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Local Spotlight

ACCUMULATED ERRORS



By Muna Al-Fuzai

muna@kuwaittimes.net

FROM MAID TO PROSTITUTE

The police recently arrested a group of Asian women for engaging in sex deals through social media. Six women, Filipinas and Nepalese, were arrested in Hawally for prostitution. Five of these women had article 20 visas, issued to domestic helpers, and one had an article 18 visa, issued to private sector workers. The women were sent to concerned authorities and their sponsors were summoned for questioning.

The report was not surprising because we read about such incidents every day. But I'm more concerned over the large number of women who enter the country as maids, then end up depending on the sex trade to make a living and stay in Kuwait, aware that they are violating the laws here because they know that this trade is forbidden. I can't imagine how these women suddenly fled their sponsors and decided to sell their bodies.

Maybe not getting their salaries can lead to desperation, because there is no doubt that these

The absence of parental guidance can also provoke boys to be dragged into such relations.

women know that prostitution is illegal. We should unearth the reasons that forced these women to run away from their sponsors without seeking any kind of assistance from their embassies. They could be infected with HIV, and possibly have already infected some of the men who interacted with them.

These five maids clearly ran away from their sponsors and became sex objects, so if there was abuse, either verbal or physical, then this matter must be exposed and investigated. After all, these women could be victims who turned into law-breakers and might be jailed and deported empty-handed, if not ending up with diseases.

Another issue here is the use of social media. Most users in Kuwait are youths and teenagers who may not be careful or aware of the danger of the sex trade and possibly catch multiple diseases. The absence of parental guidance can also provoke boys to be dragged into such relations. The impact of social media in conservative societies is huge and must be dealt with caution. The media should take some responsibility, being the messengers of awareness. After all, we are a very small society.

Unless these reasons and possibly others are taken into consideration by everyone, more crimes and law-breaking men and women would keep appearing in the papers with black stickers to cover the truth behind their misery.



A visit to one of Kuwait's 'Ghost Houses'



By Nawara Fattahova

Some people believe in ghosts or super natural spirits, while others don't. But whether they believe or not, most most people are curious to find out what is in an "haunted house", and whether it's really haunted at all. When I was a child, many people and even the press used to tell stories of the ghost houses of Kuwait and the many strange things people experienced in them. The most popular of these 'haunted' houses was located at the junction of the Fourth Ring Road and Fahaheel Expressway. Unfortunately it was demolished. However, there are still several popular and well known 'haunted houses' in Kuwait.

As a journalist, I have a desire to know. A curiosity to discover and seek out the stories of Kuwait. So one quiet weekday night, I set out to discover the secrets of one such haunted house in Kuwait. The building is located in Salmiya, opposite the Gulf Road. The complex was likely once a school, with three buildings surrounded by an almost destroyed wall.

The building is now completely shuttered and there is no entrance open to the public. The courtyard wall, now mostly disintegrating though most of holes in the wall have been patched with bars and secured with chains and locks. Before arriving at the place, the weather was warm. But when my colleagues and I came near the building, the weather suddenly turned windy. My colleague murmured the breeze was a sign of ghosts or goblins. It wasn't a full-moon night, but the moon and stars were bright and clear.

We started investigating the place while waiting for our third colleague. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a man quickly entering the place. My colleague didn't believe what I saw, and we approached the door that I saw him entering through, which was also locked with chains. We went near it and called if there was anyone there. Suddenly, an Arab man came out and said he was the haris (guard) of this place, claiming he even slept there.

I asked him if this building was haunted and if he ever saw any demons there. He said "yes", then quickly said "no". He seemed nervous and scared of strangers. I asked if we could enter and check the place, but he said this was not allowed. When I asked what was he doing in this place and why couldn't we enter, he said his kafeel may punish him, as he is guarding marble and porcelain material in the building.

So I told him we will come back, and we left to wait for our colleague. When he arrived, we went there again, but the haris didn't open the gate although we called out to him and knocked the door. After taking a few photos from the outside and going back to our cars to leave, we saw the haris re-emerge. We convinced him to let us in, but he warned us not to take photos of the stored material and not stay for a long time. We took a few photos, but couldn't check the whole place out from inside, as many areas were damaged.

There was graffiti on the walls and a few empty bottles in one of the buildings. Anticlimactically, we didn't find any demons or ghosts - just an abandoned building possibly being used for the storage of illicit goods.





Paintings from her latest exhibition. — Photos by Athoob Al-Shuaibi

'Mad World' after 'Man's World'

By Athoob A Al-Shuaibi

There is a difference between an artist creating an arbitrary stir and a controversial artist. Kuwaiti artist Shurooq Amin is definitely someone who provokes society, not merely with her artistic vision, but with her strength. Being a mother of



Artist Shurooq Amin

three hasn't stopped her from pursuing her dreams. She has displayed her art in London and Dubai to breathe the air of freedom after the shutdown of her exhibition by censors in Kuwait four years ago.

Perhaps her PhD in the connection between art and poetry makes her artworks trigger minds and extend to souls. In other words, Amin knows exactly what is going to be evoked by her paintbrush. Kuwait Times spoke to Amin about her upcoming exhibition at the Contemporary Art Platform of Kuwait (CAP) titled "It's a Mad

World", curated by Martina Corgnati in collaboration with Ayyam Gallery, Dubai.

Some excerpts:

Kuwait Times: This is your first exhibition in Kuwait after the closure of your earlier exhibition. Coming back with "It's a Mad World" is definitely going to stir up controversy. How are you going to deal with this?

Shurooq Amin: I've dealt with controversy all my life, as an artist and as a woman, simply because I live my life transparently - no easy feat in our society. So of course, I'm expecting some controversy, but I am not worried about censorship this time round. I think by now the authorities realize that if they try to stop me or shut me up by closing down my exhibition or banning my work, they will simply make a superstar out of me a second time. So I am not worried about that. This is not what is important here: What is important is the message I am trying to send through these images, especially the installation 'The Last Sip', which deals with the serious problem of alcoholism as a disease in our society.

Kuwait Times: The Mad World exhibition wouldn't have come to life if you hadn't been living in a mad world and breathing it. I wonder how "It's a Mad World" is adapted from real life.

Amin: The title "It's a Mad World" is not a unique phrase by any means; in fact, its very simplicity that makes it all the more relevant for this series. What has been going on in the world around us over the last four years has been a whirlwind of wars, genocide, climate change, financial crashes and a general mood of malaise and hopelessness.

Continued on Page 4

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I have been allowed complete freedom of expression and I have never abused it

Continued from Page 3

By juxtaposing images of social and political hypocrisies against backdrops of man-made catastrophes, I hope to jolt that mood from careless obliviousness to action.

Kuwait Times: You've been collaborating with other galleries outside Kuwait since the shutdown, in places where freedom of expression is respected. Tell us about the difference between exhibiting your work in Kuwait and other countries.

Amin: Thanks to my representative gallery, Ayyam Gallery, and thanks to the support of wonderful people who believe in me, like Omar Donia (of Contemporary Practices), and others like the great curator Martina Corgnati (who is curating this show), I have been fortunate enough to exhibit in Dubai and London, and became the first Kuwaiti female artist to exhibit at the Venice Biennale. My work was also auctioned at Christie's twice so far, making me the first Kuwaiti female artist to be sold at Christie's.

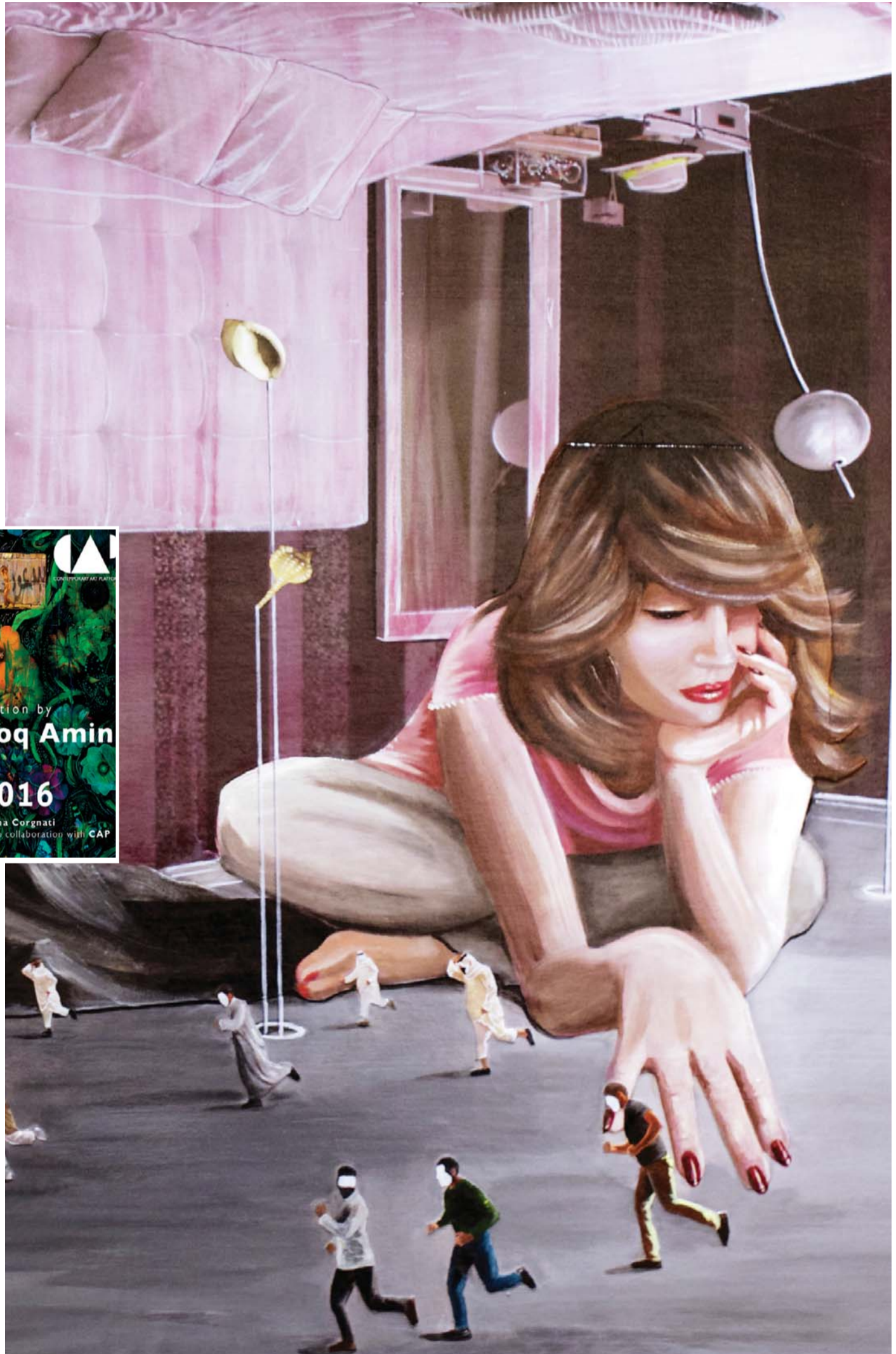


These are all honors and dreams come true for me, and I will forever be grateful to those who helped me in my career.

The difference between exhibiting abroad and exhibiting here in Kuwait is that my work has been taken very seriously internationally and my voice has been allowed to be heard uncensored. I have been allowed complete freedom of expression and I have never abused it. I say what needs to be said and I paint what needs to be addressed. I love my country and hope that this time my work will be viewed as it should be and not looked at from a "forbidden" perspective. I hope people get the message that I am trying to send. I hope it makes them think and talk, discuss and argue, hate it or love it. Whatever they feel is okay with me as long as it awakens them.

Shurooq Amin's solo exhibition "It's A Mad World" will open on April 10 and run till May 21, 2016 at CAP at the Life Centre complex in Shuwaikh.

Visit www.capkuwait.com for more information.



Shurooq Amin speaks about her upcoming exhibition in Kuwait



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.

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Story and photos by Athoob Al-Shuaibi

You are hit by the strong smell of leather and dyes and sounds of wiping, polishing and sewing machines all working at the same time when you enter the small shoe repair shop. Everyone there is busy working. The top shelves are loaded with numbered plastic bags. On one side of the shop, there's a long bench for customers to sit while they wait for quick service, while on the other, there's Kumar.

Kumar is a 27-year-old cobbler from India. Like most craftsmen, he took up his profession from his father, who's been in this trade for over 30 years. "I completed high school in India, and it's my tenth year in Kuwait mending shoes," he told Kuwait Times. He spends most of his day at work and doesn't do much to get some entertainment. "If I go out, I will spend money, but when I work, I make it. I watch a movie at night before bedtime though," he stated.

But making money from shoe mending isn't as easy as before. Fast fashion has dramatically affected people's choices when purchasing clothes and footwear. It's an era in which quantity matters more than quality. "Many people think that whether cheap or expensive, things will anyway get damaged with use, so why buy a high-priced bag or shoes?" Kumar said. "They prefer to throw shoes away or give them to charity rather than bring them to a cobbler. It's funny that even if they do bring them in, they never return to take them back," he exclaimed.

Kumar has made friendships with many loyal customers of various nationalities who frequent his shop. "Some customers stop by for a chat. Also, there's an old Kuwaiti lady who brings food. I have even tried chicken machboos (a Kuwaiti rice and chicken dish)," Kumar remarked.

"My clients trust me because before I start working, I tell them whether it's mendable or not. Sometimes, it's impossible to restore or clean some shoes, especially those made of fabric that has worn out," he explained. "I know everything about shoe repair, and I can make shoes too. However, I don't have the proper machine for this here."

Kumar is neatly dressed and groomed, which reflects his care for detail, leaving you with a good impression from your first visit to his shop. He said that he has never considered a different field of work. "I know a little electrical work, but I will always be a cobbler," he said resolutely.



'Day laborers' fulfill market demand despite the law

The demand is high for day laborers for many reasons. First they can be hired for relatively low wages.

By Ben Garcia

At six in the morning you'll find them sitting on street curbs in Bneid Al Gar, Hawally, Salmiya, Farwaniya, Shuwaikh and areas of Kuwait. They gather around and wait until a vehicle pulls up, a job on offer. They argue and negotiate until a deal is reached, then one, two or maybe several hop in and are taken by the driver to their job for the day. This might be a construction site, a private house, a farm in Wafra.

These are the day laborers of Kuwait and though the work is largely illegally it's in much demand in the country.

According to Kuwait's Private Sector Labor Law, foreigners may only work for their kafeel (sponsor) and any employee caught working outside can be penalized and deported. In Kuwait, part time work is allowed but only under certain conditions. Workers must secure necessary approval from their sponsor and authorization from Kuwait's Manpower Public Authority. But most either can't or don't. While the majority of the laborers Kuwait Times spoke with had valid visas some also are illegal residents who rely on the day labor to survive.

In recent months, there have been reported cases of raids on some companies here and workers caught working with other companies other than his/her employer are arrested. The move was implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor and Ministry of Interior, for a number of reasons but most particularly to stop and protect Asian workers from bogus companies and visa trafficking. Kuwait is home to 2.9 million expatriates who make up 70 percent of the country's 4 million population.

Kuwait Times found many temporary laborers, mostly men in the streets of Hawally and Salmiya. The demand is high for day laborers for many reasons. First they can be hired for relatively low wages. Secondly, some companies or individuals may have difficulty sponsoring laborers or have need for them only during short periods of the year. Many are used for construction projects or for remodeling projects that are one off jobs and require only a few days of extra labor.

"We are here to accept job from people who need our services whatever job available; say helper, gardener, cleaner, whatever it is, we are ready to accept and render our services," said

Sunil, one of many laborers standing in one of the streets in Salmiya.

Sunil used to wait for a temporary employer as early as five in the morning till six. "I accept even KD 6 or KD 10 per day. I've been doing this for the last two years now after resigning from a restaurant job," admitted Sunil who is in his late 40s. "I have a family to feed back in India so I am working whatever job available so long as I am earning money. I will do whatever it takes," he added.

The reality is that Kuwait's private sector does need part time and day laborers. There is a real market and demand and though the laws limit the availability, the market needs must be met.

Egyptian duo Shaaban and Ahmad were at the 'laborer street' in Hawally waiting for their transportation to bring them to the construction site where they temporarily work. The duo is armed with some construction tools/equipment which they carry with them almost every day. "We are friends and we are heading to Farwaniya for a job in a construction building there; we've been on this job for about five months now, the job is almost complete, so we will soon look for another place to work," Shaaban said.

MP QUESTIONS FINANCE MINISTER OVER METRO, RAILWAY PROJECTS

FORMER SPEAKER ALLEGES 'MASSIVE ROBBERY'

KUWAIT: MP Saleh Ashour yesterday sent a large number of questions to Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh over a reported plan to take the multi-billion-dollar metro and railway projects from the Ministry of Communications to the Public Private Partnership (PPP) authority. Acting on claims made by former Assembly Speaker Ali Al-Rashed who described the matter as a massive robbery, Ashour sent over 50 questions to the minister inquiring about financial and administrative details of the two projects.

Ashour claimed that based on recommendations by the PPP authority, the government will be obliged to pay around KD 1 billion every year for 31 years for the contractors of the metro project. He also claimed that the government will be required to pay billions of dinars to the contractor of the railway project for around 30 years, raising suspicions about the whole process.

The lawmaker also recalled that the council of ministers decided in 2012 that the two projects will be carried out on the basis of Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT)

and asked why there are plans to change this decision. The two projects have been repeatedly delayed for several reasons and moved from one authority to another. Former speaker Rashed said yesterday that if the metro and railway case filed by him was shelved or no ruling issued, he will take the matter to the Anti-Corruption Authority. In one of the questions, Ashour asked the Finance Minister about the total cost of the two projects if they were implemented by the private sector and their cost if they will be implemented by the government.



FIREMEN BATTLE THE BLAZE

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Three fire teams battled a blaze in a Farwaniya residential building yesterday morning. The fire destroyed the entire flat. Farwaniya, Sabhan technical rescue centers were dispatched. The fire was kept from spreading to other areas, as 45 firemen evacuated the residents. Three children, two women and a man were injured and treated on the site. Investigations are underway.

'Romanian prostitutes' nabbed

Criminal detectives arrested an international prostitution gang made of Romanian girls, according to a statement by Relations and security information department at the Interior Ministry. The vice department received information about some Romanian girls in a hotel apartment in Bneid Al-Qar who engage in prostitution, so legal procedures were taken and all suspects were caught in the act.

Egyptian flees via UAE

Residency affairs detectives said after receiving information about an Egyptian leaving the country despite seven travel



ban orders against him on financial cases worth KD 65,000, detectives learned that the suspect has arrived in Egypt via UAE. The boarding pass was checked and it was found out that the stamp belongs to an employee at the passport office named (DS). He was arrested, questioned and then sent to the Prosecution.

KRCS TO EXPAND ITS WORK

KUWAIT: President of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer asserted yesterday that the society would continue its mission and efforts to deliver humanitarian aid to people stricken with natural or man-made catastrophes, in implementation of directives of the Kuwaiti leadership. The Kuwait Red Crescent society will spare no effort to expand its work and serve disaster-stricken peoples, Dr Al-Sayer said in a statement following a visit by

Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Yasser Atef and the accompanying delegation to the KRCS headquarters. He said the Egyptian delegation got acquainted with the society's humanitarian work on the local and international levels.

Dr Al-Sayer praised "Long Live Egypt Fund" for improving living and health standards of Egyptians, and hoped for a future cooperation with it. The Egyptian ambassador, in remarks to KUNA, expressed his

appreciation for KRCS' efforts in humanitarian aid works in 68 countries throughout the world. For his part, Executive Director of Long Live Egypt Fund Mohamed Ashmawy said the fund staff was looking to benefit from the KRCS' experience in providing relief aid, setting up projects and holding training courses. He stated that the fund had been set up to collect donations to support the economy and improve standards of a large number of Egyptians. — KUNA

News

in brief

Kuwait Bourse-listed companies reach 190

KUWAIT: Total number of companies enlisted by Kuwait Bourse (KSE) amounted to 190 in end of 2015, compared to 193 in 2014, according to the bi-annual report released by KUNA Economic and Oil Affairs Department. Also by contrast, the number of such KSE-listed companies reached 196 in 2013, 200 in 2012 and 214 in 2011-2010, said the report, second chapter of which shed light on role of Kuwait Direct Promotion Authority (KDPA), basically with respect of promoting Kuwait as a regional enterprise hub. A year after its founding, the volume of licensed direct enterprise in 2015 amounted to KD 379.1 million, centering in sectors of technology, information, communications and energy. The authority started receiving license applications and granting concessions on December 29, 2014, after endorsement of its executive law (116/2013). Last year, it received 47 applications from local, Arab and foreign businessmen. Forty of them had been examined.

Qadsiya wins the Kuwait Athletics Championship

KUWAIT: Qadsiya won the Kuwait General Youth Athletics Championship held at Ahmed Suleiman Al-Rashdan track with 205 points yesterday. Kuwait came second with 166 points, followed by Al-Sahel in the third place with 76 points. In the same three-day championship in the juniors category, Qadsiya came in the second place with 113 points after Kuwait with 161.5 points while Al-Shabab in the third place with 98 points. Head of the athletics at Qadsiya Club Madi Al-Mutiri praised the players' level of performance in this championship in all categories. He also thanked Chairman of the Board of Qadsiya Club Sheikh Khalid Al-Fahad Al-Sabah as well as technical and administrative staff for their efforts and continuing support for the athletes.

Anti-terror drill kicks off with Kuwait participation

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Special Emergency Force SEF started Wednesday a broad counter-terrorism exercised themed "Sawlet Al-Haq 8" or the "The Round of Truth 8". A Kuwaiti delegation headed by Interior Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Special Security Forces Affairs Major General Mahmoud Al-Dousari is partaking in the exercise. The exercise includes mock operations to deal with coordinated terrorist attacks and raids on terrorist hideouts. It also includes training on shooting, snipping skills, as well as the use of helicopters in various anti-terror operations. The drill showed the high qualifications, skills and preparedness of the special emergency forces. Special forces commanders and security officials from several Arab and Muslim countries have also attended the exercises.

Kuwait Islamic Institute for Girls in Cambodia

KUALA LUMPUR: Charge d'Affaires of Kuwait's embassy in Cambodia Mutib Al-Usaimi has taken part in a ceremony held to lay the foundation stone of the second expansion project at the Kuwait Islamic Institute for Girls in the East Asian Kingdom. The ceremony was attended by deputy governor of the Tboung Khmum province where the Institute is located, and deputy head of the Southeast Asia Commission at the Kuwait-based Society of the Revival of Islamic Heritage, Ahmad Humoud Al-Jassar, a statement by the Kuwaiti embassy said yesterday. Addressing the ceremony, Al-Usaimi reiterated Kuwait's keenness on continuing support to all charity and humanitarian projects in Cambodia. He also appreciated efforts by the Society of the Revival of Islamic Heritage, in collaboration with Manabaa Al-Khair Charity, implementing and supervising various projects nationwide. Al-Usaimi lauded bilateral ties with Cambodia on all levels, referring to the efforts lavished by the Cambodian government to streamline procedures for the projects.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Services Directorate, in cooperation with Al-Khalaf Consultation and Training Institute held a ceremony in honor of firemen in the presence of Deputy Director General for Human Resources Development Affairs Maj Gen Eng Khalid Al-Tarkeet and Director of the Institute Dr Sultan Al-Khalaf. The firemen just completed the farms fire fighting course. — Photos by Hanan Al-Saadoun

STAMPS GALLERY OPENS AT DICKSON HOUSE

KUWAIT: Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Ali Al-Youha said yesterday that the permanent stamps gallery tells about an important part of Kuwait's history. The gallery is the fruit of cultural cooperation among the NCCAL, Kuwait Philatelic and Numismatic Society (KPNS), and stamp and coin collectors, he said on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the event.

Al-Youha commended KPNS for selecting the Dickson House Cultural Center, the site of the first post office in Kuwait opened in 1904, as venue of the gallery. "The gallery welcomes visitors and researchers in philately and numismatics in morning and afternoon periods around the year, including weekends and public holidays," he pointed out. On cooperation between NCCAL and the KPNS, Al-Youha said

the two bodies jointly released the philatelic magazine which issued so far four editions, including one to commemorate the centenary of Kuwait post office. "Another edition of the magazine entailed a file on Palestine post office which has historical relations with Kuwait post office dating from the British colonial era and during the Israeli occupation of Palestine. "That edition, which sheds light on the reflec-

tions of the Palestine question on Kuwaiti stamps, will be on display at a book fair, to be held in Ramallah, the West Bank, as a dedication from the Kuwaiti delegation to the event," he said, adding that Kuwait will be a guest of honor at the fair. During the opening ceremony individuals interested in philately and numismatics were honored for contributing their personal collections to gallery.— KUNA

KUWAIT INKS CONTRACTS TO IMPORT 2.5 MILLION TONS OF GAS PER YEAR

KPC, BRITISH PETROLEUM, SHELL, QATAR GAS SEAL DEAL

KUWAIT: Kuwait's state-run oil firm has signed contracts to import 2.5 million tons of liquefied natural gas a year through 2020 to meet the state's needs, a company official said yesterday. OPEC member Kuwait is rich in crude oil but its natural gas production is too small to meet its needs, which surge during the heat of the summer when power consumption soars.

Kuwait Petroleum Corp signed contracts with British Petroleum and Royal Dutch Shell to buy one million tons a year from each company, its marketing chief, Nabil Buresli, told the official KUNA news agency. It signed a third contract with Qatar Gas to import half a million tons a year. Buresli did not provide details of the value of the contracts. He said that after 2020, KPC plans to sign long-term contracts of up to 15 years to import 6-7 million tons of LNG a year.

