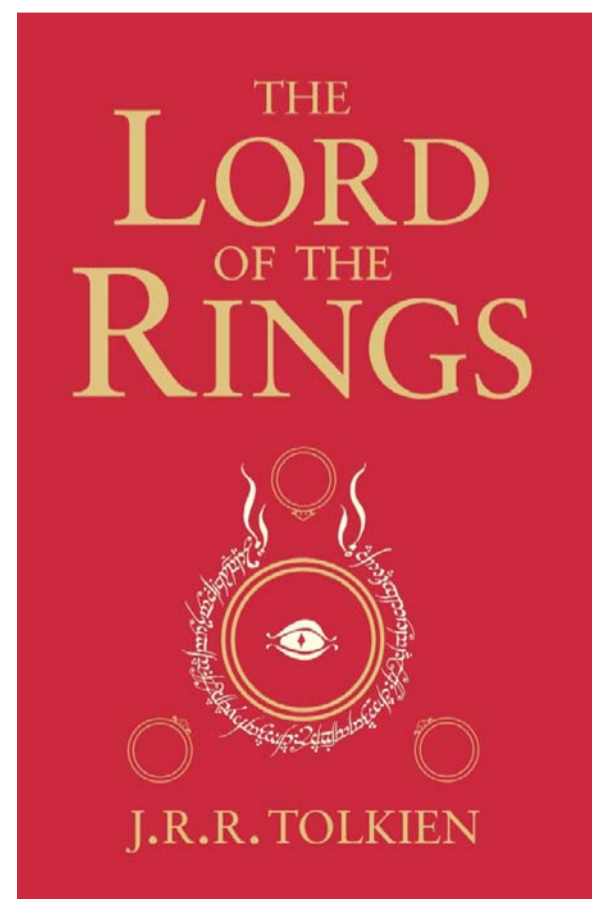
George Orwell wrote this anti-authoritarian novel in 1948 to predict what 1984 would look like in London. His prediction? A totalitarian state where "Big Brother," the government, was always watching you and telling you what to think and believe.

Some of his predictions came true, like cameras being everywhere and our bodies being scanned for weapons. This book is a must-read because it's a cautionary tale of what happens when the government is given too much control over the people and their lives.

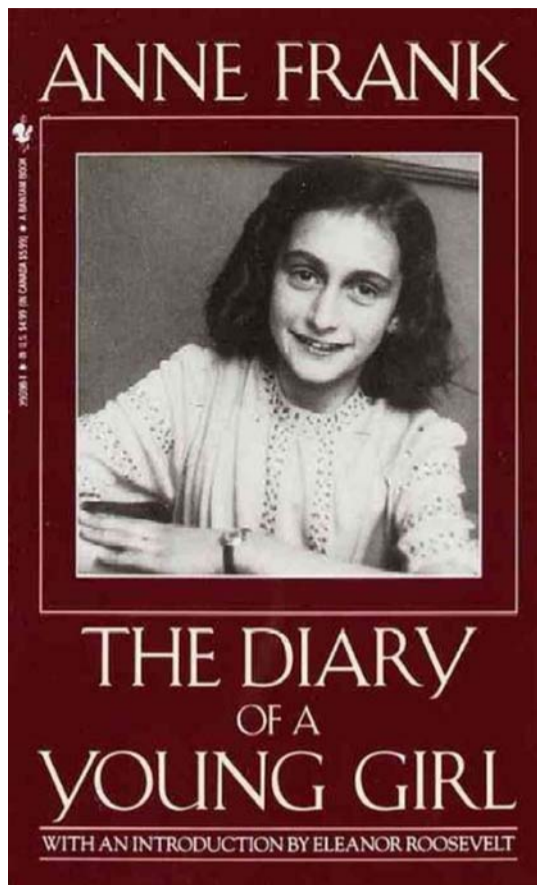


Perhaps it's unlikely, but if you haven't read *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, or the following six books in the series, you should run to the bookstore immediately. This beloved tale follows a young boy who finds out he's a wizard on his eleventh birthday and is whisked off to a wizarding school called Hogwarts to begin his training.

These books were so universally loved and praised that they spawned a multi-billion dollar film franchise, a theme park in Orlando, Florida, and a spin-off series based on JK Rowling's book, *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, which will be released later this year.

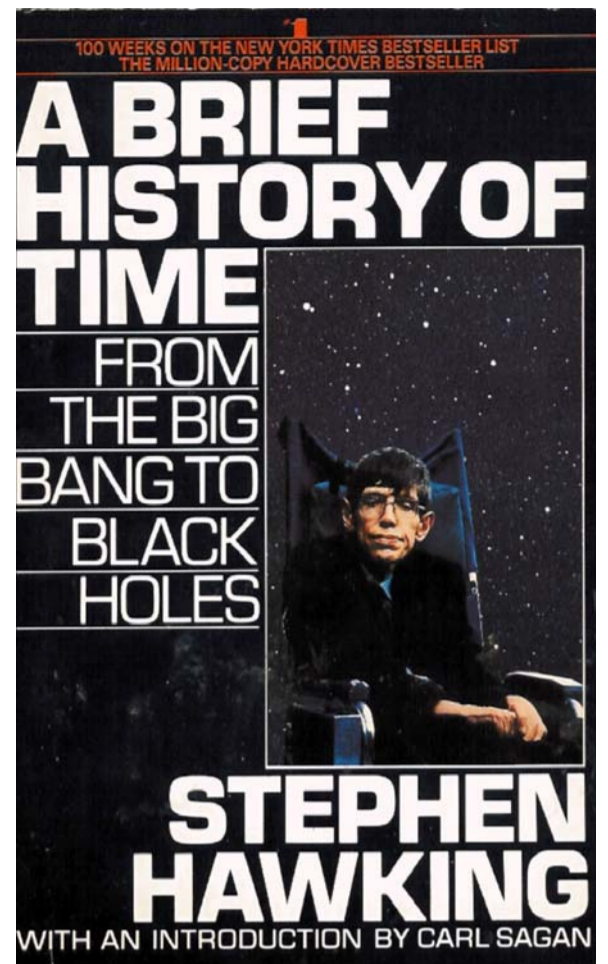
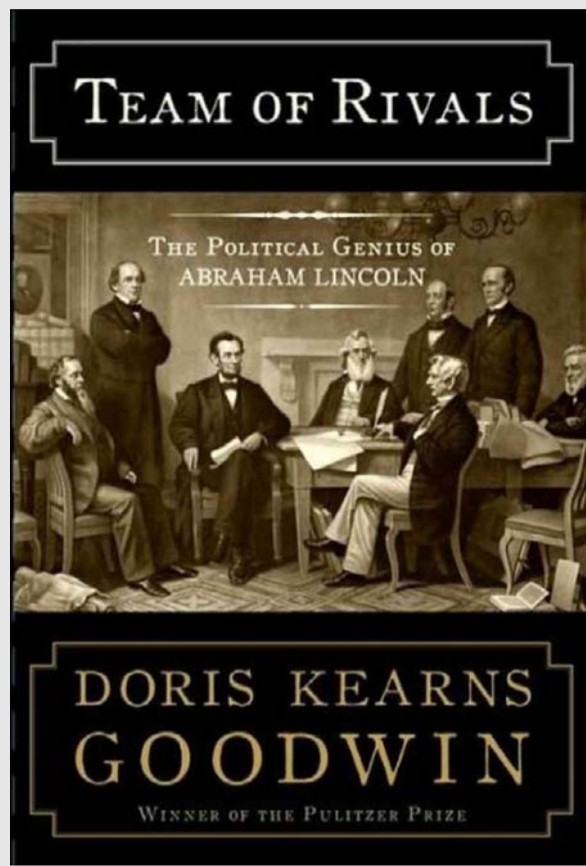


The Fellowship of the Ring - the first book in JRR Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* series - is another must-read. This epic adventure novel takes place in Tolkien's made-up world known as Middle Earth and follows Frodo Baggins as he sets out to destroy the One Ring before Sauron gets it and uses it for evil.



How much is there to learn from a 13-year-old girl's diary? In the case of Anne Frank's, so much. Frank went into hiding with her family during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands in the 1940s, and wrote regular accounts of what was going on around her. Her diary provides an almost definitive representation of what life was like for many Jews under the Nazi regime, and captures the horror of World War II in a painfully innocent and human way.

You may think you're familiar with everything there is to know about Abraham Lincoln, but even if you're a bit of an expert, this book is well worth reading. Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin wrote it to trace Lincoln's rise from a lawyer out on the prairie to beat two more-experienced politicians and become one of the most well-known presidents in US history. According to the book's summary, it focuses on "Lincoln's mastery of men and how it shaped the most significant presidency in the nation's history."



Written by the famous theoretical physicist and cosmologist, this book was published in 1988. In it, Hawking offers a clear explanation of the scientific theories of today - from time travel to general relativity to the creation of the universe.

Bill Bryson

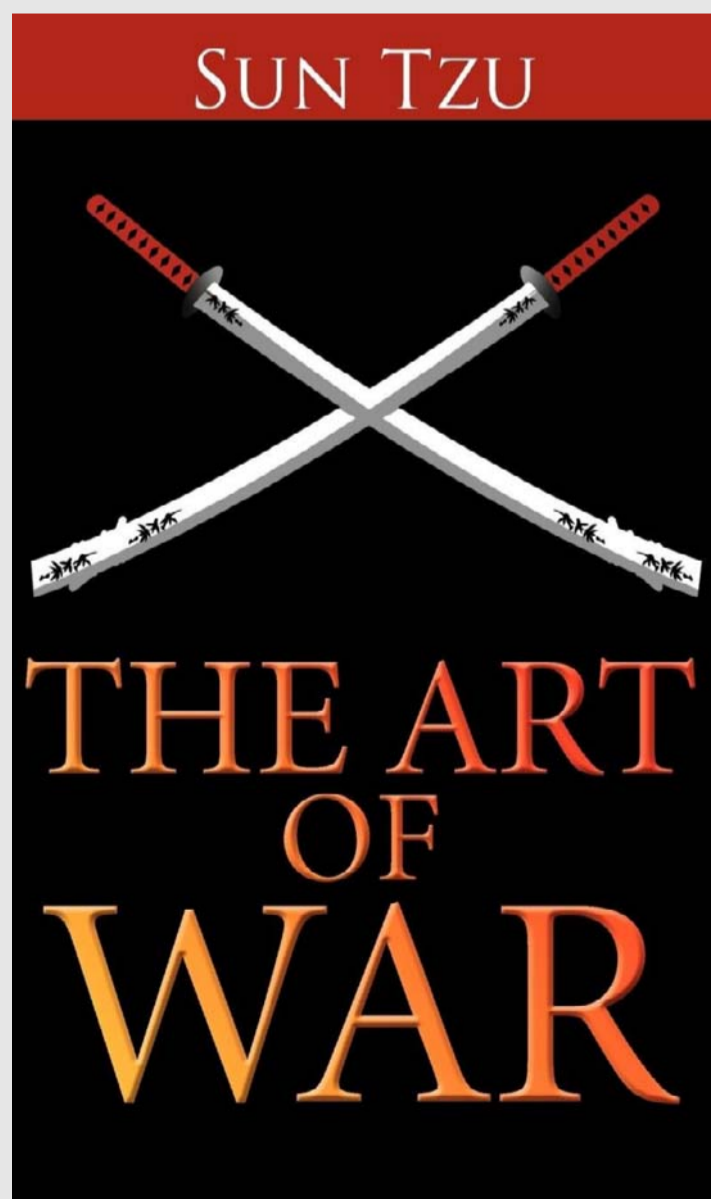
A Short History of Nearly Everything



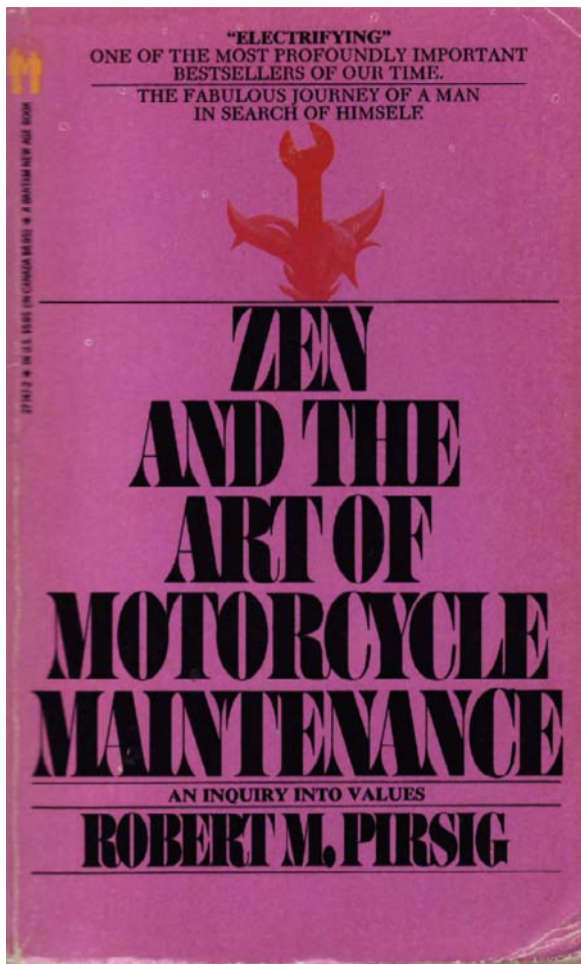
'Truly impressive...it's hard to imagine a better rough guide to science'

John Waller, *Guardian*

Bryson uses an upbeat and entertaining style of writing to take you from when there was nothing to where we are now. Interestingly, the author isn't a scientist. He's just a curious individual who decided he wanted to really understand science - so he did his research and wrote this book up to help others like himself.



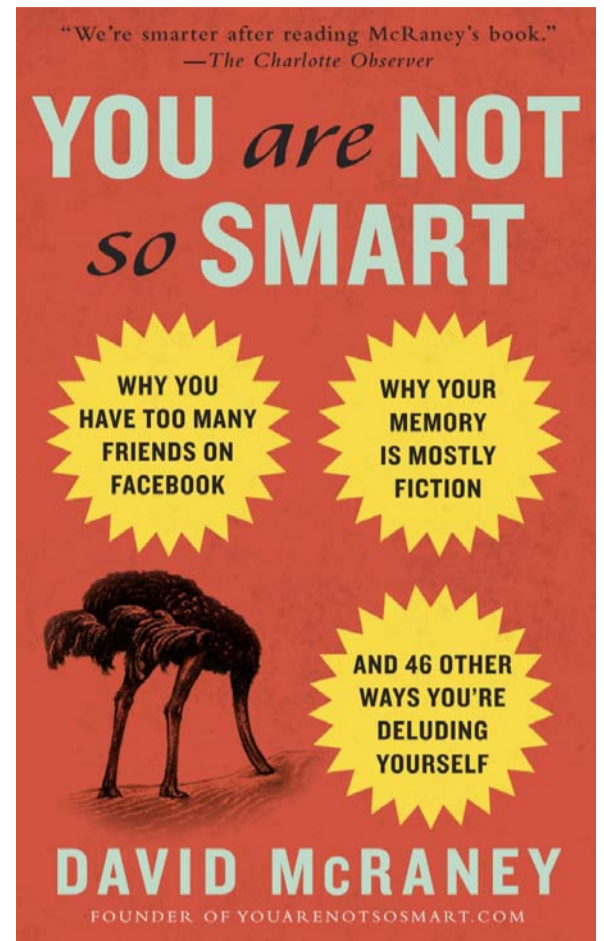
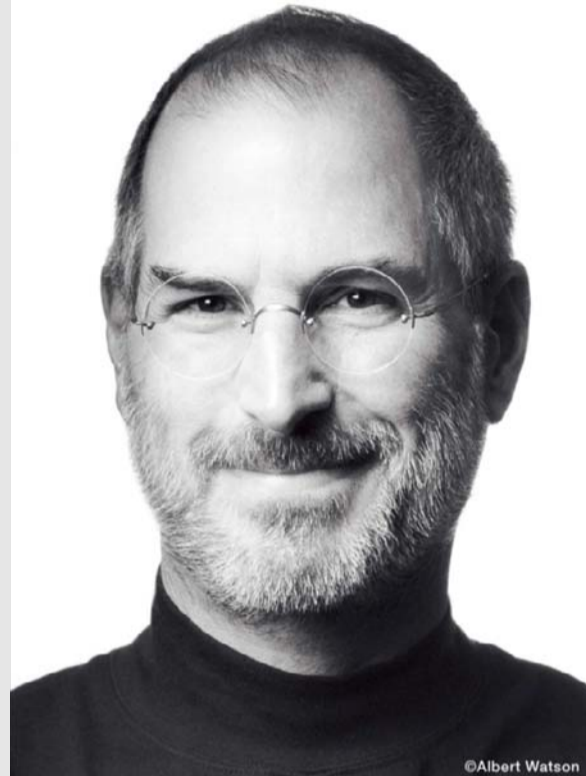
"The Art of War" may come from the 5th century BC, but it remains relevant today. The book was originally written by military strategist Sun Tzu to help explain how to win in warfare. However, over the years, people have found that the tactics described in the book, such as "know yourself" and "know your enemy" can help people succeed in the day to day struggles of life. The book contains 13 chapters - one for each aspect of war - and has been used by sports coaches, legal teams, and businesses for its valuable advice.



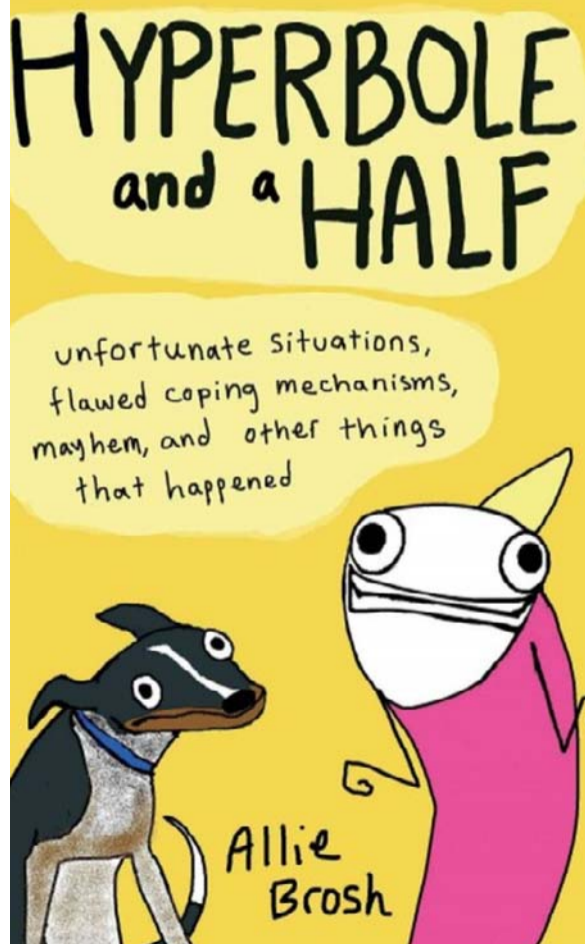
This book, which makes philosophy relatable and easy to understand, follows a father and his young son as they take an adventure-filled motorcycle trip across northwestern America. It's filled with timeless advice on how to live a better and more fulfilling life.

This gripping biography is based on years of in-depth, personal interviews with Steve Jobs - and over a hundred family members, friends, and colleagues. The book, written by Isaacson at the request of Jobs, explains why the Apple cofounder was so intimidating and alluring, and how he helped build Apple and Pixar into the enormous brands that they are today. Reading it will give you an inside view of the tech world, inspiration to make a difference with your life, and an interesting tale of a fascinating man's life.

Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson



The title may sound harsh, but McRaney is making a point: Every "rational" decision you make in your life is based on an underlying bias. This book shows how the tenets of psychology affect you every day, even though you don't consciously realize it. And no matter what you do, you can't resist.



Allie Broosh started out by posting illustrated, humorous stories about everyday events in her past and present life on a blog. It became so popular that she wrote and illustrated this book, with 18 episodes on everything from depression to how she stole cake as a child. Billionaire Bill Gates called it "funny and smart as hell," and many people say that her depiction of depression is the most accurate one they've ever read.

There are a number of lessons you can learn from Carnegie's classic, "How to Win Friends and Influence People" - and they will help you in both your personal and professional life. From it, you'll learn how to make people like you, how to win people over to your side, and how to lead them.

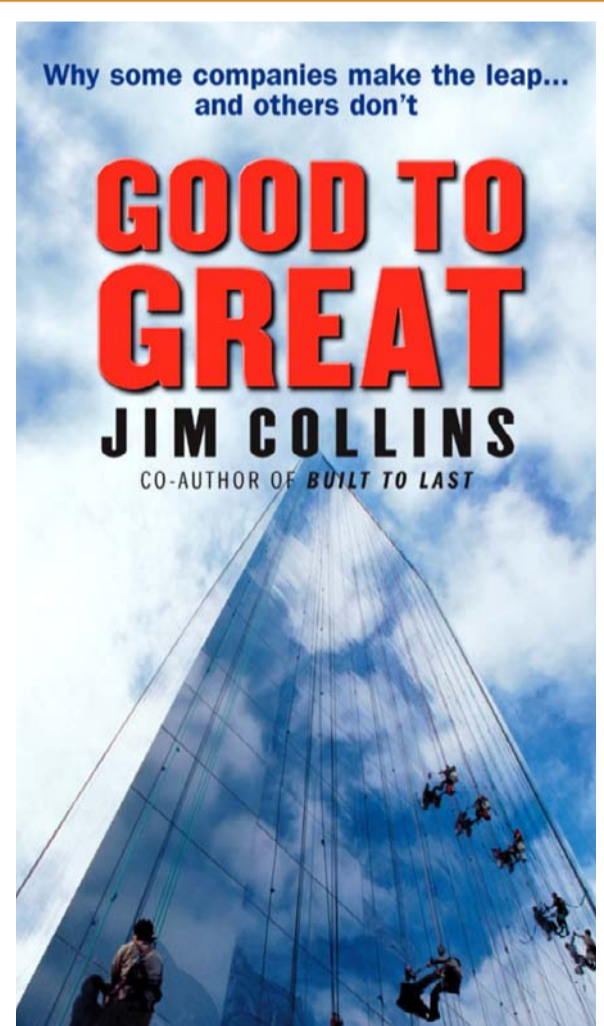
SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY EDITION

HOW TO WIN FRIENDS & INFLUENCE PEOPLE

*The Only Book You Need
to Lead You to Success*

Dale
Carnegie

OVER 75
YEARS IN
PRINT!



This classic business book uses research from 28 US companies over five years to explain why some make the leap from good to great, while others fail. If you want to know what you can do to have the greatest impact on your company's success, this is the book for you. —<http://www.independent.co.uk>

WORD SEARCH

Movies: Musicals

Find and circle all of the Movie Musicals that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the title of an additional Movie Musical.

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

- | | | | |
|---------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|
| A CHORUS LINE | CHICAGO | HELLO, DOLLY! | PAL JOEY |
| ALL THAT JAZZ | EVITA | HIGH SOCIETY | SHOW BOAT |
| ANNIE | FAME | HOLIDAY INN | SILK STOCKINGS |
| BLUES HAWAII | FANTASIA | JAILHOUSE ROCK | SOUTH PACIFIC |
| BRIGADOON | FUNNY FACE | LA TRAVIATA | STATE FAIR |
| BUGSY MALONE | FUNNY GIRL | MARY POPPINS | SWEET CHARITY |
| CABARET | GIGI | MOULIN ROUGE | SWING TIME |
| CALAMITY JANE | GODSPELL | MY FAIR LADY | THE MUSIC MAN |
| CAMELOT | GREASE | NEWSIES | TOMMY |
| CARMEN | GYPSY | OKLAHOMA! | TOP HAT |
| CAROUSEL | HAIR | OLIVER! | WEST SIDE STORY |

Yesterday's Solution

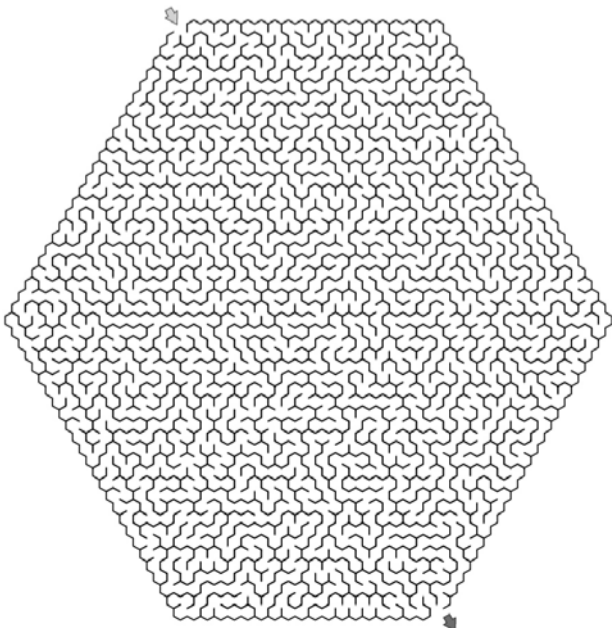
Car Parts

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

- | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| AIR BAG | CLUTCH | GAS TANK | STARTER |
| AIR CONDITIONER | COOLING FAN | HEADLIGHT | STEERING WHEEL |
| ALTERNATOR | CRANKCASE | HOOD | SUSPENSION |
| AXLE | CRUISE CONTROL | HORN | TAIL LIGHT |
| BATTERY | DEFROGGER | IGNITION | TIRES |
| BODY | DEFROSTER | MUFFLER | TRANSMISSION |
| BRAKE | DOOR | POWER WINDOW | TRUNK |
| BUMPER | DRIVE LINE | RADIATOR | TURN SIGNAL |
| CAR SEAT | DRIVESHAF | RADIO | WHEEL RIM |
| CARBURETOR | ENGINE | REAR VIEW MIRROR | WHEELS |
| CARRIER RACK | FRAME | ROOF | WINDSHIELD |
| CHILD SEAT | FUSE | SEAT BELT | |

The hidden item is: SEAT BELT WARNING LIGHT

CHALLENGING MAZE



CROSSWORD 1213

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

ACROSS

- (computer science) A computer that is running software that allows users to leave messages and access information of general interest.
- Thick dark syrup produced by boiling down juice from sugar cane.
- The local time at the 0 meridian passing through Greenwich, England.
- Mythical bird of prey having enormous size and strength.
- Raspberry native to eastern North America having black thimble-shaped fruit.
- An informal debt instrument.
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- A mythical Greek warrior who was a leader on the Trojan side of the Trojan War.
- Remote and separate physically or socially.
- A canvas or leather bag for carrying game (especially birds) killed by a hunter.
- A light strong gray lustrous corrosion-resistant metallic element used in strong light-weight alloys (as for airplane parts).
- (the feminine of raja) A Hindu princess or the wife of a raja.
- King of Denmark and Norway who forced Edmund II to divide England with him.
- Brain corals.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- Someone who refrains from injuring or destroying.
- Channel into a new direction.
- The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
- (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- Capital of the state of Oregon in the northwestern part of the state on the Willamette River.
- An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
- One or some or every or all without specification.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- Of or relating to Jamaica (the island or the country) or to its inhabitants.
- Common house and field crickets.
- A ribbon used as a decoration.
- A condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact of experience that is taken as true by many people.
- By bad luck.
- Avatar of Vishnu.
- French filmmaker (1908-1982).
- Someone who is morally reprehensible.
- The protruding part of the lower jaw.
- A deciduous tree of the family Ulmaceae that grows in the southeastern United States.
- A master's degree in fine arts.
- A member of a North American Indian people speaking one of the Hokan language.
- A painted or carved screen placed above and behind an altar or communion table.
- The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.

DOWN

- (informal) Exceptionally good.

- A cord fastened around the neck with an ornamental clasp and worn as a necktie.
- A fraudulent business scheme.
- Capital of Swaziland.
- Or family Polypodiaceae.
- Slender long-tailed monkey of Asia.
- (informal) Of the highest quality.
- Sports equipment that is worn on the feet to enable the wearer to glide along on wheels and to be propelled by the alternate actions of the legs.
- Interface consisting of a standard port between a computer and its peripherals that is used in some computers.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
- Of great mass.
- Any of various edible mushrooms of the genus Morchella having a brownish spongelike cap.
- Learns from a tutor.
- A formal expression of praise.
- A card game for 2 players.
- Genus of tropical plants with creeping rootstocks and small umbellate flowers.
- The cry made by sheep.
- Relating to or having the characteristics of bees.
- At or near the beginning of a period of time or course of events or before the usual or expected time.
- Offering fun and gaiety.
- A comedy characterized by broad satire and improbable situations.
- A member of the Uniat Church.
- A genus of Lamnidae.
- A New England state.
- A Hindu prince or king in India.
- A state in New England.
- A state of northeastern India.
- An honorary law degree.
- An artist of consummate skill.
- A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
- Small low-growing annual or perennial herbs of temperate and cool regions.
- Thorny shrub or small tree common in central Argentina having small orange or yellow flowers followed by edible berries.
- A state in the Rocky Mountains.
- A dyed fabric.
- Being derived from.
- A narrow way or road.
- The highest level or degree attainable.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- The sixth month of the civil year.
- An emergency procedure consisting of external cardiac massage and artificial respiration.
- Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
- An associate degree in applied science.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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



01:20 PI
02:50 The Aviator
04:50 The Man In The Iron Mask
06:35 Saved!
08:05 One More Kiss
09:45 Alexander The Great
12:00 The Aviator
13:35 Everybody's Fine
15:15 The Man In The Iron Mask
17:25 The Magnificent Seven Ride!
19:10 Mirrormask
20:45 Big Screen
21:00 Cursed
22:45 Big Screen
23:00 Suspect Zero

07:00 Charlie Rose
08:00 Countdown
09:00 Countdown
09:30 On The Move
10:00 On The Move
11:00 The Pulse
12:00 Bloomberg Surveillance
13:00 Bloomberg Surveillance
14:00 Bloomberg Go
15:00 Bloomberg Go
16:00 Bloomberg Go
17:00 Bloomberg Markets
18:00 Bloomberg Markets: European
Close
19:00 Bloomberg Markets
20:00 Bloomberg Markets
21:00 Bloomberg Markets
21:30 Brilliant Ideas
22:00 Bloomberg Markets
23:00 What'd You Miss?

14:30 Dialogue
15:00 News Update
15:15 China 24
16:00 News Update
16:15 Global Business
17:00 News Update
17:15 World InSight
18:00 Asia Today
18:30 Culture Express
19:00 News Update
19:30 The Heat
20:00 Africa Live
21:00 Global Business
21:30 Dialogue
22:00 News Update
22:15 China 24
23:00 News Update
23:15 World InSight



00:20 Fast N' Loud
01:10 Salvage Hunters
02:00 Redwood Kings
02:50 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
03:40 Extreme Collectors
04:05 The Liquidator
04:30 Garage Gold
05:00 How Do They Do It?
05:30 Chasing Classic Cars
06:00 You Have Been Warned
06:50 Troy
07:40 Superhuman Science
08:05 Superhuman Science
08:30 Men, Women, Wild
09:20 The Island With Bear Grylls
10:10 So You Think You'd Survive?
11:00 Salvage Hunters
11:50 Redwood Kings
12:40 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
13:30 Misfit Garage
14:20 Street Outlaws
15:10 Extreme Car Hoarders
16:00 Redwood Kings
16:50 Redwood Kings
17:40 Redwood Kings
18:30 Redwood Kings
19:20 Redwood Kings
20:10 Redwood Kings
21:00 Misfit Garage
21:50 Overhaulin'
22:40 Extreme Car Hoarders
23:30 Killing Fields

01:08 The Loch Ness Monster Revealed
01:55 Alien Planet Earths
02:42 Sci-Fi Science
03:04 Sci-Fi Science
03:29 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
04:16 The Loch Ness Monster Revealed
05:03 Alien Planet Earths
05:50 Building The Biggest
06:37 How Do They Do It?
07:00 How Do They Do It?
07:23 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
08:08 Sci-Fi Science
08:30 Sci-Fi Science
08:53 Building The Biggest
09:38 How It's Made
10:00 How It's Made
10:23 Invent It Rich
11:08 Alien Planet Earths
11:53 Building The Biggest
12:38 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
13:23 How It's Made
13:46 How It's Made
14:10 Sci-Fi Science
14:32 Sci-Fi Science
14:57 Invent It Rich
15:44 Alien Planet Earths
16:31 Building The Biggest
17:18 Sci-Fi Science
17:40 Sci-Fi Science
18:05 Mythbusters
18:50 Da Vinci's Machines
19:40 Space Pioneer
20:25 How It's Made
20:50 How It's Made
21:15 Sci-Fi Science
21:37 Sci-Fi Science
22:00 Da Vinci's Machines
22:45 Space Pioneer
23:35 Mythbusters

Reservations
03:50 Tattoo Hunter
04:35 American Guns
05:20 Extreme Engineering
06:05 Gunslingers
06:50 Mao's Cold War
07:35 Origins
08:00 Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations
08:50 Bush Pilots
09:40 Extreme Engineering
10:30 Gunslingers
11:20 Origins
11:45 Chasing Classic Cars
12:10 Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations
13:00 Bush Pilots
13:50 Extreme Engineering
14:40 Gunslingers
15:30 Origins
15:55 Chasing Classic Cars
16:20 Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations
17:10 Bush Pilots
18:00 Extreme Engineering
18:50 Gunslingers
19:40 Origins
20:05 Chasing Classic Cars
20:30 Aircrash Unsolved: The Mystery Of...
21:20 Anthony Bourdain: No Reservations
22:10 Extreme Engineering
23:00 Aircrash Unsolved: The Mystery Of...
23:50 Gunslingers



00:45 I'm Alive
01:40 Ten Deadliest Snakes With Nigel Marven
02:35 Tanked
03:25 Animal Cops South Africa
04:15 Gator Boys
05:02 Treehouse Masters
05:49 Ten Deadliest Snakes With Nigel Marven
06:36 Meet The Orangutans
07:25 America's Cutest Pets
08:15 Ten Deadliest Snakes With Nigel Marven
09:10 Treehouse Masters
10:05 Tanked
11:00 America's Cutest Pets
11:55 Bondi Vet
12:25 Bondi Vet
12:50 Ten Deadliest Snakes With Nigel Marven
13:45 Gator Boys
14:40 Treehouse Masters
15:35 Tanked
16:30 Animal Cops South Africa
17:25 River Monsters
18:20 River Monsters
19:15 Tanked
20:10 Echo And The Elephants Of Amboseli
20:40 Echo And The Elephants Of Amboseli
21:05 Treehouse Masters
22:00 River Monsters
22:55 Gator Boys
23:50 River Monsters



00:00 News Update
00:30 Dialogue
01:00 News Update
01:15 China 24
02:00 The Heat
02:30 News Update
03:00 Global Business
04:00 News Update
05:00 News Update
06:30 Dialogue
07:00 News Hour
08:00 Global Business
09:00 News Update
10:30 Sports Scene
11:00 Global Business
12:00 News Update
12:30 Culture Express
13:00 Africa Live
14:00 News Update



00:00 CNBC Conversation: David Hertz
00:30 CNBC Conversation: Carolyn Fairbairn
01:00 U.S. Squawk Alley
02:00 Asia Squawk Box
04:00 Asia Street Signs
06:00 Fast Money: Half Time Report
07:00 Capital Connection
08:00 Squawk Box Europe
11:00 Europe Street Signs
12:00 Worldwide Exchange
13:00 U.S. Squawk Box
16:00 Squawk On The Street
18:00 U.S. Squawk Alley
19:00 Fast Money: Half Time Report
20:00 U.S. Power Lunch
22:00 U.S. Closing Bell



00:20 How It's Made
00:44 How It's Made



00:05 Art Attack
00:30 Henry Hugglemonster
00:45 Calimero
01:00 Zou
01:15 Loopdidoo
01:30 Art Attack
01:55 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Calimero
02:20 Zou
02:30 Loopdidoo
02:45 Art Attack
06:00 Zou
06:20 Loopdidoo
06:35 Art Attack
07:00 Calimero
07:10 Zou
07:25 Loopdidoo
07:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
08:05 Sofia The First
08:30 Goldie & Bear
08:45 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
09:10 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
09:35 Doc McStuffins
10:00 Sofia The First
10:30 Goldie & Bear
11:00 Miles From Tomorrow
11:25 Special Agent Oso
11:40 The Hive
11:50 Handy Manny
12:15 Jungle Junction
12:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
13:00 Sofia The First
13:25 Miles From Tomorrow
13:50 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
14:15 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
14:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
15:10 Miles From Tomorrow
15:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
16:00 Sofia The First
16:25 Jungle Cubs
16:50 Aladdin
17:15 Gummi Bears
17:40 Goldie & Bear
18:05 Miles From Tomorrow
18:30 Sofia The First
18:55 Doc McStuffins
19:10 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:35 Miles From Tomorrow
20:00 Goldie & Bear
20:30 Sofia The First
21:00 Jungle Cubs
21:25 Aladdin
21:50 Gummi Bears
22:20 Lilo And Stitch
22:50 Zou
23:05 Henry Hugglemonster
23:20 Calimero
23:35 Zou
23:50 Loopdidoo