Kuwait last week inked a \$2.93 billion contract with three South Korean firms for the construction of a new LNG import terminal that is due for completion in the first quarter of 2021. The project, to be built at the Al-Zour refinery near the border with Saudi Arabia, was awarded to Hyundai Engineering Co., Hyundai Engineering & Construction Co. and Korea Gas Corporation. Kuwait sits on 101.5 billion barrels of crude-equivalent to around 7.0 percent of the world's proven reserves, according to the latest OPEC figures-and pumps around 3.0

million barrels per day. But it is dependent on imports of LNG for both power

generation and its petrochemicals industry.—AFP

SUDAN MPS APPLAUD KUWAIT'S SUPPORT

KHARTOUM: Speaker of Sudan's National Assembly Ibrahim Ahmed Omer praised in a meeting yesterday with visiting Kuwaiti lawmakers Kuwait's support of his country's growth and development aspirations. Moreover, he stressed the importance of furthering Sudanese-Kuwaiti diplomatic ties. The Kuwaiti lawmakers are part of a delegation headed by Deputy Speaker of the Kuwaiti National Assembly Mubarak Al-Khurainij visiting Sudan upon an official invitation.

The delegation held talks with its Sudanese counterpart, with Mubarak Al-Khurainij heading the Kuwaiti delegation to the talks and Sudan's deputy speaker Aisha Salih heading the Sudanese delegation. In statements during the talks, Al-Khurainij noted "Arab states are currently facing enormous challenges, the most salient of which are terrorism and Iranian intervention in the region, requiring all of us to unite against them."

He demanded Iran to stop its interventions in such places as Yemen, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon and to show commitment to internation-

al norms of conduct. "We seek peace with Iran but we will not kowtow to that country's interventionist policies; at the same time we differentiate completely between our stances vis-a-vis the government of Iran and the people of that country." Further, he applauded Sudan's participation in the Decisive Storm operation and in the Islamic Coalition and in its position regarding the assault on the Saudi Arabian consulate in Iran. He also called for a lasting solution of the Palestinian problem in accordance with UN resolutions. On her part Sudan's deputy speaker Aisha Salih extolled the two nations' bilateral relations and hoped for more cooperation between them in all fields of interest. Among issues dealt with in the talks today were removing obstacles facing Kuwaiti investments in Sudan, encouraging the two countries private sectors to interact more vigorously, and exchanging expertise and information on relevant concerns. The Kuwaiti parliamentary delegation included MPs Hamdan Salem Al-Enezi, Majed Mousa Al-Mutairi, and Mohammad Al-Hediya. —KUNA

Crime

Report

INMATE RAPED

KUWAIT: An Egyptian prison inmate was raped by two Kuwaiti inmates in their jail. The two citizens pulled a sharp object and refused all his pleas, and raped him in his prison cell. Prison administration lodged a complaint at the Sulaibiya police station, while the rape victim was sent for a medical checkup. The rape suspects face additional prison sentences if found guilty.

Soldier attacked

Two citizens, one a soldier were attacked by two unknown persons in Jahra area. One of the suspects hit the soldier with an axe, while the other one had broken teeth when he was hit with a fire extinguisher. The two were rushed to hospital, where they obtained a medical report. Investigations are underway.

'Insulting the State'

An Arab expat was taken to state security detectives for questioning over charges of 'insulting the state' of front of a mall in Jahra. A security source said a citizen called police and told them that a man insulted the state aloud. A patrol team went arrested the suspect. The suspect denied the allegation.

Mol employee faces jail

Prosecutor General Dherar Al-Asousi ordered an employee of the Interior ministry be jailed for 10 days at central prison pending investigations over his embezzlement of thousands of dinars in public funds. An informed source said the Interior Ministry discovered that one of its employees who supervises the collection of citations fines has been pocketing the money. The suspect also canceled the citations on the computer.—Al Rai, Al Anbaa, Al Qabas

International

FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2016

**Four Australians
detained in
Lebanon**

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**Iceland names
new PM, holds
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**Bruised Trump
and Clinton
eye New York**

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MANAMA: Bahrain's Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa (left) and US Secretary of State John Kerry (center) arrive to speak to reporters ahead of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Ministerial meeting. — AFP

KERRY URGES IRAN TO HELP END REGION'S WARS CRITICIZES ISLAMIC REPUBLIC'S 'DESTABILIZING ACTIONS'

MANAMA: US Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday urged Iran to help end the wars raging in Yemen and Syria, criticizing the Islamic republic's "destabilizing actions" in the Middle East. On the first visit by a US chief diplomat to Bahrain since 2010, Kerry also told authorities in Manama accused of discriminating against the country's Shiite majority that respect for human rights was "essential".

Kerry was also to meet his other Gulf Arab counterparts later yesterday, two weeks before President Barack Obama is scheduled to attend a summit of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council in Riyadh when Washington's Middle East policy is likely to come under the microscope.

Speaking during a joint news conference with Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa, Kerry condemned "the destabilizing actions of Iran, which the United States takes very seriously". Kerry said Tehran should "help us end the war in Yemen... help us end the war in Syria, not intensify, and help us to be able to change the dynamics of this region".

Tehran and the Gulf states back opposition sides in Syria and Yemen. Last year Iran struck a landmark deal with world powers scaling back its

nuclear program, which has led to the lifting of international sanctions on the Islamic republic. Sheikh Khalid, whose government accuses Iran of stoking persistent protests among the kingdom's Shiites demanding an end to Sunni minority rule, echoed Kerry's call.

Iran's "interventions through proxies in several parts of our region (are) continuing unabated," the Bahraini foreign minister said. "We want to see them help" in trying to "reach a political solution" in war-ravaged countries but "yes, we do want to see Iran change its foreign policy," he said, speaking alongside Kerry. Tehran argues that it is Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies that are sowing instability in the region with their air strikes in Yemen and support to the opposition in Syria.

'Full' Yemen ceasefire

All the Gulf Arab states, apart from Oman, are taking part in a Saudi-led coalition that has been battling Iran-backed rebels in Yemen since March last year, in a war which the United Nations says has killed around 6,300 people.

Human Rights Watch said yesterday that bombs supplied by the United States were used in coalition air strikes on a market in Yemen that

killed at least 97 civilians including children last month. Asked to comment on the report, Kerry said he did not have "solid information" on weapons used in Yemen. The United States has been exerting efforts to "try to secure a full ceasefire in Yemen", he added.

Yemen's warring parties have agreed to observe a UN-brokered ceasefire from midnight Sunday which will be followed by peace negotiations in Kuwait on April 18. The Gulf Arab states have also been staunch backers of Syrian rebel groups fighting to overthrow President Bashar Al-Assad's regime since 2011.

Iran, with Russia, has been among the regime's main supporters in the conflict that has killed more than 270,000 people and pushed nearly five million into exile. Kerry will also discuss the situation in Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere in the region during his meeting with Gulf foreign ministers, a US official said. The GCC comprises the Sunni-dominated monarchies of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman.

More 'inclusive' Bahrain

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE have carried

out air strikes against the Islamic State jihadist group in Syria as part of a US-led military coalition. "We're satisfied, I think, with the overall level of support that we're getting from the Gulf states in the coalition," the US official said.

On Bahrain, Kerry urged authorities to adopt an "inclusive political system". "Here, as in all nations, we believe that respect for human rights and an inclusive political system are essential," Kerry said. He said he and Sheikh Khalid "had the chance to discuss the ongoing effort to address and to reduce sectarian divisions here in Bahrain and elsewhere".

"I appreciate the seriousness with which he considers this issue," Kerry said. "We all welcome steps by sides to create conditions to provide for greater political involvement for the citizens of this great country," he added. In 2011, the tiny but strategic island state, which is dominated by a ruling family drawn from the Sunni minority, crushed a Shiite-led uprising calling for a full constitutional monarchy with an elected prime minister. Scores of Shiites were rounded up and sentenced to lengthy jail terms, including opposition chiefs, amid growing criticism from international rights groups. — AFP

SAUDI KING SALMAN STARTS EGYPT VISIT

CAIRO: Saudi King Salman yesterday started a five-day visit to Cairo in a show of support for Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, with the leaders due to sign a raft of investment deals. Saudi Arabia has been the key backer of Sisi since the then-army chief in 2013 overthrew his Islamist predecessor Mohamed Morsi, whose Muslim Brotherhood movement was viewed with suspicion by Riyadh.

It has pumped billions of dollars in aid and investment into Egypt's battered economy, and the two heads of state are expected to ink more investment agreements on Friday amounting to about \$1.7 billion. Live footage on state television showed Sisi greeting the 80-year-old Salman at Cairo airport, before heading off in a convoy to the presidential palace.

The two will hold meetings later in the day and on Friday, when they will sign 14 agreements that include a \$1.5 billion deal to invest in the Sinai Peninsula, an Egyptian government official said. Salman is expected to address the Egyptian parliament on Sunday, state media reported.

Egyptian media gave full coverage of the visit, with state television welcoming Salman to his "second country" and playing celebratory music as his plane touched down in Cairo. "This is the first official visit by King Salman, whose valuable and honorable positions in support of Egypt and its people will never be forgotten," the presidency said in a statement. "Egypt accords great importance to this visit," it said, adding the leaders would discuss regional issues and economic cooperation.

The visit follows months of reports in both Saudi and Egyptian newspapers of strained ties over Cairo's unwillingness to participate fully in Saudi-led military operations in Yemen. Egypt had announced it would join the operations against Iran-backed Shiite rebels in Yemen with ground troops if needed, but appears to have balked at the prospect of becoming mired in the conflict.

However, Saudi Arabia has played a key role in propping up Egypt's economy, whose vital tourism industry has been devastated by years of political turmoil and jihadist attacks. For Saudi Arabia, which is in competition with regional rival Iran, keeping Egypt under its aegis is crucial.—AFP

MONEY, JIHADIST THREAT DRIVE SUPPORT FOR NEW LIBYA GOVT

TRIPOLI: In seeking to establish its authority in the chaos of Libya, the UN-backed new unity government has two major trump cards—control of state funds and fears of rising jihadist influence. Prime minister-designate Fayez Al-Sarraj's Government of National Accord has so far managed to win broad support, experts and local sources say.

It faces major challenges, and suffered a setback on Wednesday when the head of a rival Tripoli-based authority, Khalifa Ghweil, contradicted an earlier announcement from his administration that it would stand down. But by undercutting support for its rivals among Libya's armed groups and positioning itself as a bulwark against the Islamic State group, the Sarraj government appears to be gaining ground.

After losing control of state coffers to the new administration, the Tripoli authority is unable to keep up payments to the armed groups that propelled it to power, a politician close to the unity government told AFP. "Some members of armed groups are no longer being paid and others fear suffering the same fate," he added, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"These armed groups prefer supporting the unity government" for now, he said, warning that "the risk of violent clashes remains" if Sarraj's administration does not bring the militias fully on board. Sarraj, who is operating under a UN-sponsored power-sharing deal agreed by some Libyan lawmakers in December, surprised observers with a sudden arrival in Tripoli under naval escort last week.

Winning militia support

He has since moved to restore some semblance of order to Libya, which collapsed into disarray after the 2011 ouster and killing of longtime dictator Moamer Kadhafi. The country has been split between rival powers since a militia alliance seized control of Tripoli in mid-2014, forcing the government backed by the internationally recognized parliament to flee to the country's far east.—AFP



CAIRO: A handout picture released by the Egyptian Presidency on April 7, 2016 shows Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (right) meeting with Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz in the capital.—AFP

FOUR AUSTRALIANS DETAINED IN LEBANON ON KIDNAP CHARGES

SUSPECTED OF SMUGGLING CHILDREN OUT OF THE COUNTRY

BEIRUT: Lebanese authorities have detained four Australians, including journalists, on suspicion they were involved in the abductions of two children in Beirut the previous day, police officials and Australian media said yesterday.

A British citizen has been detained as well on suspicion that he planned to smuggle the children out of Lebanon on his boat, the officials also said. The five are being questioned over the kidnapping of Noah and Lahela Al-Amin, the son and daughter of a Lebanese man and an Australian woman. The children have been living in Beirut since their father Ali Al-Amin brought them from Australia last year, the officials said.

The kidnapping, in which the children were taken Wednesday after an attack on their Lebanese grandmother as she was taking them to school near their home in Beirut, was part of a family dispute, the police said. Yesterday, police first said the mother and the children were at the Australian Embassy but later, the Lebanese intelligence department declared the mother was detained and was being held by police with her children, state-run National News Agency reported. It did not say where they were found but added that the children were safe.

'Risky operation, risky story'

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media, did not give the names of the Australians and the Briton. The Australian detainees include journalists working for Channel Nine's 60 Minutes, who were filming an episode on the issue in Lebanon. Among the detainees is TV presenter Tara Brown.

60 Minutes reporter Michael Usher told Nine News in an interview broad-

cast yesterday that Australian consular officials in Beirut were in contact with the 60 Minutes crew. "Our obvious concern is that we have not been able to speak to the crew for going on 15 hours now and that's obviously been very concerning for all of us here," Usher said.

Usher added that the journalists detained in Beirut are very experienced and prepared for the difficulties of covering what he called, "a risky operation, a risky story - this desperate Australian mum trying to get her two Australian children home."

A Beirut police official said the five detainees were being held at a police station near the place where the boat was parked in the Lebanese capital. During questioning, the journalists said they came on a humanitarian mission and that their aim was not to kidnap the

children, he added.

Channel Nine issued a statement earlier Thursday saying that: "We can confirm a crew from 60 Minutes has been detained in Beirut. We won't be giving out any more details, other than to say we are working with authorities to get them released and back home ASAP." A Channel Nine employee told The Associated Press in Australia that the 60 Minutes crew was not physically present when the children's kidnapping took place.

Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said her ministry has been in contact with Channel Nine. A statement from Bishop said Australian authorities are "urgently seeking to confirm the crew's whereabouts and welfare, and have offered all appropriate consular assistance." —AFP



BEIRUT: Two employees enter a compound that houses the Australian Embassy.—AP

250 SYRIANS MISSING AFTER IS ATTACK NEAR DAMASCUS

DAMASCUS: Some 250 Syrians were missing and feared kidnapped yesterday after the Islamic State group attacked a cement factory in an advance against government positions east of Damascus. The jihadists launched the offensive after suffering a series of setbacks at the hands of regime troops in recent weeks including the loss of the ancient city of Palmyra, which officials said residents would start returning to on Saturday. The fresh fighting came ahead of a new round of peace talks due next week in Geneva following a ceasefire between the regime and non-jihadist rebels that has allowed Syrian forces to focus on fighting IS.

After being pushed out of Palmyra on March 27, IS launched the fresh assault this week near the town of Dmeir, some 50 kilometers east of Damascus. Residents said IS attacked the cement factory outside the town on Monday and that about 250 employees had gone missing. "We haven't been able to reach our family members since noon on Monday after an attack by Daesh on the factory," said one resident of Dmeir, using an Arabic acronym for IS. "We have no information about where they are."

An administrator at the plant confirmed that 250 employees had been unreachable since Monday. Dmeir is divided between IS control in the east and rebel control in the west, but several key positions around it, including a military airport and a power plant, are still in government hands. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor, said the fighting was heavy but the jihadists had not managed to gain significant ground.

"The most violent clashes are near the airport and the power plant, but IS has not entered either yet," Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said. IS had seized five regime positions in the area, including two checkpoints, since Monday, he said, adding that 20 members of regime forces and 35 IS fighters had been killed in the clashes.

Palmyra residents return

A Dmeir resident told AFP yesterday that she could hear heavy shelling around the city and that residents were not daring to leave their homes. "We're in the eastern neighborhood. The situation is very tense here," she said, asking not to be named out of fear for her safety.

"We have no electricity, we have no water. There are people fleeing from the eastern districts to the west," she said. Last month's fierce street battles in Palmyra left much of the city's residential neighborhoods severely damaged.

Most of Palmyra's pre-war population of 70,000 people fled west towards the city of Homs when the extremist group advanced on the city in May 2015. Syrian officials in Homs city were this week preparing for the first of these displaced residents to return. "The first group of buses transporting residents back to Palmyra will leave on Saturday (from Homs). The residents started to register their names today," a provincial government official said. He said nearly 45 percent of residential neighborhoods in the city had been destroyed by the recent round of fighting. Many apartment blocks had partially collapsed walls and some had been totally demolished, AFP journalists who visited the city after its recapture reported.

Talks 'doomed'

Authorities this week began restoring power lines in the city and repairs to housing began on Wednesday, provincial governor Talal Barazi told state news agency SANA. An estimated 15,000 residents stayed on under IS rule and most left during the Syrian army's offensive to retake the city, but it was not clear to where they had fled. Since Syria's conflict erupted in March 2011, thousands of people have gone missing — many of them arbitrarily arrested by armed forces across the country. More than 270,000 people have been killed and millions have fled their homes.

UN-backed peace talks to bring an end to the conflict are set to resume next week in Geneva, with this third round focusing on plans for a political transition. The key stumbling block remains the fate of President Bashar Al-Assad. Syria's opposition has clung to its years-long demand that he leave power immediately, but the government has refused. This week the main opposition group, the High Negotiations Committee, said the upcoming negotiations were certain to fail unless Assad's fate is on the table. "If negotiations did not address the fate of Assad, it would be a waste of time and doomed to failure," HNC representative Riad Naasan Agha said Tuesday at a forum hosted by Al-Jazeera in Qatar. Agha said that he was not hopeful the talks would succeed, as negotiations on forming a transitional government were almost at a "dead-end". —AFP



ROME: This file photo taken on March 29, 2016 shows the parents of Italian student Giulio Regeni, Paola Regeni (L) and Claudio Regeni (R), holding a banner reading "Truth for Giulio Regeni" during a press conference with Senator Luigi Manconi (C), president of the Human Rights commission at the Italian Senate. — AFP

EGYPT SEEKS TO DEFUSE ITALY ANGER OVER SLAIN STUDENT

LACK OF PROGRESS CONTINUES TO FRUSTRATE

ROME: Egyptian investigators began briefing Italian counterparts yesterday on a much-criticized probe into the slaying of an Italian student in Cairo that threatens to poison relations between the two countries. The delegation of prosecutors and police arrived in Rome with a 2,000-page file on an investigation in which more than 200 people have been questioned, according to Italian media reports.

The meeting aims at reassuring Italy that everything is being done to bring the killer of 28-year-old Giulio Regeni to justice. Frustrated by the apparent lack of progress, Italian officials have warned of consequences if the Egyptians do not present a credible and detailed account of everything they know about the young man's gruesome fate. The talks are expected to continue into Friday.

The case is a testing one for Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, who has fostered a close trade and security relationship with Egypt's military-backed president, Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, but is under pressure to respond to public anger over the Regeni case. "The relationship is a huge deal for Italy but Egypt has burnt most of its credit in the last two months in a not very smart way," said Mattia Toalda, an expert on Italian foreign policy at the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) in London.

The Cambridge student disappeared in central Cairo on January 25. His body was found on the outskirts of the city on February 3 bearing the

signs of torture which, an autopsy concluded, had been inflicted over several days. His mother has said his body was so mutilated she could only recognize him by the tip of his nose and global media coverage of the case has focused international attention on other disappearances and rights abuses in Sisi's Egypt.

Italian officials were initially told Regeni had been killed in a car accident, then that his death had been linked to a personal dispute. At the end of last month, Egypt publicly announced police had killed four members of a criminal gang specializing in abducting foreigners, and that they had found Regeni's passport in the apartment of a sister of one of the slain suspects. That version of events was greeted with outraged skepticism in Italy, where there is a widespread suspicion that the murder was the work of elements in the security services—a theory Cairo dismisses as without foundation.

'Lies again and again'

Foreign Minister Paolo Gentiloni told parliament on Tuesday the kidnapping gang story was a "new attempt to give credence to a convenient truth", and that Italy was preparing "immediate and proportionate" action if the Egyptian delegation did not provide satisfactory answers. Toalda said he could not remember an Italian foreign minister speaking the way Gentiloni did.

"Basically he is saying to Sisi: 'You

told us lies again and again, and now we have to do something.'" Italy's own investigators are still waiting to receive Regeni's mobile phone records and CCTV images from the neighborhood in which he was abducted. Rome also wants to know if and why Regeni was under surveillance prior to his abduction. The student had been researching labor movements in Egypt.

He disappeared on the fifth anniversary of the uprising that ousted longtime leader Hosni Mubarak, a day when Cairo was on a security lockdown and virtually deserted. Toalda said Italy's options in terms of action were limited to recalling its ambassador, warning its citizens against travel to Egypt on security grounds or seeking backing from its European Union partners to put pressure on Cairo over the case.

All are problematic. An ambassador callback risks being seen domestically as purely symbolic while a travel ban would hurt Egypt's battered tourism industry at the cost of escalating the rift with Sisi's government.

And other EU countries might not be keen to jeopardize their relations with Egypt to support Italy given Rome's past courting of the Sisi regime. "A lot depends on whether the Egyptian team can come up with something that buys Renzi more time in terms of public opinion, which is very inflamed over this issue," Toalda said. "If they don't it will be almost impossible for Renzi not to be seen to be doing something." —AFP

BELGIUM STRUGGLES TO WIN BACK TOURISTS

BRUSSELS: Gone are the usual snap-happy crowds on Brussels' famed Grand Place, visits to the Atomium monument have plummeted and hotel rooms are empty. Two weeks after the Belgian capital was hit by terror attacks, the country's tourist industry is in despair.

As Belgium struggles to move on from the March 22 Islamic State suicide bombings that struck Brussels airport and a metro station, killing 32 people, the financial impact of the attacks is weighing on the economy. For some holidaymakers not scared away, the chance to explore the city's delights undisturbed during the normally busy Easter holiday period has been an unexpected boon.

"We like it. There's not too many people and we can take great pictures," said a smiling Lucien Liu from China as he marvelled at the near-deserted Grand Place square with its celebrated 15th-century Gothic city hall. Danish tourist Jeppe Strauss, in town for a few days with friends, said they had encountered no queues at the museums.

"It made our trip a lot more pleasant since we did not have to spend a lot of time waiting," he told AFP on a street lined with waffle and chocolate shops. But there is no such silver lining for those working in the tourism industry, which accounts a significant part of the economy, as much as nine percent in some parts of the country. Hotel and restaurant bookings are down by half since the attacks, according to Patrick Bontinck, head of the Brussels tourism office.

'Economic carnage'

"This has never happened before," said Said Rabet, owner of the Saint-Michel hotel which boasts views of the Grand Place and is usually fully booked. Now, just five of his 14 rooms are taken. "It's not enough to say things are going badly, it's worse than that. This is economic carnage in the hotel and restaurant sectors," he added. The effects are being felt across the country.

Hospitality businesses in the northern Flanders region, home to the tourist hotspot of Bruges, say revenues are down by a third since the attacks, according to a survey by the Unizo employers' group yesterday. Belgium's tourism sector was already struggling in the wake of the Paris terror attacks in November after it emerged they were largely planned in Brussels.

Following the Paris bloodshed, the Belgian capital went into lockdown for several days over fears of an imminent attack, with soldiers deployed on the streets and schools and the metro system closed. While Belgium remains on high alert-authorities are still hunting for a suspected third attacker whose bomb did not go off at Brussels airport-Prime Minister Charles Michel insisted Wednesday that the country was returning "to normal life".

Rudi Vervoort, head of the Brussels regional government, said steps have already been taken since the Paris attacks to reassure visitors. "We can of course guarantee the safety of all visitors, all tourists in hotels, in all the main tourist spots," he said at the same press conference as Michel.

A special phone line has been set up to respond to visitors' questions and there are webcams at key sites so tourists can go online and "see for themselves that everything is fine", he added. — AFP



BRUSSELS: Police stand outside the council chamber in Brussels the appearance of Salah Abdeslam, the sole surviving suspect in the November 13 Paris attacks. — AFP



REYKJAVIK: Iceland's new prime minister Sigurdur Ingi Johannsson (left) of the Progressive Party and Bjarni Benediktsson (right) finance minister of the Independence Party arrive to address members of the media after a meeting. — AFP

ICELAND NAMES NEW PM, HOLDS AUTUMN ELECTION

PANAMA PAPERS FORCES PREVIOUS LEADER'S RESIGNATION

REYKJAVIK: Iceland's right-wing government on Wednesday named a new prime minister and said it would hold early elections in the autumn, after the previous leader was forced to step down over his implication in the Panama Papers scandal.

The two coalition partners, the Progressive Party and the Independence Party, agreed after talks late Wednesday to hand the prime ministerial post to the agriculture minister Sigurdur Ingi Johannsson, 53, of the Progressives. He replaces Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson, 41, who stepped down Tuesday amid massive public protests over a hidden offshore account revealed in the so-called Panama Papers leak of 11.5 million financial documents. "We expect to have elections this autumn," Johannsson told reporters, insisting that the coalition, in power since 2013, would continue to run the country's affairs despite thousands of protesters calling for the whole government's resignation. "We will continue our work together. We are of course hoping this will help bring stability in the political system," he said. President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, who at 72 is due to retire in June after five terms and 20 years in office, is expected to approve Johannsson's appointment. Iceland's next legislative elections were originally scheduled for April 2017.

First casualty of Panama Papers Gunnlaugsson, who remains the

head of the Progressive Party for the time being, was the first major political casualty to emerge from the leak of millions of documents detailing offshore accounts held by world leaders and celebrities. Two other Iceland cabinet ministers have been singled out in the leak-Finance Minister Bjarni Benediktsson and Interior Minister Olof Nordal-and the coalition is keen to stall for time to avoid what would surely be a resounding protest vote if a snap election were held soon. The coalition parties "have lost all their legitimacy, but I am sceptical they will leave of their own initiative. Time is on their side and it's crucial for them to stay in power," lamented Gyda Margret Petursdottir, a 42-year-old teacher who protested against the government outside parliament on Wednesday.

The Panama Papers, revealed by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), showed that Gunnlaugsson and his wife owned an offshore company in the British Virgin Islands and had placed millions of dollars of her inheritance there.

The prime minister sold his 50-percent share of the company to his wife for a symbolic sum of \$1 at the end of 2009, but he had neglected to declare the stake as required when he was elected to parliament six months earlier. Gunnlaugsson has said he regretted not having done so, but insisted he and his wife had followed Icelandic

law and paid all their taxes in Iceland.