00:00 Violetta
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Hank Zipzer
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:30 Violetta
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Hank Zipzer
04:35 Binny And The Ghost
05:00 Violetta
05:45 The Hive
05:50 Mouk
06:00 Lolirock
06:25 Sofia The First
06:50 Gravity Falls
07:15 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
07:40 Jessie
08:05 Shake It Up
08:30 Shake It Up
08:55 That's So Raven
09:20 That's So Raven
09:45 Girl Meets World
10:10 Girl Meets World
10:35 Home On The Range
12:15 Cars Toons
12:20 Jessie
12:45 Jessie
13:10 Austin & Ally
13:35 Austin & Ally
14:00 Liv And Maddie
14:25 Descendants Wicked World
14:30 Liv And Maddie
14:55 Dog With A Blog
15:20 Dog With A Blog
15:45 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
16:10 Violetta
17:00 I Love Violetta
17:10 Evermoor
17:35 Evermoor
18:00 Evermoor
18:25 Evermoor
18:43 Best Friends Whenever
19:05 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
19:30 Violetta
20:20 I Love Violetta
20:30 Home On The Range
22:00 Binny And The Ghost
22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:10 Hank Zipzer
23:35 Binny And The Ghost



00:10 Eastenders
00:45 Holby City
01:40 Stella
02:30 Happy Valley
03:25 Doctors
03:55 Eastenders
04:25 Stella
05:10 Father Brown
06:00 Holby City
06:55 Stella
07:45 Doctors
08:15 Eastenders
08:45 Stella
09:30 Father Brown
10:20 Doctor Who
11:10 Doctor Who
12:00 Doctor Who
12:50 Doctor Who
13:35 Holby City
14:35 Doctors
15:05 Eastenders
15:35 Death In Paradise
16:30 Death In Paradise
17:25 Death In Paradise
18:20 Doctors
18:50 Doctors
19:25 Father Brown
20:15 War And Peace
21:00 Happy Valley
22:00 Luther
22:55 Stella
23:45 Doctors



00:00 Charlie Rose
01:00 Bloomberg West
02:00 First Up With Angie Lau
03:00 Trending Business
04:00 Trending Business
05:00 Asia Edge
06:00 Bloomberg West



DEATH RACE ON OSN MOVIES HD ACTION



- 06:00 Boyster
- 06:10 Super Matrak
- 06:35 Super Matrak
- 07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 07:25 K.C. Undercover
- 07:50 Supa Strikas
- 08:15 Annedroids
- 08:40 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 09:10 Kirby Buckets
- 09:35 Guardians Of The Galaxy
- 10:00 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 10:25 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 10:50 K.C. Undercover
- 11:20 K.C. Undercover
- 11:45 Supa Strikas
- 12:10 Supa Strikas
- 12:35 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 13:00 Annedroids
- 13:30 Mighty Med
- 13:55 Mighty Med
- 14:20 Kickin' It
- 14:44 Kickin' It
- 15:10 Guardians Of The Galaxy
- 15:15 Rocket Monkeys
- 15:40 Guardians Of The Galaxy
- 16:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 16:30 Kirby Buckets
- 16:55 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 17:25 K.C. Undercover
- 17:50 Supa Strikas
- 18:15 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 18:40 Mighty Med
- 19:05 Cars Toons
- 19:10 Annedroids
- 19:35 Phineas And Ferb
- 20:00 Kirby Buckets
- 20:25 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 20:55 K.C. Undercover
- 21:20 Pickle And Peanut
- 21:45 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 22:10 Mighty Med
- 22:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am
- KSA



- 00:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
- 00:55 The Grace Helbig Show
- 01:25 Kourtney And Khloe Take The Hamptons
- 02:20 E! News
- 03:15 Giuliana & Bill
- 04:10 The E! True Hollywood Story
- 05:05 E! Entertainment Special
- 06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 06:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 07:50 Style Star
- 08:20 E! News
- 09:15 Giuliana & Bill
- 10:15 Giuliana & Bill
- 11:10 The Grace Helbig Show
- 11:35 The Grace Helbig Show
- 12:05 E! News
- 13:05 Dash Dolls
- 14:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 15:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 16:00 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
- 17:00 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
- 18:00 E! News
- 19:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
- 20:00 WAGs
- 21:00 WAGs
- 22:00 E! News
- 23:00 Botched



- 00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 01:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
- 01:30 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
- 02:00 Tia Mowry At Home
- 02:30 Tia Mowry At Home
- 03:00 Man Fire Food
- 03:30 Man Fire Food
- 04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 04:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 05:00 Iron Chef America
- 06:00 Chopped
- 07:00 Man Fire Food
- 07:30 Man Fire Food
- 08:00 Chopped
- 09:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To



PIXELS ON OSN MOVIES HD

- Basics
- 09:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To
- Basics
- 10:00 The Kitchen
- 11:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 11:30 Anna Olson: Bake
- 12:00 Chopped
- 13:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 13:30 The Pioneer Woman
- 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 15:00 Man Fire Food
- 15:30 Man Fire Food
- 16:00 Chopped
- 17:00 The Kitchen
- 18:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 18:30 Anna Olson: Bake
- 19:00 Chopped
- 20:00 Iron Chef America
- 21:00 Chopped
- 22:00 Cutthroat Kitchen
- 23:00 Man Finds Food
- 23:30 Man Finds Food



- 00:20 Pawn Stars
- 00:45 Pawn Stars Australia
- 01:10 Aussie Pickers
- 02:00 Alaska Off-Road Warriors
- 02:50 American Pickers
- 03:40 Shipping Wars
- 04:05 Shipping Wars
- 04:30 Pawn Stars
- 05:00 Grave Trade
- 06:00 The Curse Of Oak Island
- 06:50 Mankind The Story Of All Of Us
- 07:40 Hunting Hitler
- 08:30 American Restoration
- 08:55 Mountain Men
- 09:45 Ax Men
- 10:35 Swamp People
- 11:25 American Restoration
- 11:50 American Restoration
- 12:15 Counting Cars
- 12:40 Counting Cars
- 13:05 American Pickers
- 13:55 Grave Trade
- 14:45 Mankind The Story Of All Of Us
- 15:35 Hunting Hitler
- 16:25 Counting Cars
- 16:50 Alone
- 17:40 Aussie Pickers
- 18:30 Duck Dynasty
- 19:20 Ax Men
- 20:10 Swamp People
- 21:00 Storage Wars: New York
- 21:25 Storage Wars: New York
- 21:50 Pawn Stars
- 22:15 Pawn Stars Australia
- 22:40 Hunting Hitler
- 23:30 The Curse Of Oak Island



- 00:10 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
- 01:05 Emmerdale
- 01:30 Eggheads
- 02:00 Coronation Street
- 03:25 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 04:20 Come Dine With Me Couples
- 05:15 Come Dine With Me Couples
- 06:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
- 07:00 Eggheads
- 07:30 Grantchester
- 08:25 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 09:20 Keep It In The Family
- 10:15 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
- 11:05 Eggheads
- 11:35 Come Dine With Me Couples
- 12:30 Who's Doing The Dishes?
- 13:25 Emmerdale
- 13:50 Emmerdale
- 14:20 Coronation Street
- 14:45 Keep It In The Family
- 15:35 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 16:30 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
- 17:25 Remember Me
- 18:20 Emmerdale
- 18:45 Emmerdale
- 19:10 Coronation Street
- 19:35 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 20:30 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
- 21:25 Remember Me
- 22:20 Coronation Street
- 22:50 Emmerdale
- 23:15 Emmerdale
- 23:40 Keep It In The Family



- 00:10 Eat Street
- 00:35 Eat Street
- 01:00 Cesar To The Rescue
- 01:50 Rustic Adventure Argentina
- 02:15 Eat Street
- 02:40 Eat Street
- 03:05 Cruise Ship Diaries
- 03:30 Tales From The Bush Larder
- 03:55 Tales From The Bush Larder
- 04:20 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- 04:45 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- 05:10 Eat Street
- 05:35 Eat Street
- 06:00 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
- 06:50 Cesar To The Rescue
- 07:40 Rustic Adventure Argentina
- 08:05 Eat Street
- 08:30 Eat Street
- 08:55 Cruise Ship Diaries
- 09:20 Tales From The Bush Larder
- 09:45 Tales From The Bush Larder
- 10:10 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of

- Australia
- 10:35 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- Australia
- 11:00 Eat Street
- 11:25 Eat Street
- 11:50 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
- 12:40 Cesar To The Rescue
- 13:35 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
- 14:00 Baking Good, Baking Bad
- 14:30 Baking Good, Baking Bad
- 14:55 Cruise Ship Diaries
- 15:25 Tales From The Bush Larder
- 15:50 Tales From The Bush Larder
- 16:20 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- 16:45 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- Australia
- 17:15 Eat Street
- 17:40 Eat Street
- 18:10 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
- 19:05 Cruise Ship Diaries
- 19:30 Tales From The Bush Larder
- 20:00 Tales From The Bush Larder
- 20:25 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- 20:50 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- Australia
- 21:15 Eat Street
- 21:40 Eat Street
- 22:05 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
- 22:55 Cesar To The Rescue
- 23:45 Ariana's Persian Kitchen



- 00:30 Hot In Cleveland
- 01:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
- 01:30 Web Therapy
- 02:00 The Brink
- 02:30 You're The Worst
- 03:00 Mad Love
- 03:30 Living With Fran
- 04:00 Two And A Half Men
- 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 05:30 My Name Is Earl
- 06:00 The Bernie Mac Show
- 06:30 Community
- 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 08:00 Two And A Half Men
- 08:30 My Name Is Earl
- 09:00 Mad Love
- 09:30 Kevin From Work
- 10:00 I Hate My Teenage Daughter
- 10:30 Community
- 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 12:00 The Bernie Mac Show
- 12:30 Two And A Half Men
- 13:00 My Name Is Earl
- 13:30 Community
- 14:00 Living With Fran
- 14:30 Kevin From Work

- 15:00 I Hate My Teenage Daughter
- 15:30 Hot In Cleveland
- 16:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
- 16:30 The Bernie Mac Show
- 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 18:00 Fresh Off The Boat
- 18:30 Black-Ish
- 19:00 2 Broke Girls
- 19:30 The Simpsons
- 20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 21:00 Hot In Cleveland
- 21:30 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
- 22:00 Comedians
- 22:30 The Brink
- 23:00 You're The Worst
- 23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers



- 00:00 Jennifer's Body
- 02:00 Justice League: Throne Of Atlantis
- 03:45 The Bourne Legacy
- 06:00 Metro
- 08:15 Destruction: Las Vegas
- 09:45 I Am Legend
- 11:30 Don't Look Back
- 13:00 The Bourne Legacy
- 15:30 Metro
- 17:45 I Am Legend
- 19:30 Armageddon
- 22:00 Death Race



- 00:00 Seven Psychopaths
- 02:00 Mystery Men
- 04:15 50 First Dates
- 06:15 Rush Hour 2
- 08:00 500 Days Of Summer
- 10:00 50 First Dates
- 11:45 Mystery Men
- 14:00 Dunston Checks In
- 16:00 500 Days Of Summer
- 18:00 Spy Hard
- 20:00 Date Night
- 22:00 A Million Ways To Die In The West



- 01:30 One Last Look
- 03:00 Foxcatcher
- 05:15 A Valentine's Date
- 07:00 1911
- 09:00 10 Years

- 11:00 A Valentine's Date
- 13:00 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The Strike
- 15:00 God Help The Girl
- 17:00 10 Years
- 19:00 Not Fade Away
- 21:00 A Walk Among The Tombstones
- 23:00 By The Gun



- 01:00 What Dreams May Come
- 03:00 At Any Price
- 04:45 The Apostle
- 07:00 Won't Back Down
- 09:00 Blackfish
- 10:30 The Apostle
- 12:45 Les Miserables
- 15:30 Secret Window
- 17:30 Blackfish
- 19:00 Out Of The Furnace
- 21:00 What Maisie Knew
- 23:00 Twice Born



- 01:00 The Kings Of Summer
- 03:00 Life Of A King
- 05:00 Big Eyes
- 07:00 Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2
- 09:00 Odd Thomas
- 11:00 The Maze Runner
- 13:00 Tracers
- 15:00 Louder Than Words
- 17:00 4 Minute Mile
- 19:00 Night At The Museum: Secret Of The Tomb
- 21:00 Pixels
- 23:00 Bad Words



- 01:15 Miffy The Movie
- 02:45 Columbus In The Last Journey
- 04:30 Mamma Moo And Crow
- 06:00 Miffy The Movie
- 08:00 Blackie And Kanuto
- 10:00 Rugrats In Paris: The Movie
- 11:30 The Olsen Gang In Deep Trouble
- 13:00 Columbus In The Last Journey
- 14:30 Egon And Donci
- 16:00 Curious George: Back To The Jungle
- 18:00 Rugrats In Paris: The Movie
- 20:00 Blue Elephant 2
- 22:00 Egon And Donci
- 23:30 Curious George: Back To The Jungle



- 00:00 The Wedding Ringer
- 02:00 A Promise
- 04:00 Metallica: Through The Never
- 06:00 The Book Of Life
- 08:00 In My Dreams
- 10:00 Hellboy: Sword Of Storms
- 12:00 Dawn Of The Planet Of The Apes
- 14:15 Next Goal Wins
- 16:15 In My Dreams
- 18:00 The Remaining
- 20:00 Winter's Tale
- 22:00 Wild Card



- 00:30 Gillette World Sport
- 01:00 Top 14 Highlights
- 01:30 NRL Premiership
- 03:30 PGA Tour
- 07:00 Golfing World
- 08:00 Trans World Sport
- 09:00 World Rugby
- 09:30 Live Super Rugby
- 11:30 NRL Full Time
- 12:00 Live NRL Premiership
- 14:00 Formula-E Championship
- Sound Of The Future
- 14:30 Gillette World Sport
- 15:00 Super Rugby
- 17:00 Golfing World
- 18:00 Super Rugby
- 19:55 Live Super Rugby
- 22:00 Golfing World



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Happiness is being able to see a productive trail behind your hard work or being able to enjoy something you or a loved one has accomplished. It is sweet to be recognized as well as appreciated by your friends and family. No matter how you feel inside, you are one to always emit your usual grateful attitude. Getting to places on time has always been a problem for you but you are finally getting into the habit of scheduling yourself to be slightly early or on time when it comes to obligations and promises. People like you better and you are getting to know a new and happier you. Enjoy the progress you have made thus far. Surprises happen. Later, a close friend may make plans to take you on a fun shopping expedition.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This is a good day. You will find your concentration and interests are mostly focused on the process of some important project. It could be that you are moving through some important papers that have been shoved to the side and you intend to complete the job. You still need some sensitive information and will move through the old files quickly. When you finish, you can relax but you must realize the finished report may take another day. You are almost there. This evening you will enjoy a project that is completely different from your usual pastime. Pottery can be painted and decorated, then potted with a plant. Nurture yourself with your inner expression. This playtime will gift you with a therapeutic effect from your research earlier today.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

It could be important to do some serious thinking about your work or career, particularly if you feel it is inadequate. Find ways in which to begin your search for a more adequate job or profession. You are encouraged when you see the advertisements for the types of businesses that need people. Ask yourself what you would like to do and what type of job helps you convey your talents. Be patient with yourself but do a few things each day that will take you in the direction you want to go. If you have no responsibilities at this time in your life, you might think about doing work that would teach you something new. Consider working for a small airline company, a zoo or a museum or as a representative for a sales company. Positive results are unfolding.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your goals and objectives are very clear today and you proceed, not only with self-confidence, but with a clear understanding of the hard work that is necessary. If others are involved in your goals, you could accept a leadership role; otherwise, you prefer to work alone. This is the day you may have decided to take down the Christmas lights or build a doghouse. Thoroughness is more important than speed. At any rate, the project keeps you busy most of the day. All this activity helps you to think and while you are thinking you may come up with new ideas that will help your company to prosper. If you are your own boss, it is time to hire more people. This evening you can relax and enjoy something cold to drink and propping your feet up.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This is a great time, when good fortune and plain old luck surround you. It is easy for you to make correct decisions, find the right path and move forward where career is concerned. Life's problems seem manageable and easy to solve. The arts, music, sculpture or dance is the fun thing you may be teaching to neighbor children or friends later today and the routine keeps popping back into your mind all day long. There could be a new dance step that you work to perfect. Careful-word could get around and you could be teaching more than a few. With your personality and the friends that enjoy your company, you will find success in any sort of social endeavor. There is a powerful aphrodisiac in the air that lends itself to love this evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

If you need it, you will have help in making a payment on an overdue bill or making a large purchase. You could talk the most stubborn person into that loan or advance now. You are at your most practical when it comes to dealing with others. The support you need is there when you need it. You could be most persuasive when you want to be. This tends to carry through to your friendship and family members as well as the workplace. You must realize that friends and relatives rely on you as much as you depend on them. Attraction to the opposite sex is strong. If no partner is available, soak up that eagerness with some creative activity concerning the arts, music, sculpture or dance. A fun experiment for dinner tonight is actually pretty good!



Libra (September 23-October 22)

There are times you may wonder if your routine could be any less of a routine. Today you think about ways in which you could shake up the order of your day but in the end, you kind of like the way your routine keeps you focused. You like to know what is coming and you can depend on your work falling into place. There are plenty of things to keep your mind busy and you have no problem in completing all your tasks. This evening you find that some sort of artistic endeavor or project, perhaps a decoration job, is on your agenda. It is time to prepare for a party or some other fun celebration for next week. Someone close to you is about to get married and you are planning a party. Do not hesitate to get help when you need help for the games and refreshments.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may feel that you did not have enough time to visit with family members the past few days and so today you may suggest everyone gather to enjoy a nearby tourist attraction or a new movie or any number of other fun entertainment subjects for a fun gathering. When you were a kid you might have played board games and this could be one of those days for board games. Everyone gets along and awards should be given for patience. A stop time should be agreed upon so that the time does not become tedious. The situation is a natural for self-expression and lends itself to your particular ideas and thoughts. Asking young people questions is fun and you may discover one youngster with a fun sense of humor. A good conversation with those you love is possible.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You are curious and talkative this day-adept at conversation. Unexpected communication happens all day long-in the break room as well as around the water cooler. New equipment may have your attention for a short while. Team purpose is most important this afternoon when you try to achieve success for your company by helping to form the plans for the team. You may only be in meetings today that will help gain a focus for the outcome. Your job may be to fine tune the steps that will achieve the end result. This evening a co-worker friend of long ago may pop around your home for a visit. Perhaps pictures were developed of the new year's party. Whatever the case, you will enjoy your visit. Consider yourself the cook tonight.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You are a compassionate person and you listen to a co-worker complain. Just the listening is all that is necessary just now as you are able to help him or her point out some unnecessary thoughts. It is surprising what one can discover when a compassionate person listens. The relationship with a spouse or business partner is on solid ground-now is the time to test your own wings. You can do exactly what you were trained to do-now, get out and perform your duty. Expressing affection comes easily and can do positive things for your disposition this evening. Your powers of creativity are great. You are feeling inner peace and smooth sailing in relationships. You may be in the mood for painting a room or wall; give yourself time to choose the color.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You will inspire yourself to work hard and inspire others to new achievements. Your time has come. You are ambitious on the professional level and this determination to achieve can leave you exhausted in the evening. If you usually work, you will find an opportunity to move outside your usual job duties. A convention or some other gathering to show off business products or techniques will be rewarded by your attention. You will be paid well for your expertise or some special talent that is attractive to the event. By the time you get home this evening, you and others on the home front will have lots of fun conversations to share. Your creative juices are flowing and regardless of how busy you were during this day, you have lots of love to share.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You communicate well most places, particularly in the workplace. You have new technologies to learn and perhaps teach and you are progressing really well. Today you may take some time to study or confer with other people that have your same business interests. You can look forward to a problem-free time for the next few months; you must be doing something right! Remember to keep your home life and business life separate. This may become one of the more important lessons for you this year as well as not being afraid to speak up for yourself. You will make the most of all that comes your way. A strong desire to help others will make you the center of attention at times. An influential person may take notice of your special talents today.