Vote of no-confidence

It has not been proven the couple stood to gain financially from the offshore holding, and the ICIJ noted only that Gunnlaugsson had "violated Iceland's ethics rules". But the issue is particularly sensitive in Iceland, a country marked by the excesses of the 2000s when senior bankers used shell companies in tax havens to conceal their dealings in risky financial products which ultimately led to the 2008 collapse of the nation's three main banks.

The left-wing opposition presented a motion of no-confidence to parliament on Monday, and said late Wednesday it intended to push ahead with it despite the government's plans for an early election. "There is a consensus between the opposition parties that we will push the vote of no-confidence," said Birgitta Jonsdottir, the founder of the libertarian Pirate Party which campaigns for more transparency in politics. "We don't see the point in continuing with a government that has 26 percent trust," she said, acknowledging however that the motion had little chance of passing in parliament because of the government's majority. A Gallup poll conducted Monday and Tuesday credited the Pirate Party with a whopping 43 percent of voter support, far ahead of the Independence Party at 21.6 percent, the opposition Left Green Movement at 11.2 percent, and the Progressives at 7.9 percent. —AFP

FACING VIOLENCE, MEXICAN WOMEN LEARNING TO FIGHT

ECATEPEC: The slender, 24-year-old Mexican female nurse faces off with a much bigger gun-toting man, twists his hand to snatch the weapon, points it at her attacker and pulls the trigger. Fabiola Arteaga is not being threatened on the streets, but is taking part in a practice bout at a martial arts academy in a sprawling Mexico City suburb. Arteaga is among a growing number of women and teenage girls taking self-defense classes at several training centers in Ecatepec, a crime-ridden city of 1.6 million where killings of women have surged in recent years. Students learn techniques such as disarming a man with a gun or a knife, kicking him, breaking his nose, escaping a chokehold, or twisting his arm when he tries to grab them from behind.

Some 600 women have been murdered in the State of Mexico, which nearly surrounds Mexico City, in the past four years, with most homicides taking place in Ecatepec, according to the non-governmental National Citizen Observatory of Femicides. The bodies of women turn up every week in the rough suburbs of the capital. They are abandoned at the foot of hills or dumped in canals. The corpses are often burned or bear the scars of abuse.

The State of Mexico now competes with Ciudad Juarez, the city bordering the United States that became infamous for its spate of femicides, for the grim title of the most dangerous place for women in the country. "These are crimes that are clearly filled with hatred" against the victims because they are women, said Maria de la Luz Estrada, head of the observatory.

'Always be prepared'

Determined not to join the grim list of victims, Arteaga has been learning tang soo do, a Korean martial art, for the past five years at the Xtreme Martial Arts academy, in a poor and dimly lit neighborhood of Ecatepec. Her community is plagued by "extreme violence, with women raped and killed," she said, recalling that one of her nieces was killed at age 15.

The classes have taught her to "always be prepared and observe everything," Arteaga said. "Stepping back is useless," the instructor, Mario Ramirez, shouted at a teenage girl as a young would-be assailant tried to stab and hit her. "There's no law in Ecatepec," he said, shouting again: "They don't know that we know how to defend ourselves!"

Fabiola Zamora, a 15-year-old tang soo do green belt, had a stark reason to take the classes. "I saw how girls were taken away at my school, so I thought that I had to defend myself in one way or the other," she said. Zamora was not the youngest taking a class. At the tender age of nine, Kenya already knows about the dangers lurking in her city. She already fears being "kidnapped and cut to pieces." She has been learning self-defense moves for the past year "so that I don't get kidnapped," Kenya said. She could have been taking ballet lessons. Instead, she watches as women learn to fend off assailants, hoping she can also learn ways to "stay alive" amid the "bang" of fake guns being fired. At least 47 percent of women 15 and older have suffered some sort of attack in the country of nearly 120 million people, according to the National Public Security System.

'Gender alert'

In the State of Mexico, the prosecutor's office in charge of investigating femicides has opened 254 cases since 2011, but only 72 have ended in sentences so far, said the head of the unit, Dilcia Garcia. The problem is too big for the suburb and the 5,000 police officers patrolling the vast streets are not enough, Garcia said.—AFP



MEXICO CITY: A female student (R) learns self-defence techniques against an attacker, during a class in the dangerous municipality of Ecatepec. — AFP



UTAH: In this March 19, 2016, file photo, Utah Gov. Gary Herbert, from left, Republican presidential candidate, Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, wave during a rally.— AP

CRUZ OUTMANEUVERING TRUMP IN HAND-TO-HAND DELEGATE FIGHT

DELEGATE GAME COUNTERING TRUMP'S HEADLINE GRABBERS

DENVER: While the focus of the Republican presidential campaign shifts eastward to the New York primary, Texas Sen Ted Cruz is pivoting west, where he is quietly trying to chip away at Donald Trump's lead in the race for convention delegates.

Cruz won six pledged delegates during a pair of obscure, congressional-level Colorado GOP assemblies tomorrow. He is also poised to make gains in several other western Republican contests, including a possible sweep of Colorado's remaining assemblies, due to conclude tomorrow. Cruz's success in the complex delegate game is helping him counter Trump's headline-grabbing wins in big states and would give the Texas senator a tactical advantage should the party's presidential nomination come down to a rare contested convention.

"Cruz is ahead of everyone on this," Republican election lawyer Ben Ginsberg said, describing Cruz's aggressive but quiet delegate strategy as "equally important" to the actual votes. Cruz has racked up some outright popular vote victories, most recently by soundly winning Wisconsin's primary Tuesday and squeezing Trump's narrow, but achievable, path to the nomination. Still, Trump is heavily-favored in the upcoming round of northeastern primaries, especially in the billionaire's home state of New York on April 19.

That's why Cruz's team has been busy at work in states like North Dakota, where convention delegates are selected directly by party officials. These tedious, complicated and insider-heavy events are key to the party's organizational structure, a concept new to Trump but not to Cruz, who rose to prominence in Texas through the GOP's grassroots.

Zero endorsements

Trump's campaign did not respond to a request for comment, but he has previously complained that caucuses

are unrepresentative, and said that delegate fights are tricks to subvert the voters' will. Cruz has outmaneuvered Trump in all the caucus states, beginning in Iowa. In North Dakota last week, he scooped up endorsements from delegates selected at the party's state convention tomorrow.

All 28 of North Dakota's delegates will go to the national convention free to support the candidate of their choice. But in interviews, 10 said they are committed to vote for Cruz at the convention. A few others said they are leaning toward Cruz, though they weren't ready to commit. None has endorsed Trump so far. In Colorado, Cruz is taking advantage of an unusual change to the state's nominating process. Rather than selecting delegates according to a statewide vote, as it has in the past, Colorado is holding a series of rolling caucuses this week in each of its seven congressional districts, then culminating with a statewide convention on Saturday where Trump and Cruz are expected to speak.

Colorado Republican operatives say that, just by winning the congressional gatherings, Cruz could lock down a majority of the 34 delegates up for grabs, even before Saturday's convention. "Cruz has the big upper hand here," said Ryan Lynch, a Colorado-based Republican consultant unaffiliated with any of the presidential campaigns. "They're the only ones really organized."

That was apparent on Saturday when a slate loyal to Cruz swept the first two congressional district assemblies. A slate is a group of candidates that run in multi-seat elections on a common platform. Members of the slate had strategized with Rep. Ken Buck, Cruz's Colorado chairman and a veteran politician well-connected among the state's Republican primary electorate.

'Organized state'

The Cruz campaign sent out emails

on their behalf to delegates who had been selected at earlier precinct-level meetings, and slate members worked the phones and lobbied those delegates further for support. "It was kind of like running a classic campaign—talking to as many people as possible, working it," said state Rep Justin Everett, one of Cruz's delegates. "We're probably only a \$500 investment. We didn't see much from the Trump campaign in terms of an investment."

Cruz has not had a heavy paid-staff presence in Colorado. Instead, a pro-Cruz volunteer network has been coordinating closely, said former Colorado Secretary of State Scott Gessler. "Cruz has an organized slate. But you can't beat the shoe leather aspect of it," said Gessler, a Cruz delegate from Denver. "I made about 250 phone calls. I don't know if I'd have won if I hadn't made those phone calls."

The remainder of Colorado's delegates will be chosen at district conventions Friday and the state convention Saturday in Colorado Springs. Cruz's delegate strategy stretches beyond North Dakota and Colorado. He campaigned through swing regions of Wisconsin long before Trump set foot there. He also locked up support from almost all of Milwaukee's conservative talk radio personalities, giving him a free mouthpiece aimed at roughly 40 percent of the state GOP's primary voters.

Likewise, Cruz supporters are organizing in Iowa this week. Cruz won the proportionally binding caucuses on Feb 1, but stands to gain delegates in the Iowa GOP's district conventions on Saturday. While Trump remains the closest to the 1,237 delegate target for now, he's not taking it for granted. His campaign announced last week the hiring of Paul Manafort to run his convention effort, including delegate strategy. Likewise, Trump said he would open a convention-planning office in Washington, DC, to also house its delegate-selection team. — AP

SANDERS QUESTIONS CLINTON'S PRESIDENTIAL QUALIFICATION

PHILADELPHIA: Bernie Sanders is questioning whether Democratic rival Hillary Clinton is "qualified" to be president after she spent much of the day after the Wisconsin primary criticizing his record and his preparedness for the job.

"She has been saying lately that she thinks that I am quote unquote not qualified to be president," Sanders told a crowd of more than 10,000 people at Temple University's Liacouras Center in Philadelphia on Wednesday. "I don't believe that she is qualified if she is, through her super PAC, taking tens of millions of dollars in special-interest funds."

Sanders also said Clinton is not qualified because of her vote for the war in Iraq and her support for trade agreements that he says are harmful to American workers. It's the latest salvo in a war of words that has gotten increasingly heated as underdog Sanders has gained ground on front-runner Clinton, capped by the Vermont senator's victory in Tuesday's Wisconsin primary.

Clinton spokesman Brian Fallon responded quickly to Sanders' comment, writing on Twitter: "Hillary Clinton did not say Bernie Sanders was 'not qualified.' But he has now - absurdly - said it about her. This is a new low."

In a fund-raising appeal early yesterday, Hillary for America's deputy communications director, Christina Reynolds, said of Sanders: "This is a ridiculous and irresponsible attack for someone to make - not just against the person who is almost certainly going to be the nominee of their party this November, but against someone who is one of the most qualified people to run for the presidency in the history of the United States." Indeed, Clinton did not say Sanders was "unqualified" or "not qualified" during a much-quoted interview Wednesday morning on MSNBC's "Morning Joe." In a discussion of an interview with Sanders that appeared in the New York Daily News, Clinton was asked if "Bernie Sanders is qualified and ready to be president of the United States." She responded, "Well, I think he hadn't done his homework and he'd been talking for more than a year about doing things that he obviously hadn't really studied or understood, and that does raise a lot of questions." Sanders spokesman Michael Briggs said Wednesday evening that Sanders was responding to reports on the CNN and Washington Post websites. A Post story was headlined, "Clinton questions whether Sanders is qualified to be president."—AP

ROUHANI: RADICAL TALK WON'T DELIVER RESULTS

TEHRAN: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday that radical talk from critics of the country's nuclear deal with world powers was dangerous and he urged more, not less, diplomacy and dialogue. His comments came just days after a speech by the commander of the elite Revolutionary Guards, who said the accord, which lifted international sanctions on Iran, amounted to a humiliation. Rouhani, a moderate cleric under Iran's theocratic system, was boosted in February elections when his allies made gains in parliament and their conservative rivals lost dozens of seats. However, the polls have been followed by gestures from hardliners within the regime that appear aimed at preventing the nuclear agreement leading to any wider rapprochement.

A flurry of ballistic missile tests conducted by the Guards since October last year triggered fresh US sanctions after a UN panel said they breached previous resolutions. The tests, however, do not amount to an infringement of the July nuclear accord as it did not cover ballistic missiles.

Rouhani, in a speech broadcast live from Tehran, said the nuclear deal, finally implemented in January after more than two years of talks, showed "logic and argument can triumph over hard power and threats." "Under radical thinking, there should never be cooperation with the IAEA or the United Nations," Rouhani said, referring to the International Atomic Energy Agency responsible for monitoring the deal. "Radical thinking tells us not to trust anyone, not to trust neighbors or friends, but moderate thinking tells us... we should talk to the world and seek self-reliance at the same time. "Being radical is disadvantageous to us everywhere. It creates the biggest danger for any society."

Once-only opportunity

The Guards report not to Rouhani but to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's ultimate authority. The force's commander, Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari, said on Tuesday that the nuclear deal should not be seen as a model for rapprochement.—AFP



BETHPAGE: Republican Presidential Candidate Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally. — AFP

BRUISED IN WISCONSIN, TRUMP AND CLINTON EYE FRIENDLIER NEW YORK

BOTH CANDIDATES LOOK TO BOUNCE BACK

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton looked to bounce back Wednesday from unsettling presidential primary losses in Wisconsin, training their sights in the next White House contests on friendlier ground—their home state of New York.

The Republican and Democratic frontrunners were trounced Tuesday night in the Badger State, giving their respective rivals—Ted Cruz and Bernie Sanders — a boost in morale and delegates. Trump's defeat makes his ascent to the Republican nomination steeper, increasing the likelihood of a contested convention in July that could throw the party's nod to someone more to the liking of the establishment.

Usually at no loss for words, the real estate mogul left it to his campaign to blame his poor Wisconsin showing Tuesday on an anti-Trump movement that it said spent "countless millions on false advertising" to stop him. "Ted Cruz is worse than a puppet—he is a Trojan horse, being used by the party bosses attempting to steal the nomination from Mr Trump," his campaign said in a statement. Cruz, an ultra-conservative senator from Texas, won with 48.3 percent of the vote, to 35 percent for Trump. Ohio Governor John Kasich took 14 percent.

'Turning point'

"It was a turning point, I believe, in this entire election," Cruz told reporters Wednesday in New York, where he flew to challenge the brash billionaire on his home turf. Cruz painted Trump as more willing to engage in insults than substantive debate. "He gets very angry when the voters reject him," Cruz said.

Trump's loss followed a brutal campaign week, in which he alienated

women by saying those who have abortions should be punished—and then retracting the comment. He also drew fire for calling NATO obsolete and a plan to make Mexico pay for a border wall by holding hostage the money its citizens send home from the US.

But Trump remains the undisputed Republican frontrunner with 746 delegates to 510 for Cruz and 145 for Kasich after Tuesday, according to a CNN estimate. The first to get to 1,237 wins the nomination. Trump needs to secure those delegates before the Republican convention in Cleveland in July, or face a fight in the second round of balloting when pledged delegates are free to choose a candidate for themselves.

By winning Tuesday, "Cruz increased his chances of preventing a first-ballot nomination for Trump," American politics professor John Pitney of Claremont McKenna College said. "It gives the anti-Trump forces a fighting chance." Clinton also emerged from Wisconsin with her formidable delegate lead intact — 1,780 compared with 1,099 for Sanders. To win the Democratic nomination, 2,383 delegates are needed.

The race now turns to friendlier territory for both Trump and Clinton. Polls give New Yorker Trump a 31-point lead over Kasich and Cruz in the Empire State, which votes April 19. In Pennsylvania, which votes a week later, he leads by 13 percentage points, according to a RealClearPolitics poll average. Clinton, who represented New York in the Senate from 2001 to 2009, has an 11-point lead over Sanders in her adopted home state and a 17-point advantage in Pennsylvania, where she also has roots. The candidates were losing no time, with Trump holding a rally in Bethpage on Long Island later in the

day. Cruz sought to make his own mark in New York, addressing voters in a Bronx restaurant.

Trump shook off his defeat at a fiery speech in Bethpage filled with his usual applause lines about building a wall on America's southern border and "making America great again." "We're bringing companies back to the United States. We are going to have a strong border. We are going to build the wall. It will be a real wall," he said in one of his most popular campaign refrains.

Cruz, who faces an uphill battle—especially after slamming Trump in January as having liberal "New York values"—was heckled briefly at his stop in the minority-heavy Bronx by a man who accused him of running on an "anti-immigrant platform."

Clinton rebukes Sanders

Clinton, meanwhile, pounced on an interview Sanders gave to the New York Daily News editorial board in which he vowed to break up big banks like JPMorgan Chase but failed to explain specifically how he would do it or what the consequences might be.

"I think he hadn't done his homework and he had been talking for more than a year about doing things that he obviously hadn't studied or understood and that does raise a lot of questions," Clinton said. Clinton argued that her pragmatism was a smarter approach than the grass-roots idealism of Sanders, who has touted free public college for all and a universal health care system.

"Like a lot of people, I am concerned that some of his ideas just won't work because the numbers don't add up," Clinton said in Philadelphia. "Others won't even pass Congress."—AFP

BANGLADESH MAN FOUND IN PAKISTAN JAIL DIES 4 YEARS LATER

DHAKA, Bangladesh: A man who returned to Bangladesh four years ago from a Pakistani prison, where he spent 15 years on suspicion of being an Indian spy, died yesterday, his family said. He was 56. Moslemuddin Sarkar had been suffering from diabetes and kidney failure, and in recent days had trouble breathing. His brother, Julhas Uddin, said Sarkar's imprisonment and torture in Pakistan had left him "physically very weak."

"We are preparing for his burial," Uddin said, sobbing. "Please pray for my brother." Sarkar vanished in 1989 from his village of Bishnurampur, about 110 kilometers (70 miles) north of Dhaka, and traveled for several years in India before being picked up in 1997 by Pakistani authorities near the border. He spent 15 years in prison cells in Karachi and other locations in Pakistan. His family thought he was dead. But an anonymous caller from Pakistan told them he was in Pakistan, and the International Committee of the Red Cross helped secure his return in August 2012.

He arrived at the international airport in Dhaka that year - bearded, thin and ravaged by fatigue. Family members greeted and embraced him for the first time in 23 years. Sarkar said

little while wiping away tears rolling down his cheeks. His elder brother, Sekandar Ali, gripped him tightly and said "I can't believe you are alive! You are back!" before more gently suggesting, "Brother, let's go home. Mother is waiting for you." When Sarkar first disappeared, Ali searched the shipyard where he had once worked, but found no evidence of his brother. He and the family waited for years to hear news from Sarkar, but eventually came to believe he had died.

Upon his return to Bangladesh, Sarkar told The Associated Press that he had first crossed into India in 1989, visiting New Delhi for a few months as well as the northeastern states of Assam and Meghalaya. He then returned to New Delhi, got married and moved into a slum. But when his Indian wife left him, he decided to travel to Pakistan to find work. "Some people told me I will get a better work if I go to Pakistan. They told me you are a Muslim, go there, you will get better chance," he said in 2012. "But I got caught along the India-Pakistan border when I tried to enter Pakistan in 1997. I had no travel documents."

Sarkar said he was interrogated and tortured by Pakistani authorities



DHAKA, Bangladesh: In this file photo, Bangladeshi man Moslemuddin Sarkar, 52, center, who had been missing since 1989 is hugged by his brother Sekandar Ali, right, after he arrived at the airport in Dhaka, Bangladesh. — AP

who believed he was an Indian spy. Pakistan and India have a history of bitter relations and often imprison each other's citizens for lengthy periods for entering their territories. Both

sides have freed scores of such prisoners, but hundreds are still believed held in jails. Sarkar was buried near his home, his family said. He is survived by his two brothers. — AP

PAKISTAN WANTS AIR FORCE UPGRADE FOR PROLONGED MILITANT FIGHT SAYS NO END NEAR IN FIGHT AGAINST ISLAMIST MILITANTS

PARIS: Pakistan wants to upgrade its ageing fleet of fighter jets in anticipation of a prolonged battle against Islamist militants, although the purchase of fifth-generation planes would only be a last resort, a senior air force official said. US ally Pakistan, a nuclear-armed nation of 180 million people, is fighting a Taliban insurgency in its northwest, a separatist insurgency along its Iranian border in the west, and has a heavily militarized and disputed border with arch rival India in the east.

In 2014, the military launched a crackdown in the northwestern areas of North and South Waziristan and has managed to push back militants into a few pockets. But its air force, which will need to retire dozens of jets over the coming years, lacks the latest technology and relies heavily on a fleet of about 70 US -made Lockheed Martin F-16s, which are solely capable of carrying out precision targeting.

"Our concern is that we don't know how long these anti-terrorist operations will continue," Pakistan Air Force second-in-command Muhammad Ashfaq Arain told Reuters in an interview late on Wednesday. "We have weakened them (militants) to a great extent, but I don't see an end in the very near future, so all the burden is being shared by the F-16s and its pilots." Sceptics suspect that Pakistan's military is seeking an improved arsenal to counter the growing military might of India, its eastern

neighbor. The two countries have fought three wars since their violent separation in 1947 at the end of British colonial rule.

Pakistan's fleet also includes hundreds of Dassault Aviation French-made Mirage jets that are over 40 years old and F7 Chinese warplanes that are over 25 years old, both of which the air force plans to retire over the next few years. To fill the void, Islamabad has decided to bet on the JF-17 fighter, jointly developed by China and Pakistan, rather than spending billions on fifth-generation multi-role aircraft like Dassault's Rafale, which rival India is buying, or the Russian Su-35. That option, Arain said, had almost been ruled out for being too expensive and because Pakistan did not want to mix technologies and resources. It would only be reconsidered if "it was pushed against a wall". Instead, 16 JF-17s will be produced this year with a further 20 in 2017, but Arain acknowledged that the jets' usefulness in current operations was limited because it lacks precision targeting.

Damocles pod

"Operationally, the aircraft are working pretty well so we if we had a targeting pod on the JF-17, the burden would be shared," Arain said. He said his visit to Paris was in part aimed at assessing from French officials the prospects of supplying the Thales-made Damocles, a third-generation targeting pod. He said that was

Islamabad's priority for now. Previous negotiations in 2010 for a deal worth 1.2 billion euros (\$1.6 billion) worth of electronics and missiles collapsed under pressure from India, uncertainty over Pakistan's finances and fears of the transfer of technology given Chinese involvement in the JF-17.

"We're looking at the best option. The Damocles is a battle-proven system and the other options are not," Arain said. "If we do not get the Damocles pod for example, then we will need to look for alternate options that may not be proven." He said that in the long run, the air force was thinking about its needs beyond 2030 when F-16s and JF-17s would start to be replaced. The United States in February approved the sale to Pakistan of up to eight F-16 fighter jets for the short term, but Arain said even that was proving complicated.

"It's a much cheaper fighter jet, but buying more F-16s is economically not feasible for us and then there is a lot of human outcry," he said. Arain countered any suggestion that Pakistan might want greater air power to target India by saying that New Delhi itself was expanding its fleet. "We get eight aircraft and there are people who start to say that it will tilt the balance of power in South Asia. But when somebody across the border buys 36 aircraft and has plans to buy 126, that doesn't change the balance of power," he said, referring to India. — Reuters

SECULAR ACTIVIST HACKED TO DEATH IN BANGLADESH

DHAKA: A Bangladeshi law student who posted against Islamism on his Facebook page has been murdered, police said yesterday, the latest in a series of killings of secular activists and bloggers in the country. "At least four assailants hacked Nazimuddin Samad's head with a machete on Wednesday night. As he fell down, one of them shot him with a pistol from close range. He died on the spot," deputy commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Syed Nurul Islam told AFP.

"It is a case of targeted killing. But no group has claimed responsibility," Islam said, adding police were investigating whether Samad was murdered for his writing. The Dhaka Tribune said the assailants shouted Allahu Akbar (God is Greatest) as they attacked Samad on a busy road near Dhaka's Jagannath University, where he was a law student. Samad had only recently arrived in Dhaka from the northeastern city of Sylhet to study law. Deputy commissioner Islam said police suspect the attackers had been monitoring the victim since before he arrived in Dhaka.

Last year, suspected Islamist militants hacked to death at least four atheist bloggers and a secular publisher in a long-running series of targeting killings of anti-Islam activists in the Muslim majority country. Police arrested members of a banned group called the Ansarullah Bangla Team over those murders, although none have yet been prosecuted. Imran Sarker, who leads Bangladesh's largest online secular activist group, said Samad had joined nationwide protests in 2013 against top Islamist leaders accused of committing war crimes during the country's war of independence. "He was a secular online activist and a loud voice against any social injustice. He was against Islamic fundamentalism," said Sarker, head of the Bangladesh Bloggers Association. Samad had written against radical Islam in a number of recent Facebook postings. — AFP



WASHINGTON, District of Columbia: File photo shows Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi attends a plenary session during the 2016 Nuclear Security Summit at the Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC. — AFP

INDIA PM BLAMES 'ACT OF FRAUD' FOR DEADLY BRIDGE COLLAPSE

NEW DELHI: Indian leader Narendra Modi said yesterday a fatal flyover collapse in Kolkata was "an act of fraud" and accused West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee of corruption at a state election rally. Modi, campaigning for his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said the collapse was the result of corrupt practices under Banerjee's ruling Trinamool Congress state govern-

ment. "A huge bridge collapsed and what did these people say—an act of God. Didi (Banerjee), this is not an act of God but an act of fraud," Modi said at the rally in Birpara, a town in the state's far northeast.

Twenty-six people were killed when a portion of a flyover that was under construction collapsed onto a busy street crushing scores of pedestrians and cars on March 31. A top official

from the construction company IVRCL that was building the bridge drew ire for saying the collapse was "an act of God", although Banerjee herself is not known to have said this. Nine officials of the firm have been arrested on charges including murder as investigators probe negligence in the disaster, which came on the brink of a month-long state election expected to be closely fought.

Modi said it was a divine message to voters in the state to reject the chief minister's party in the polls over what he alleged was rampant corruption. "This business of money and death led to the collapse of the Vivekananda bridge," Modi said. "In a sense it is an act of God that it fell on election eve to expose your (Banerjee's) misgovernance," he said. The BJP, which has failed to gain ground in West Bengal and won just one seat in the previous election, is trying to put the ruling party on the back foot over the incident.