COUNTRY CODES

Afghanistan	0093	Kuwait	00965
Albania	00355	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Algeria	00213	Laos	00856
Andorra	00376	Latvia	00371
Angola	00244	Lebanon	00961
Anguilla	001264	Liberia	00231
Antigua	001268	Libya	00218
Argentina	0054	Lithuania	00370
Armenia	00374	Luxembourg	00352
Australia	0061	Macau	00853
Austria	0043	Macedonia	00389
Bahamas	001242	Madagascar	00261
Bahrain	00973	Majorca	0034
Bangladesh	00880	Malawi	00265
Barbados	001246	Malaysia	0060
Belarus	00375	Maldives	00960
Belgium	0032	Mali	00223
Belize	00501	Malta	00356
Benin	00229	Marshall Islands	00692
Bermuda	001441	Martinique	00596
Bhutan	00975	Mauritania	00222
Bolivia	00591	Mauritius	00230
Bosnia	00387	Mayotte	00269
Botswana	00267	Mexico	0052
Brazil	0055	Micronesia	00691
Brunei	00673	Moldova	00373
Bulgaria	00359	Monaco	00377
Burkina	00226	Mongolia	00976
Burundi	00257	Montserrat	001664
Cambodia	00855	Morocco	00212
Cameroon	00237	Mozambique	00258
Canada	001	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Cape Verde	00238	Namibia	00264
Cayman Islands	001345	Nepal	00977
Central African Republic	00236	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Chad	00235	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Chile	0056	New Caledonia	00687
China	0086	New Zealand	0064
Colombia	0057	Nicaragua	00505
Comoros	00269	Niger	00227
Congo	00242	Nigeria	00234
Cook Islands	00682	Niue	00683
Costa Rica	00506	Norfolk Island	00672
Croatia	00385	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Cuba	0053	North Korea	00850
Cyprus	00357	Norway	0047
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Oman	00968
Czech Republic	00420	Pakistan	0092
Denmark	0045	Palau	00680
Diego Garcia	00246	Panama	00507
Djibouti	00253	Papua New Guinea	00675
Dominica	001767	Paraguay	00595
Dominican Republic	001809	Peru	0051
Ecuador	00593	Philippines	0063
Egypt	0020	Poland	0048
El Salvador	00503	Portugal	00351
England (UK)	0044	Puerto Rico	001787
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Qatar	00974
Eritrea	00291	Romania	0040
Estonia	00372	Russian Federation	007
Ethiopia	00251	Rwanda	00250
Falkland Islands	00500	Saint Helena	00290
Faroe Islands	00298	Saint Kitts	001869
Fiji	00679	Saint Lucia	001758
Finland	00358	Saint Pierre	00508
France	0033	Saint Vincent	001784
French Guiana	00594	Samoa US	00684
French Polynesia	00689	Samoa West	00685
Gabon	00241	San Marino	00378
Gambia	00220	Sao Tome	00239
Georgia	00995	Saudi Arabia	00966
Germany	0049	Scotland (UK)	0044
Ghana	00233	Senegal	00221
Gibraltar	00350	Seychelles	00284
Greece	0030	Sierra Leone	00232
Greenland	00299	Singapore	0065
Grenada	001473	Slovakia	00421
Guadeloupe	00590	Slovenia	00386
Guam	001671	Solomon Islands	00677
Guatemala	00502	Somalia	00252
Guinea	00224	South Africa	0027
Guyana	00592	South Korea	0082
Haiti	00509	Spain	0034
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Sri Lanka	0094
Honduras	00504	Sudan	00249
Hong Kong	00852	Suriname	00597
Hungary	0036	Swaziland	00268
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sweden	0046
Iceland	00354	Switzerland	0041
India	0091	Syria	00963
Indian Ocean	00873	Taiwan	00886
Indonesia	0062	Tanzania	00255
Iran	0098	Thailand	0066
Iraq	00964	Toga	00228
Ireland	00353	Tonga	00676
Italy	0039	Tokelau	00690
Ivory Coast	00225	Trinidad	001868
Jamaica	001876	Tunisia	00216
Japan	0081	Turkey	0090
Jordan	00962	Tuvalu	00688
Kazakhstan	007	Uganda	00256
Kenya	00254	Ukraine	00380
Kiribati	00686	United Arab Emirates	00976

DIABETES LINK TO SITTING LARGELY DUE TO OBESITY AND LACK OF EXERCISE HAVE REAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY DURING LEISURE TIME

DENMARK: Too much time spent sitting is associated with an increased risk of developing diabetes, but the effect is primarily seen among those who are also obese or inactive most of the time, a recent Danish study finds. Overall, the study linked sitting for more than 10 hours a day to a 35 percent higher risk of diabetes compared with sitting for less than 6 hours daily. But the good news for desk jockeys is that staying slim and getting plenty of exercise appeared to minimize the diabetes risk associated with all that time sitting down.

"If you are normal weight, and it's impossible to avoid sitting a lot at work, it's nice to know that being physically active outside work alleviates the diabetes hazard from sitting - at least that's what our results point toward," said senior study author Dr Janne Tolstrup of the University of Southern Denmark in Copenhagen. While previous research has linked sedentary time to diabetes, the current findings should encourage people with desk jobs to get moving more during the day, Tolstrup added by email.

World Health Organization

"If you do sit, there's a lot you can do quite easily," Tolstrup said. "Stand at your desk, or try to vary your position, take active breaks such as standing or walking as opposed to sitting, and be sure you have some real physical activity during leisure time."

Globally, about one in 10 adults have diabetes, according to the World Health Organization. Most of these people have type 2 diabetes, which is associated with obesity and aging and occurs when the body can't make or use enough of the hormone insulin.

To assess the connection between diabetes and sedentary time, Tolstrup and colleagues analyzed data on more than 72,000 people who reported how much time they spent sitting in 2007 and 2008. The researchers followed people over five years to see how many developed diabetes. Half of the study participants reported sitting for at least 6.3 hours a day, according to the results in the British Journal of Sports Medicine.

People who reported sitting for 10 hours or more were likely to be younger, have more education, be physically inactive, smoke, drink alcohol and be overweight. During the study period, 1,790 adults developed diabetes. Compared to those who sat for less than six hours a day, people who spent six to 10 hours sitting were 15 percent more likely to develop diabetes, suggesting the risk increases with the number of hours spent sitting down. There wasn't an increased diabetes risk associated with increased sitting time when people got at least 150 minutes a week of moderate to vigorous physical activity, however. That suggests that other factors - notably obesity and lack of exercise - are the main drivers of the link

between sitting time and diabetes risk, the study team writes.

Regular exercise

Limitations of the study include its reliance on people to accurately report how much time they spent sitting on a typical day, as well as the lack of data on their sedentary habits over time, the authors note. Only 14 percent of people asked to participate agreed to join the study, which also means the results may not be representative of the Danish population. "Unfortunately at the population level, the majority of the population are overweight or obese and the majority of the population are inactive," said David Dunstan, head of the physical activity laboratory at Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute in Melbourne, Australia.

"The message here is that health gains could be made at the population level if sitting time was reduced, of course, in addition to engaging in regular exercise," Dunstan, who wasn't involved in the study, added by email. Certainly, there's little downside to getting up from a desk to walk around, said Bethany Barone Gibbs, a researcher at the University of Pittsburgh who wasn't involved in the study. "It is unlikely that reducing sitting and breaking it up will be harmful, but we are still trying to quantify the potential benefit of this particular behavior modification on diabetes risk and other health outcomes," Gibbs said by email. — Reuters



NEW YORK: This image made available by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2016, shows a map of the United States with an estimated range of the Aedes aegypti mosquito for 2016 indicated in blue. — AP

CDC EXPANDS RANGE OF ZIKA MOSQUITO INTO PARTS OF NORTHEAST

ATLANTA: The mosquitoes that can transmit the Zika virus may live in a broader swath of the US than previously thought - but that doesn't mean they'll cause disease here, federal health officials said Wednesday. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posted new maps of the estimated range of Aedes aegypti mosquitoes, and a related cousin, on its website. Instead of just being in the southern part of the country, the new maps show the range for Aedes aegypti (AYE'-dees uh-GYP'-tie) could extend into parts of the Midwest and Northeast. Previous maps were about a dozen years old, and CDC officials describe the new ones as a best understanding of where the mosquitoes have been seen recently or previously - even though it's not clear if very many actually live in every spot shaded on the map. It's possible the range increased, or just that scientists have done a better job looking for them. CDC Director Tom Frieden said the implication is "there are more places at risk than realize they're at risk, given where the mosquito is likely to be present."

But there's a big caveat: Even if the mosquito lives in a certain spot, it has to bite an already infected person in order to spread Zika, or related viruses, to other people. Also unlike many Zika-plagued areas, the mainland US has air conditioning and screens to keep the insects out of homes where they commonly live. That's why the website says: The "maps are not meant to represent risk for spread of disease." Zika is spreading rapidly through Latin America. While most people experience mild or no symptoms, Zika is suspected of causing babies to be born with abnormally small heads and underlying brain damage, after a rash of such cases in Brazil. The CDC says more than 270 US cases have been reported among travelers. — AP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times



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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (31/03/2016 TO 06/04/2016)

SHARQIA-1 BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE JU ON: THE GRUDGE 3 (JU-ON: THE BEGINNING OF THE END) NO FRI+SAT KUNG FU PANDA 3 FRI+SAT KUNG FU PANDA 3 KUNG FU PANDA 3 JU ON: THE GRUDGE 3 (JU-ON: THE BEGINNING OF THE END) JU ON: THE GRUDGE 3 (JU-ON: THE BEGINNING OF THE END) JU ON: THE GRUDGE 3 (JU-ON: THE BEGINNING OF THE END)	12:00 PM 3:00 PM 3:00 PM 5:00 PM 7:00 PM 9:00 PM 11:00 PM 1:00 AM	BATMAN V SUPERMAN: AWN OF JUSTICE BATMAN V SUPERMAN: AWN OF JUSTICE	9:15 PM 12:15 AM	10 CLOVERFIELD LANE KUNG FU PANDA 3 KUNG FU PANDA 3 KUNG FU PANDA 3 BATMAN V SUPERMAN: AWN OF JUSTICE 10 CLOVERFIELD LANE	1:30 PM 3:45 PM 5:45 PM 7:45 PM 10:00 PM 1:00 AM
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Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2016

FRENCH PROTESTERS CLASH WITH POLICE OVER LABOR REFORMS

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Japan stumbles over baby steps to encourage working mums

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KOLKATA: In this March 29, 2016 photo, Indian commuters walk past a parked Ola cab. — AP

UBER, OLA BATTLE FOR INDIA'S BOOMING TAXI MARKET COMPETITION FOR MARKET DOMINANCE BECOMING FIERCE

NEW DELHI: Aiming to wrest control of India's booming taxi market, two cab-hailing smartphone apps - Uber and Ola - are promising hundreds of millions in new investment while also facing off with one another in court.

San Francisco-based Uber reportedly plans a \$500 million infusion of new funds, apart from the \$1 billion already committed over the past nine months, according to Indian newspapers. The company declined this week to comment on those reports. Meanwhile, Ola Cabs promises to add another 2,000 cars to the fleet of 26,000 it already commands in New Delhi, chief spokesman Anand Subramanian said.

But it's the ongoing legal wrangles between the two - with each accusing the other of behaving unethically - that have drawn focus to the struggle for India's \$9 billion taxi industry and future growth possibilities in a country with an urban population of 400 million people but few options in safe, convenient public transportation. This month, Uber filed suit against Ola, accusing its Bangalore-based rival of hijacking its business by creating fake accounts to make bookings with Uber that it then canceled. Ola denied the allegations, calling them ludicrous and suggesting they were a smoke screen to hide Uber's own troubles. Ola previously challenged Uber in court over what it said were illegal business practices.

Analysts say the court battles show competition for market dominance is becoming fierce.

"It's a tussle to capture the top spot among taxi-hailing apps and the title of No 1," said Jaspal Singh, founder of Valoriser Consultants, specializing in analysis of the transportation industry.

Smartphone taxi apps, introduced in India in 2010, have grown to account for 10 percent of the country's overall taxi industry, which also includes regular cabs and three-wheeler "rickshaws." Ola has already bought out the upstart TaxiForSure, and both Uber and Ola offer rates below those of traditional taxis. Meanwhile, they are quickly adding new cities and customers, including car drivers increasingly fed up with traffic gridlock and difficulty finding parking on India's overcrowded roads.

So far Ola has been dominating the smartphone app market, with a presence in more than 100 cities and roughly half of the business, analysts say. Uber, which entered the Indian market in 2013, operates in 29 Indian cities and is anxious to expand, while myriad small players are clawing their way in.

Court battles

In the latest legal action between the two, filed in the Delhi High Court, Uber demanded an injunction against Ola and \$7.4 million in damages. It accuses Ola - backed by Japan's SoftBank Group Corp. and hedge fund Tiger Global Management LLC - of creating more than 90,000 fake accounts to book around 400,000 rides and then cancel them in an effort to dis-

rupt Uber's business.

The allegations are similar to those faced by Uber itself in the United States in 2014, where San Francisco-based Lyft accused Uber of booking and canceling thousands of rides. Uber denied the accusations and no legal action was filed. The Delhi High Court will hold its next hearing in September on Uber's lawsuit, which Ola called "frivolous and false."

Ola said in a statement it was "not beyond our imagination that this is an effort to divert attention from the current realities of the market where Uber has faced major setbacks." Specifically, those setbacks include a legal petition filed by Ola in October, accusing Uber of flouting a Supreme Court order demanding app-based taxis in New Delhi switch from running on diesel to using compressed natural gas. The companies were given until this month to comply with the rules, intended to curb extreme air pollution in the capital. Ola's parent company, ANI Technologies LTD, has alleged Uber's lawsuit is retaliation against Ola's petition.

Uber had earlier troubles in India as well. It was accused of failing to properly screen its drivers in 2014 after one was accused of raping a 26-year-old passenger. Uber's reputation temporarily took a hit, and the government briefly banned all smartphone app taxi services while new regulations were drafted. The current wrangling over ethics and legal threats is not limited to Uber and Ola.

'It's so convenient'

Last week, rickshaw booking app Jugnoo, operating in the north Indian city of Chandigarh, accused Ola of using "unethical practices to sabotage its business" by making fake bookings and warned of legal action if it did not cease. Jugnoo CEO Samar Singla said his company saw a sudden surge in bookings and cancellations, with about 20,000 cancellations made through 800 accounts over a 10-day period earlier this month.

"We started mapping the areas where the bookings were being made from, and it invariably pointed to places close to Ola's office," Singla said in a statement. Singh, the transportation analyst, said Uber and Ola were honing their strategies and boosting services to secure market dominance as the country experiments with transportation limits aimed at curbing air pollution.

On April 15, New Delhi will begin banning cars with odd- or even-numbered license plates from the roads on alternate days for two weeks. The capital's first such effort in January helped lessen air pollution and traffic. Residents say they will be relying on cab companies to travel in the city during those weeks. "The last time I just ordered a cab from my phone. For me it doesn't matter if it's Ola or Uber," said Rashmi Singh, an advertising executive. "It's so convenient, I could park my car in the garage permanently." — AP

US CRUDE STOCKS HIT RECORD LOW

LONDON: Oil futures fell yesterday, with US crude hitting its lowest price in more than two weeks as the country's crude stocks reached yet another record high, renewing concerns about global oversupply.

The increase in US inventories came despite seasonal refinery utilization hitting an 11-year high, while a rise in the dollar put further pressure on oil prices. Brent crude futures fell 45 cents to \$38.81 a barrel as of 0823 GMT. The front-month contract for U.S. crude futures was down 65 cents at \$37.67 a barrel, after dropping to \$37.57, the lowest since

March 16. "The door is open for lower prices," said Hamza Khan, head of commodity strategy with ING. "There's a backlog of oversupply that needs to be worked out of the system." US crude stockpiles rose by 2.3 million barrels to 534.8 million barrels in the week to March 25, the seventh week at record highs, data from the US government's Energy Information Administration showed.

The increase was less than analysts' expectations of a 3.3-million-barrel build after crude imports fell by 636,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 7.4 million bpd. Crude prices have risen

about 50 percent since mid-February on optimism over a proposal by several major oil-exporting countries to freeze production and signs of falling US output.

Producers are meeting on April 17 in Qatar to discuss the plan to stabilise output at January's levels. In the past week, however, oil prices have started to track lower. Despite the freeze proposal, OPEC crude output rose in March to 32.47 million bpd from 32.37 million bpd in February, according to a Reuters survey. Iran is expected to add another half a million bpd of oil within a year, Fatih Birol, head

of the International Energy Agency, told Reuters on Wednesday. But elsewhere in Asia, the sustained weakness in oil prices has suppressed upstream oil and gas production, consultancy BMI Research said in a report yesterday. Weaker prices are "limiting opportunities to stem natural declines in ageing assets", the report said. China's still-growing demand could help absorb the excess. China is set to import 7.5 million bpd this year, overtaking the United States as the world's biggest crude importer, a vice president of Unipet, the trading arm of Sinopec, told a seminar. — Reuters

US HINTS AT ALLOWING IRAN TRADE IN DOLLARS

WASHINGTON: The US treasury secretary seems to be laying the groundwork to let Iran begin trading in dollars, after a landmark accord with the West last year saw the country limit its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of sanctions.

Jack Lew said in Washington Wednesday that US sanctions should not be used lightly, though a Republican-controlled Congress remains dead set against easing restraints on Tehran. "We must be conscious of the risk that overuse of sanctions could undermine our leadership position within the global economy, and the effectiveness of our sanctions themselves," he told The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Lew said Washington must be willing to ease sanctions when they have actually worked, even if this is delicate in the case of Iran.

After the historic accord of July 2015 among Iran and major western powers to lift sanctions previously imposed because of Iran's nuclear program—which the West feared was aimed at building a bomb—Tehran has kept its word, Lew said. And now it is up to the United States to keep its word, he added.

However, non-nuclear-related sanctions against Iran that were imposed because of what the US says is its support for terrorism and regional destabilization, remained in force, Lew said. He added that the US administration had explained to the foreign business community what it now can and cannot do in Iran, making implicit reference to the worries of European banks. Mark Dubowitz, of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said Lew's remarks signaled that the administration of President Barack Obama is preparing to make a major concession to Iran by giving it access to the US dollar. He said this change would be adamantly opposed by the US Congress. "It seems clear to me that the administration is seriously considering giving Iran access to the use of the US dollar for business transactions," Dubowitz told AFP.

A battle with Congress

At issue are operations called U-Turn transfers, which would allow Iranian and foreign banks to engage in financial transactions in dollars by having access to offshore clearing houses. The United States banned these transfers—which involved US financial institutions as intermediaries—in 2008. Last week, Ed Royce, chairman of the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs, wrote a letter to Obama expressing concern that licenses might be granted that would allow such dollar transactions.

Dubowitz said Lew's tone suggests that the US Treasury is paving the way for a future easing of sanctions, as Iran is complaining that the United States has only stopped punishing Iran on paper, not in actual fact.

Iran's Supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, accused the United States last week of not fulfilling its commitments in the nuclear deal. He said Europe is wary of doing business with Iran, out of fear of the United States.

But Patrick Clawson, research director at the Washington Institute, which specializes in the Middle East, said the US treasury secretary's comments speak more than anything to the domestic battle with the US Congress. Clawson said opening the way for an easing of sanctions would be very difficult for the Obama administration. He said Lew's comments were directed rather at dissuading Congress from approving new sanctions against Iran. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, accompanied by his wife Emine walk downstairs from a plane upon his arrival at Andrews Air Force Base. — AP

TURKEY ECONOMY DEFIES CRISES TO GROW ROBUST 4% IN 2015

BEATING BOTH EXPECTATIONS AND PREVIOUS YEAR FIGURES

ISTANBUL: Turkey's gross domestic product (GDP) grew 4.0 percent in 2015, data showed yesterday, with the economy defying a series of domestic crises to beat expectations and the previous year's figure.

The stout growth was helped by an unexpectedly strong fourth quarter, with the economy growing 5.7 percent in the last three months from the same period a year earlier, the statistics office said in a statement. The main drivers were strong foreign trade and an acceleration in domestic demand.

The full-year growth figure was well above the 2.9-percent reading in 2014 while the fourth quarter rating was far superior to the market consensus. The figures are a boost for the government of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at time when Turkey has been rocked by a series of militant attacks which are hurting its key tourist industry.

There have also been concerns over the consistency of economic policy under Erdogan and the economic fallout from a row with Russia after the shooting down of a Russian warplane on November 24. Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek hailed the figures, saying Turkey was the fourth fastest growing economy among G20 states and was grow-

ing at double the pace of emerging economies, excluding China and India.

"This success was achieved despite a year with two general elections, geo-political tensions in our region, challenging conditions for our trade partners and volatility in global financial markets," he told the state-run Anatolia news agency. The reading of 5.7 percent growth in the fourth quarter was by far the best of 2015 after 3.9 percent growth was recorded in the third quarter.

"The economy continued to grow in the last quarter despite political uncertainty, tension with Russia, and rising terrorism," said Ozgur Altug, chief economist at BGC Partners in Istanbul. "The figures confirmed the Turkish economy's resilience to shocks," he added.

'Hard to justify'

William Jackson, senior emerging markets economist at Capital Economics in London, described the fourth quarter figure as "staggering". "The whopping 5.7 percent rise was flattered by working day effects, but even taking this into account the economy remained extremely robust," he said in a note to clients. Turkey, which is a major importer of energy, was also helped by the

current low oil prices. The economic prospects for 2016 could be less certain, with tourism taking a heavy blow after a sequence of suicide attacks in Istanbul and Ankara this year blamed on jihadists and Kurdish militants. The number of foreigners entering Turkey fell 10.3 percent in February, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism said Tuesday. Meanwhile, investors are also concerned over stubbornly high inflation—8.8 percent in February—and uncertainty over the direction of monetary policy when respected governor Erdem Basci's mandate expires next month. There are fears that Erdogan wants a more pliant figure to take the job and pursue an expansionary monetary policy to further boost short term growth.

Altug said he forecast 2016 growth to be considerably lower at three percent. Some analysts questioned the wisdom of Turkey pruning a key interest rate last week at a time of high inflation, fretting it could be the result of government pressure. Jackson said that the strength of the growth raised further questions about the bank's stance. "The strong growth figures coming alongside mounting signs of an inflation problem make the central bank's decision to cut interest rates last week even harder to justify," he said. — AFP

S&P LOWERS CHINA'S OUTLOOK TO NEGATIVE

BEIJING: Ratings agency Standard & Poor's (S&P) cut its outlook on China from stable to negative yesterday, warning that economic rebalancing was taking longer than expected. "The economic and financial risks to the Chinese government's creditworthiness are gradually increasing," it said in a statement.

S&P kept its rating on Chinese sovereign bonds unchanged at AA-/A-1+. Beijing is grappling with a tough economic transition away from dependence on heavy industries toward a consumer-driven model, but fluctuations in the exchange rate and stock markets have undermined confidence in leaders' willingness to push through reforms.

S&P said that it could downgrade Chinese government bonds this year or next if Beijing tries to keep economic growth at 6.5 percent by opening the

credit floodgates and pushing investment to above 40 percent of GDP. That would be "well above what we believe to be sustainable levels of 30%-35% of GDP and among the highest ratios of rated sovereigns", which it said would weaken the economy's resilience to shocks.

The US-based agency also said its downgrade was motivated by its view that much-needed reforms to hulking, inefficient state-owned enterprises may be "insufficient" to reduce the risks of credit-fueled growth. It projected the economy would expand at 6 percent or more over the next three years, but forecasted that government debt would rise to 43 percent of GDP. But it said ratings could stabilize if Beijing takes measures to cool credit growth so that it is more in line with nominal GDP. A lowered outlook does not necessarily mean there will

be a downgrade of Chinese bonds, which would push up borrowing costs for Beijing in international markets.

No game changer in sights

Chinese stock futures fell after the announcement yesterday evening, but analysts said the outlook cut was unlikely to weigh heavily on markets. "I don't see this as a game changer," Nordine Naam, global macro strategist for Natixis SA told Bloomberg News, adding he did not expect "any major impact".

"While things will remain difficult, we're expecting fiscal stimulus in the coming months that will be supportive of growth," he said. China's foreign exchange reserves, the world's largest, fell to \$3.2 trillion in January, the lowest in more than three years, official data have showed. S&P pointed to increased

global use of the Yuan and ambitious plans to increase fiscal transparency as positive signs for the economy, while noting that a history of uneven implementation and a lack of "checks and balances" or a "free flow of information" could lead to distortions and "foster discontent over time".

S&P joins fellow ratings agency Moody's, which cut its outlook on Chinese sovereign bonds earlier in March, citing increasing capital outflows and rising debt. After the Moody's downgrade the official news agency Xinhua carried a commentary criticizing the "short-sightedness" of Western ratings agencies, and claiming they lacked credibility and significance. China's economy grew 6.9 percent last year, its weakest rate in a quarter of a century, and concerns over its outlook have kept mounting. — AFP

JAPAN STUMBLES OVER BABY STEPS TO ENCOURAGE WORKING MUMS

HARASSMENT OF WORKING MOTHERS A GROWING PROBLEM

TOKYO: Akane had always enjoyed her job at a Tokyo call centre until, unlike many Japanese mothers, she decided to return to work after finishing her maternity leave. It was not long before colleagues started picking on the 30-something mother for working shorter hours or being away from the office due to child-care issues. She is not alone. Harassment of working mothers is a growing problem in Japan, possibly aggravated by government policies aimed at keeping women in the workforce, experts say. Akane said her superiors were little help and the constant harassment—mostly from female colleagues—forced her to make a decision.

"I said 'I'm leaving, I can't stand it,'" said Akane, who asked that her surname not be revealed. "The surprising thing was that this was mostly the attitude of my female colleagues rather than the men." To stem a shrinking labor force, rapidly-ageing Japan is offering benefits for young mothers—such as flexible working hours, including no night shifts — to staff the nation's offices and factories. But the moves have stirred jealousy and resentment in many workplaces. "The situation is downright serious," said Maeko Takenobu, an author of several books about female employment who is seen as an expert on the subject. "Many (women) suffer in silence as they have no other choice but work."

In response, Tokyo unveiled a public service campaign to stop the harassment of working mothers, including a hotline for whistleblowers, although many women are still afraid to report workplace abuse. Nearly half — 48 percent of pregnant women say that have been the victim of bullying at work by colleagues or their immediate supervisor, according to a recent labor ministry investigation.

The same study found that one-third of working women have experienced sexual harassment at their place of employment, and a majority did not report the abuse. And harassment is not just confined to the workplace. A decade ago, Japan rolled out a small badge to be worn by pregnant women, which said "I have a baby inside me".

'Womenomics'

The button was designed to create a welcoming environment for pregnant women on subway trains and other public places as well



TOKYO: Pedestrians walk past a woman (L) wearing a maternity badge on a street. — AFP

as the office. It was also meant for emergency first responders so they would avoid treatment potentially harmful to an unborn child.

The idea, however, has been a disappointment. Users are sometimes treated rudely on public transport, resulting in some women refusing to wear the badges for fear of becoming targets of harassment.

"Unfortunately, the badge is often seen as a sign of the vanity of being pregnant," said an editorial on akachan no heya, a widely followed website for pregnant women. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe continues to pledge his support for working women as part of a wider bid to kickstart the country's struggling economy. Economists have said for years that Japan needs to make better use of its well-educated but underemployed women, which could go a long way toward plugging the labor gap as it faces an ageing and declining population. In speech after speech, Abe has urged Japan to open up to "womenomics", encouraging some of the nation's biggest firms to adopt targets for boosting the number of female executives.

While women are well represented in poorly-paid, part-time work, only a fraction of executives at 3,600 listed companies are female. Japan was ranked 101 out of 145 in the Global

Gender Gap Index 2015, released by World Economic Forum, lower than Suriname and Azerbaijan. Last year, cosmetics giant Shiseido created a stir when it changed a program that allowed young mothers working as its department store beauty consultants to work shorter hours and have more flexible schedules. The program, in place since 1991, annoyed other colleagues because working mothers were often absent during the busiest periods, such as evenings and weekends.

Shiseido said the move was aimed at giving working moms experience during hectic times so they could improve their skills—and be in line for promotions. But some worry that may send the wrong message to young women considering having a child in a country where mothers already feel guilty for leaving their children with others—outside of nurseries, of which there is a huge shortage, and school.

Experts say Japanese society needs to look for more flexible solutions. For example, the problem of waiting lists for children to enter nurseries will be hard to solve "until we enthusiastically introduce a system like the French 'nounous'", said Keio University's Takeshi Natsuno, referring to officially approved individual child care specialists. — AFP

PROFITS SOAR AT CHINA'S BIGGEST THREE AIRLINES

SHANGHAI: China's three biggest airlines reported soaring net profits in 2015 despite the country's worst economic growth in a quarter of a century, as more Chinese travelled abroad. Cheaper jet fuel helped the bottom line, but losses from foreign exchange hurt as China's Yuan currency slid against the dollar, they said.

"With the slowdown in world economic growth, and the ruggedness and hardship on the road of global recovery, China faced constant downward economic pressure," China Southern Airlines said in a statement late Wednesday. But its net profit more than doubled last year to 3.74 billion Yuan (\$575 million), it said. The figure fell just short of analysts' expectations of 3.9 billion Yuan, according to an average compiled by Bloomberg News.

"The group seized the opportunity of decreasing fuel prices and increasing outbound tourism, which significantly improved the profit level," said China Southern, which is Asia's biggest airline by fleet size with 667 planes.

Flag carrier Air China said separately that its net profit surged 83 percent to 7.06 billion Yuan. "Although low fuel prices have helped to ease the pressure on operating costs, intensified industrial competition and substantial exchange rate fluctuations have posed severe challenges," it said in a statement.

Last year, the Chinese government launched a shock devaluation of the Yuan, guiding the normally stable unit nearly five percent lower, and slowing growth has maintained downward pressure on the currency. Air China estimated its net exchange loss at 5.16 billion Yuan last year due to the depreciation of the Yuan, according to its statement.

Another carrier, China Eastern Airlines, reported a rise of just over 33 percent rise in net profit last year to 4.54 billion Yuan, its statement said. "In 2015, the aviation industry benefited from international low crude oil prices but at the same time, it was adversely affected by exchange rate fluctuations," China Eastern said, adding average jet fuel prices fell by nearly 40 percent.

Moving forward, the June opening of a new Disney theme park in commercial hub Shanghai could help airlines despite wider economic weakness, analysts said. "The slow economy does have an impact on airline companies," Yu Nan, an analyst at Haitong Securities said. "The opening of the Disney park might boost the business of airlines in the third quarter." — AFP

STRUGGLING STEEL INDUSTRY SPARKS MAJOR CRISIS IN UK

LONDON: The British government scrambled yesterday to save the country's struggling steel industry after Tata Steel announced plans to sell its UK plants, which employ almost 20,000 people. Prime Minister David Cameron held a crisis meeting at 10 Downing St, and said the government would do "everything it can" to keep steelmaking in Britain. But, he said, "this is a difficult situation. There's no guarantee of success."

"This industry is in difficulty right across the world," Cameron said. "There's been a collapse in prices, there's massive overcapacity." The steel industry in Britain, like many developed economies, has been hit hard by cheap Chinese imports, which have depressed prices, and manufacturers have asked the government and European Union to impose anti-dumping duties.

Tata Steel, which operates the country's biggest steel plant at Port Talbot in south Wales, is losing 1 million pounds (\$1.4 million) a day in its UK operations. A sale or restructuring would likely involve heavy job losses. Tuesday's decision by the Indian company to shed its British steelworks appeared to catch UK authorities by surprise. Cameron was on vacation in the Canary Islands, while Business Secretary Sajid Javid was in Australia.

Javid, who quickly flew back to Britain, said the steel industry "is absolutely vital for the country and we will look at all viable options" to save it. The opposition Labor Party has urged the government to nationalize the steel industry - as it did struggling banks, which received billions in public money to keep them afloat during the 2008 financial crisis.

Labor's economy spokesman, John McDonnell, said temporary nationalization would be "cost-effective in the long term." "It isn't just the cost of losing those jobs, as we've seen elsewhere. It's the cost of devastation of whole communities. And remember, we will be paying out in unemployment benefits and other benefits to those people who lose their jobs," he said.

But Cameron said: "I don't believe nationalization is the right answer." He suggested the government could provide incentives to steelmakers, including a guarantee that British-made steel would be used in major defense and infrastructure projects. Critics say that may not be enough. Labor lawmaker Stephen Kinnock, who represents the Port Talbot area, accused the government of being in "disarray" over steel. He said the government "has been asleep at the wheel and has been more interested in rolling out the red carpet for China, than it has been in standing up for British steelworkers." — AP



RENNES: Student protesters shout slogans and hold placards reading "Get up to € 1,200 is insulting" (left), "Act work Removal of 2" (2nd left), "Valls get out!" (center) during a demonstration against the French government's proposed labor reforms. — AFP

FRENCH PROTESTERS CLASH WITH POLICE OVER LABOR REFORMS

MULTIPLE STRIKES SHUTS DOWN COUNTRY

PARIS: Clashes broke out on the streets of France yesterday during fresh protests over labor reforms, just a day after beleaguered President Francois Hollande was forced into an embarrassing U-turn over constitutional changes. A nationwide strike shut the Eiffel Tower, disrupted train services and saw dozens of schools closed or barricaded by students.

Riot police used tear gas against stone-throwing protesters in the western cities of Nantes and Rennes, among 200 demonstrations drawing tens of thousands of people nationwide despite rainy weather. Police said around 10 youths were arrested in Paris, where demonstrators threw firecrackers and yellow paint at security forces.

Adding to Hollande's miserable week, a separate strike by air traffic controllers threatened headaches for thousands of passengers, while drivers faced more than 400 kilometers of tailbacks on motorways around Paris. The Socialist government is desperate to push through reforms to France's controversial labor laws, billed as a last-gasp attempt to boost the flailing economy before next year's presidential election.

But it has faced a wave of often violent protests by unions and students angry over plans to make it easier for struggling companies to fire workers, even though the reforms have already been diluted once in a bid to placate employers.

Hollande's government was still reeling from his decision Wednesday

to abandon constitutional changes that would have allowed dual nationals convicted of terrorism to be stripped of their French citizenship. The measure had been derided as ineffective and divisive, including by left-wing rebels within the Socialist party—many of whom also oppose the labor reforms.

Least popular president

Already the least popular president in France's modern history, Hollande's numbers continue to fall, with a new poll yesterday showing his approval rating at a new low of 15 percent. Another poll on Wednesday showed he would not even make the second-round run-off in the presidential election.

Hollande, 61, has vowed not to run again if he cannot cut the country's stubbornly high unemployment figures—long stuck at around 10 percent—and he hoped the labour reforms would encourage firms to hire more staff. Pressure from the street and parliament's back benches caused the government to water down the proposals two weeks ago so that they apply only to large firms.

Some reform-minded unions have backed the changes, but the unions behind Thursday's protests said in a statement on Thursday: "Clearly, this bill will not lead to the necessary job creation, will make insecurity more widespread and will deepen professional inequality, notably for women and youths." A recent opinion poll found 58 percent of the public still

opposed the labor reform bill.

A video of an officer punching a 15-year-old boy on the sidelines of a protest last week went viral and fuelled further anger. The officer was detained for questioning yesterday. Joblessness is nearer to 25 percent among the young, with many stuck on an endless cycle of short-term contracts and internships.

'Not a blank cheque'

Bosses are also unhappy with the reforms, particularly over the removal of a cap on compensation paid for unfair dismissal, and the scrapping of plans that would have allowed small- and medium-sized companies to unilaterally introduce flexible working hours.

Labor Minister Myriam El Khomri said this week that she understood why "such a profoundly reformist text has raised questions and requires debate," adding: "It is not a blank cheque for companies." Parliament is set to vote on the reforms in late April or early May.

Aviation authorities told airlines to cancel 20 percent of their flights from Paris Orly airport on Thursday and a third of flights from the Mediterranean city of Marseille as air traffic controllers went on strike again. Paris' Charles De Gaulle airport was not expected to be affected by the 36-hour walkout over job cuts and a lack of investment in new technology. The Airlines for Europe lobby group said it was the 43rd strike by French air traffic controllers since 2009. — AFP

PHILIPPINES RECOVERS SUMS STOLEN FROM BANGLADESH

MANILA: More than \$4.5 million of tens of millions recently stolen from Bangladesh and funneled into Philippine casinos was recovered yesterday, as a lawmaker in Manila said almost half the haul could still be salvaged. On February 5, unidentified hackers shifted \$81 million from the Bangladesh central bank's account with the US Federal Reserve to a non-descript bank in Manila, and then to the casinos where the trail went cold. Representatives for casino agent Kim Wong, who is under criminal investigation after a portion of the stolen money was traced to his account, surrendered \$4.63 million in cash to the Philippine central bank yesterday. "He kept his promise to return the money," Wong's lawyer Innocencio Ferrer said in a statement.