Derek O'Brien, a lawmaker and chief national spokesman for the Trinamool Congress, accused Modi in a social media post of "playing cheap politics over a tragedy". "These are not words befitting of the Prime Minister of India. They bring his high office to disrepute... The Trinamool Congress is far from being a corrupt party," he wrote on Facebook. Banerjee's party is facing a two-way challenge in the elections after previously ending the 34-year-rule of Leftist parties, which have entered into an alliance with the Indian National Congress. West Bengal is one of five Indian states holding elections this month and next and the results will be announced on May 19. — AFP

CLASHES IN KASHMIR AFTER INDIAN TROOPS KILL 2 LOCAL REBELS

SRINAGAR, India: Anti-India protesters attacked government forces with rocks and burned an armored vehicle yesterday as they participated in the funerals of two insurgents killed in a gunbattle in the disputed Kashmir region, an Indian official said. The clashes erupted as police fired tear gas to disperse thousands of people protesting the killing of the two by Indian forces in the southern Shopian area of the Indian portion of Kashmir, said senior paramilitary officer Nalin Prabhat.

Prabhat said the two, including Naseer Pandit, a former police constable who joined the militants last year, belonged to Kashmir's largest rebel group Hizbul Mujahideen. As the news of the killings spread, thousands of people gathered in the towns of Shopian and Pulwama to take part in their funerals, chanting slogans in favor of Pakistan and against Indian rule. Clashes erupted in Pulwama as police fired tear gas

to stop the protesters from marching on the main road. The protesters responded by throwing rocks at the police and by burning an armored vehicle, police said.

There were no reports of any injuries in the clashes. Funerals for militants usually draw thousands in Kashmir, where sentiments against Indian rule run deep. Rebels have been fighting since 1989 for Kashmir's independence or merger with Pakistan, which controls another portion of the territory in the west. More than 68,000 people have been killed in the militant uprising and Indian military crackdown. The rebel groups have largely been suppressed by Indian troops in recent years, and resistance is now principally expressed through street protests. India and Pakistan have fought two wars over control of Kashmir since they won independence from British colonialists in 1947. — AP

MALDIVES PRESIDENT LOOKS TO REBUILD TIES ON INDIA TRIP

NEW DELHI: Maldives President Abdulla Yameen will meet with Narendra Modi next week, New Delhi said yesterday, the pair's first tete-a-tete since the Indian premier controversially cancelled a visit to the island nation last year. Yameen, who will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, arrives in New Delhi for the two-day visit on Sunday and will have a meeting and lunch with the Hindu nationalist prime minister on Monday. Ties between traditional allies India and the Maldives took a hit last year due to a bitter internal power struggle in the Maldives which led to the jailing of former president Mohamed Nasheed.

The political turmoil prompted Modi to cancel a planned visit to the Maldives in March 2015 at the last minute, but a trip by Indian foreign minister Sushma Swaraj in October appears to have calmed tensions. "India and Maldives commemorated 50 years of diplomatic relations last year," said Vikas Swarup, the Indian foreign ministry spokesman, at a media briefing. "Both countries have historically had a close relationship both as neighbors and friends in the Indian Ocean region." India has been wary of China's growing interest in the far-flung archipelago, as Beijing builds a network of ports in the Indian Ocean dubbed the String of Pearls.

In 2012, the Maldives cancelled an airport expansion deal with an Indian infrastructure firm and later gave the contract to a Chinese company, ruffling feathers in New Delhi. On Wednesday, President Yameen inaugurated construction work on the \$800-million project in the capital Male, which he said would boost economic activities. The atoll nation of 400,000 people has generated headlines over a crackdown against political dissent which has dented its popular image as a holiday paradise. — AFP

RUNAWAY GROOM: CHINA NABS FRAUD SUSPECT AT AIRPORT

SHANGHAI: Chinese authorities have detained the head of a group of finance companies accused of defrauding more than 100,000 investors, as he sought to board a private plane allegedly hired to take him to Europe for his wedding, media reports and police said. Xu Qin, described as the "controller" of the Zhongjin-linked companies, was held at an airport in Shanghai as he attempted to fly to Italy for the ceremony with other executives, on an aircraft chartered for the purpose, media reports said.

He was among more than 20 managers of Zhongjin detained by police and accused of swindling investors through falsifying operations and inflating business performance, according to a police statement released on Wednesday. The Zhongjin stable of companies, headquartered in commercial hub Shanghai, pooled money from investors for a variety of funds and projects, with the promise of high returns.

Police gave no estimates for the size of the case, but reports said it involved more than 130,000 investors with the firm raising at least 34 billion yuan (\$5.3 billion) in funds. Authorities said Xu registered more than 50 subsidiaries and controlled over 100 linked companies.

The case is the latest financial fraud to emerge as China's economy slows, recording its lowest growth in a quarter of a century last year. In a recent scandal, peer-to-peer (P2P) lending firm Ezubao bilked 900,000 investors out of \$7.6 billion by offering high interest rates which it was unable to pay, in what one executive described in a televised confession as a "typical Ponzi scheme". A wealth management firm, Shanghai-based Jinlu Financial Advisors, has also struggled to pay back investors, China Business News said on its website. An associated company this week announced plans to make payments within two years. In the southwestern city of Kunming, private financing firm Yunnan Pan-Asia Folk Capital Registration Service Centre stopped making some payments to investors in November last year, sparking a public protest in February, an investor told AFP. — AFP

OUTRAGE OVER ON-CAMERA ABDUCTION ATTEMPT IN CHINA

BEIJING: The choking, assault and attempted kidnapping of a Chinese woman at a Beijing hotel in full view of security cameras and multiple passers-by has sparked a social media firestorm, with more than two billion views. It is the latest in a series of flashpoint incidents in China where witnesses have stood by doing nothing, sparking debate about whether the country is turning into a society of bystanders. A woman using the screen name "Wanwan" on Tuesday posted a video of surveillance footage showing her being assaulted by a man in the hallway of a Yitel hotel, an economy chain. Her assailant choked her, pulled her hair and tried to abduct her while she shouted, "I don't know you, let go of me!" she said.

A hotel staff member who assumed that they were a couple having a fight observed them at close proximity for several minutes and asked them take their dispute elsewhere, but did not intervene, she added. After a failed attempt to flee via the lifts, she was eventually rescued by a female passerby who came to her aid, the footage showed. "The whole incident lasted five to six minutes, in a place entirely covered with surveillance cameras, yet not a single security or hotel management staff member came out to help me," Wanwan lamented.

The most popular of numerous hashtags referring to the incident had accumulated over two billion viewings by Thursday afternoon on China's Twitter-like Weibo—around 50 percent more than the number of people in the world's most populous country. It had over two million comments. "When a man hits a woman, no mat-

ter whether they know each other or not and no matter what the reason or what the circumstances, you should always mediate and pull them apart if possible," said one.

'Absurd'

Witnesses are often afraid to come to the aid of strangers in China, where there have been numerous high-profile attempts by injured parties to try to extort money from those who have helped them.

In one well-known 2009 case, a driver who assisted an elderly woman was ordered by a court to pay her 100,000 yuan (\$16,500), on the grounds that he would not have helped if he was not responsible for hitting her. In another oft-cited 2011 incident, a toddler named Yue Yue in Guangdong province was run over by two separate vehicles and later died after being ignored by more than a dozen passers-by.

The country only passed its first ever law against domestic violence in December, despite government statistics stating that nearly a quarter of all married Chinese women have fallen victim to it. Wanwan said she called police multiple times, only to be told the event "wasn't their business". They later opened an investigation. In a separate post, Wanwan said the hotel had offered her money to take down her post—which she refused. The day after her original post, women staged a protest outside the hotel in support, holding signs reading: "Hotels have a responsibility to protect women" and "Who will be responsible for protecting women's safety?"

Yitel's parent company Homeinns issued a

statement saying: "We deeply apologize to the person involved and the general public." The incident had revealed "insufficient security management and customer service", among other issues, it admitted. Many social media posts gave women basic self-defense tips, while others told them not to go out alone at night or dress too fashionably.

"This society! We don't talk about how to improve security or our bureaucratic governing style, or about using the law to punish violent criminals when their victims have nowhere to turn!" wrote one Weibo commentator in disgust. "Instead, we ask passers-by and girls to be more careful and not go out at night—this is absurd!" — AFP



BEIJING: This photo shows Liu Hongni (left), a manager of the Yitel hotel, talking to journalists during a press conference in Beijing.—AFP

CLINTON TELLS WORKERS SHE'LL STAND UP TO CHEATING CHINA

PHILADELPHIA: A day after losing Wisconsin, White House hopeful Hillary Clinton unleashed a blistering critique of China while campaigning Wednesday in blue-collar Pennsylvania, warning the Asian giant must "toe the line" if she becomes president. The eastern US state, where organized labor is an influential force, hosts its presidential primaries on April 26. "China illegally dumps cheap products in our markets, steals our trade secrets, plays games with their currency, gives unfair advantages to state-owned-enterprises and discriminates against American companies," she said.

"We will throw the book at China for their illegal actions." Clinton's remarks, delivered to a state AFL-CIO union convention in Philadelphia, were among her most forceful campaign trail comments about Beijing. Her rival for the Democratic nomination, Senator Bernie Sanders, addresses the gathering yesterday. Clinton, seeking to regain her footing in the nomination race after losing six of the last seven state contests, pointed to her experience as secretary of state as a measure of her ability to influence Beijing. "I've gone toe to toe with China's top leaders on some of the toughest issues we face, from cyber attacks to human rights to climate change to trade

and more," she said.

"I know how they operate, and they know if I'm president, they're going to have to toe the line, because we're going to once and for all get fair treatment, or they're not going to get access to our markets." At one point she referred to China as "the biggest abuser of global trade." Clinton defeated Barack Obama in Pennsylvania in their 2008 primary battle, thanks to support from union Democrats, and she aims to repeat her victory in three weeks' time.

But she will need to reassure workers who have criticized her late opposition to the trans-Pacific trade deal recently signed by President Barack Obama. Sanders has steadfastly opposed the agreement from Day One.—AFP

INDONESIA RESUMES EXECUTIONS AS IT STEPS UP 'WAR ON DRUGS'

AUTHORITIES LAUNCH CRACKDOWN ON CHILD EXPLOITATION

JAKARTA: Indonesia is preparing to execute more foreigners convicted of drug offenses as it maintains a contentious policy of imposing capital punishment for drug crimes. Attorney General Muhammad Prasetyo said Thursday that his office is looking for the right time to carry out the executions. He did not specify how many convicts would face firing squads in what would be the third set of executions under President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo's administration.

"We are still concentrating on drug convicts. We want to see a deterrent effect," Prasetyo said when asked whether people convicted of other death-penalty crimes such as murder would be executed. "We are waiting for the right time" to carry out the executions, he said. Indonesia has extremely strict drug laws and more than 130 people are on death row, mostly for drug crimes. About a third of them are foreigners.

Fourteen people convicted of drug-related crimes, mostly foreigners, were executed last year amid an international outcry. Indonesia's relations with Australia were particularly strained following the execution of two of its nationals in April last year. Local media reports quoted the chief of the Jakarta prosecutor's office as saying 10 foreigners would be executed: four Nigerians, two Malaysians, two Americans, one Zimbabwean and one

Senegalese. In the past, Indonesia has avoided executions during Islam's holy month of Ramadan.

Child exploitation

In another development, authorities in the sprawling Indonesian capital are cracking down on the exploitation of children after a raft of cases, from child labor to violence and sexual assault, was uncovered in recent weeks. Tens of thousands of children are trafficked annually in Indonesia, with the majority forced into prostitution and manual labor, the United Nations' child welfare agency UNICEF says.

The drive follows the arrests last month of several Jakarta residents who sedated infants and used them to beg for money or hired them to motorists looking to evade minimum passenger norms designed to fight the city's notorious traffic congestion. "These cases are a wake-up call for us all to improve our policing style, to make it proactive and prevent violence against children," said Jakarta police spokesman Mohammad Iqbal.

Authorities have begun designating safe houses for vulnerable children in the city, besides tightening patrols in neighborhoods where there are many children, he added. This week, the city government suspended a rule requiring each car to carry at least three passengers, saying it was encouraging child labor. The measure had been

aimed at congestion in Jakarta, where poor public transport forces commuters to spend three or four hours in their cars each day, at an annual cost to the economy of about 65 trillion rupiah, or about \$5 billion.

The practice of hiring extra passengers, or "jockeys", off the street to satisfy the three-passenger rule has long been in use in the city of 10 million people. But the discovery of some jockeys drugging babies and offering them for hire prompted authorities to suspend the rule. "Many victims are traumatized and stressed when they come to us, so we have to counsel them," said Neneng Heryani, the director of a state-run rehabilitation centre that offers academic, sport and musical activities for the children.

The centre in East Jakarta looks after about 40 children, but thousands more remain at risk of exploitation. Experts have welcomed the latest efforts to combat child abuse, but have urged the government to take a comprehensive approach in tackling the problem. "At the moment this is more like fire-fighting and reactionary," said Arist Merdeka Sirait, chief of a national panel on child protection, pointing to an urgent need for preventive measures. "People need to be educated," he said. "The whole mindset needs to be changed, to think of children not just as a source of income, but as needing protection." — Agencies

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Lifestyle

Friday Times

www.kuwaittimes.net

British street artist Banksy's only known surviving work in Italy, a mural entitled 'Madonna with a pistol', is pictured in Naples. Banksy's mural, which has proved a popular attraction for tourists visiting the city, has been placed under a protective cover in the hope of preserving it.—AFP

Kesha loses suit over abuse



This image released by The Orchard shows Jesse Eisenberg, left, and Devin Druid in a scene from "Louder Than Bombs." — AP

Innovative storytelling lifts 'Louder Than Bombs'

Few actors, male or female, are better at portraying an innate sense of mystery than the great French actress Isabelle Huppert. Her face seems to hold dozens of expressions all at once. You get the sense that there's always something deeper underneath - and that you'll never really know all of it. And so it should be little surprise that Huppert is the most watchable and, yes, mysterious element of "Louder Than Bombs," by Norwegian director Joachim Trier - even though her character is already dead. The film - intimate and often moving, yet ultimately too disjointed to feel satisfying - examines her character's life only in flashback, exploring the effects of her loss on family members. And yet, though we want to know more about her than we get, she's the most vibrant presence onscreen.

Sympathetic character

Huppert plays Isabelle Reed, a celebrated war photographer. Despite a career spent flirting with danger in far-off locales, her death has come in the most mundane of places: On a road near her home in suburban New York, in a car crash. Isabelle has left three men behind to grieve, all in crucial states of transition. Her husband, Gene (a thoughtful Gabriel Byrne) is an former film actor now teaching in the local school. Her older son, Jonah (Jesse Eisenberg) is a wunderkind university professor and new father, a responsibility he seems highly ambivalent about (when, oh when will Eisenberg play a sympathetic character? Not here.) And her youngest, Conrad (Devin Druid, touching), is just trying to get through high school, adolescence and a painful first crush, not to mention cope with the death of his mother.

The action, such as it is - the film progresses in a decidedly non-linear fashion - begins three years after Isabelle's death. Gene is helping to

organize a retrospective of his wife's work, a project that will involve the dredging up of some unpleasant truths. Richard (David Strathairn), a dashing former colleague of Isabelle's, is writing an article to accompany the show, and tells Gene he'll have to address the true cause of Isabelle's death, which was reported as an accident. Not to give away too much, but each man in the film seems to be at a different place in his understanding of - or explanation for - the tragic event. And so we see different scenarios of the crash unfold.

Everyone misbehaves

This multiple-perspectives technique is one favored by Trier, who's making his English-language debut here, throughout the film (Eskil Vogt co-wrote the screenplay.) At one point, we see Gene, concerned about Conrad, surreptitiously follow his son from a park to a cafe to a cemetery, trying to figure out his behavior. Only later, when we see the scene replayed from Conrad's perspective, do we understand what the heck he was doing. But what the heck is anyone doing in this movie? One might say that every character in this study of a family in disarray means to do the right thing, but has a strange way of showing it. Everyone misbehaves. Eisenberg's Jonah is the first person we see in the film, holding the sweet, tiny finger of his newborn baby in the hospital, marveling over this new life. Moments later, though, he runs into an old girlfriend and lies, bald-faced (and hilariously), about the reason he's in the hospital. Apparently he's not quite comfortable with his new role as a father. —AP

Katie Holmes moves behind the camera for 'All We Had'

Katie Holmes walks into Jean-Georges clutching an oversized paper coffee cup. "I'm the jerk who brought the Starbucks," she laughs, as a waiter swoops down to whisk the offending coffee from her hand. Holmes, casually elegant in jeans and a tan coat, has been holed up in an editing suite, putting the finishing touches on her directorial debut "All We Had." An adaptation of Annie Weatherwax's novel, the film's look at a family pushed into poverty by the 2008 financial crisis seems worlds removed from the crowd at the posh Trump Tower restaurant.

"There was a line in the book, something like, 'Superheroes drive broken-down cars, and they take their kid with them everywhere no matter what,'" Holmes said. "That was such a wonderful theme and a nice thing to put into the world." Holmes not only directed the film, she stars as Rita, a hardscrabble mother fighting to create a better life for her daughter. The story resonated with the multihyphenate, who drew on her relationship with Suri, her 9-year-old daughter with Tom Cruise, to create her character. Emerging as one of the most promising actresses of her generation, with compelling turns in "Wonder Boys" and "Pieces of April" while starring in TV series "Dawson's Creek," Holmes found her subsequent marriage to and divorce from Cruise picked over by tabloids.

She's kept a lower profile in recent years, appearing in Broadway plays, in an arc on "Ray Donovan," and as Jackie Kennedy in "The Kennedys," while largely shunning the spotlight. Holmes got comfortable in the director's chair while shepherding a "30 for 30" documentary about gymnast Nadia Comaneci for ESPN, then set her sights on directing a feature. It was a career move that Jane Rosenthal, her friend and

founder of the Tribeca Film Festival, had urged the actress to make. "When you produce or direct, you have more control of your own destiny," said Rosenthal, who signed on to produce the film. Cablevision and Madison Square Garden chief James Dolan financed the picture, which premieres April 15 at the Tribeca fest.

Holmes meticulously worked out a shot list and storyboarded the project, shot over 24 days last summer in New York City and the Lower Hudson Valley. Even before filming started, she would send Rosenthal photos or videos that inspired her. "One day my daughter and I were going to ballet class," said Holmes, "and the sun was shining a certain way and I was videoing on my iPhone because the shadows were great." Adam Schweitzer, Holmes' longterm agent, helped the actress find the project at the manuscript stage with his team at ICM. He visited the set and came away impressed by the way Holmes juggled multiple roles. "Maybe it comes from being an actress, but she's really great at communicating," said Schweitzer. "She had total command." Overseeing "All We Had" required Holmes to dig deep. "I was trying to find the look and tone," she said. And while the character of Rita was a meaty role, her struggles to keep her family afloat financially were emotionally draining. Despite the twin pressures of both jobs, Holmes insists she was never tempted to stick just to directing. "I'm an actress," she said simply. "You don't give good roles away." "All We Had" premieres at Tribeca on April 15. ICM Partners is handling sales for the film. — Reuters



File photo shows Kesha arriving on the red carpet for the MTV Video Music Awards (VMA) at The Forum in Inglewood, California. — AFP

Singer Kesha loses suit over abuse

A judge on Wednesday refused a plea by US singer Kesha to free her from a contract with an allegedly abusive producer, in a case that has galvanized feminists. Kesha had asked a court to suspend her exclusive contract with Dr Luke's Kemosabe Records, part of the Sony Music conglomerate, saying that the producer raped her and tormented her emotionally. But a New York judge dismissed her lawsuit on largely technical grounds, ruling in one count that Kesha could not seize on the city's laws against hate crimes.

Kesha failed to prove that Dr. Luke "harbored animus toward women or was motivated by gender animus when he allegedly behaved violently toward Kesha," Judge Shirley Kornreich wrote. "Every rape is not a gender-motivated hate crime," she wrote. The lawsuit did not ask the court to look into the substance of the assault allegations. Kesha said that Dr. Luke, whose real name is Lukasz Gottwald, drugged and raped her in 2005 and 2008.

The 29-year-old singer, whose full name is Kesha Rose Seberty, did not press charges at the time and said in the lawsuit that Dr. Luke

threatened to destroy her career if she went public. But the judge said the court did not have jurisdiction, with Kesha living in California and entering the contract with the New York-based label after the alleged violence occurred.

"Kesha failed to plead that any of the alleged discrimination occurred in New York State or City," the judge wrote, adding that the statute of limitations had likely passed in any case on rape charges. The decision deals a major blow to Kesha although she had also filed suit in California. Kesha has enjoyed an outpouring of support after the New York court in February refused to issue an initial injunction on the contract. Adele and Taylor Swift, two of the top women in music, have both publicly backed Kesha and feminist protesters have rallied outside Sony Music's New York headquarters. —AFP



This CD cover image released by Savoy Records shows, 'English Heart,' a release by Ronnie Spector. — AP

Ronnie Spector honors UK peers with 'English Heart'

In 1964, Ronnie Spector toured Britain with the Ronettes just weeks before the Beatles arrived in America. "English Heart" is her tribute to that British Invasion, in turn influenced by her band and former husband Phil Spector's "Wall of Sound." While Spector is often cited for the power of her pipes, these 11 songs are styled more around subtlety and insinuation. Producer Scott Jacoby has wisely favored the feel of the 1960s originals over the sounds, evocation rather than imitation. There are exceptions, like the thumping drums and Farfisa organ on the Dave Clark Five tune "Because."

Conversely, electronic percussion on "You've Got Your Troubles" (originally by The Fortunes) lends a contemporary touch, contributing to the accommodating combination of old and new. If there's a jarring moment on the album, it's Spector substituting "baby" for "Lord" on the refrain of "Don't Let Me Be Misunderstood," which somehow manages to seem faster than the Animals' version when it is actually slower. Spector wisely covers smaller but superior US hits like Lulu's "Oh Me Oh My (I'm a Fool for You Baby)" and Sandie Shaw's "Girl Don't Come" instead of the usual smashes.

A version of the Rolling Stones' semi-obscure "I'd Much Rather Be With the Girls" with the daughter of her late sister (and fellow Ronette) Estelle Bennett and cousin Cindy Mizelle is pure joy. Hindered by an uneven recording career since the '70s, Spector also covers the Zombies, Beatles, Bee Gees and Kinks on "English Heart," and sounds ready to create some more memories of her own. — AP

Review: Melissa McCarthy's 'The Boss' misses the mark

The search continues for a suitable showcase for the awesome talents of Melissa McCarthy outside of films directed by Paul Feig. The latest vehicle to give it a try, "The Boss," has a promising enough blueprint for comedy. McCarthy plays the red-haired, thoroughly turtlenecked Michelle Darnell, a ruthless, self-made executive whose Martha Stewart-like descent lands her in white-collar prison. Penniless upon release, she moves in with her former and much mistreated assistant Claire (Kristen Bell) and her daughter Rachel (Ella Anderson).

But, as in McCarthy's slipshod road movies "Identity Thief" and "Tammy," the material here isn't on her level, the laughs are largely cheap and once again, the hall-of-fame comic actress is stuck in a minor-league movie. Like "Tammy," "The Boss" was directed by Ben Falcone, McCarthy's husband and longtime collaborator, and written by them both. (Steve Mallory, who also dates back to their improve days at the Upright Citizens Brigade, also pitches in on the screenplay). In both films, the premise is solidly rooted in the common frustrations of thoughtless bosses and dead-end jobs. Tammy's midlife crisis was partially prompted by a meltdown with her fast-food manager (played by Falcone), but in "The Boss," Bell's Claire is the one suffering under tyrants.

Business rival

Michelle is introduced as the 47th wealthiest woman in America, a perch she flaunts as a finance guru. At an arena rally, she descends to the stage on a bird with dollar bills showering her. She's Suze Orman times a hundred. Her downfall is plotted by a business rival, Renault (Peter Dinklage), who gets her locked up for insider trading. Claire, a single mother, finds another job with yet another uncaring supervisor (the underused Cecily Strong). But Michelle turns up on Claire's Chicago doorstep, looking for a place to stay.

The first sign of trouble in "The Boss" isn't the lack of a Bruce Springsteen cameo, but Michelle's first night on Claire's couch bed. When she sits down, the bed violently flings her high up on the wall, a crudely brutal, digitally faked moment of poorly calibrated slapstick that seems to exist only for the movie's trailer. Other such bits crop up, like a tumble down stone steps by Michelle, that feel like desperate reaches for laughs. After attending Rachel's Girl Scouts meeting, Michelle hits on an idea for a homemade brownie operation that will teach young women more capitalistic ideals and give them a percent of the profits, too.

Sweetness and crassness

By even the standards of redemptive occupations in comedies, it's a thin concept. But Michelle's rival troupe of treat-selling girls begins to take off, bringing back all of Michelle's hard-nosed business tactics. A street fight between the girls follows, as does the expected lesson about family and generosity. "The Boss" is tighter than "Tammy" and it's not without laughs. With few supporting players providing much humor (Kathy Bates, as Michelle's mentor, is entirely squandered), McCarthy shoulders the film.

And she remains a captivating, unpredictable force in even a mediocre film, with a rare gift for both bombastic and humble characters, sweetness and crassness, physical comedy and verbal spats. But so far, those gifts have only been fully put to use by Feig. Their films together - "Bridesmaids," "The Heat" and "Spy" - are a class above the rest. Thankfully, their next one, "Ghostbusters," is due this summer. "The Boss," a Universal Pictures release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "sexual content, language and brief drug use." Running time: 99 minutes. Two stars out of four. — AP



This image released by Universal Studios shows Kristen Bell, front row second from left, and Melissa McCarthy, center, in a scene from, 'The Boss.' — AP



This file photo shows Willie Nelson (left), Kris Kristofferson (second left), Merle Haggard (second right) and Blake Shelton (right) performing on stage during the 56th Grammy Awards at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, California.