Wong testified at a marathon parliament hearing Tuesday that two high-rollers from Beijing and Macau shifted the \$81 million to dollar accounts in Manila's Rizal Commercial Banking Corp (RCBC). Wong said he did not know the money was stolen from Bangladesh and that he merely helped the two men—who are also his casino clients—open bank accounts.

He offered to return the money, which he said remained in his account in Solaire, one of the Philippine capital's gleaming billion-dollar casinos. Earlier yesterday, Filipino Senator Ralph Recto said as much as \$34 million almost half of the sum stolen—could be recovered from two casinos and a foreign exchange brokerage based on testimonies from the hearing. By Recto's own calculations, this would include \$17 million that Wong claimed was still with exchange brokerage Philrem and \$10 million from a destitute casino in the north. There was also \$5.5 million that Wong picked up from the house of Philrem's owner and a further \$2.3 million in the Solaire casino account of the Macau man who allegedly brought the \$81 million to the Philippines. —AFP



TOKYO: Men chat in front of an electronic stock indicator of a securities firm. — AP

ROLLER-COASTER Q1 ENDS WITH SHARES, DOLLAR PRESSURIZED

GOLD HEADS FOR 16% GAIN, BEST IN 30 YEARS

LONDON: World stocks fell for the first time in four days yesterday, the final day of a roller-coaster first quarter that has hammered the dollar and the pound but has proven the best in decades for gold and bonds. European markets had a groggy morning with shares down 1 percent, the dollar hovering near a seven-week low versus the euro and oil volatile again after an extremely wild V-shaped ride so far this year.

Analysts were cautious about drawing too many conclusions amid the normal end-of-quarter choppiness, but there was a sense that the underlying currents of the past few months were still running strong.

Oil was stuck at \$39 a barrel on record US stockpiles and China was put on a downgrade warning by S&P, while euro zone inflation data showed it remains non-existent, underscoring just why the European Central Bank is cranking up its stimulus efforts. This quarter "has all been about the three C's. Commodities, China and central banks," said Aberdeen Asset Management investment committee member Kevin Daly.

When oil hit \$27 a barrel in mid-January there were "pretty dark" predictions for the global economy, he said, but the rebound in crude, China and ECB stimulus and the Federal Reserve cooling rate hike expectations had all bolstered confidence. The ECB's two rounds of additional aid this year is a large part of the reason why German government bonds are set for their best quarter since the height of the Eurozone crisis in late 2011.

Bund yields were down another couple of ticks ahead of US trading. They have shed nearly 50 basis points since the start of the year to leave them within touching distance of zero again. US

treasuries have surged too. In the currency market, the dollar remained weak as the latest sell-off continued following this week's cautious comments on the global outlook from the head of the Federal Reserve, Janet Yellen.

The Euro pushed up to \$1.1365 and the yen hovered at 112.36 to the greenback to leave the six currency dollar index on track for its biggest monthly fall since April 2015 and largest quarterly drop in five years.

"Obviously Tuesday was very interesting from Janet Yellen and it had the desired effect," said Charles Schwab managing director Kully Samra.

Blizzard of data

Sterling has also taken a pounding this year as concerns about a potential British exit, or 'Brexit', from the European Union, have grown. It barely budged yesterday but has seen its biggest quarterly tumble in 6-1/2 years against the euro and on a trade-weighted basis, although on the flip side, March has been its best month in almost a year against the dollar.

The US currency's recent weakness has also been a boon to the Australian and New Zealand dollars, which have both soared to nine-month highs, and it has also boosted Wall Street, which is at its highest level of the year. It is expected to dip back in line with Europe later when it resumes. Traders are bracing for blizzard of data too, including jobless claims figures that will set the tone for Friday's closely watched monthly payrolls figures.

Overnight, MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan finish at its highest since early December as emerging markets continued to capitalize on the commodity rebound and the dollar's decline. This year's turbulent

start left MSCI's benchmark EM equity index down 14 percent by the time it bottomed on Jan. 21 and Bond market <JPMEGR selling drove government bond spreads - a rough reflection of borrowing costs - up 18 percent.

But fast forward 2-1/2 months and EM stocks are up 20 percent. Currencies from the Russian rouble to the Brazilian real have surged and struggling parts of Africa have some of the best-performing bonds in the world. "The snap-back (rally) has happened very quickly, but it always happens like that," said Allianz Global Investors portfolio manager Shahzad Hasan.

Gold shines brightest

Asia has been carved in two though. Japan's Nikkei sagged 0.7 percent yesterday to an 11 percent quarterly loss, having been slammed by the 7 percent surge in the yen against the dollar. Shanghai shares have been an even bigger loser, having dropped about 15 percent since the start of the year, notwithstanding a gradual rebound since mid-January.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, safe-haven gold has been the big winner of 2016 so far. It ticked up to \$1,232 an ounce and has jumped a whopping 16 percent this quarter, its best run in nearly 30 years. Certain industrial metals have been red-hot too. Copper is up 2.5 percent, while tin and zinc have soared 15 and 10 percent respectively.

"It is difficult to get bearish on gold at this stage given that the Fed has made it quite clear that it is reluctant to raise rates," said INTL FCStone analyst Edward Meir. "As a result, the dollar is not rallying on constructive macro releases, and we have to suspect that its weaker tone will limit any substantial declines in gold for the time being." — Reuters

CHINA MIDEA GROUP BUYS 80% OF TOSHIBA'S HOME APPLIANCES ARM

BEIJING: China's Midea Group will buy a little more than 80 percent of loss-making Japanese conglomerate Toshiba's home appliances arm for \$473 million, the two companies said. Toshiba, which makes everything from rice cookers to nuclear plants, will retain the remaining 19.9 percent of Toshiba Lifestyle Products & Services Corporation (TLSC), which will retain its name, the two said in a joint statement.

Under the deal, Midea will be licensed to use Toshiba brands for home appliances for 40 years, obtain more than 5,000 intellectual property assets, and be authorized to use other related patents retained by Toshiba, it said. The deal, worth 53.7 billion Yen (\$473 million) pending unspecified "adjustments", is the latest in a series of overseas acquisitions by Chinese firms, and comes as Beijing seeks to retool its heavy industry-dependent economy to one more driven by consumer demand.

Chinese companies have made global headlines with multi-billion dollar buys in recent years, including state-owned ChemChina's \$43 billion offer last month for Swiss pesticide and seed giant Syngenta—the biggest-ever overseas acquisition by a Chinese firm if it goes through. Another Chinese home appliance maker, Haier, announced in January that it will buy the appliances arm of US giant General Electric for \$5.4 billion. Midea's chairman Fang Hongbo said the acquisition of the Toshiba unit—which he called an "iconic brand"—was "an important landmark in Midea's globalisation endeavour" and would "significantly strengthen our competitiveness in Japan, Southeast Asia and the global market".

In the joint statement, issued Wednesday, Toshiba president Masashi Muromachi added he was "confident that Midea's further investment in R&D, marketing and branding will bring about a brighter future for the home appliances business". Toshiba has been roiled by a profit-padding scandal, in which bosses for years systematically pushed their subordinates to cover up weak financial figures.

It is expecting a huge loss of about \$6.4 billion for the year to March with sagging global demand contributing to its financial woes. The Midea takeover is subject to regulatory approvals in China and anti-trust clearances in relevant jurisdictions, the two firms said. Privately owned Midea, founded in 1968, is one of China's biggest home appliance makers and raked in 12.7 billion Yuan (\$2.0 billion) in net profit last year, up 21 percent from a year ago, according to its website. — AFP

SPAIN OVERSHOOTS PUBLIC DEFICIT TARGET FOR 2015

MADRID: Spain posted a public deficit of 5.16 percent of economic output in 2015, Budget Minister Cristobal Montoro said yesterday, the eighth consecutive year the country has overshoot its fiscal target. Spain's conservative government predicted last year that it would reduce its deficit to 4.2 percent in 2015 and then to 2.8 percent in 2016 — forecasts that EU finance commissioner Pierre Moscovici said were "a bit optimistic".

"The budget deficit was lowered in 2015 to 5.16 percent from 5.8 percent. It is therefore a new reduction of Spain's public deficit, but it is insufficient," Montoro told a news conference. The deficit overshoot, one of the highest in the European Union, could raise pressure on Spain's acting government to adopt painful new austerity measures.

The ruling Popular Party (PP) passed deep and unpopular budget cuts during their four-year term in an effort to closely stick to deficit targets and allay market concerns over Spain's accounts. The cuts in health and education generated social unrest and contributed to growing levels of inequality and acting Prime Minister Mairano Rajoy eased some of the austerity last year ahead of a December 20 election, and reduced taxes.

Rajoy in February predicted the deficit would come in at 4.5 percent in 2015 and indicated he would ask Brussels for leeway in reducing the country's deficit. Eurozone rules dictate that governments must narrow budget deficits to within 3.0 percent of economic output, or face fines although none have ever been applied despite consistent breaches.

Since the Stability and Growth Pact came about in 1998 to strengthen the monitoring of budgets, 25 of the EU's 28 members have overstepped the deficit limit. Sweden, Estonia and Luxembourg are the only countries that have never breached it. — AFP

SCHENN LIFTS FLYERS OVER CAPITALS

CANADIAN CLUBS SHUT OUT OF NHL PLAYOFFS

PHILADELPHIA: Nick Cousins and Sam Gagner scored in the shootout after Brayden Schenn tied the game late in the third period of regulation to lift the Philadelphia Flyers to a 2-1 victory over the Washington Capitals on Wednesday night. The win propelled the Flyers out of a tie with Detroit for the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. Alex Ovechkin scored in regulation for Washington (54-16-6), which was seeking a franchise record for victories after already clinching home-ice advantage throughout the playoffs with the league's best regular-season record. Steve Mason made 29 saves in regulation and overtime for the Flyers and stopped TJ Oshie and Evgeny Kuznetsov in the shootout.

DUCKS 8, FLAMES 3

Jakob Silfverberg scored twice while Ryan Kesler had a goal and three assists as the Anaheim Ducks tied an NHL record for consecutive regular-season home wins over one team with a thumping of the Calgary Flames. Corey Perry, Brandon Pirri, Jamie McGinn, Nate Thompson and rookie Shea Theodore also scored, helping the Ducks take over first place in the Pacific Division with their 23rd in a row over the Flames at Honda Center. The Philadelphia Flyers won 23 straight over the Pittsburgh Penguins at the Spectrum from 1980-87. The Flames haven't won in Anaheim since Jan. 19, 2004, when Roman Turek made 36 saves in a 5-1 victory and the head coaches were Darryl Sutter and Mike Babcock. The Ducks, vying for their fourth straight division title, are a point ahead of the Los Angeles Kings with six games left on the schedule.

SENATORS 2, JETS 1

Canada's hockey humiliation was complete Wednesday as the Ottawa Senators were eliminated from NHL playoff contention, leaving the post-season without a Canadian club for just the second time. With 11 days left in the regular season, the Senators were the last team carrying Canada's banner. They did what they could, beating Winnipeg 2-1, but the Philadelphia Flyers' 2-1 shootout victory over the Washington Capitals officially eliminated the Senators. The only other time no Canadian team made the Stanley Cup playoffs was in the 1969-70 season.

That season, the NHL was a 12-team, two-division league and the Montreal Canadiens and Toronto Maple Leafs, Canada's only



PHILADELPHIA: Washington Capitals' Jay Beagle (83) cannot get a shot past Philadelphia Flyers' Steve Mason (35) as Shayne Gostisbehere (53) trails during the third period of an NHL hockey game on Wednesday, March 30, 2016. — AP

two clubs, failed to advance. By 1978-79, the NHL had merged with the World Hockey Association and number of Canadian NHL clubs rose to six teams. Now there are seven—and all will be idle come playoff time. Last season, five Canadian teams made the post-season. That was an improvement on 2013-14, when only the Montreal Canadiens reached the playoffs. Montreal,

whose 24 Stanley Cup triumphs are the most of any team in the NHL, were eliminated from post-season contention on Saturday—the first time since 2011-12 they won't appear. Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver and Edmonton are bringing up the rear of the Western Conference, while Toronto are in last place in the East. — Agencies

KENYA ANTI-DOPING BILL RISKS MISSING DEADLINE

NAIROBI: Kenyan lawmakers have held the preliminary reading of a bill criminalizing sports doping, just days before a deadline to avoid threatened Olympic expulsion. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) gave Kenya until April 5 to tighten its anti-doping law and provide funding for a proposed Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya (ADAK), after the east African track giants missed an earlier February 14 deadline. The Anti-Doping Bill establishes the anti-doping agency and proposes a \$1,000 (100,000 Kenyan shillings, 872 euros) fine, and/or a year in jail for athletes caught doping. Those caught smuggling or administering banned substances face a \$30,000 (3 million Kenyan shillings, 26,200 euros) fine or a three-year jail term.

The new bill, the preliminary reading of which was held late on Wednesday, is intended to save Kenyan athletes from an Olympics ban threatened by IAAF president Sebastian Coe. However, parliament is on recess for the next 10 days—until after the April 5 deadline—and the bill requires two further parliamentary hearings, possible committee hearings and presidential assent before becoming law, a process that can take months. When Kenya missed the February deadline to prove it was doing enough to combat drug-taking, Coe said he would severely punish any country guilty of attempting to cover up doping.

Efforts to comply with the new extended deadline were hampered in February when Athletics Kenya chief executive Isaac Mwangi stepped aside to allow a probe into allegations he sought bribes from two suspended athletes, claims he denies. Many in Kenya fear doping is rife among their top-class runners, who have been the source of enormous national pride. The IAAF earlier this month listed Kenya among five countries in "critical care" over their inadequate anti-doping measures. Some 40 Kenyan athletes have been involved in drug scandals in the last three years and athletics supremo Isaac Mwangi has been suspended for alleged corruption involving doping cover-ups, drawing a sharp rebuke from WADA.

"They are very well aware of what they need to do. They need to reply to us by April 5," WADA president Craig Reedie said on March 11. "They simply need to do it. If they don't do it my compliance review committee will take the matter further," insisted the Briton, adding a declaration of non-compliance was possible after WADA had brought to light institutionalized doping in Kenya. "We understand funding is now available and they (Kenya) need to pass legislation, we know the type of legislation they are talking about which is acceptable." It remains to be seen whether world athletics authorities will judge Kenya to have taken sufficient steps to avoid further censure. — AFP

HAMILTON RELISHING BATTLES; SPORT FACES MORE SCRUTINY

MANAMA: Three-time drivers world champion Lewis Hamilton says he relishes the prospect of another wheel-to-wheel scrap with Mercedes team-mate Nico Rosberg and the Ferrari team at this weekend's Bahrain Grand Prix. The 31-year-old Briton, who finished second behind Rosberg at the season-opening Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne, has been involved in previous thrilling and close battles with the German at the Bahrain International Circuit. And he fought back after a bad start in Australia to help Mercedes deliver a one-two at the opening race after a fight to catch and overhaul the Ferrari drivers, four-time champion Sebastian Vettel and the Finnish 2007 title-winner Kimi Raikkonen.

"I'm excited by the thought that there will be more races like Melbourne," said Hamilton. "We know there are going to be weekends where we are a few seconds up the road ahead of the Ferrari (team), races where it's wheel to wheel and some races where they might be ahead." At the moment, we really don't know what lies ahead and that makes it exciting. Bahrain has been very entertaining for the past two seasons so more of the same would be great for everyone."

Vettel and Raikkonen made the most of slow starts by the two Mercedes men in Melbourne to take control of the race and lead for more than half of the distance before they were reeled in—partly due to tyre strategy decisions—and overhauled. This weekend, Ferrari expect to be stronger still and may have a good early opportunity to break the Mercedes grip on early-season victories. Rosberg

said: "We've stepped up our game once again this year, but Ferrari were a real threat all weekend in Melbourne and it's clear that we've got a big battle on our hands. "I've had some great battles in Bahrain in the last two years, with Lewis and the Ferraris, so I'm expecting more of the same and looking forward to that..."

Qualifying concerns

Team boss Toto Wolff confirmed that Mercedes fear Ferrari more than ever this weekend, but added that he was as worried about the sport's image and the likelihood of another fiasco in qualifying tomorrow. A new format of 'progressive elimination' in which a driver was knocked out every 90 seconds resulted in near-uproar in Melbourne when the session ended without a car on the track. An immediate unanimous decision by the teams to revert to the former system of qualifying, in three timed mini-sessions without individual eliminations, failed to gain the full support of the F1 Commission. As a result, the much-maligned new format will be used again in the hot and dry conditions at the Bahrain track at Sakhir, 30 kilometres south-west of the island capital Manama. "The teams were unanimous in their opinion of it in Melbourne—and it wasn't positive," said Wolff. "We haven't found the right format with this change and it's hard to see how it might be more entertaining for the fans this weekend in Bahrain. "The sport is under scrutiny on this matter, so careful thought is required in order to make co-ordinated, intelligent steps forward from the position we are in. — AFP

ROACH KEEN AS PACQUIAO MULLS OLYMPIC BID

LOS ANGELES: Veteran trainer Freddie Roach has vowed to back Manny Pacquiao if the boxer decides to take advantage of rule changes which could see professional fighters allowed to take part in this summer's Olympics. Pacquiao said Wednesday he is yet to decide on whether he will pursue a spot in the Philippines Olympic team, appearing to pull back from an earlier statement to AFP in which he said he would be honoured to fight in Rio. "I'm not saying a yes or a no," Pacquiao told reporters. "I'm not closing the door. I have to think about it and I'm still thinking about it. It's good to let professionals in the Olympics." The eight-time world champion said earlier this month he had been "personally invited" to Rio by Wu Ching-Kuo, president of the International Boxing Association (AIBA) - the governing body for amateur boxing.

Proposed changes to AIBA statutes, set to be put to a

vote at a special congress of AIBA confederations at the end of May, could leave Olympic eligibility in the hands of the national boxing federations. Pacquiao, who is preparing for what is being billed as his farewell fight against Timothy Bradley in Las Vegas on April 9, is planning to transition into Philippines politics when he hangs up his gloves. However the prospect of becoming his nation's first ever Olympic gold medallist is likely to be a powerful lure for the 37-year-old. The Philippines has won a total of nine bronze and silver medals at the Olympics since the 1928 games in Amsterdam, five of them in boxing.

Pros at Olympics 'insane'

Roach told AFP on Wednesday he had discussed the prospect of fighting in Rio with Pacquiao and revealed he had even offered to work for free. "If they let him in the

Olympics I told him I'd train him," Roach said. "He said 'You know there's no pay for that right?' I said 'No problem!'. "If Manny wants to go to the Olympics and get his country a gold medal I'd be behind that. Pro athletes compete in other sports at the Olympics, so why not? "I don't agree with it but that's the way life is."