Country's original outlaw Merle Haggard dies at 79

Country music legend Merle Haggard, an outlaw in both song and life who gave voice to the hippie era's disaffected conservatives before moderating his views, died Wednesday on his 79th birthday. Haggard, who had recently returned to tour despite frequent illness, died following a pneumonia at his home in northern California, a representative said. His son, fellow musician Ben Haggard, wrote on Facebook that his father predicted a week ago that he would die on his birthday and that "he took his last breath surrounded by family and friends."

Tributes poured in from across the music world for Haggard, who released a staggering amount of work over six decades with more than 30 songs that topped the US country charts. "We've lost one of the greatest writers and singers of all time. His heart was as tender as his love ballads. I loved him like a brother," singer Dolly Parton said in a statement. Willie Nelson, a collaborator of Haggard who is the best-known living star of the outlaw country genre, wrote on Facebook that the late singer was "my brother, my friend."

Haggard had the greatest impact with his 1969 hit "Okie from Muskogee," which emerged as an anthem of sorts for the counterculture to the counterculture who had become so prominent among US youth. The song-its title reference to a slang for a person from the conservative Plains state of Oklahoma, in which Muskogee is a small city-tells of pride in the US flag and the war against communism in Vietnam. "We don't smoke marijuana in Muskogee / We don't take no trips on LSD / We don't burn no draft cards down on Main Street / But we love living right and being free," he sings in the opening lines.

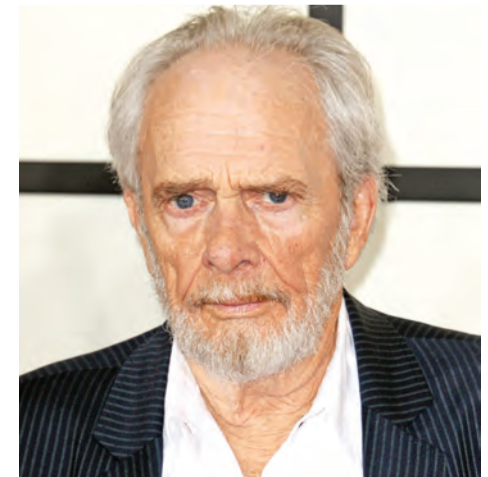
Transition from conservative image

While the song became a rallying cry in the US culture wars, Haggard later described "Okie from Muskogee" as an attempt to understand heartland America rather than a statement of his own principles. He became a critic of the more recent war in Iraq and has been an avowed supporter of

Democratic presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton, even writing a song in 2007 for her earlier campaign with the line, "Let's put a woman in charge."

"If a guy doesn't learn anything in 50 years, there's something wrong with him," he told Men's Journal last year. In another recent interview, Haggard voiced solidarity with African Americans protesting against police brutality and said the former Confederacy country music's home turf had not addressed the Civil War. Married five times and the singer of many love ballads, Haggard became best known for outlaw country songs about run-ins with the law—a subject matter he knew first-hand.

Deeply affected by his father's death when he was a child, Haggard learned guitar as a youth and became involved in petty crime, landing in California's San Quentin prison for burglary and put in solitary confinement for brewing moonshine. He credited a 1958 performance at the prison by legend Johnny Cash—who turned a later concert at San Quentin into a celebrated album—with inspiring him to pursue music. —AFP



File photo shows Merle Haggard as he arrives on the red carpet for the 56th Grammy Awards at the Staples Center.



British Master Tailor Kathryn Sargent poses for a photograph during a photo call to promote the launch of her shop on Savile Row in central London.



Kathryn Sargent poses for a photograph. — AFP photos

First female master tailor cuts through on London's Savile Row

Kathryn Sargent made history on Wednesday by becoming the first female master tailor to open her own premises on London's Savile Row—the epicenter of traditional British bespoke tailoring. Sargent, who worked her way up the ranks during 15 years on the prestigious street at Gieves and Hawkes, opened her first tailoring house around the corner in 2012, before seizing the opportunity to move back onto Savile Row in her own right.

"It has always been a dream of mine. It feels fantastic. There's a real sense of achievement," the 41-year-old told AFP. Sargent has started with a six-month residency covering the spring and summer season, with a view to her tailoring house becoming a permanent fixture on the Row. Having become well-known for her skills in the close-knit Savile Row community, she was offered the chance to open her own premises.

"We're always talking and working together on how we can promote our craft nationally and internationally and also preserve our skills and keep the standards high. The landlords here work with us to do that too," Sargent said. "It was discussed whether I would like to be on Savile Row and the answer was 'Yes!' I've always wanted to have my name above the door of a shop here. "The opportunity of having a shop here for the summer to showcase our work and engage with potential new clients, it was too good not to take up."

Sargent discovered her passion for tailoring while studying at fashion college and began her apprenticeship in 1996 at Gieves and Hawkes, which holds the prestigious 1 Savile Row address. Savile Row's tailoring history dates back to 1803 and she became the first woman on the street to be appointed head cutter in 2009, before leaving to create her own Kathryn Sargent

Bespoke tailoring house in 2012. William Skinner, chairman of the Savile Row Bespoke Association, said: "It's fitting that the first woman to be appointed as a head cutter on Savile Row is returning to open a shop of her own and is testament to the continued appeal of Savile Row as the sartorial home of high quality, hand-crafted tailoring." — AFP



Kathryn Sargent poses for a photograph during a photo call to promote the launch of her shop.

Lady Gaga's childhood piano could bring \$200,000 at auction

Lady Gaga was only 5 years old when she wrote her first song on an upright piano that her grandparents bought. Now the instrument that inspired the pop music sensation is going on the auction block at a pre-sale estimate of \$100,000 to \$200,000. The piano is being offered at Julien's Auctions' "Music Icons" memorabilia sale at the Hard Rock Cafe New York on May 21. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of the piano will benefit the Born This Way Foundation, launched by Gaga in 2012 to empower youth. The organization also addresses issues of bullying, poor body image, and acceptance and tolerance.

The Everett Piano Co instrument was featured in a 2011-2012 "Women Who Rock" exhibition at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland. Gaga's paternal grandparents purchased the piano for \$780 in 1966 and later gave it to her parents. Little Stefani Germanotta began taking piano lessons when she was 4 and wrote her first composition, "Dollar Bills," a year later, a song inspired by Pink Floyd's "Money." "When Stefani started to crawl, she would use the leg of the piano to pull herself up and stand, and in doing so, her fingers would eventually land on the keys," her mother, Cynthia

Germanotta, recalled once. "She would stay there and just keep pressing the keys to hear the sound. We would then start to hold her up or sit on the bench and let her tinker."

When she turned 13, her parents bought her a baby grand piano. Darren Julien, owner of Julien's Auctions, said investors and collectors are looking for ways to diversify their portfolios and historical artifacts like rock 'n' roll memorabilia that have proven to be great investments. "Values continue to increase due to the collectability of Western pop culture globally," he said. "Rock 'n' roll memorabilia is the new art market." The auction also includes more than 85 Elvis Presley items, including a custom-made 1969 Gibson Dove guitar that Presley's father made for him. It was given to a fan by Presley at a 1975 concert. The guitar has Elvis Presley inland across the fingerboard and a Kenpo Karate decal (Presley was a black belt in karate). It's estimated to bring \$200,000 to \$300,000. Memorabilia from singer-guitarist Stevie Ray Vaughan, Kurt Cobain, the Beatles, Johnny Cash, Michael Jackson and other music icons also are part of the sale. — AP



Photo shows a piano owned by singer Lady Gaga in Culver City, Calif. — AP



In this file photo, the chair dedicated to bombing victim Baylee Almon is pictured in the Field of Empty Chairs at the Oklahoma City National Memorial at dusk in Oklahoma City.



The field of empty chairs at the Oklahoma City National Memorial. — AP photos

Visiting the **Oklahoma bombing** memorial 21 years later

This month marks 21 years since the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995. The Oklahoma City National Memorial, built on the bombing site, provides a quiet space to reflect on the realities of violence and to renew personal hopes for peace at a time when acts of terror continue around the world. On a recent visit, I found myself reacting in different ways to the site's symbols and features. First, the chairs. There are 168 of them, one for each victim, set out in a field where the Alfred P Murrah Federal Building once stood. They're arranged in nine rows representing each floor of the building, and each chair is marked with the name of someone killed on that floor. Nineteen small chairs represent the children who died in the attack. I could hardly look

at the seats without seeing a man, woman or child in each one.

The long reflecting pool at the center of the memorial had a calming effect. It's designed to symbolize the event's limitless impact by reflecting all that has changed since the attack. When it happened, the Oklahoma City bombing was the worst act of terrorism that had ever taken place on US soil, a distinction that now belongs to 9/11. The moment of destruction in Oklahoma City is symbolized by the massive Gates of Time on either end of the reflecting pool.

The gates are marked with numbers representing the minute before and after the explosion that morning. The first, 9:01, represents the last minute of peace before the deadly strike. At the oth-

er end, 9:03 marks the beginning of recovery. For me, the gates drove home the reality of what happened. At a fence near the entrance, mourners and visitors leave written tributes, flowers, flags and other mementos. Perusing the display, I felt anger, then grief, then reluctant acceptance. As the gate inscription states: "May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity." — AP



In this photo, Mark Falgren, from left, Magnus Larsson, Lukas Graham Forchhammer and Kasper Daugaard of Lukas Graham pose for a portrait in Los Angeles. — AP

Denmark's Lukas Graham makes US mark with '7 Years'

Lukas Graham Forchhammer has an American dream. The Danish singer-songwriter from the pop-soul band Lukas Graham has topped charts in Europe and Australia, but he always hoped to reach audiences in the United States. "I've always wanted to release records in America. That's where I believe the music belongs and the style and the eclectic musical mix that we put together kind of belongs here," Forchhammer said.

His stateside breakthrough finally came in the form of the soulful "7 Years," which recently catapulted to No. 2 on Billboard's Hot 100. Forchhammer said performing the emotional pop ballad during his nearly sold-out North American tour has been immensely satisfying. "It was never really meant to be a huge success in Denmark because I didn't think people would get the lyrics quick enough." In a recent show in LA, he said, "I could see how the lyrics resonated immediately. I was blown away."

The band's self-titled, worldwide debut album came out April 1. (It was previously released in Europe.) Forchhammer credits his upbringing in Copenhagen's diverse hippie enclave Christiania for his eclectic sound. "Listening to all these different musical genres from all over the world and listening to my father's record collection, the Irish folk influences from home. Of course they're all in there somewhere hiding within the lyrics and melodies. But rap music was the biggest influence on my way of writing and my performing," he said.

Forchhammer is thrilled with his new-found US success, but has no interest in fame. "If it was up to me it would be nice not ever to get stopped on the street because we just do music. I didn't do this become a celebrity," he said while acknowledging his world may soon change. "We are No. 2 on Billboard. I don't think I can remain anonymous for that much longer. It was fun while it lasted. Very fun." — AP

New Zealand school musical ends with 2 boys in hospital

A high school musical in New Zealand got a little too real this week when a prop razor used in a throat-slitting scene ended up cutting the necks of two boys and sending them to a local hospital overnight. Students at Saint Kentigern College in Auckland were performing the opening night of Sweeney Todd before parents and other audience members Wednesday when things went badly wrong. Set in Victorian London, the musical depicts a barber who slits his customer's throats with a razor and uses the bodies to make meat pies.

The head of Saint Kentigern College, Steve Cole, told radio station Newstalk ZB the razor used in the show was real but had been bound in duct tape. He said he has no idea what went wrong during a scene midway through the Second Act. "It had been bound in Cellophane, bound in all sorts of things," he said. "It was very non-sharp, blunted, and had been through all sorts of health and safety checks. It was a very unfortunate mishap." He said the boys were released from hospital Thursday and were doing well.

"We've been keeping contact through the family and making sure the kids are OK," he told the radio station. Cole said a performance of the play scheduled for Thursday was canceled but he hoped the show could resume today. "Obviously without those particular props," he added. Police and health-and-safety officials are investigating the incident. — AP



If it's spring, it must be time for a **herby salmon salad**

By Katie Workman

Nothing speaks to me of spring like a salmon salad. It's light and pretty and herby, and when you add pasta it becomes a real meal. It's also quite portable, so you'll want to think of this when you're envisioning lunch at your desk the next day, or when you're invited to a potluck event. And talk about easy to make. Poach the salmon. Boil the pasta. Puree dressing. Dump everything together and you're good.

I speed chill the salmon by popping it in the freezer for a few minutes. But if you have more time, you certainly could poach the salmon the night before

and refrigerate it until ready. Likewise, the pasta also could be cooled briefly in the freezer, spread in an even layer on a rimmed baking sheet (or similarly prepped the day before).

Some people really, really love cilantro, and some people really, really hate it. It's actually a genetic thing. For some people, it tastes soapy or otherwise unpleasant. So this recipe - with its creamy cilantro dressing - clearly is for the lovers, and not the dish to make if you're not sure about your audience. I love it (obviously, I guess), and I love this dressing. But if you'd rather lose the cilantro, feel free to substitute fresh basil.

PASTA SALAD WITH SALMON AND CREAMY CILANTRO DRESSING



Ingredients

Start to finish: 30 minutes
Servings: 6

2-pound salmon fillet, bones removed
Salt
1 pound cavatelli or elbow pasta

For the cilantro sauce

1 cup fresh cilantro leaves, plus extra to garnish
1/4 cup minced shallots
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1/2 cup mayonnaise
1/4 cup plain Greek yogurt (or another 1/4 cup mayonnaise)
2 tablespoons heavy cream
Pinch cayenne pepper
Ground black pepper

Preparation

Set the salmon in a large saute pan. If needed, cut the salmon into 2 pieces. Add enough cold water to just cover. Season with 2 teaspoons salt, then bring to a boil. Immediately turn off the heat, cover the pot and let the salmon sit for 10 minutes. After 10 minutes, transfer the salmon to a plate and set in the freezer to cool. Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook according to package directions, then drain. Rinse under cold water to cool. Set aside to drain.

Meanwhile, in a food processor or blender combine the cilantro, shallots, Dijon, mayonnaise, yogurt, cream and cayenne. Puree until smooth, then season with salt and pepper. When the salmon is chilled, remove the skin, if necessary, and break the flesh into bite-sized chunks. In a large bowl, combine the pasta, cilantro sauce and salmon, then toss gently to combine. Garnish with additional cilantro leaves.

Want a better Passover brisket? You need to know your cuts

By Elizabeth Karmel

Though most of my brisket experience has been spent at the smoker or the grill, I have fond memories of braised brisket, which I usually enjoyed during Passover with my relatives. I remember the beefy steam escaping into the kitchen as the tomato- and onion-flecked meat was spooned onto a serving dish. Sadly, the taste of the brisket was always a bit of a letdown. Which is why I started smoking my briskets; it was an easy way to add lots of flavor. But recently I decided there must be a way to add flavor to a traditional braised brisket.

But first, a brisket primer. A whole brisket averages 15 pounds, and butchers cut it in half to make it easier to sell and easier to cook. The first cut - the lower half of the brisket - is the lean piece, also called the flat. It's the cut most often found at grocers. But because it's so lean, it generally has little flavor.

The second cut sits on top of the flat. Called the point, this cut is fattier and far more flavorful. Most butchers end up grinding the point for burger meat,

mistakenly (at least in my mind) assuming people won't want a fattier cut. But I certainly do! And you should, too. And don't worry about the fat, much of it melts away from the meat during cooking and is easily separated from the pan sauce later.

So if you want an amazing holiday brisket, ask for the point or second cut. If you don't have a butcher in your neighborhood who can provide this for you, you can order the point from any number of online retailers, including Master Purveyors (one of the largest sellers of meat in the country). Trust me... The flavor difference is worth the trouble.

Now that you know what meat to get, let's talk cooking. My secret for getting the best flavor is to make this recipe the day before I serve it. It is very hands-off, but needs patience and time to make it right. That includes letting it set overnight in the refrigerator. This step is important for many reasons, including that it makes it easy to remove the fat. Though the recipe is written for an oven braise, if you have a slow cooker with a saute setting, it's easy to do it in that. Eight hours on high in the slow cooker is perfect.



TWO-DAY BRAISED POINT BRISKET

Ingredients

Start to finish: 40 minutes active plus 4 to 6 hours cooking and overnight chilling

Servings: 10

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1/2 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper

4- to 5-pound point or second-cut brisket

Olive oil

2 medium red onions, cut into rings

18 1/2-ounce can French onion Soup

14 1/2-ounce can stewed tomatoes

1 tablespoon chopped fresh thyme, plus extra to garnish

1 cup (about 1 ounce) dried porcini mushrooms

4 large carrots, cut into chunks

Chopped fresh parsley, to serve

Flaked sea salt

Preparation

Heat the oven to 325 F. In a small bowl, stir together the salt, garlic powder and pepper. Set aside. If necessary, trim excess fat off the brisket, but leave about 1/4 inch on both sides. Brush any exposed meat (where there is no fat) with olive oil, then season all over with the spice mixture. Heat a large Dutch oven over medium-high. Add the brisket and sear all sides, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer the brisket to a plate.

Arrange the onions evenly over the bottom of the Dutch oven, then set the brisket over them. Add the onion soup, tomatoes, thyme, mushrooms and carrots. Stir gently to

combine, then cover and roast in the oven for 4 to 6 hours, or until the brisket is tender, but not falling apart. Remove the pot from the oven and let the brisket cool in the pot.

Once cooled, cover and refrigerate overnight. The next day, skim off and discard the congealed layer of fat. Remove the brisket and set aside. Place the pot over medium-high heat and the stovetop and bring to a simmer. Cook, uncovered, until reduced to 6 cups. Working in batches, transfer the liquid and vegetables to a blender and puree until smooth. Return to the pot. Slice the brisket into 1/4-inch slices against the grain and place the slices into the reduced juices to warm. Simmer for 4 to 5 minutes. Serve the slices with the juices and topped with parsley and flaked salt.



Friday Times

Entertainment

7 TV shows you should binge watch this April

Some of the hottest television series are returning this month, so if you have yet to catch up, you'd better get started! To help you out with that, check out this list, which should help direct you to all the places where you can power through the seasons and episodes you may have missed. With that in mind, here are seven choices for your extended viewing pleasure during the month of April.

GAME OF THRONES

What it is: George RR Martin's epic Song of Fire and Ice fantasy novels come alive in HBO's blood-spurting, sibling-bedding, dragon-filled series, set in a fictional, highly political, medieval world.

Why you should watch it: Season six marks the official break from the source novels, since pretty much everything this season

will be new to everyone. In other words, it's a great time to get caught up. Immersing you in the world of Westeros, Game of Thrones features a wealth of well-developed characters whose arcs take shocking turns. Certified Fresh for all five seasons, the show is also incredible to look at with big-budget production values that rival any blockbuster film.



ORPHAN BLACK

What it is: After seeing "herself" jump in front of a train, a young woman named Sarah Manning discovers she is a clone and, with the help of the others like her, falls into a conspiratorial whirlwind of mystery and deception.

Why you should watch it: Tatiana Maslany has received attention for

her performances as each clone, but that's not the only reason to watch. Suspense, drama, action, and a touch of tongue-in-cheek humor make this one a must-see for fans of varying genres. With its fourth season set to premiere on BBC America on April 14, you've got a little time to catch up before things heat up again.

HOUSE OF LIES

What it is: A shamelessly unscrupulous management consultant begins his own firm and engages in highly questionable business practices to achieve his goals.

Why you should watch it: The cast is full of talented veterans, from its star, the inimitable Don Cheadle as Marty Kaan, to his

team, which includes Kristen Bell and Ben Schwartz (you may know him as Jean-Ralphio from Parks and Recreation). Beyond the strong ensemble, though, House of Lies possesses a dark, incisive sense of humor, and at a half hour an episode, it flies by. Its fourth season gets going on Showtime on April 10.



What it is: In Mike Judge's comedy set in Bay Area's tech universe, Richard (Thomas Middleditch) and his team of socially awkward developers make an app, catching the attention of the area's billionaire investor.

Why you should watch it: This savvy satire was a big enough hit - both with audiences and critics - that HBO lengthened its

original 8-episode first season to ten glorious episodes for season two. The cast, featuring Middleditch, TJ Miller, and Kumail Nanjiani, perfectly capture the oddball characters who rule the Internet, and thanks to the comic sensibilities of Mike Judge, the series manages to be witty, silly, and incisive all at the same time.



UNBREAKABLE KIMMY SCHMIDT

What it is: In executive producer Tina Fey's Netflix original comedy series, Ellie Kemper plays Kimmy Schmidt, a sheltered young woman who escapes to a new life in New York City after living as a "mole woman" in an Indiana cult for 15 years.

Why you should watch it: Critics agree that Kemper shines as Kimmy, whose spirit

cannot be broken by the challenges of life in the five boroughs. Add 30 Rock-style humor from a hilarious cast that includes Tituss Burgess, Jane Krakowski, and Carol Kane, and this is one binge that will leave you smiling all weekend. All episodes of season two will drop on Netflix on Friday, April 15, so you'll have plenty of time to burn through the first season.



OUTLANDER



OUTLANDER

What it is: Based on the bestselling books by Diana Gabaldon, Outlander is the story of Claire Beauchamp Randall (Caitriona Balfe), a married WWII nurse who finds herself mysteriously transported back in time to 1743 where she meets an irresistible Scottish warrior (Sam Heughan).

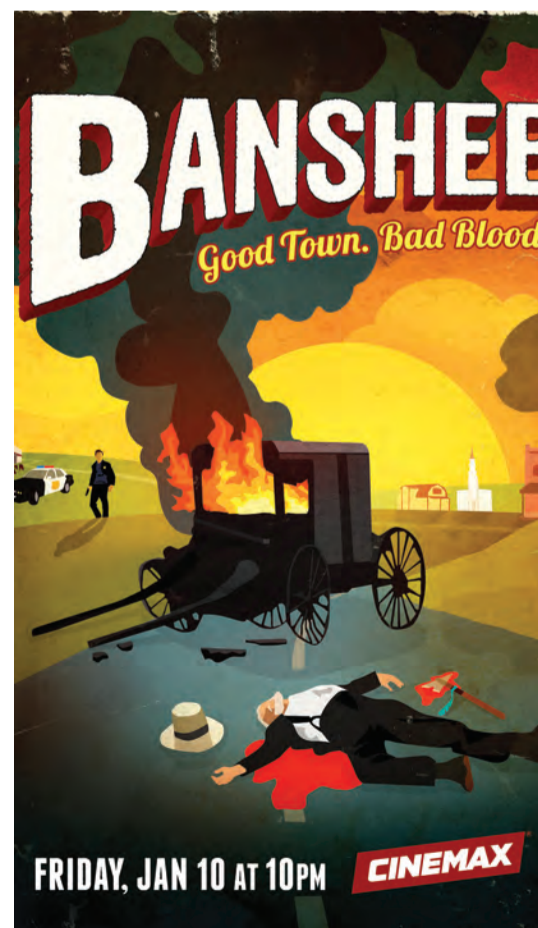
Why you should watch it: In addition to bringing two separate historical time periods to life, the Certified Fresh Outlander will win you over with its heroine Claire, whose sexy, feisty nature is anything but dated. Season two, which finds Claire and Jamie relocated to France, premieres with new episodes on Saturday, April 9 on Starz.

BANSHEE

What it is: A dangerous ex-con attempts to reconnect with his true love and ends up replacing a small town's new sheriff when the sheriff is killed before anyone meets him.

Why you should watch it: It's hard to find a show so crazy, so nasty, and so sexy. The talented cast makes it difficult to choose who to root for, whether it's the violent ex-con disguised as the sheriff, his ex-partner/lover-in-crime hiding her past, or the "businessman" mob-boss who excommunicated himself from his Amish family to run the town. Season four premiered on Friday and the season three DVD came out today, so it's a great time to start watchin.

— www.rottentomatoes.com



Friday Times

FRIDAY, APRIL 8, 2016

Travel



Shoppers and tourists walk past the 100 Club on Oxford Street. — AP photos

Touring sites from London's punk rock scene, 40 years later



Guitars hang from the walls of the NO.TOM guitar shop on Denmark Street.

The Sex Pistols and The Clash led the British punk rock revolution in the steamy summer of 1976. London is marking 40 years since that summer with a series of events, gigs and exhibits this year. As an early fan of punk, I set out on a personal pilgrimage to explore the neighborhoods and locations that were its petri dishes — from the Pistols’ rehearsal and living space to the scene of the Notting Hill riots witnessed by The Clash to the pubs and clubs that hosted their first shows.

In some places, I found the opposite of the angry energy that inspired anthems like the Pistols’ “Anarchy in the UK” and The Clash’s “London’s Burning.” But I also found some venues still going strong.

First stop

Portobello Road to see the mural of Clash frontman Joe Strummer, which was painted after this death. Sadly, when I visited, it was mostly covered by scaffolding. I looked in vain for signs of Strummer’s anti-establishment vibe, but all I found was a bustling market selling knickknacks, clothing and antiques while passers-by peered at their iPhones. From there I headed to Tavistock Road, the street that inspired Strummer’s “White Riot,” his call

to arms after a West Indian carnival ended in riots in Notting Hill in the summer of ’76. But I failed to find any sign of punk’s past on the quiet thoroughfare, so I settled in the Metropolitan Pub on Great Western Road for a hand-pulled pint.

The Rough Trade record shop opened in 1976 on Kensington Park Road. Today it’s on Talbot Road, filled with vinyl and CDs, its walls and ceiling adorned with posters featuring The Clash, Sex Pistols and others.

In Central London, I marveled at the fine instruments at NO.TOM, a small guitar shop on Denmark Street, near the Tottenham Court Road tube. The short street, once known as London’s Tin Pan Alley, was home to many music publishers and studios. Behind NO.TOM

there’s a tiny 19th century cottage where the Sex Pistols once lived. It’s covered with graffiti created by the Pistols’ John Lydon (Johnny Rotten), including a drawing of the Pistols’ manager Malcolm McLaren, and another of Nancy Spungen, Sid Vicious’ girlfriend.

At 100 Oxford St, the 100 Club is marked with a sign and poster for upcoming shows. The Sex Pistols played here in May 1976 and the venue hosted a punk festival in the fall of ’76. In January 2016, ’70s bands including 999, The Members, UK Subs and Discharge played here as part of a punk series.

In Chelsea, at 430 King’s Road, a giant “SEX” sign once hung outside a shop of the same name shared by McLaren, the Pistols’ manager, and designer Vivienne Westwood.

Westwood still runs a boutique here called Worlds End.

Next stop - Camden Market

Today this thriving collection of bars, restaurants, shops and stalls is overrun with shoppers perusing all types of food and fashion, from espresso to T-shirts bearing the Union Jack. I was here to find the spot where The Clash posed for a photograph that became an iconic image adorning their first album. The photo was taken on a ramp that’s since been converted to steps. I took a selfie standing there but couldn’t help feeling a pang of regret. My favorite band, often called “the only band that matters,” once stood here on the cusp of fame, but today the spot



Tourists take photos outside the Rough Trade record shop in London.



A wall sports records, photos and posters at the Hope & Anchor pub in London.



Tourists and locals mingle in Camden Market.

seems to embody the opposite of punk's anti-materialistic message. And I had become part of the iPhone-toting tribe intent on the next purchase and picture. Where was the Pistols' "Anarchy in the UK"? Where were "All The Young Punks" from The Clash song?

Maybe they were up the road at the Roundhouse. This fine music venue, originally a 19th century railway repair facility, has hosted performers since 1966. The Clash played their fifth-ever show here in September 1976. The Pistols, The Damned, The Ramones and Patti Smith all played here too. A Punk Weekender scheduled here for July 9 and 10 features music, prose and poetry as part of London's 40-year anniversary celebration.

Final destination

My final destination was London's Islington neighborhood, home to the Hope and Anchor pub, 207 Upper St, and Screen on the Green, 83 Upper St. Hope and Anchor has



A chalkboard shows a listing of gigs at the Hope & Anchor pub.

a lovely ground-floor pub with a small theater space upstairs and music venue in the basement. The basement's roster has included The Jam, The Ramones, The Police, The Stranglers, XTC, U2, The Cure, Joy Division and The Pogues.

Hope and Anchor also hosted pre-punk bands playing what was called pub rock, including a group led by Joe Strummer, the 101ers. The pub's Facebook page lists upcoming shows, and today's audiences aren't likely to be hit by flying sheets of spit ("gob" as the Brits call it) the way they were in the early punk era, with fans gobbing at performers and musicians spitting right back.

Screen on the Green, with a fabulous neon facade, hosts movies and live events. It's one of the oldest cinemas in the UK. The Clash, Sex Pistols and Buzzcocks played together there on the night Aug. 29, 1976. It was the end of the long, hot summer when punk was born. — AP



Passersby walk by the Hope & Anchor pub.

WORD SEARCH

Oliver Twist

Find and circle all of the words and names from *Oliver Twist*. The remaining letters spell the title of the first chapter of *Oliver Twist*.

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

- AGNES FLEMING
- BARNEY
- BEADLE
- BLATHERS
- BOLTER
- BRITTLES
- BROWNLOW
- BULL'S-EYE
- BUMBLE
- CHARLEY BATES
- CHARLOTTE
- COACH
- COURT
- DICKENS
- DOCTOR
- DODGER
- DUFF
- FAGIN
- GALLOWES
- GAMFIELD
- GILES
- GRIMWIG
- GRUEL
- HANDKERCHIEF
- HARRY MAYLIE
- HOUSEBREAKER
- INHERITANCE
- JAIL
- LEEFORD
- LIMBKINS
- LOCKET
- LONDON
- LOSBERNE
- MAGISTRATE
- MONKS
- MR. FANG
- MRS. BEDWIN
- MRS. CORNEY
- MRS. MANN
- NANCY
- NOAH
- OLD SALLY
- OLIVER TWIST
- ORPHAN
- PICKPOCKET
- PISTOL
- ROSE MAYLIE
- SIKES
- SOWBERRY
- SURGEON
- TOBY CRACKIT
- TOM CHITLING
- TRAPS
- UNDERTAKER
- WAISTCOAT
- WILL
- WORKHOUSE

CROSSWORD 1220

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78				79						80		81	
82					83								84

ACROSS

- A shape that sags.
- A noticeable decline in performance.
- A pustule in an eruptive disease.
- North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly inhabiting the Black Hills of western South Dakota.
- An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to about a bushel.
- (informal) Roused to anger.
- A port city in southwestern Croatia on the Adriatic.
- Conforming to an ultimate standard of perfection or excellence.
- A unit of dry measure used in Egypt.
- A distinguished female operatic singer.
- The basic unit of money in Peru.
- (Greek mythology) Fire-breathing she-monster with a lion's head and a goat's body and a serpent's tail.
- The comfort you feel when consoled in times of disappointment.
- The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
- The ninth month of the Moslem calendar.
- (often plural) A command given by a superior (e.g., a military or law enforcement officer) that must be obeyed.
- A French abbot.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
- Being the one previously mentioned or spoken of.
- The shorter of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
- An emergency procedure consisting of external cardiac massage and artificial respiration.
- English essayist (1775-1834).
- A long plume (especially one of egret feathers) worn on a hat or a piece of jewelry in the shape of a plume.
- According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- Not in action or at work.
- A summary that repeats the substance of a longer discussion.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- The Hebrew patriarch who saved himself and his family and the animals by building an ark in which they survived 40 days and 40 nights of rain.
- A sharp abrupt noise as if two objects hit together.
- (of tempo) Fast n.1.
- Erect European annual often grown as a salad crop to be harvested when young and tender.
- The cry made by sheep.
- A straight sword with a narrow blade and two edges.
- A mountain peak in the Saint Elias Range in the southwestern Yukon Territory in Canada (19,850 feet high).
- Any of various systems of units for measuring electricity and magnetism.
- A manually operated device to correct the operation of an automatic device.
- United States sculptor and architect whose public works include the memorial to veterans of the Vietnam War in Washington (born in 1959).
- An informal term for a father.

DOWN

- Wood of a sumac.
- The fourth month of the Hindu calendar.
- A cushion on a throne for a prince in India.
- A person from whom you are descended.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- The act of slowing down or falling behind.
- (Welsh) A warrior god.
- A fertile tract in a desert (where the water table approaches the surface).
- Having been given flavor (as by seasoning).
- The syllable naming the fourth (subdominant) note of the diatonic scale in solmization.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- Used of mouth or eyes.
- An informal conversation.
- Bushy plant of Old World salt marshes and sea beaches having prickly leaves.
- To fix or set securely or deeply.
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- A state in New England.
- The French-speaking part of the Canadian Maritime Provinces.
- Italian violin maker in Cremona.
- One of two alternative forms of a genes that can have the same locus on homologous chromosomes and are responsible for alternative traits.
- Chew the fat.
- A ridge that forms a seam between two parts.
- English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
- God of wealth and love.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
- Acute lung injury characterized by coughing and rales.
- Deciduous dioecious Chinese tree having fan-shaped leaves and fleshy yellow seeds.
- Something causes misery or death.
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- An infective disease caused by sporozoan parasites that are transmitted through the bite of an infected Anopheles mosquito.
- Organized persecution of an ethnic group (especially Jews).
- Small spiny outgrowth on the wings of certain insects.
- An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
- A populous province in northeastern China.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
- Praise, glorify, or honor.
- Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
- Set down according to a plan.
- A former copper coin of Pakistan.
- A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
- To make a mistake or be incorrect.
- A person who announces and plays popular recorded music.

Yesterday's Solution

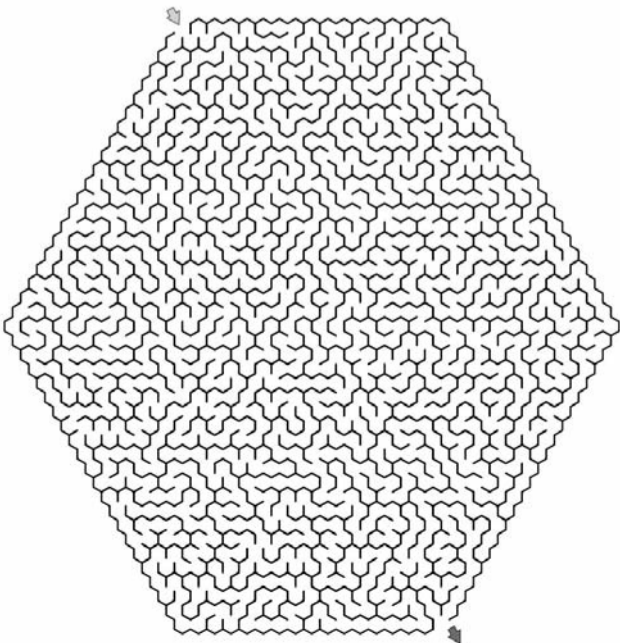
Tools

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

- BAND SAW
- BOLT CUTTER
- BRUSH
- BUFFER
- CALIPER
- CHALK
- CHISEL
- CLAMP
- COPING SAW
- CROWBAR
- DADO
- DIVIDER
- DRILL PRESS
- FILE
- GRINDER
- HAMMER
- HAND SAW
- HEX KEY
- JIG SAW
- JOINTER
- KNIFE
- LATHE
- MALLET
- MITER BOX
- PLANE
- PLIER
- POLISHER
- PROTRACTOR
- PRY BAR
- PUNCH
- RASP
- RATCHET
- ROUTER
- SANDER
- SAWHORSE
- SCREWDRIVER
- SCROLL SAW
- SOCKETS
- SPRAY GUN
- SQUARE
- STAPLE GUN
- STUD FINDER
- TABLE SAW
- TAPE MEASURE
- TAPS AND DIES
- TINSNIPS
- VISE
- WOOD RULE
- WRECKING BAR
- WRENCH

The hidden sentence is: MEN HAVE BECOME THE TOOLS OF THEIR TOOLS

CHALLENGING MAZE



Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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



01:30 Big Screen
01:45 Hi, Mom!
03:15 Quigley Down Under
05:15 The Adventures Of Gerard
06:45 Charge Of The Light Brigade
08:50 Geronimo: An American Legend
10:45 Solarbabies
12:20 Robinson Crusoe
13:50 Big Screen
14:05 Geronimo: An American Legend
16:00 Teen Witch
17:30 Big Screen
17:45 Death Rides A Horse

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 Storage Wars Canada
04:30 Garage Gold
05:00 Chasing Classic Cars
06:00 You Have Been Warned
06:50 Troy
07:40 The Carbonaro Effect
08:05 The Carbonaro Effect
08:30 The Island With Bear Grylls
09:20 Bear Grylls: Mission Survive
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 Overhauled
15:10 Extreme Car Hoarders
16:00 Diamond River Hunters
16:50 Diamond River Hunters
17:40 Diamond River Hunters
18:30 Diamond River Hunters
19:20 Diamond River Hunters
20:10 Diamond River Hunters
21:00 Misfit Garage
21:50 Overhauled
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 Swamp Brothers
07:00 Swamp Brothers
07:25 America's Cutest Pets
08:15 Ten Deadliest Snakes With Nigel Marven
09:10 Treehouse Masters
10:05 Tanked
11:00 Your Pet Wants This
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 Shamwari: A Wild Life
20:40 Shamwari: A Wild Life
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: Kyriakos Mitsotakis
00:30 CNBC Conversation: Travis Kalanick
01:00 U.S. Squawk Alley
02:00 Asia Squawk Box
05:00 Asia Street Signs
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



00:00 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 Hannah Montana
09:20 Hannah Montana
09:45 Girl Meets World
10:10 Girl Meets World
10:35 A.N.T. Farm
11:00 A.N.T. Farm
11:25 Jessie
11:50 Jessie
12:15 Whisker Haven Tales With The Palace Pets
12:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
12:45 Fish Hooks
13:10 Austin & Ally
13:35 Austin & Ally
14:00 Liv And Maddie
14:25 Cars Toons
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
17:25 I Love Violetta
17:35 Full Out
19:10 I Love Violetta
19:30 Violetta
20:45 Go Figure
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

00:05 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
03:10 Henry Hugglemonster
03:20 Calimero
03:35 Zou
03:45 Loopdidoo
04:00 Art Attack
04:25 Henry Hugglemonster
04:35 Calimero
04:50 Zou
05:00 Loopdidoo
05:15 Art Attack
05:35 Henry Hugglemonster
05:50 Calimero
06:00 Zou
06:20 Loopdidoo
06:35 Art Attack
07:00 The Hive
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
10:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
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
19:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:30 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



T O M C R U I S E
O B L I V I O N

OBLIVION ON OSN MOVIES HD ACTION



00:05 Eastenders
00:40 Holby City
01:35 Stella
02:25 Silent Witness
03:20 Doctors
03:50 Eastenders
04:20 Doctor Who
05:10 Father Brown
06:00 Holby City
06:55 Eastenders
07:25 Doctors
07:55 Doctors
08:20 Eastenders
08:50 Stella
09:40 Father Brown
10:25 Doctor Who
11:15 Doctor Who
12:00 Doctor Who
12:45 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
20:10 Happy Valley
21:00 Happy Valley
22:00 Undercover
23:00 Stella
23:45 Doctors



00:00 Charlie Rose
01:00 Bloomberg West
02:00 First Up With Angie Lau
03:00 First Up With Angie Lau
04:00 Trending Business
05:00 Trending Business
06:00 Asia Edge
07:00 Bloomberg West

22:50 Zou
23:05 Henry Hugglemonster



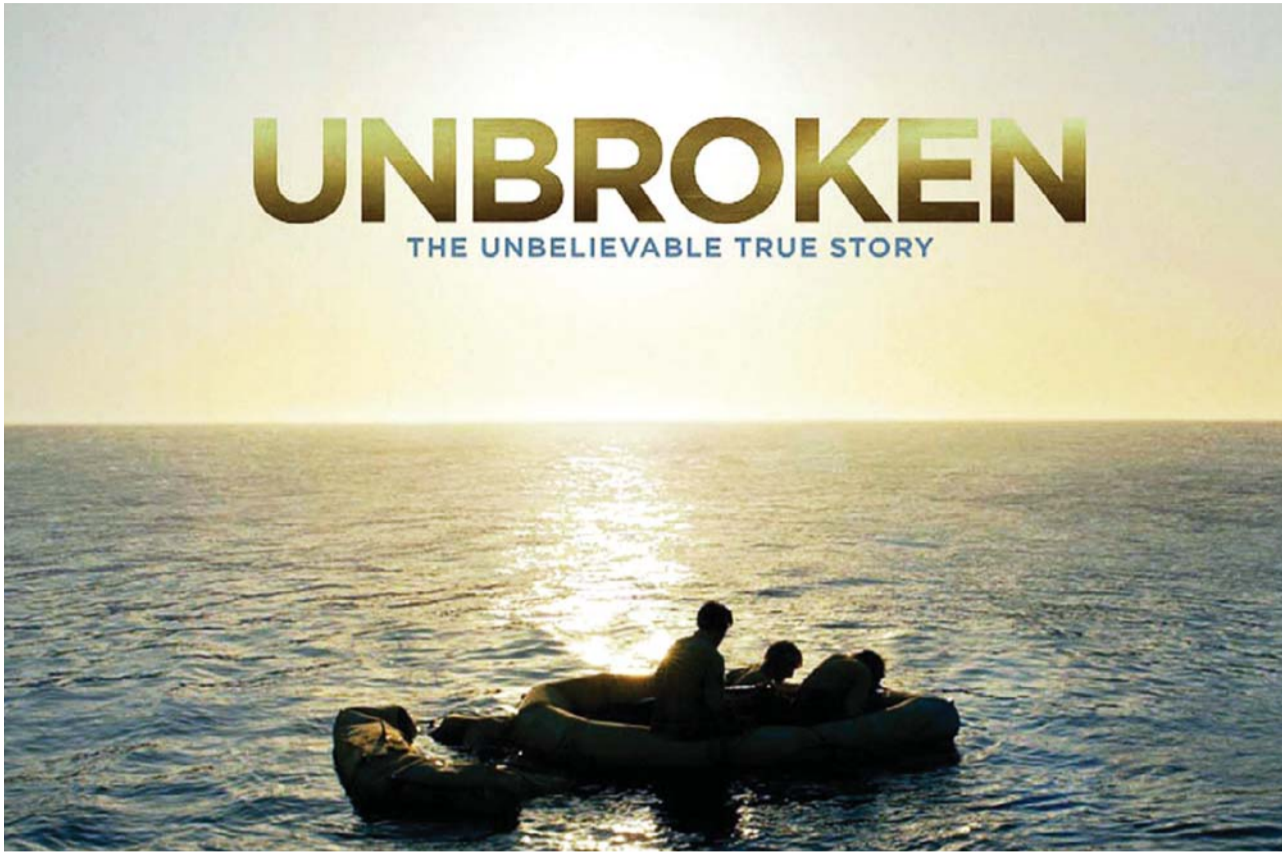
06:00 Boyster
06:10 Super Matrak
06:35 Super Matrak
07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
07:25 K.C. Undercover
07:50 Supa Strikas
08:15 Annedroids
08:40 Lab Rats
09:10 Kirby Buckets
09:35 Guardians Of The Galaxy
10:00 Rocket Monkeys
10:25 Ultimate Spider-Man
10:50 Boyster
11:20 Boyster
11:45 Pair Of Kings
12:10 Pair Of Kings
12:35 Lab Rats
13:00 Lab Rats
13:30 Phineas And Ferb
13:55 Phineas And Ferb
14:20 Kickin' It
14:45 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
18:40 K.C. Undercover
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
22:10 Mighty Med
22:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am
KSA



00:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
00:55 The Grace Helbig Show
01:25 Kourtney And Khloe Take The Hamptons
02:20 E! News
03:15 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
04:10 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
05:05 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
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 Live From The Red Carpet
14:05 Fashion Police
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 Private Chef
01:30 Private Chef
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



UNBROKEN 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 Ice Road Truckers
02:50 Ax Men
03:40 American Restoration
04:05 American Restoration
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
02:30 Keep It In The Family
03:25 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
04:20 The Jonathan Ross Show
05:15 Celebrity Exposed: Photography Of Richard Young
05:45 Celebrity Exposed: Photography Of Richard Young
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 Celebrity Exposed: Photography Of Richard Young
12:00 Celebrity Exposed: Photography Of Richard Young
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 Celebrity Exposed: Photography Of Richard Young
16:00 Celebrity Exposed: Photography Of Richard Young
16:30 The Doctor Blake Mysteries



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
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
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
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



01:00 Curse Of Chucky
03:00 The Hulk
05:30 Oblivion
07:45 Transit
09:45 Superfast
11:45 The Outsider
13:45 Oblivion
16:00 Transit
18:00 12 Rounds
20:00 Battleship
22:15 Bad Ass 3: Bad Asses On The Bayou
23:45 Poker Night



00:00 Good Luck Chuck
02:00 Father Of The Bride
04:00 Sister Act
06:00 Man Of The House
08:00 Charlie And The Chocolate Factory
10:00 Father Of The Bride Part II
12:00 UHF
14:00 Planet 51
16:00 Charlie And The Chocolate Factory
18:00 Cas & Dylan
20:00 John Tucker Must Die



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 Last Of Robin Hood
03:00 The Single Moms Club
05:00 About Alex
07:00 Transcendence
09:00 Draft Day
11:00 The Two Faces Of January
13:00 Seventh Son
14:45 50 To 1
16:45 Barely Lethal
18:30 Unbroken
21:00 The Rewrite
23:00 The Expendables 3



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)

Communication with influential people is on the schedule this today. You may discover an offer of a new exhilarating career opportunity. Your innovative ideas can gain the support of those in positions of control and responsibility. You feel an expanded sense of self-confidence and optimism. Others recognize the goals you have attained thus far and this may lead to an increase in sales or contacts. It is a good time to improve your education or broaden your experience through travel. You tend to feel lucky and your expectations are high. Friendships or relationship with peers would appear to be most treasured at this time. A short trip or games could be intellectually stimulating this evening.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Once you get past the beginnings of a business meeting this morning, you will find your creative mind filling to the brim, as if someone had just poured you a fresh carbonated drink. Quite a lot can be accomplished today and most will be acknowledged in positive ways by others. An older person in authority will help to boost your career today. The wise use of your time during your noon break could be of benefit to you as a way to relax or reenergize your mind and your energies. There is talk of exercise but no real plan comes of it. Why don't you go to the nearest gym and participate in some game or exercise when you tell others, if you want, you will find others joining you in your efforts. There is entertainment tonight.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Rushing about could cause some problems so-easy does it. Learn to plan ahead as much as possible. If your time is already taken, say no to other activities for now. Interaction with authority figures or older people may be in the forecast this morning. Working with-rather than against-the flow should be easy to do. In-depth discussions and probing conversations find you at your mental best. Your analytical abilities are strong. This is a good day, with lots of ambition. New projects can be investigated and moved forward. Projects that are already under way will be successful. You often enjoy the results of creating your own opportunities. An evening under the night sky can be fun this evening.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your work is an important area for you. Not only does your professional involvement define who you are, but work is also the key to your sense of wellbeing. If you are in a business that can give you the opportunity to show off your talents, you are indeed a happy camper. Unearthing previously unrealized talents can be a positive answer to a flux in income now. You may be somewhat impulsive today and find yourself doing things you normally would not do. You may also experience some irritability, but it will pass relatively quickly. Avoid important decisions just now as you may have difficulty concentrating. New friends can be met through a popular hobby that you enjoy. Watch what you eat and drink and keep your body running smoothly.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Spontaneity is the mood of the day. Capacious enthusiasm in your work allows you many opportunities to be creative-or, to exchange wonderful ideas. You may find yourself enjoying a long conversation, writing a letter, or making a special phone call. Some may seek you out for your advice regarding important matters. You are understanding and you handle important matters with patience. This is a great time to look at how you are progressing in the workplace and how you want to proceed now. Spread some cheer to a stranger today-names are not necessary-an act of kindness or a smile can make someone's day more pleasant. You could find yourself at a book review or book signing tonight.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your lunch hour is best spent outside with other friendly people today. You may decide to walk around and sightsee or just enjoy your time in the sunshine. You may find yourself looking for a little romance later today or at least enjoying some fun conversations with a very close friend. You can appreciate feelings and movement. Perhaps a dance date is coming up soon and you will be looking at some new shoes or thinking about a new style. Problems on the home front may not be as bad as it seems at first. Someone may not be clear on facts-perhaps you could ask the right questions. You are able to create a more pleasant environment for everyone. You may enjoy escaping into a good movie or book. You enjoy a loved one's company this evening.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You can handle bigger responsibilities now. With a new resolve, you become generally tolerant and optimistic about your career and professional prospects. You may travel for business or you may deal with governmental agencies. Public relations and educational matters may require your attention. Your mind is shrewd and practical as well as original. It's a good time to begin new projects or a new job. You feel secure, efficient and comfortable with your colleagues and friends. You can show leadership and ambition in your professional life as well as in your domestic affairs. Slowdowns in mail, shipments or travel can be particularly irritating just now. Use self-restraint in seeking cooperation and compromise on important issues.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

In order to take advantage of changing circumstances, status and security goals need rethinking. Your career is a focus for this, but your home and family situation is also involved. Finances-purchases, investments and credit-could stand some clear thinking now. Getting in over your head where such things are concerned can happen before you know it, so keep an eye on the bottom line. This is a time that marks the end of a number of years of hard work-a kind of apprenticeship that has taken place will now be coming to an end. Now you begin to move upward and outward. A number of very successful years are in the forecast, during which the world should bend to your lead. A new hobby may lead to new passions or extra income.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

This is a good day. Take care of the basics of life-health, work and such-becomes a greater preoccupation. An inborn essential need to be powerful and in control-pulling the strings, as it were-may lead to a greater interest or experience in healing and investing. Be wise with your finances and do your research before you obligate your work energies to some big-package item. Your mind is quick and sharp and you have no difficulty with problem-solving techniques. You are beginning to learn to let go of tension. As you surrender to life, you will be propelled forward. While family members are busy this afternoon, do your city a favor and buy a package of wildflower seeds to sprinkle around . . . Nature will do the rest.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You should use great effort in moneymaking opportunities, but show caution with the types of activity in which you want to participate. You are most persuasive with others and when you take the time to understand your audience you receive delirious applause. It is good that you are able to use your creative mind in projects today as the afternoon will keep you busy either leading or creating the projects needed to move your class or your department forward. You add that special touch to your work that really grabs the attention of others-particularly today as there may be some competition between groups. Minute details may be necessary for a correct presentation but it will not be boring. Become energy conscious when purchasing machines and equipment.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Group meetings, social affairs, luncheons and lectures are all beneficial to your advancement in the business world. Gathering information will help you make decisions for later. A sense of value and valuing may find you lavishing affection on those near you. You could be purchasing a gift for a loved one later today. Be wise and shop around for the best buy, not just the first thing you see. Figuring out ways to make your nest egg grow can be a preoccupation now. This is a significant day and you will find yourself feeling in good health and enjoying the day. Spending time with close, old friends is a good choice this afternoon. Aim toward a balance of work, play, rest and relaxation. Volunteer work could certainly be a consideration at this time.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

A conflict at work could be resolved this morning. Take advantage of upcoming conferences, lectures-anything that can give you tools toward enlightening your creativity. Make your own plans for your future instead of following what someone else says you should do. Self-defeating attitudes could fly out the window this week-be prepared to let go. Close relationships take on more emotional depth, power and importance. If you have a significant other, now may be the best time to deepen the relationship. Words of reassurance can work wonders now. You are compassionate and giving to all around you. Your devotion and selflessness will reap unexpected rewards. This is a great time to reflect and understand your own situation.