Roach meanwhile dismissed concerns that allowing professionals to fight against untested amateurs could be risky. "What's dangerous about it? A three-round fight or a 12-round fight? It's still boxing. People talk about the difference between pros and amateurs. But good pros come from the amateurs," Roach said. However Roach's view was not shared by Pacquiao's veteran promoter Bob Arum, who branded the AIBA's proposals as "insane". "I think the idea of professional boxers in the Olympics the way it's been proposed is insane," Arum, 84 said. — AFP

WARRIORS CLOSE IN ON NBA RECORD

SALT LAKE CITY: Stephen Curry scored 31 points, including six straight in overtime as the Golden State Warriors continued their historic run with a 103-96 victory over the Utah Jazz on Wednesday night. The Warriors (68-7) surpassed last season's victory total and can break the 1995-96 Chicago Bulls' record of 72-10 with five wins in their last seven games. Golden State's Klay Thompson hit a tying 3-pointer with 15 seconds remaining in regulation after an offensive rebound and kick-out from Shaun Livingston after Thompson missed the previous attempt. The Jazz (37-38) fell into a tie with Houston for the No. 7 slot in the Western Conference playoff race. Curry had seven rebounds and four assists, while Thompson finished with 18 points. Gordon Hayward led the Jazz with 21 points and Rodney Hood added 20.

SPURS 100, PELICANS 92

Manu Ginobili scored 20 points as the Spurs beat the injury-depleted Pelicans for their NBA-record 38th straight home victory to open a season. San Antonio topped the 37-0 start by the Chicago Bulls during their record 72-victory season in 1995-96. Golden State has an existing 36-game home winning streak to open the season, giving the Warriors a chance to end up with the record. San Antonio's Kawhi Leonard had 16 points in his return from a three-game absence, showing no discomfort after bruising his right quadriceps last Wednesday. Alexis Ajinca had 18 points for New Orleans, which was without nine players due to injury. Jordan Hamilton added 14 points in his first start in his third game with the team.

RAPTORS 105, HAWKS 97

DeMar DeRozan scored 26 points while Jonas Valanciunas added 19 points and nine rebounds as Toronto earned its franchise-record 50th victory of the season. DeRozan added six assists and five rebounds while Kyle Lowry finished with 17 points, 11 assists and six rebounds as the Raptors (50-24) won for just the second time in five games. Jeff Teague had 18 points for the Hawks (45-31), who had won four in a row. Tim Hardaway Jr. added 15 points and Paul Millsap had seven points and nine rebounds.

LAKERS 102, HEAT 100, OT

Julius Randle hit a tiebreaking hook shot in the paint with 1.9 seconds left in overtime as Los Angeles rallied late in a tumultuous day to beat Miami. Jordan Clarkson scored six of his 26 points in overtime for the Lakers, who ended a four-game losing streak with just their 16th win of the season. Los Angeles hung on



SALT LAKE CITY: Utah Jazz forward Gordon Hayward (left) and Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry (right) vie for a loose ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game on Wednesday, March 30, 2016. The Warriors won 103-96 in overtime. — AP

when Joe Johnson missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer for the Heat, who had won four of five. D'Angelo Russell scored five of his 16 points in overtime after receiving light boos from Lakers fans at several points early in the night. The rookie guard apologized profusely before the game for recording an unflattering video of teammate Nick Young.

NUGGETS 109, GRIZZLIES 105

Will Barton scored 25 points and Emmanuel Mudiay had 17 as the Nuggets beat the reeling Grizzlies. Barton split a pair of free-throw attempts with 3.2 seconds left to help Denver hold on after Memphis pulled within three. The Grizzlies (41-34) have lost four in a row. Their advantage over Portland for the fifth seed in the Western Conference is down to two games. Zach Randolph led Memphis with 26 points, while Jordan Farmar finished with 14.

KINGS 120, WIZARDS 111

DeMarcus Cousins had 29 points, 10 rebounds, five steals and four blocks as the Kings hurt the Wizards' playoff hopes. The Wizards dropped their second straight and fourth in five games, falling 3 1/2 games

behind Indiana for the eighth and final playoff berth in the Eastern Conference. Bradley Beal scored 24 points and Otto Porter had 20 for Washington. John Wall contributed 14 points and 13 assists. Rudy Gay and Omri Casspi scored 15 points apiece for the Kings and Rajon Rondo had 15 points and 11 assists before he was ejected after getting a double technical in the closing seconds of the game.

CLIPPERS 99, TIMBERWOLVES 79

Chris Paul had 20 points, 16 assists and eight rebounds in leading the Clippers to their fourth straight victory. JJ Redick scored 17 points for Los Angeles and DeAndre Jordan had 11 points, eight rebounds and three blocks. The Clippers held Minnesota to 34.5 percent shooting and only turned the ball over seven times. Karl-Anthony Towns had 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Timberwolves, who have been humming along with one of the league's best offenses since the All-Star break until they hit the Clippers wall. Andrew Wiggins had just seven points and six turnovers and left the game midway through the third quarter with a lacerated chin. Los Angeles never trailed and led by as many as 33 early in the fourth quarter.

MAVERICKS 91, KNICKS 89

JJ Barea scored 26 points and made the go-ahead layup with 49.9 seconds left to help Dallas rally in the fourth quarter. The Mavericks tied the Rockets for eighth place in the Western Conference. Barea's basket put Dallas ahead 90-89 after the Mavericks trailed by seven with 8 minutes left. Carmelo Anthony scored 31 points for New York and Derrick Williams added 15 in his third start of the season.

BUCKS 105, SUNS 94

Khris Middleton scored nine of his 26 points in the final 7:31 while Jabari Parker added 21 points as Milwaukee stopped a five-game slide. Milwaukee's reserves outscored Phoenix's backups 32-9. Phoenix has lost four straight and five of six. Giannis Antetokounmpo had 10 points and six assists in the Bucks' first game since coach Jason Kidd announced Tuesday that the 6-foot-11 forward would play point guard in the 2016-17 season. PJ Tucker had 20 points and 10 rebounds for Phoenix. Devin Booker scored 18 points, and Alex Len had 17 points and 15 rebounds. — AP

ENGLAND TEAMMATES SET TO RESUME TITLE RIVALRY

LONDON: Having combined seamlessly for England, the players of Leicester City and Tottenham Hotspur will resume battle in the Premier League title race this weekend with the two main protagonists facing testing fixtures. Hostilities were put to one side as the likes of Leicester striker Jamie Vardy and Spurs counterpart Harry Kane both impressed as England won in Germany and lost at home to the Netherlands. Yet with the international break over, Kane, one of five Spurs players in the England squad, and Vardy, who played alongside England debutant and club mate Danny Drinkwater, are back in opposing camps.

Kane, who scored against Germany, will be hoping that his team win at Liverpool tomorrow and narrow the gap to leaders Leicester, who play Southampton at home on Sunday. Vardy, who scored his first two goals for England in tomorrow's game in Berlin and Tuesday's match at Wembley, is hoping to get back on the score-sheet after five league games without a goal. "The (England) goals can only be good for my confidence and I will hopefully be scoring again at the weekend," he said. With only seven matches remaining, Leicester, seeking a fourth straight win when they face Southampton, are top with 66 points, five ahead of Spurs on 61.

Arsenal are a further six behind with a game in hand and tomorrow have a quick opportunity for revenge against Watford, who ended the Gunners' bid for a third successive FA Cup triumph when they beat them 2-1 at the Emirates three weeks ago. Fourth-placed Manchester City, whose title hopes virtually evaporated when they lost 1-0 at home to Manchester United, travel to Bournemouth, while fifth-placed West Ham United will be looking to continue their top-four push at home to Crystal Palace. Palace have tumbled from fifth on New Year's Day to 16th and will be desperate to end a run of 13 league matches without a win that has dropped them far too close to the relegation zone for comfort.

Bottom-placed Aston Villa, who sacked French manager Remi Garde on Tuesday, look to have very little chance of escaping and have caretaker Eric Black in charge for the visit of outgoing champions Chelsea tomorrow. Unless Palace's nosedive continues, two from Norwich City, Sunderland and Newcastle United look set to go down with Villa. Norwich are at home to Newcastle, who now have 11 players sidelined with injuries after goalkeeper Rob Elliot was ruled out for the season after damaging knee ligaments in Ireland's 2-2 draw with Slovakia. —Reuters



BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's Lionel Messi kicks the ball during a training session in Buenos Aires, Argentina. —AP

MESSI PROVOKES OUTRAGE IN EGYPT BY DONATING BOOTS

CAIRO: A charitable gesture by Argentinean football star Lionel Messi has provoked outrage in Egypt, where a lawmaker and football official took umbrage at the donation: his football boots. Messi, in an interview with the private satellite channel MBC Misr, had donated his boots to the channel to auction them off for charity. "Messi, I really thank you," said the interviewer as she sat across from the Barcelona player, dangling his boots, in the segment aired on Saturday.

While no one would consider being hit with a shoe or boot, or being labeled a shoe a compliment, it is especially insulting in Middle East cultures.

Donating boots, it emerged, was equally insulting to Egyptian member of parliament Said Hasasein, who attacked Messi on his television show. "This is my shoe," he said, holding up a beaten loafer. "I donate it to Argentina."

"This is an insult to Egyptian people," he elaborated, thumping his fist on his desk. Egyptian Football Federation spokesman Azmi Mogahed phoned in to the show to express his outrage. "Even in our religion..." he began to say, when Hasasein interrupted: "His religion is Jewish!" Mogahed agreed. "I know he's Jewish, he donates to Israel and visited the Wailing Wall and whatever ... we don't need his shoe and Egypt's poor don't

need help from someone with Jewish or Zionist citizenship." "People in Argentina sleep in parks!" Hasasein added.

Messi was born into a Catholic family, and has made the sign of the cross after scoring goals. Some Egyptians criticized Messi, and his interviewer, on Twitter, using the hashtag "Messi's boot for the Egyptian people." "It's not your fault, Messi you dog. It's the fault of that son-of-a-shoe channel, and that daughter-of-a-shoe interviewer," wrote one. Others, including former Egyptian football star Mido, defended Messi. "The most precious thing a writer has is his pen, and the most precious thing a football player has is his boots," he wrote on Twitter. —AFP

SUNDERLAND TO SACK EBOUE AFTER FIFA BAN

LONDON: Sunderland said yesterday they intended to terminate the contract of Emmanuel Eboué before he had even kicked a ball in anger for the club after FIFA ordered the defender to serve a one-year ban over fees owed to a former agent. However, the Ivory Coast international can automatically end the ban if he pays the money to his ex-agent Sebastien Boisseau, the world governing body said.

FIFA, announcing the suspension earlier on Thursday, said the ban covers "any football-related activity that will last for one year or until he pays the total outstanding amount owed to his former agent". In response, Premier League strugglers Sunderland said they had given the 32-year-old former Arsenal player, who joined the north-east side in a short-term deal earlier this month, two weeks' notice.

Eboué has the right of appeal but it now looks as if his Sunderland career could end without him

making a single first-team appearance. "Sunderland AFC has been advised by the Football Association that Emmanuel Eboué has been placed under an immediate suspension from football and all football-related activity for a period of one year, by FIFA," said a club statement. "The suspension relates to a monetary dispute between the player and a former agent, which precedes his time at Sunderland AFC and was not something that the club was made aware of by the player."

"Eboué signed a contract with Sunderland AFC until the end of the current season and the club has therefore given notice of its intention to terminate the contract. The player has two weeks in which to appeal this decision." Eboué's ban will be a further setback to Sunderland manager Sam Allardyce's hopes of keeping the club in the lucrative Premier League, with the Black Cats now without Adam Johnson after the club sacked the former England midfielder following his admission of

sexual activity with an under-age girl that has since seen the player jailed. Sunderland, two points shy of safety, continue their quest for Premier League survival against West Bromwich Albion on Saturday.

A FIFA players' status committee ruled in July 2013 in favour of agent Sebastien Boisseau in a contractual dispute with Eboué. In September 2014, the FIFA disciplinary committee fined the Ivory Coast star 30,000 Swiss francs (\$30,000) for failing to comply with the decision. He was then given a 120-day "grace period" to settle the debt before Boisseau would be entitled to request that a one-year ban be imposed. Eboué appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport but lost. After a new deadline for payment was set and passed, Boisseau "requested that the one-year ban be imposed on Mr Eboué in accordance with the decision of the FIFA disciplinary committee", said a FIFA statement. —AFP

NEVILLE'S VALENCIA VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY 'IS DOOMED TO FAIL'

MADRID: Gary Neville's unhappy tenure at Valencia was brought to a sudden halt on Wednesday as the Spanish club announced he had been sacked after just four months in charge. Neville's first foray into senior management after limited experience as an assistant to Roy Hodgson with England was a risky one from the day the shock announcement of his appointment was made in early December. On the back of a hugely successful 20-year playing career with Manchester United, Neville had gained widespread praise for his astute analysis as a Sky Sports pundit in his homeland before taking up the challenge offered by Valencia's Singaporean owner, his business partner and friend Peter Lim.

The hiring of an untried coach who didn't speak Spanish and the close personal relationship between Lim and Neville raised suspicions straight away in Valencia. "I would question it as a neutral observer," Neville said himself on the day he was presented as the club's new coach.

"I'd be sceptical and I would want to be proved otherwise. Anyone who has any doubts, concerns, reservations, they'll only be removed if we win football matches."

Ultimately, he didn't win enough even to see out his short-term contract until the end of the season. "I would have liked to have continued the work I started but understand that we are in a results business and in the 28 games (W10, D7, L11) they have not been to my standards or to those which are required by this club," Neville said in a statement after his dismissal. Even those statistics are padded by three wins in Cup ties against third-tier Barakaldo and struggling Granada, as well as a 10-0 aggregate rout of Rapid Vienna in the Europa League.

Neville won just three of 16 La Liga games in charge to see Los Che tumble from four points off the Champions League places when he arrived, to six points above the relegation zone with a tough final eight games of the season to

come. Cup runs briefly prolonged his stay, yet even they ended in major disappointment. The 7-0 thrashing at the hands of Barcelona in the first leg of the Copa del Rey semi-final was described by sporting director Jesus Garcia Pitarch as one of the worst results in the club's history. Elimination from the Europa League at the hands of a fellow La Liga side with far fewer resources in Athletic Bilbao earlier this month closed the door to any salvation for a miserable season at the Mestalla.

Neville will be succeeded for the remainder of the season by Pako Ayestaran. The hiring of Rafael Benitez's former assistant to translate Neville's ideas to the squad in February coincided with Valencia's only upturn in form in recent months. "I'm the head coach of Valencia, I will be the head coach of Valencia for the rest of this season. If I leave, Pako will leave," Neville said at the time of suggestions Ayestaran had been hired with eyes to replacing him. Neville's trust in



Valencia's head coach Gary Neville

Ayestaran, his old friend Lim and his own ability to turn around a sinking ship in Spain was ultimately misplaced. — AFP

FRENCH PREVIEW

FEKIR'S RETURN BOOSTS LYON'S HOPES IN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

PARIS: When Nabil Fekir badly damaged the cruciate ligament in his right knee last year, his chances of making the France squad for the European Championship took a hit. His club's ambitions, too. But the 22-year-old Fekir, who was voted the French league's best young player after scoring 13 league goals for Lyon last season, is on his way back, boosting the seven-time champions' hopes of qualifying for the Champions League. Without Fekir, Lyon went through an inconsistent season that took a turn for the best following the firing of coach Hubert Fournier during the winter break.

Under the helm of replacement Bruno Genesio, Lyon climbed back to fourth place and can still qualify for Europe's top competition. Ahead of Sunday's match at Lorient, Genesio's team is only one point behind third-place Nice. And with seven matches left to play this season, Lyon can still bridge a six-point gap on Monaco in second place.

PSG, which has already sealed a fourth straight league title, hosts Nice on Saturday. The French league's runner-up qualifies automatically for the Champions League, with the third-place team entering in the playoffs.

Fekir has resumed full training with his teammates but Genesio has ruled him out of the game against Lorient because he does not want to risk him on a synthetic turf. Seven months after his serious injury, the attacking midfielder will likely return to action in Montpellier on April 8. "He is technically ready," Genesio said. "He does the same things he was capable of before getting injured. There is still some apprehension, but it will disappear little by little." Here are some other things to know ahead of this weekend's matches:

Ibrahimovic to retire?

Zlatan Ibrahimovic has not finished planting seeds of doubts in the minds of his fans. With his future at Paris Saint-Germain still unclear, the league's best scorer with 27 goals is now hinting that he could end his career at the end of the season. After previously saying he could



Nabil Fekir

join the Major League Soccer after his experience in France, Ibrahimovic is now proclaiming that "anything could happen." "I have three months left here, and then we'll see what happens. Big things will happen," the 34-year-old Ibrahimovic said. "Perhaps I will retire. No one has been thinking about this possibility. But I would like to retire from high-level football while I'm still on top."

Ben Arfa's tribute

One of the most technically gifted French players, Hatem Ben Arfa, says he wants to pay tribute to the late Johan Cruyff by pulling off one of the Dutch great's signature moves. Ben Arfa, whose dribbles and goals have helped Nice to third place in the standings this season, is planning a rendition of the famous Cruyff Turn when his team travels to PSG on Saturday. "Those who try, who create, who invent, have always struck the right

chord with me," Ben Arfa told France Football magazine. "And Cruyff only did that. Right from when I first saw it, I have loved this feint, which consists of knocking the ball behind your standing leg. As a kid, I even called it the Cruyff Special. I don't think there is any other option for me than to try it in our next game in Paris against PSG."

Aurier is back

PSG defender Serge Aurier has served his six-week suspension following his outburst on social media and has returned to the squad. Aurier was suspended in February after a video showing him making derogatory comments about coach Laurent Blanc, striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic and other players emerged. Aurier trained with the reserves during his suspension and played with Ivory Coast in African Cup of Nations' qualifiers. — AP

UPWARDLY MOBILE WEST HAM PRIMED FOR LIFT-OFF

LONDON: As the sparrow flies, West Ham United's Boleyn Ground is a mere four kilometers from the Olympic Stadium that will soon be their home but the move could catapult the Hammers into entirely new footballing territory. A few years after the club were struggling in the second tier and flirting with financial meltdown, boom times are predicted as they prepare to take residence in a 60,000-seater stadium that will be the third biggest in English club football.

With a 200 million pounds (\$287.36 million) annual income expected, a charismatic manager and the best West Ham squad seen in recent times, no wonder the likes of Arsenal, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur are casting anxious eyes across the capital. What is more, with West Ham fifth in the Premier League with eight games to go, they could kick off a new era rubbing shoulders with Europe's elite in the Champions League.