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	00238	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Chad	00235	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Chile	0056	New Caledonia	00687
China	0086	New Zealand	0064
Colombia	0057	Nicaragua	00505
Comoros	00269	Nigar	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

LOOKING FOR CLEAN WATER A HUGE TASK FOR HAITIANS

PORT-AU-PRINCE: Under the blazing sun in Haiti, Malinka Dorleus trudges up a hill with a 20-liter bucket of water on her head a trip she makes up to four times a day. From her village of Godet, the 15-year-old can see the sprawling villas belonging to the Caribbean country's elite, yet her family and neighbors have no access to running water. "In the morning, I get two buckets of water that we use for cooking and drinking," the girl explains, breathless after walking up from the stream that serves several hundred villagers. "In the afternoon, I come back again once or twice."

Godet is only 15 kilometers from Haiti's capital city of Port-au-Prince, but the lack of a proper road means the community of metal shacks and simple concrete homes is isolated and cut off from basic services. Dorleus is not alone—the UN says 42 percent of Haitians do not have access to safe drinking water. It's this lack of infrastructure that reinforces the cycle of poverty in Haiti, the poorest country in the Americas and one of the poorest in the world. Catheline Metelus, who is 27 and was born in Godet, has been hauling water along this same path for years. "It takes more than one hour to get up and down the hill with the water."

Sometimes I'm too tired to go but I have no choice," she says. Metelus, who earns a few dollars a week selling leeks from her garden, worries about the water's effect on the health of her three children. "The doctor told us to always boil water to kill germs but that requires coal, which is expensive. Chlorine is also expensive so a lot of the time, we just drink it," she says.



PORT-AU-PRINCE: A group of women wash their clothes at a water source in Godet, in the commune of Kenskoff, in the Haitian capital. About 42 percent of Haitians do not have access to safe drinking water, according to the UN. — AFP

Risk of disease

Mourad Wahba, the humanitarian coordinator of the UN mission to Haiti, said lack of water also means problems with sanitation, which can cause and spread disease. "I know we immediately think of cholera but even diarrhea is dangerous in an environment where these illnesses aren't treated," he said. Mothers here say their children frequently suffer from diarrhea caused by the water, and the most severely affected are sent to the hospital by motorcycle taxi. Such a scenario can devastate the finances of a family in Godet, most of whom survive on their small gardens and informal jobs.

In Haiti, 72 percent of people do not have toilets in their homes. The number of toilets in Godet can actually be counted on one hand. "There's a lady here who has a

well-built toilet," Metelus said, pointing to a small concrete house a hundred meters away, "but it's not always open so we answer the call of nature on the hillside." At the bottom of the hill lies the stream that is their only source of water, but poverty leaves few other options.

Meanwhile, a lack of education means many villagers do not understand the dangers of contaminating the stream with trash and chemicals. Women washing clothes in the water reject the idea that they should do their work downstream. "It's made from flowers, it's natural," 30-year-old Marie-Juna Pierre said, pointing to the label on her bottle of fabric softener. She then poured the blue liquid into the very spot where she comes every morning to gather drinking water for her children. — AFP

IN DROUGHT-HIT CENTRAL NICARAGUA - WATER 'IS LIKE LOOKING FOR GOLD'

TEUSTEPE: Nicaragua may boast a southern lake that is Central America's biggest body of freshwater, but in the center of the country years of drought have taken a severe toll. "This is like looking for gold," Pedro Membreno, a 55-year-old resident said as he dug into the rocky earth near the town of Teustepe, one of 33 communities in a parched corridor. His hole was already 15 meters deep, and still there was no water. He and hundreds of other rural dwellers are desperately searching for aquifers, underground layers of water in permeable rock.

But many have simply dried up under the drought that has dragged on for three years now. Nicaragua's central region has witnessed an absence of rain and temperatures hovering around 36 to 39 degrees centigrade. Conditions worsened further over the past year with El Nino, the cyclical climatic phenomenon that warms the eastern Pacific, heating up and drying out much of Central America. The change accelerates deforestation and prompts farmers to divert scarce water for their crops. The result has been despair for the towns of Teustepe, Ciudad Dario, Las Banderas, San Francisco Libre and Tipitapam, stretching from the center to the north of the country, one of the poorest in the Americas.

Dry riverbeds

Their towns lie in arid fields, among bald hills where plants have shriveled, and dry riverbeds. Women and children can be seen walking along the roads with empty containers, looking for water. Despite the apocalyptic scenes, and worried protests that have sprung up in some outlying suburbs of the capital Managua to the west, environmentalists say there is no danger of the entire country going thirsty. Still, said Denis Melendez, a coordinator for an environmental umbrella group called the National Platform for Risk Management, the drought was having a sharp impact.

"We knew that the climatic phenomenon was going to affect severely affect us. That was clear. But this prolongation of nearly three years has exacerbated the situation," he said. "In the hand-dug wells, people are saying the water is much deeper than before, that they have to go further down or the waters have receded like in the big lakes." Silvia Luna, aged 29, confirmed the worry felt by many. She was bathing and washing clothes with other women and children in a meager waterhole located between boulders, a couple of hundred meters from her home. "Sometimes the waterhole is dry and we wait for water to come out for us to do our chores," she said. — AFP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LARGEST CIRCULATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
فهد علي المخيزيم
Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

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



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (07/04/2016 TO 13/04/2016)

SHARQIA-1
OBSERVANCE 12:15 PM
OBSERVANCE 2:30 PM
NO FRI+SAT
KUNG FU PANDA 3 2:15 PM
FRI+SAT
KUNG FU PANDA 3 4:15 PM
OBSERVANCE 6:15 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 8:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 11:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 12:45 AM

SHARQIA-2
THE BOSS 12:30 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 1:30 PM
THE BOSS 2:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 4:30 PM
THE BOSS 6:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 8:30 PM
THE BOSS 10:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 12:30 AM

SHARQIA-3
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 1:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 4:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 7:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 10:00 PM
10 CLOVERFIELD LANE 1:00 AM
10 CLOVERFIELD LANE 1:45 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 4:00 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 7:15 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 10:30 PM

MUHALAB-1
THE BOSS 12:15 PM
THE BOSS 2:15 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 4:15 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 6:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 8:15 PM
THE BOSS 10:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 12:30 AM

MUHALAB-2
OBSERVANCE 12:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 1:45 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 1:30 PM
OBSERVANCE 4:45 PM
OBSERVANCE 6:30 PM
OBSERVANCE 8:15 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 10:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 1:00 AM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 10:15 PM
OBSERVANCE 1:30 AM

MUHALAB-3
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 12:30 PM
NO FRI+SAT
KUNG FU PANDA 3 11:30 AM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 1:30 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 3:30 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 6:45 PM
OBSERVANCE 10:15 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 3:30 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 6:45 PM
SARDAAR GABBAR SINGH - Telugu 10:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 1:15 AM

FANAR-1
THE BOY AND THE BEAST 12:15 PM
THE BOY AND THE BEAST 2:45 PM
THE BOY AND THE BEAST 5:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 7:45 PM
THE BOSS 10:00 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 12:05 AM

FANAR-2
MR. RIGHT 1:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 3:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 5:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 7:00 PM
MR. RIGHT 9:00 PM
MR. RIGHT 11:00 PM
MR. RIGHT 1:00 AM

FANAR-3
OBSERVANCE 12:45 PM
OBSERVANCE 2:30 PM
JU ON: THE GRUDGE 3 (JU-ON: THE BEGINNING OF THE END) 4:45 PM
OBSERVANCE 6:45 PM
JU ON: THE GRUDGE 3 (JU-ON: THE BEGINNING OF THE END) 8:45 PM
OBSERVANCE 10:45 PM
OBSERVANCE 12:45 AM

MARINA-1
OBSERVANCE 12:15 PM
THE BOSS 2:00 PM
THE BOSS 4:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 6:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 8:00 PM
THE BOSS 10:00 PM
OBSERVANCE 12:05 AM

MARINA-2
MR. RIGHT 12:30 PM
MR. RIGHT 2:30 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: AWN OF JUSTICE 4:30 PM
MR. RIGHT 7:30 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 9:30 PM
MR. RIGHT 12:30 AM

MARINA-3
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 11:45 AM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 2:00 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 4:15 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 2:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 4:15 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 6:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 8:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 10:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 12:45 AM

AVENUES-1
KUNG FU PANDA 3 11:30 AM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 1:45 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 4:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 6:15 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 8:30 PM
10 CLOVERFIELD LANE 10:45 PM
10 CLOVERFIELD LANE 1:00 AM

AVENUES-2
MR. RIGHT 12:30 PM
MR. RIGHT 2:45 PM
MR. RIGHT 5:00 PM
MR. RIGHT 7:15 PM
MR. RIGHT 9:30 PM
MR. RIGHT 11:45 PM

AVENUES-3
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 12:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 2:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 4:45 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 7:00 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 9:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 11:30 PM

360°- 1
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 1:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 3:30 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 5:45 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 8:00 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 10:15 PM
MA3 AL KHATAR (Kuwaiti Film) 12:30 AM

360°- 2
3000 NIGHTS - Arabic 12:30 PM
3000 NIGHTS - Arabic 2:45 PM
3000 NIGHTS - Arabic 5:00 PM
3000 NIGHTS - Arabic 7:15 PM
3000 NIGHTS - Arabic 9:30 PM
3000 NIGHTS - Arabic 11:45 PM

360°- 3
KUNG FU PANDA 3 12:45 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 3:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 5:15 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 7:30 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 9:45 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 12:15 AM

AL-KOUT.1
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 1:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 2:00 PM
KUNG FU PANDA 3 4:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 6:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 9:00 PM
BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE 12:05 AM

AL-KOUT.2
THE BOSS 12:45 PM
THE BOSS 2:45 PM
MR. RIGHT 4:45 PM
THE BOSS 6:45 PM
MR. RIGHT 8:45 PM

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Maternity Hospital	24843100
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Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

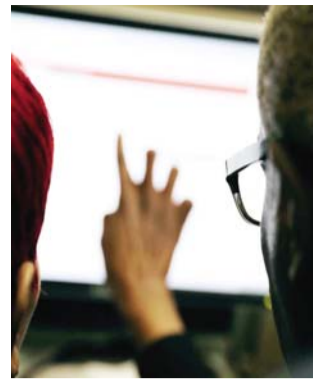
Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381

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WALL ST SET TO OPEN LOWER ON GLOBAL GROWTH FEARS

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Applications for jobless aid fall to low level of 267,000

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MUNICH: German journalists Frederik Obermaier (L) and Bastian Obermayer (R) co-authors of the so-called "Panama Papers" investigation pose at the office of the German daily "Sueddeutsche Zeitung". — AFP

OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS ARE FOR MORE THAN LAUNDERING MONEY

'A LOT OF FEAR ABOUT WHAT THE IRS CAN DO'

Offshore accounts conjure images of bad behavior by the rich and shady, and for good reason: they have been used to dodge taxes, fund organized crime and facilitate corruption. But many people use offshore accounts for more than just hiding bribes and laundering money. Really. And offshore accounts can be financial tools for more than just the ultra-wealthy, too. Regular people use them to simplify transactions with relatives overseas, or to keep money in places where they travel often - or for more distasteful reasons, like to hide money from a soon-to-be ex-spouse.

These accounts and trusts, and the shell companies sometimes set up to control them, have come under scrutiny this week after a massive leak of confidential documents from a Panamanian law firm has shown how some of the world's richest people hide assets to avoid paying taxes.

It is impossible to say how many accounts are for legitimate purposes rather than illicit ones, according to Mark Matthews, an attorney and former IRS deputy commissioner. "My sense is there is a vast majority of people who have legal reasons," he said.

An offshore account is simply a financial account or trust held somewhere outside of that person's home country. Americans can hold them overseas and many foreigners hold them in the US. They can be set up by companies or individuals.

Regulators, particularly the US, have cracked

down on them in recent years. An exact measure of how many offshore accounts exist and who they are held by is tricky because of their nature: many are specifically designed to offer account holders anonymity. Here are a few common reasons an individual who isn't among the world's superrich might hold an offshore account:

Family

Immigrants often maintain accounts in their home country to make things simpler to manage when back home or to help care for relatives who stay behind. Financial ties can last for generations through inheritances. "It's not the mega-rich, you see other people who were otherwise middle class," Matthews said.

There can be confusing or tricky situations, of course. Matthews said these can come up if a family business is maintained in a home country or if there are family secrets. Matthews tells of a case where a woman never told her husband of an account established years before by her father because he didn't "want her to marry that American." "I wish I could sell the movie rights, the stories of these families are amazing," Matthews said.

The US has made several efforts to force and encourage citizens to reveal their offshore holdings, including a voluntary disclosure program that started in 2009 that has brought more than 54,000 disclosures and \$8 billion in taxes.

Convenience

There are an estimated 8 million Americans living abroad. That means there are that many people who might want easy access to local banks to deposit their paycheck, pay bills or get cash. "There seems to be the presumption that if you have an account in a foreign country you are trying to hide money from the government," said Jane Bruno, whose Florida-based tax consulting and preparation business specializes in helping Americans living overseas.

The easy access abroad can create some thorny problems at home, though. Bruno said efforts to crack down on wrongdoers holding offshore accounts have made it daunting for people living overseas who try to follow the law. Unlike most other countries, the US taxes its citizens on all income, regardless of where it is earned or where they live. That can make for some anxiety-producing tax paperwork. "There is a lot of angst around the whole thing and there is a lot of fear about what the IRS can do," Bruno said.

Asset protection

Some people move assets offshore to protect them from a future lawsuit, divorce or other attack by a third party. Barry Engel, an attorney specializing in asset protection, said some people feel they are a target because of their wealth or their profession, or maybe they have seen a friend ensnared in costly disputes or other problems.

In many cases, assets in an offshore trust cannot be touched in a legal dispute. And as long as the money is reported to the IRS, the whole arrangement can be above board. People outside the US may also put money in offshore accounts if they feel the political or financial climate in their own country isn't stable. And while the US is outspoken about its fight against offshore abuses, it has become a popular place for many global companies and wealthy to park their money thanks to laws in some states that make it easy and cheap to establish businesses and accounts, and do so anonymously.

Business

Small business owners, especially internet-based ones, can have customers all around the world, and they may have little or no operations in the country where the owners live. These businesses often find it much simpler - and cheaper - to incorporate the company abroad where registration fees or taxes are low, or where it's easier to process payments coming from several countries.

There are also financial products only available in certain countries that may require an account in that country to access. Often, offshore accounts are just plain practical. "There's been a lot of press and coverage of all the wrong uses because, let's face it, the right uses aren't very exciting," Engel said. — AP

CHINA WAS LARGEST MARKET FOR PANAMA PAPERS LAW FIRM

BEIJING: Nearly a third of the business of Mossack Fonseca, the law firm at the centre of the Panama Papers scandal, came from its offices in Hong Kong and China, reports say, making the Asian giant its biggest market.

Shell companies incorporated through the Hong Kong and China offices of the Panamanian law firm accounted for 29 percent of its global active companies, according to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), which coordinated a year-long investigation into a trove of 11.5 million documents.

The investigation found that relatives of at

least eight current or former members of China's Politburo Standing Committee, the ruling party's most powerful body, have been implicated in the use of offshore companies.

Such vehicles are not illegal in themselves and can be used for legitimate business needs. But they commonly feature in corruption cases, when they can be used to secretly move ill-gotten gains abroad. Under President Xi Jinping, Beijing has launched a much-publicized anti-graft drive but has not instituted systemic reforms such as public declarations of assets.

Xi's brother-in-law and family members of two current members of the Politburo Standing

Committee (PSC), Zhang Gaoli and Liu Yunshan, have offshore holdings, ICIJ reported. Relatives of past PSC members Jia Qinglin, once the fourth-ranked leader in China, Li Peng, who led the Tiananmen Square crackdown, Hu Yaobang, ex vice-president Zeng Qinghong, and Tian Jiyun were named by the Guardian, which took part in the investigation.

The documents also named movie star Jackie Chan, billionaire heiress Kelly Zong Fuli, and shopping-mall magnate Shen Guojun. Chinese media have largely avoided reporting on the leaks and social media have been scrubbed of references to them, with foreign

news broadcasters such as the BBC blacked out when they report on the issue.

Mossack Fonseca has offices in eight Chinese cities including Hong Kong, its website showed, more than any other country. Its locations in China include the major financial centers of Shanghai and Shenzhen, as well as port cities Qingdao and Dalian, and lesser-known provincial capitals such as Shandong's Jinan and Hangzhou in Zhejiang, along with Ningbo, also in the eastern province.

In a statement, Mossack Fonseca denied any wrongdoing and said it has always complied with relevant laws and regulations. — AFP



LOS ANGELES: Hunter March hosts "Top Five Live," AwesomenessTV's daily live entertainment show on go90. — AP

VERIZON DIPS ANOTHER TOE INTO ONLINE VIDEO PROGRAMMING

LOS ANGELES: Could the next "House of Cards" be coming to your phone? That's what Verizon hopes now that it's paid more than \$100 million for a piece of the online-video studio AwesomenessTV. It's the latest attempt by a maturing, mainstream corporation to find growth in non-traditional video programming that can reach younger audiences on Smartphone and tablets.

In 2014, for instance, Disney acquired online-video producer Maker Studios for a tab that eventually hit \$625 million. An AT&T joint venture bought Full screen, a similar production company, for an undisclosed sum the same year. Hollywood's DreamWorks Animation bought AwesomenessTV in 2013, paying a total of \$113 million after the studio hit promised deal targets. In some ways, these arrangements are modern - albeit much smaller - versions of classic media deals struck by companies anxious to draw bigger audiences. Think Twitter buying the rights to Thursday Night Football, Time Warner Cable doing likewise with Los Angeles Dodgers baseball, or cable company Comcast buying NBC Universal.

The investment gives Verizon a 24.5 percent stake in AwesomenessTV and more original video for its Go90 streaming service, which launched in September. It will also help it make use of its \$4.4 billion purchase of AOL last year, which gave Verizon a new capability to deliver ads on top of video.

"Verizon has concluded that trying to extract more and more money out of data usage charges is a dead-end street," said analyst Craig Moffett of research firm MoffettNathanson. Instead, it's been focused on selling ads targeted to where its users happen to be, which is "why they bought AOL and why they launched Go90," he said. Now the company is focused on building up its library of stuff to watch - and, of course, to sell ads against. AwesomenessTV CEO and founder Brian Robbins said the money will allow it to spend more to make short-form shows with top-level talent. That, in turn, will help it build an audience older than the teen "Generation Z" crowd it now attracts with shows like "Cheerleaders" and "Guidance."

The idea, Robbins said, is to make shows on par with the "high end of premium subscription services - HBO, Netflix or Showtime." Verizon would reserve some of that programming for a new paid Go90 tier it plans to launch later this year or early next. But the investment - valued at roughly \$159 million - is tiny relative to Verizon Communications Inc.'s \$217 billion market value, and at best represents a baby step by the mobile carrier. — AP

APPLICATIONS FOR JOBLESS AID FALL TO LOW LEVEL OF 267,000 EMPLOYEES REMAIN DESPITE LOW GROWTH

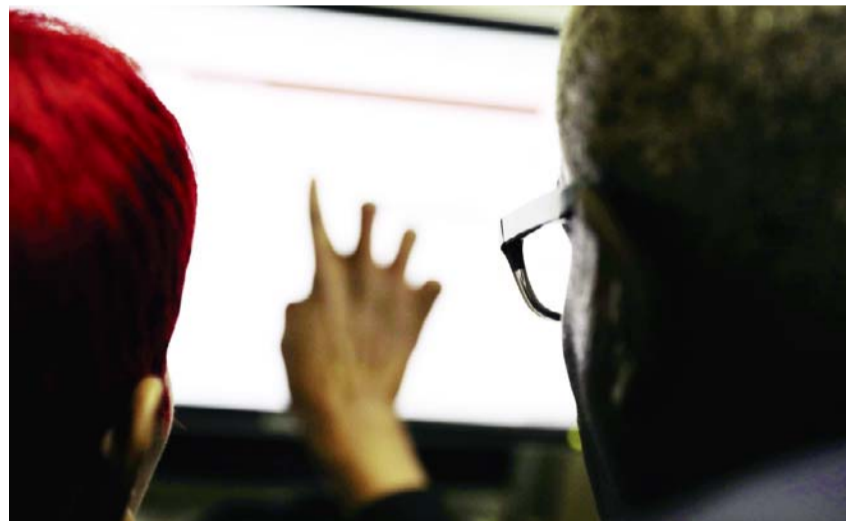
WASHINGTON: Fewer Americans sought unemployment aid last week, evidence that employers are holding onto their workers despite signs of weak growth.

THE NUMBERS: Applications for US jobless benefits fell 9,000 to a seasonally adjusted 267,000, the Labor Department said yesterday. The four-week average, a less-volatile figure, rose 3,500 to 266,750. The number of people receiving benefits was mostly unchanged at 2.19 million. The benefit rolls have fallen 6.5 percent in the past year.

Applications have been below 300,000 for 57 straight weeks, the longest streak since 1973.

THE TAKEAWAY: Applications are a proxy for layoffs, so the figures point to a stable job market with steady hiring and few job cuts. Businesses appear unfazed by the economy's current weakness, with some analysts forecasting that growth may slip below a 1 percent annual rate in the first three months of this year.

That suggests many companies may see the slowdown as temporary. Hiring has remained solid, as employers added 215,000 jobs in March. The unemployment rate ticked up to 5 percent, from 4.9 percent, but for mostly a good rea-



ATLANTA: Georgia Department of Labor services specialist Louis Holliday, right, helps a woman with a job search on a computer at an unemployment office. — AP

son: Many people who hadn't been searching for work launched job hunts last month. Most found jobs, but not all were immediately hired. That boosted the number of unemployed.

KEY DRIVERS: The steady job gains have continued despite evidence growth is slowing. Americans barely increased their spending in February for the third straight month. Home sales

have leveled off. And orders for manufactured goods fell last month, partly because of weaker overseas demand.

Growth was just 1.4 percent at an annual rate in last year's fourth quarter, and may have slowed further in the first quarter. Yet many economists expect ongoing job gains and lower prices at the gas pump to lift consumer spending in the coming months and boost growth. — AP

EU TO GIVE STATES MORE POWERS ON VAT RATES, TO TACKLE FRAUD

BRUSSELS: European Union states will have more powers to set sales tax rates, the European Commission said yesterday, presenting a broad reform of Value Added Tax rules which also aims to curb widespread fraud involving VAT.

The plan follows repeated pressure from EU states to scrap the existing system based on a centralized EU-wide rate-setting mechanism, which limits countries' powers to decide reduced levies for specific products, ranging from ebooks to sanitary products.

Two options remain under discussion, the bolder of which would give states the freedom to set rates as they prefer "so long as it does not generate tax distortions", the Commission said in its plan. EU Economics Commissioner Pierre Moscovici told reporters that he favored the more ambitious option. A definitive decision will be made by next year. In either case Britain will retain its right to apply zero rates of VAT, a legacy entitlement that it shares with other older member states but which London is unusual in using

so widely, notably on foods and medicines.

The Commission will also make a proposal by the end of the year to increase the number of products and services exempt from VAT. "This would solve the tampon tax issue," an official said, explaining that this measure would allow Britain to charge no VAT on female hygiene products, which are currently taxed at a reduced 5 percent rate.

This follows a commitment made at the EU leaders' summit in March to end the tampon tax row that had become a political football for Britons campaigning to leave the EU in a June referendum. The Commission will also propose this year a cut in VAT on eBooks and online news publications to align prices with their paper versions.

The Commission's action plan on VAT also proposes to changing the way the tax is collected on trade between EU states. At the moment the tax is collected by the state where the goods or services are sold and exporters are exempt. — Reuters

WALL ST SET TO OPEN LOWER ON GLOBAL GROWTH FEARS

NEW YORK: Wall Street was set to open lower yesterday as investors worried about weak global growth and the uncertainty surrounding the Federal Reserve's plans to hike interest rates this year.

Minutes from the Fed's March meeting released on Wednesday pointed to concerns about the central bank's limited ability to tackle a global economic slowdown, reducing the odds of a rate increase before June. While the Fed has projected two rate increases this year, the market is pricing in a near 60-percent chance of a hike in December, according to CME Group's Fed Watch Program. The

central bank's caution put pressure on the dollar as investors sought safety in the yen. "I suspect that what we're seeing here is a little market jitters due to the fact that the dollar continues to weaken," said Peter Cardillo, chief market economist at First Standard Financial in New York. "I think we will just stay in a mixed-to-holding pattern for the next day or two until the earnings season begins to move into full gear next week," Cardillo said.

First-quarter earnings at S&P 500 companies are expected to decline 7.4 percent, according to Thomson Reuters data. At 8:32 a.m. ET, Dow e-minis were down

76 points, or 0.43 percent, with 26,122 contracts changing hands. S&P 500 e-minis were down 10 points, or 0.49 percent, with 242,468 contracts traded. Nasdaq 100 e-minis were down 19 points, or 0.42 percent, on volume of 26,057 contracts. Fed Chair Janet Yellen, who has urged caution on raising rates, is slated to speak on monetary policy along with former central bank chairmen in New York later in the day. The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits fell to 267,000 last week, beating the fall to 270,000 estimated. Wall Street closed higher on Wednesday, boosted by gains

in healthcare and energy shares. Oil held steady near \$40 a barrel as a rise in Iraqi exports offset gains from an unexpected fall in US stockpiles.

Valeant Pharmaceuticals shares were up 6.7 percent at \$36.47 premarket after the company got approval from its lenders for an amendment and waiver to its credit facility. Yahoo slipped 2.3 percent to \$35.82 after Re/code reported that the Internet company expects sharp decline in revenue and profit for 2016. Bed Bath & Beyond was up 3 percent at \$50.27 after strong quarterly results prompted price target upgrades. — Reuters

A TOP HAVEN FOR TAX CHEATS THAT MAY SURPRISE YOU

'THERE'S A BIG NEON SIGN SAYING THE US IS OPEN TO TAX CHEATS'

WASHINGTON: The US lambastes and strong-arms countries that help drug lords and millionaire investors hide their money from tax collectors. Critics say it should look closer to home.