No wonder co-owner David Gold mentioned Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic as a potential close-season signing this week. "It's a great moment," former West Ham midfielder Joe Cole said this week. "The club is ripe for going in an upward direction. They just need to make the right decisions in the transfer market, get good continuity, and really take it on." It is all quite a turnaround from Cole's final days at West Ham in 2003 when they were relegated. West Ham's fiercely loyal fans have not had many reasons for a good old Cockney knees up. Their dreams, as the club anthem "Forever Blowing Bubbles" says, usually fade and die. Trevor Brooking's headed winner in the 1980 FA Cup final against Arsenal secured their last silverware. Since then they have flitted between the top two divisions, watched home-grown talents like Rio Ferdinand, Michael Carrick, Joe Cole and Jermain Defoe leave for bigger things while a takeover by an Icelandic consortium almost crippled the club in the late 2000s. Suddenly, however, they are feeling chipper and the feel-good factor was evident during the international break when 35,000 watched club skipper Mark Noble's testimonial kickabout.

New mentality

Former favourite Paolo Di Canio returned for that game and spoke passionately about the changes he has noticed at the club since he left after relegation in 2003. "The mentality, the methodology, the philosophy has changed completely," the Italian said. "They were always in the top five in December then after, down, down, finishing 11th and 12th. This time the team have pushed up again. This is because of Bilic. It's not magic, this is a new mentality, a new work ethic."

While Bilic has masterminded West Ham's resurgence on the field with inspired signings such as Dimitri Payet, Manuel Lanzini and Diafra Sakho, owners Gold and David Sullivan have, as Cockneys would say, played a blinder off of it. West Ham have a 99-year lease at the Olympic Stadium and will pay in the region of 2.5 million pounds per season in rent on top of the 15 million pounds they contributed for conversion costs—a minimal sum considering the total bill was 250 million. The tears will flow though on May 10 when they play their final match at their spiritual home of more than 100 years on the edge of east London's Docklands. Those that have supported them through thick and thin still wallow in the "academy of football" nickname and past greats such as Bobby Moore, Geoff Hurst and Martin Peters who helped England lift the Jules Rimet World Cup trophy in 1966. — Reuters

DJOKOVIC ROLLS INTO MIAMI SEMI-FINALS

MIAMI: Top-ranked defending champion Novak Djokovic withstood back spasms throughout the second set Wednesday to defeat Tomas Berdych 6-3, 6-3 and reach the ATP and WTA Miami Open semi-finals. Djokovic, trying to match Andre Agassi's record of six Miami titles with his third in a row, will play Belgian 15th seed David Goffin on Friday for a berth in Sunday's final. The 28-year-old Serbian won his 14th consecutive match at the hardcourt event and his 28th out of 29, but needed a gritty performance after back pain began early in the second set, prompting him to have massage therapy before serving in the sixth game.

"Due to windy conditions on the court, it was hard to find a good rhythm to serve," Djokovic said. "I had a little bit of a spasm in

the back but (the trainer) did a great job and I was able to finish the match." Asked if he had any worries the spasms might become a long-term issue, Djokovic said: "No concerns. None at all." On the women's side, reigning Australian Open champion Angelique Kerber, the second seed from Germany, and two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka of Belarus advanced to a Thursday semi-final showdown. Both have finals wins over top-ranked Serena Williams this year, Kerber at the Australian Open and Azarenka at Indian Wells.

Berdych lost his 10th consecutive match to Djokovic, whose domination of their career rivalry reached 23-2. Berdych's last victory over Djokovic was in a 2013 Rome quarter-final. "If you have that many head-to-head, it can help, but not substantially,"

Djokovic said. Djokovic blasted a crosscourt forehand winner to break Berdych for a 3-1 lead and held from there to claim the first set, in which the Czech had 21 unforced errors. Berdych surrendered a break to open the second set but Djokovic first reached for his lower back in the next game but held and broke again to end the match.

"Overall, this is the best match I've played in the tournament," Djokovic said. "I feel better than I did last year at the same stage. I'm hoping I can keep the same trajectory." Djokovic won his 11th Grand Slam title two months ago at the Australian Open and also has crowns this year at Indian Wells and Doha. Goffin matched his semi-final run from Indian Wells by downing French 18th seed Gilles Simon 3-6, 6-2, 6-1. "Feeling great," Goffin said. "Confident for the rest of

the week and the season." But he is 0-3 against Djokovic, losing in the 2013 French Open first round and at Cincinnati in 2013 and 2015. "He's going to be very dangerous but I like my chances," Djokovic said.

Azarenka, Kerber cruise

Former world number one Azarenka defeated British 24th seed Johanna Konta 6-4, 6-2 while Kerber cruised into the semi-finals, downing US 22nd seed Madison Keys 6-3, 6-2. The German second seed, the last of the top 12 remaining, is 1-6 lifetime against Azarenka, but won their most recent meeting in the Australian Open quarter-finals on the way to the title. "We have played some really tough matches," Kerber said. "I know I have to play my best tennis against her. I will be ready." — AFP



DOHA: This file photo shows Kupttamon, an Indian laborer working in Qatar, sitting in his tiny over-crowded room at a private camp housing foreign workers in Doha. — AFP

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ACCUSES QATAR OF ABUSING WCUP WORKERS

DOHA: Qatar World Cup stadium workers have suffered abuse and been subjected to forced labor, Amnesty International said yesterday, for the first time alleging rights violations at a 2022 tournament venue. The London-based watchdog said laborers at the Khalifa International Stadium, mostly from Bangladesh, India and Nepal, were lied to over their salaries, went unpaid for months and were housed in squalid accommodation, which it claims amount to forced labor.

Seven workers at the venue, which will also host the 2019 World Athletics Championships, were even prevented from returning home to help their families after Nepal's devastating 2015 earthquake. "This is a World Cup based on labor exploitation," said Amnesty's Mustafa Qadri. The poor treatment of construction workers is one of the major issues that has dogged the Gulf state since the controversial decision to award it the right to host football's flagship tournament. The 51-page report, "The Ugly Side of the Beautiful Game", is likely to increase international criticism of Qatar and put fresh pressure on FIFA and its new leadership, as well as World Cup sponsors.

The criticisms also extend to landscaping at the nearby Aspire Zone, a world-renowned sports complex where Paris Saint-Germain and Bayern Munich trained this year.

Amnesty said it carried out its research for a year until February and interviewed 234 men. It claimed 228 said the wages they received were lower than promised. Many had no choice but to accept reduced salaries as they had paid debt-inducing recruitment fees of up to \$4,300 to enter the Gulf, even though such fees are illegal under Qatari law. Qatar was uncharacteristically quick to respond to the report, pointing out the steps it has taken to improve practices. It said Amnesty's claims painted "a misleading picture" and were aimed at only four of the 40 companies working at the Khalifa Stadium.

'Like a prison'

One group of men told Amnesty that a labor supply company, Seven Hills, did not pay staff for months. Workers at the 40,000-seater stadium and Aspire Zone were also initially put in sub-standard and overcrowded accommodation, said Amnesty. "In one case, the main entrance road to the camp was flooded due to inadequate drainage and smelled of raw sewage," the report said. Amnesty alleged most laborers had their passports unlawfully confiscated, and 88 men including Nepalese "were denied the right to leave Qatar".

One worker, Deepak, said life in Qatar was "like a prison". "When I first complained... the

manager said 'If you complain you can but there will be consequences. If you want to stay in Qatar be quiet and keep working,'" he said. Amnesty recognized the tournament's organizers, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, had introduced safeguards, but urged Qatar to "fundamentally reform" its "kafala" sponsorship system, which restricts job changing or leaving the country. Its report also criticized FIFA's "lack of meaningful action".

Qatar defends record

Supreme Committee chief Hassan Al-Thawadi admitted abuses occur and organizers did not "have a magic wand that could fix the matter" but said the commitment to reform was "clear and steadfast". He reiterated that no workers had died on World Cup projects and said relevant reforms had been introduced to address concerns raised by the report, even before the committee knew about it, he said. These included wage protection, improved accommodation, and sanctions against companies named in the report including the termination of Seven Hills' contract. "We have always maintained this World Cup will act as a catalyst for change it will not be built on the back of exploited workers," the committee said in a statement. — AFP

REFUGEES RUN FOR RIO OLYMPIC DREAM TEAM

NGONG: High up in Kenya's rugged Ngong Hills, refugees sprint around an athletics track in intensive training they hope will see them selected for a unique team for the Rio Olympics. Hand-picked from Kenya's vast refugee camps-including Dadaab, the biggest in the world-to join the training camp just outside the capital Nairobi, the athletes here have their eyes set on racing in Rio de Janeiro in August.

"It will be a very great moment for me and the rest of the refugees, who will be so proud for having produced one of their own who has gone to the Olympics," said 22-year-old Nanzumu Gaston Kiza, who fled Democratic Republic of Congo after his relatives were massacred in ethnic clashes. Here at Ngong, a high altitude running track some 2,400 meters (7,875 feet) above sea level, some 40 kilometers southwest of Nairobi, athletes from across eastern Africa are chasing the dream of the Olympics.

Amid a world record number of people forced from their homes and their countries, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) this month announced the creation and funding of Team Refugee Olympic Athletes (ROA) to compete in Rio under its flag. The team, expected to include between five to 10 athletes from across the world, is part of the IOC's "pledge to aid potential elite athletes affected by the worldwide refugee crisis". "Team ROA" will march just before the hosts Brazil enter the Olympic Stadium at the opening ceremony-carrying the Olympic flag and anthem-a position likely to be given enormous cries of support.

'Message of hope'

While countries may field their own teams, the refugees are unable to return home safely to take part - and instead will run under the Olympic flag. "We want to send a message of hope for all refugees in our world," IOC president Thomas Bach said when plans for the team were announced. At this camp in Kenya-training in fierce equatorial sunshine at high altitudes that would leave many breathless-athletes include runners from DR Congo as well as war-torn South Sudan and Somalia. "It is a very good opportunity for us," said 22-year-old Angelina Ndai, a 1500-metre hopeful from South Sudan. "I will feel so proud to be there and to be recognized as a South Sudanese." It is not the first time athletes have run under the IOC flag: fellow South Sudanese Guor Mading Maker ran in the London 2012 marathon as an independent Olympian-under the name Guor Marial. At that time, newly independent South Sudan had not yet been accepted as an IOC member. Today it is a member, but Ndai is among the more than two million people forced to flee the world's youngest nation, which has been in civil war for more than two years. "We are here, and we believe we will move forward," Ndai said.

The athletes' abilities are in no doubt, but it has been far from easy for most to shift from the crowded camps to the track. Runners picked up injuries at the initial stages, with many forced to quit to return to the refugee camps. "We have been training hard, even though our bodies have been responding negatively, because we got lots of injuries," Ndai said. Former Kenyan Olympic team coach John Anzrah is in charge of moulding the refugees into quality Olympic material capable of challenging elite athletes in Rio. "When the athletes came here, they not in shape, they were a zero," Anzrah said. "We should remember that these were people living in camps and we had to start them from somewhere." — AFP



MUMBAI: India's Rohit Sharma dives to make his ground during their ICC World Twenty20 2016 cricket semifinal match against the West Indies at Wankhede stadium in Mumbai yesterday. — AP

WEST INDIES THUMP INDIA BY 7 WICKETS

SIMMONS RIDES LUCK TO CARRY WEST INDIES INTO FINAL

MUMBAI: Late replacement Lendl Simmons led a charmed life to blast 82 not out and carry West Indies to a nail-biting seven-wicket win in the last over against India in the second semi-final of the World Twenty20 yesterday. Simmons was caught twice at the Wankhede Stadium, on 18 and 50, but both times the bowlers had overstepped for no-balls and he made the hosts pay dearly for their mistakes as West Indies set up a final against England on Sunday.



MUMBAI: West Indies's Andre Russell celebrates after scoring the winning runs during the World T20 men's semi-final match between India and West Indies yesterday. — AFP

Earlier, Virat Kohli continued his rich vein of form by smashing an undefeated 89 to guide India to 192 for two after they were put in to bat. West Indies lost Chris Gayle and Marlon Samuels early in their reply but opener Johnson Charles kept them in the hunt with a 36-ball 52 and a third-wicket stand of 97 with Simmons. The right-handed Simmons plays for Mumbai in the Indian Premier League and was only called into the squad two days ago as a replacement for the injured Andre Fletcher.

He cracked seven fours and five sixes in 51 balls and added an unbeaten 80 with Andre Russell for the fourth wicket to take West Indies home with two balls to spare. Russell, known for his powerful hitting, contributed 43 off 20 deliveries. Earlier, the West Indian bowlers began strongly, allowing the home team just six runs in the first couple of overs but India then took control in front of a stadium filled to the brim with fans wearing the team's blue jersey. India, the inaugural champions in 2007, dropped under-performing opener Shikhar Dhawan and the move paid off as Rohit Sharma (43) and Ajinkya Rahane (40) put on 62 for the first wicket.

That laid the perfect foundation for Kohli, who led his side into the last four with 82 not out against Australia in the previous match, as he compiled a third unbeaten half-century in the tournament. Kohli began nervously, twice going close to being run out, but made the opposition pay for failing to take their chances. He struck 11 fours and a six in his 47-ball knock, putting on 66 for the second wicket with Rahane and an unbroken 64 for the third with Captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni (15 not out). West Indies' women also reached the final as Captain Stafanie Taylor scored 25 and took three wickets to help defeat New Zealand by six runs and set up a final against champions Australia on Sunday. — Reuters

SCOREBOARD

MUMBAI: Scoreboard from the World Twenty20 semi-final between India and West Indies at Mumbai's Wankhede stadium yesterday:

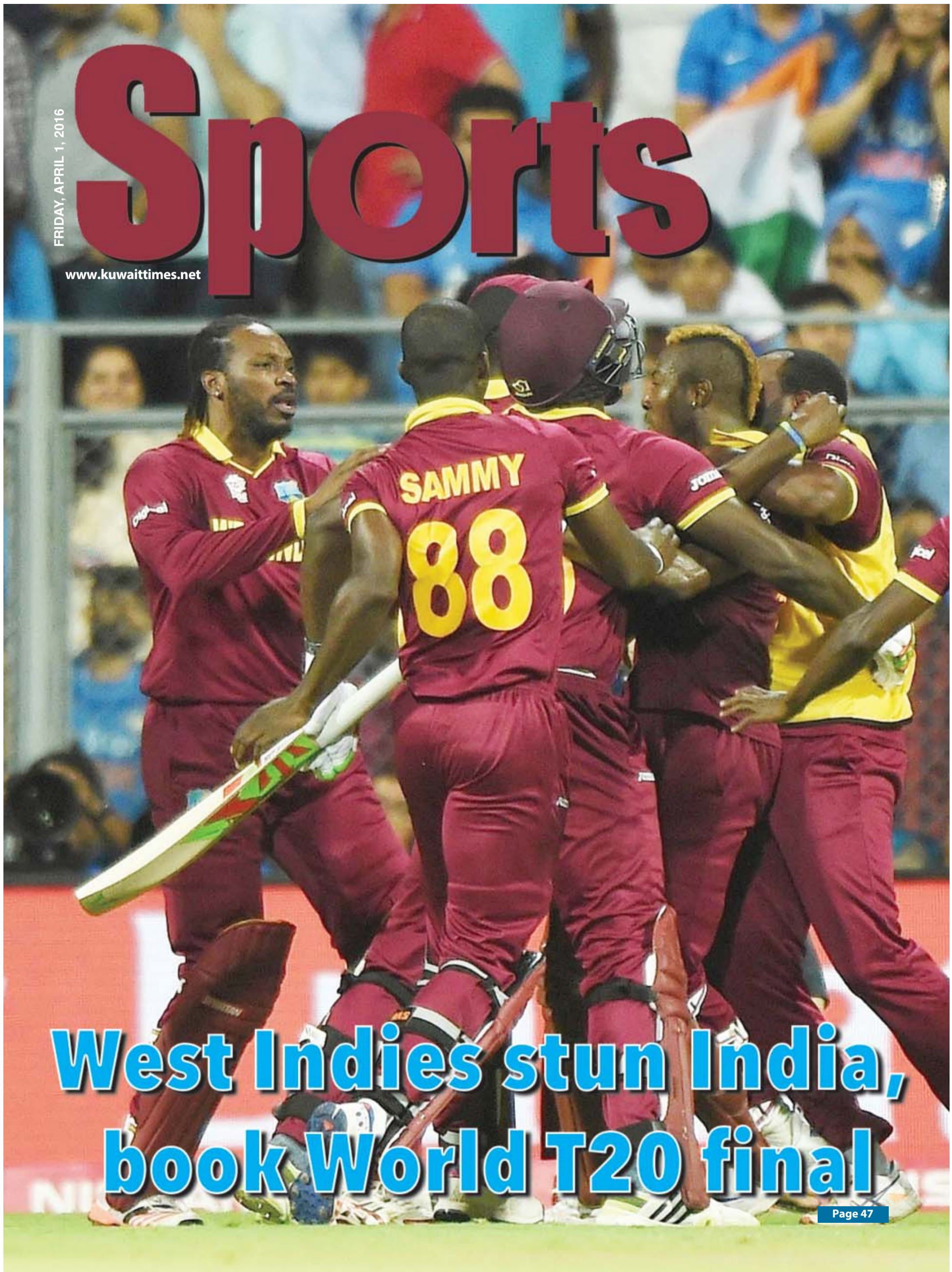
India	
R. Sharma lbw b Badree	43
A. Rahane c Bravo b Russell	40
V. Kohli not out	89
MS. Dhoni not out	15
Extras (lb 1, w 2, nb 2)	5
Total (for 2 wickets, 20 overs)	192
Did not bat: S. Raina, M. Pandey, H. Pandya, R. Jadeja, R. Ashwin, J. Bumrah, A. Nehra	
Fall of wickets: 1-62 (Sharma), 2-128 (Rahane)	
Bowling: Russell 4-0-47-1, Badree 4-0-26-1, Brathwaite 4-0-38-0, Benn 4-0-36-0, Bravo 4-0-44-0	

West Indies	
J. Charles c Sharma b Kohli	52
C. Gayle b Bumrah	5
M. Samuels c Rahane b Nehra	8
L. Simmons not out	83
A. Russell not out	43
Extras (lb 3, nb 2)	5
Total (for 3 wickets, 19.4 overs)	196
Did not bat: D. Ramdin, D. Bravo, D. Sammy, C. Brathwaite, S. Badree, S. Benn	
Fall of wickets: 1-6 (Gayle), 2-19 (Samuels), 3-116 (Charles)	
Bowling: Nehra 4-0-25-1, Bumrah 4-0-42-1, Jadeja 4-0-48-0, Ashwin 2-0-20-0, Pandya 4-0-43-0, Kohli 1.4-0-15-1	
Result: West Indies won by seven wickets	

FRIDAY, APRIL 1, 2016

Sports

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**West Indies stun India,
book World T20 final**