America itself is emerging as a top tax haven alongside the likes of Switzerland, the Cayman Islands and Panama, those seeking reform of the international tax system say. And states such as Delaware, Nevada, South Dakota and Wyoming, in particular, are competing with each other to provide foreigners with the secrecy they crave. "There's a big neon sign saying the US is open to tax cheats," says John Christensen, executive director of the Tax Justice Network.

America's openness to foreign tax evaders is coming under new scrutiny after the leak this week of 11.5 million confidential documents from a Panamanian law firm. The Panama Papers show how some of the world's richest people hide assets in shell companies to avoid paying taxes.

Christensen's group, which campaigns for a global crackdown on tax evaders, says the United States ranks third in the world in financial secrecy, behind Switzerland and Hong Kong but ahead of notorious tax havens such as the Cayman Islands and Luxembourg. Under a 2010 law, passed after it was learned that the Swiss bank UBS helped thousands of Americans evade US taxes, the United States demands that banks and other financial institutions disclose information on Americans abroad to make sure they pay their US taxes.

But the US doesn't automatically return the favor. More than 90 countries have signed on to a 2014 information-sharing agreement set up by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; the US is among the few that haven't joined. American banks don't even collect the kind of information foreign countries would need to identify tax dodgers.

"The banking lobby has resisted changes in the law that would allow more sharing of data," says Peter Cotorceanu, a Zurich-based lawyer who specializes in private banking.

Last year's report

In a report last year, the Tax Justice Network complained that "Washington's independent-minded approach risks tearing a giant hole in international efforts to crack down on tax evasion, money launder-



HONG KONG: The entrance of the regional head office of Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca, one of the world's biggest creators of shell companies. — AP

ing and financial crime." It said foreign elites have "used the United States as a bolt-hole for looted wealth."

Pascal Saint-Amans, head of the OECD's Center for Tax Policy and Administration, says the US often makes information available to other countries upon request. But that means countries can get details only on those they already suspect of tax evasion. Christensen says Swiss banks report that "many of their tax-dodging clients are talking about moving to the US. You go to Switzerland, and that's all they're talking about." Individual states, including Nevada, Wyoming and South Dakota, are making things worse, critics say.

They compete with each other to make it easier to set up corporations - few questions asked about who's behind the business. "We have states that set up corporations where there's no information about ownership," says Jack Blum, a Washington lawyer who specializes in financial crime. "The states make a lot of money doing that." Nevada, for instance, makes it easy to incorporate secretly and charges a \$500 annual business license fee for corporations and \$200 for other businesses. Lawmakers granted business entities greater protection against lawsuits in 2001, hoping to attract more of them and use incorporation filing revenue to raise teacher salaries.

"Nevadans will continue to see nefarious business practices like those reported in the Panama Papers if state officials don't change the laws of incorporation," says

Rep. Dina Titus, D-Nevada. "It is time for the state to tighten its disclosure and liability laws and remove the sign from our front yard that says: 'Sleazeballs and rip-off artists welcome.'" Nevada's registered agent industry, which helps businesses incorporate in the state, supports about 1,000 jobs and pumps \$110 million into the state economy every year, says the Nevada Registered Agents Association. The group opposed an effort last year to raise the business license fee. "Nevada has promoted itself for decades as a 'business friendly' state, and that benefit is critical to keep new entities incorporating in Nevada," says Matthew Taylor, a former association president and current board member.

Doubts

But doubts are rising, even in Nevada. Many of the businesses are mere shells, financial contrivances that don't employ people or make any investments.

"Historically, we have marketed ourselves as kind of a Wild West, frontier sort of place," says Pat Hickey, a Republican in the Nevada Assembly. Now, Hickey wonders, "Don't we want businesses that actually reside here, provide services or manufacture things? ... I don't know it's necessarily an industry that we need to bend over backward to keep." South Dakota says its favorable trust laws provide an attractive place for families to park and grow their wealth, and it can all be done outside the public eye. —AP

GROUP BEHIND 2010 ARIZONA BOYCOTT CONSIDERS NEW EFFORT

PHOENIX: Latino and civil rights groups behind a 2010 boycott of Arizona designed to pressure the state into stopping anti-immigrant legislation on Wednesday said they are considering a renewed boycott because of a new series of legislative proposals.

The groups, united as the Somos America Coalition, said more than a half-dozen bills moving in the Arizona Legislature target illegal immigrants and strike fear in the immigrant community. Founding President Roberto Reveles delivered a letter to Republican Gov. Doug Ducey asking him to pressure the Legislature into killing the bills or to veto them if they reach his desk.

"During the boycott, Arizona's business community eventually delivered a clear message to the Legislature's leadership to reject any further anti-Latino and anti-immigrant policies," Reveles' letter said. "Regrettably, the legislature is once again promoting extremist public policy shamelessly aimed at making life so miserable for undocumented immigrants that they will self-deport."

Enacting the new legislation would prompt a destructive boycott, Reveles said. A study done six months after the start of the 2010 boycott showed at least \$141 million in lost economic activity, although it didn't have a massive impact on the state's economy. Ducey spokesman Daniel Scarpinato called any boycott "a stunt that should be widely and vocally condemned." "Let me be very clear," he said. "Any discussion of a boycott is election year politics at its worst and these groups should be ashamed of themselves for trying to divide Arizona and destroy our economy."

State business groups, including the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry, also rejected calls for a renewed boycott. "Boycotts only hurt our economy, negatively impact hardworking Arizonans and divide our citizens," the groups said in a joint statement.

New Bills

The Legislature is considering a series of bills that worry the Latino groups, although many of them have stalled. Ducey has signed one bill that ends a state prison program that releases some convicts subject to deportation after they serve 50 percent of their sentences instead of the normal 85 percent. Those convicts were then turned over to federal officials for deportation, but lawmakers were concerned some were being released in the US.

In a signing letter, the governor said the bill was about holding everyone to the same standard of justice and wasn't about immigration politics. The other bills cited by Reveles' group include ones that would require illegal immigrants to serve their full sentences and deny them probation; target state funding to cities that issue identification cards to people in the country illegally or don't cooperate with immigration agents; and another barring the state from helping relocate refugees.

Sen. Steve Smith, R-Maricopa, is sponsoring the bill requiring full sentences and says it aims to prevent criminals from being released early and committing more crimes. It was prompted by the 2015 killing of 21-year-old convenience store clerk Grant Ronnebeck by an immigrant released on bond by immigration officials after a state conviction. — AP

COLOMBIA PEACE NEGOTIATOR HAD PANAMA COMPANY, PAID TAXES

BOGOTA: Colombia's chief negotiator at peace talks with Marxist FARC rebels said yesterday that in the past he created a company in Panama for his family's wealth and paid taxes in full to the Colombian government.

The official, Humberto de la Calle, volunteered the information in a statement after he said he was asked about it by journalists from Colombian website Connectas, one of more than 100 media outlets investigating the so-called Panama Papers leaked from Panamanian

law firm Mossack Fonseca.

The law firm specializes in establishing offshore companies, which could be used to avoid taxes, but there are several legitimate reasons for individual people and corporations to set them up. "In the past I created a family company called Davinia, its only purpose being to serve as a holder for family wealth," de la Calle said in a statement carried by Colombian media other than Connectas. De la Calle, a former vice president, said the company's creation in 2009 was

reported to Colombian authorities. It has since been closed, its assets moved to Colombia and registered with the chamber of commerce, he said. The statement did not say when the company was liquidated. The release of four decades of documents showing how the politically connected and rich stash their wealth has led to investigations around the world. Mossack Fonseca has denied any wrongdoing.

When contacted by Connectas and other media about the assets, de la Calle answered

their questions and provided copies of his tax return, the statement said. Connectas has so far not published any information connecting de la Calle to the Panama Papers leak.

De la Calle, who leads the government's negotiating team at talks in Cuba with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), said he supported the release of the information but believes law abiding people wanting to protect their wealth were being conflated with criminals. — Reuters

NICARAGUA TURNS TO RUSSIA TO HELP START NATIONAL AIRLINE

MANAGUA: Nicaragua is to start a new national airline and expand its international airport under a deal with Russia involving Russian aircraft and a loan of up to \$300 million, state media reported yesterday.

Government officials did not immediately respond to AFP queries seeking to verify the information. According to a report by the online news website 19 Digital, a cooperation deal with Russia to boost development will go towards extending the runway at Managua's airport and building extra facilities. Nicaragua's national radar network will also receive investment. There were no details on how many planes Nicaragua would have in its new national fleet. The country has not had a flag-carrying airline since 1990, when the company Aeronica was bought up by a Central American consortium. The Russian financing, which is to be reimbursed over 40 years, was agreed in a meeting in Managua between representatives between both countries that started Monday, 19 Digital reported. — AFP

TESLA MODEL 3 ORDERS HIT 325,000

NEW YORK: Orders for Tesla's Model 3, its first mass-market electric aimed at taking the upstart automaker into the mainstream, have reached 325,000, Tesla said yesterday.

The mark was hit just one week after the car, which will not be available until late 2017, was unveiled by Tesla Motors founder Elon Musk in Los Angeles. "This interest has spread completely organically," Tesla said on its blog. "Unlike other major product launches, we haven't advertised or paid for any endorsements." Consumers interested in the car must pay a deposit of \$1,000. Tesla has viewed the Model 3, which starts at a base price of \$35,000, as key means to transitioning the auto market to zero-emissions. But it is also Tesla's key to transitioning from a niche luxury automaker to a real industry player selling a large volume of cars. "This has been a true grassroots effort driven by the passion of the Tesla team that's worked so hard to get to this point, and our current and future customers who believe so strongly in what we are trying to achieve," Tesla said. "We are all taking a huge step towards a better future by accelerating the transition to sustainable transportation." The huge number of orders will necessitate a big ramp-up in Tesla's manufacturing capacity. First started in 2003, Tesla built just 50,000 cars in 2015, but has set a target of 500,000 a year by 2020. Tesla is expected to expand its production base beyond its current plant in Fremont, California as it builds more of the Model 3, which is priced at about half the level of its first two models. — AFP



PARIS: Tesla Motors shows the car manufacturer's new Model 3. — AFP



PARIS: Anti-fraud activists block entrances at Societe Generale's Paris headquarters as part of a protest accusing the French bank of ties to the so-called "Panama Papers". — AP

EUROPE'S BANKS UNDER SCRUTINY AS REGULATORS LOOK INTO PANAMA PAPERS

'THE RISKS HAVE RISEN, NOT FALLEN'

BERN/GENEVA: Banking watchdogs across Europe have begun checking whether lenders have ties to a massive document leak from Panama that showed how offshore companies are used to stash clients' wealth. Switzerland's financial watchdog FINMA said yesterday that banks must clamp down on money laundering, as the Geneva prosecutor opened a criminal probe.

Four decades of documents from Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca, which specializes in setting up offshore companies and has offices in Zurich and Geneva, showed widespread use of those instruments by global banks and triggered investigations across the world. "Do I think we are where we should be in fighting misuse in the financial system? No," FINMA Chief Executive Mark Branson told Reuters following its annual news conference.

"We think in some ways the risks in Switzerland have risen, not fallen, and that there is more that can be done. We don't want to see large scandals involving Swiss banks." Switzerland is the world's biggest international wealth management centre with around \$2.5 trillion in assets and has taken on more wealth of late from emerging markets, from which it is harder determine the origin of assets, Branson said.

Britain's Financial Conduct Authority said yesterday it has written to 20 banks and other financial firms, giving them until

April 15 to spell out any involvement they have with the "Panama Papers".

HSBC, Britain's biggest bank and its affiliates created more than 2,300 shell companies with Mossack Fonseca, according to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists. HSBC has dismissed suggestions it used offshore structures to help clients cheat on their taxes.

Also yesterday, France's ACPR financial regulator said it has told French banks to hand over extra information about their business ties with tax havens. German regulator BaFin is likewise probing the role of Germany's banks, a source told Reuters on Monday. Watchdogs in Sweden, Netherlands and Austria said earlier this week that they were looking into banks named in the papers. The chief executive of Austria's Hypo Landesbank Vorarlberg became one of the first top bankers to quit over reports based on the data leak yesterday, though he denies his bank violated any laws or sanctions.

Swiss banks

The "Panama Papers" investigation has exposed financial arrangements of public figures including friends of Russian President Vladimir Putin, relatives of the prime ministers of Britain, Iceland and Pakistan, and the president of Ukraine.

Branches of Swiss lenders including UBS and Credit Suisse were mentioned in

the leaked documents as being among the main banks that requested offshore companies for clients. Both banks have denied wrongdoing in connection with the practice.

Swiss financial institutions—a focal point of efforts by European governments to crack down on tax avoidance—trailed only Hong Kong in having used Mossack Fonseca, the reports have said.

Branson said FINMA would first check for signs of illegal activity before deciding whether to launch an investigation linked to the Panama Papers. There were a few indications that they may be relevant in Switzerland, Branson said.

Geneva's prosecutor also said on Thursday he had launched a criminal inquiry in connection with leaks that revealed many offshore companies set up by lawyers and institutions in the Swiss lakeside city and financial centre. "Some information has been made public this week and the prosecutor's office wanted to verify if this information showed anything that was against the law," a spokesman for the prosecutor said.

One prominent Geneva lawyer helped set up 136 Panama offshore companies, Swiss television has reported. "Yes, it is an industry with a legal dimension. I have been in this business for 30 years and this activity was sought after by foreign nationals. — Reuters

DETROIT SHUTS OUT FLYERS 3-0 AS PLAYOFF RACE WINDS DOWN

DETROIT: If the Detroit Red Wings make the playoffs for a 25th straight year, they can thank Jimmy Howard. Howard made 30 saves, Darren Helm, Andreas Athanasiou and Kyle Quincey scored for Detroit, and the Red Wings took a step toward another postseason appearance with a 3-0 win over the Philadelphia Flyers on Wednesday night.

The Red Wings (93 points) lead Boston (91) in the race for third place in the Atlantic Division. Philadelphia (91) is tied with the Bruins for the second wild card. "I think it's just the paying attention to detail," Howard said. "We've been a lot smarter with the puck - not forcing things, and just taking what's given."

While teammate Petr Mrazek has struggled in net, Howard has won all three of his starts this month. Wednesday was his second shutout of the season. The Flyers have three games remaining, while Detroit and Boston have two each. The Bruins host the Red Wings on Thursday night, and a win would put Detroit in the playoffs.

"From day one, we've had to grind out wins. Everything's been close," Red Wings coach Jeff Blashill said. "We've never been truly comfortable in a playoff spot. At times, we've been on the outside looking in."

Helm scored in the first period and Athanasiou added a short-handed goal in the second for Detroit, which hasn't missed the postseason since 1990. Quincey's goal was an empty-netter. Detroit took a 1-0 lead on Helm's goal. Philadelphia's Shayne Gostisbehere was trying to help clear the puck by flinging it around behind the net from near the corner, but instead it went toward the goal and bounced in front, where Helm was able to flip it past Flyers goalie Steve Mason for his 13th

goal of the season.

An even more glaring mistake led to the second goal. Philadelphia's Jakub Voracek let the puck get past him near the boards with the Flyers on the power play. There was nobody back to prevent Athanasiou from going in alone on a breakaway, and his eighth goal of the season made it 2-0. "They played a good game. We played a good game too," Philadelphia's Claude Giroux said. "They got a couple bounces. We had chances on the power play and at even strength."

Mason made 23 saves. His most impressive sequence came in the second when he stopped a breakaway by Helm, then recovered in time to deny Luke Glendening's follow-up attempt. Voracek hit the crossbar with a wrist shot in the second, and that's the closest the Flyers came to beating Howard. Quincey's empty-net goal with 1:43 left in the game was a strange one. Skating near his own net, he tried to slam the puck around the glass to clear it. The puck bounced out at a weird angle and slid all the way down into the goal. The Flyers host Toronto on Thursday night. "We didn't get the job done so we just have to pivot real quick and look at the two points (Thursday) night," Philadelphia coach Dave Hakstol said.

This was Detroit's last home game of the regular season. Pavel Datsyuk was honored before the game for reaching 600 assists recently, and fans chanted "one more year" at the 37-year-old star, hoping he will remain with the Red Wings. The short-handed goal was only the second of the season by Detroit. Philadelphia was without G Michal Neuvirth (lower body) and D Andrew MacDonald (upper body). ... Red Wings F Tomas Jurco replaced rookie Anthony Mantha in the lineup. — AP



DETROIT: Detroit Red Wings center Andreas Athanasiou reacts after scoring on Philadelphia Flyers goalie Steve Mason during the second period of an NHL hockey game. — AP

MAEDA HOMERS IN DODGERS' WIN



SAN DIEGO: Los Angeles Dodgers starting pitcher Kenta Maeda throws against the San Diego Padres in the first inning of a baseball game. — AP

SAN DIEGO: Japanese pitcher Kenta Maeda homered in the second at-bat of his major league debut with the Los Angeles Dodgers on Wednesday night and beat the Padres 7-0, making San Diego the first team in major league history to be shut out in its first three games.

So much joy and so much agony in one game. "I'm just very happy that I got a 'W' in my major league debut," Maeda said through a translator. There wasn't anything for the Padres to celebrate. They were outscored 25-0 in the opening three games by their biggest rivals and set MLB marks for futility.

"There is still perspective here, not to be lost," rookie manager Andy Green said. "We still do have 159 games left and we will score runs this year. And we will win series this year." But this was bad. The Padres were outscored 25-0 in being swept in three games by the Dodgers. They set the MLB mark with 27 straight scoreless innings to open a season. The old mark was 26 by the 1943 St Louis Browns, according to STATS.

The Dodgers joined the 1963 Cardinals in winning their first three games by shutouts. Clayton Kershaw and Scott Kazmir had strong performances in the first two games before Maeda responded with six shutout innings of his own. The right-hander signed an eight-year deal with the Dodgers in January after spending eight seasons with the Hiroshima Carp of the Japanese Central League.

His delivery bears some resemblance to that of former Dodgers pitcher Hideo Nomo, with a pause at the top. He threw a full repertoire of pitches: two- and four-seam fastballs, sliders, curveballs and a changeup. Nomo, the first Japanese player to permanently join the majors, is now a special

adviser to the Padres' baseball operations.

'Very efficient'

Maeda scattered five hits in six innings, struck out four and walked none. "I was a little bit nervous at first but my teammates scored four runs for me so that relaxed me a lot," Maeda said. "I was able to get on the mound the way I usually do and pitch the way I usually do." Roberts said Maeda was "very efficient and they didn't really stress him at all. It was clean."

Obviously for him to hit a homer, he got a lot of firsts out of the way. He got his first strikeout, hit, homer, win, so it was a good night. "With one out in the fourth, Maeda drove an 0-2 pitch from Andrew Cashner (0-1) into the seats in left field."

Maeda (1-0) waved to the crowd as he rounded third base and at first got the silent treatment in the dugout from his teammates, who then mobbed him. "I didn't know that the ball's going to go in, so I was running really hard. That's all I thought about," he said. And the silent treatment? "I was surprised but then everybody moments later came. I was very surprised at first." Said manager Dave Roberts: "It was fun to see the guys react to Kenta. They had a big team hug."

The right-hander signed an eight-year deal with the Dodgers in January after spending eight seasons with the Hiroshima Carp of the Japanese Central League. The Padres thought they'd ended their scoreless streak in the sixth. Although Cory Spangenberg was called out trying to score on a grounder to first, the Padres appealed. A replay appeared to show Spangenberg got his foot across the plate before being tagged by AJ Ellis. After a review of 3:02, the call was upheld. — AP

WILLIAMS LEADS OLYMPIC SEVENS STAMPEDE IN HK

HONG KONG: All Blacks superstar Sonny Bill Williams will stake his claim for an Olympic sevens spot when the informal dress rehearsal for Rio takes place this week in Hong Kong. The code-swapping, two-time Rugby World Cup-winner leads an unusually high-profile field at the famous Hong Kong sevens as a number of top names make their bid for Rio.

Williams has missed the last two sevens world series tournaments with a knee problem and he will be keen to prove his worth just four months out from the Olympics. Fellow All Black Liam Messam is also with New Zealand while colourful Wallabies winger Nick "Honey Badger" Cummins is hoping to nail down a spot

with Australia.

French Six Nations star Virimi Vakatawa is in Hong Kong and New England Patriots Super Bowl-winner Nate Ebner is training with the USA squad with his eye on Rio. The heavyweight line-up has ramped up anticipation for Hong Kong, the seventh of 10 world series tournaments and the highlight of the annual sevens calendar.

Hong Kong's format and sold-out, 40,000-capacity stadium are the closest the sevens series comes to conditions in Rio, making it a vital part of teams' preparations. The championship standings could also hardly be tighter with just one point each between leaders Fiji,

South Africa and New Zealand.

'Not holding back'

Although an injury now could ruin a player's Olympic chances, coaches insisted games would be as intense as ever in the three-day tournament starting on Friday. "I've got 24 players that are wanting to go to Rio to be Olympians so they're not holding back," said New Zealand coach Gordon Tietjens. "They're fighting for positions to go to Rio so it really makes it very competitive amongst the squad that I have."

Exuberant Fiji are perennial favourites in Hong Kong but they remain under a cloud after the devastation of super

cyclone Winston, which killed 44 people in February. "(Players) lost houses, families lost livelihoods and five percent of the population is without a roof over their heads at the moment, and there's a food shortage," said coach Ben Ryan.

"It's not been a lucky time for Fiji and the boys have obviously been affected on a personal level from that. "But saying that, Fijians are incredibly resilient and the boys... they've not moaned about it, they haven't complained about it and we certainly won't use that as an excuse for any lack of preparation. "We're as well prepared as any of the other sides. And the boys will have perhaps a little bit more motivation." — AFP

DAN CARTER RELISHING EUROPEAN CUP HYPE

PARIS: Dan Carter said lining up against Toulon and "good mate" Ma'a Nonu in the European Champions Cup will be "special". The Racing 92 fly-half will make his debut in the competition at home to reigning champions Toulon on Sunday and the New Zealand legend said this was one of the reasons he chose to end his international career and head to Europe.

"When you think of European rugby, there's the great competitions with a lot of history like the (French) Top 14, the (English) Premiership, but the ultimate level is the European Championship," said the 34-year-old, who expects people to be sitting up and taking notice back home. "I can see a few of the rugby supporters back home starting to take an interest once you get to the playoffs.

"I've watched a few European championship games and the finals, the playoff games, just to see the crowds that they get and the importance and just the hype around those games—that's something pretty special. "So when I was looking for a club in Europe, I wanted a strong club that would give me a chance to play in that competition because as a player you want to be playing in the best competitions and that's definitely one of them."

Carter will come up against the man who spent much of the last decade in an All Black jersey playing on his outside shoulder: Nonu. But Carter says facing up to his fellow cap-centenarian will be old hat. "I haven't even thought about it to be honest, that I'll be lining up against one of my good mates," he added. "I guess it's nothing new for me, we've played against each other at Super Rugby level for the last 12-13 years. We've matched up against each other in Crusader-Hurricanes games, so it's nothing new—I always enjoy playing against my good mates, it'll be good fun."

Nonu class

While Carter settled straight in at Racing and has been a huge success, Nonu took a little more time on the south coast and even complained a couple of months ago that his team don't throw the ball around enough.

"It's not easy to make that transition and the class of the player has come out and he's shown what he's capable of the last three months playing at Toulon," said Carter. "He's been fantastic, he's been one of their best players, so I'm not too sure what all the talk early was. He's found his feet and is obviously a lot more comfortable in that team now and he's showing why he's one of the best players in the world."

And Carter says the half-back position he plays, dictating the gameplan, made it easier for him to adapt to the more forward and kick-oriented style in the northern hemisphere than centre Nonu. "There's definitely challenges, it's not going to be exactly as we had at home. He (Nonu) is obviously in a slightly different position where I'm directing play and can choose to kick the ball or pass, whereas he's not in that position at one wider where he doesn't have that decision. "So I can understand his frustration. I'm lucky enough to have experienced roughly what to expect here six years ago (during a brief stint with Perpignan) so it's not about coming here to try to change things to the way we did it back home in New Zealand, it's more about just trying to fit in the best way possible to the way that things are done with your club. "That's probably why he had those frustrations early on, but he's adapted now." — AFP



LAS VEGAS: Welterweight boxers Manny Pacquiao (left), and Timothy Bradley Jr (right), pose with promoter Bob Arum (center), during their final news conference at the MGM Grand Hotel & Casino. — AFP

PACQUIAO VOWS TO SIGN OFF IN STYLE

LAS VEGAS: Manny Pacquiao believes his 11-month absence from boxing following last year's defeat to Floyd Mayweather has left him hungrier than ever as he prepares for his farewell fight against Tim Bradley here tomorrow.

The 37-year-old Filipino insists he will retire from boxing after the third instalment of his rivalry with Bradley, vowing to focus on a political career in his homeland where he is seeking election to the Senate. While Pacquiao has carefully kept a door ajar to extending his career, he told reporters at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas on Wednesday that he views Saturday's bout as an opportunity to sign off in style. "It's really important for me to win this fight, to win convincingly," Pacquiao said. "It's part of my legacy." Asked if he still retained the killer instinct which helped him win an unprecedented eight world titles at eight different weight classes, Pacquiao said his long absence had served to renew his enthusiasm for the ring.

"I still have that (killer instinct)," Pacquiao said. "I rested almost one year and when I started training for this fight I felt fresh and hungry again, like I did when I first started

boxing. It's been good for me. It's good that I had a long layoff. "I still have that desire. I love boxing. Boxing is my passion. I grew up on boxing. I started when I was 12 years old, non-stop, until now."

Pacquiao's long-time trainer Freddie Roach said he had questioned whether retirement talk could prove a distraction. "I thought it might be, but training camp was great, it was just like every other training camp. Manny maybe worked a little harder and said 'Let's go out with a bang' and that's what we intend on doing," Roach said.

'Bat out of hell'

Pacquiao (57-6-2) has joked that a knockout against Bradley—who has twice gone the distance with the Filipino, winning one, losing one—would boost his appeal at the ballot box when he stands in Filipino elections in May. Pacquiao however has not scored a knockout since 2009, when he demolished Britain's Ricky Hatton in two rounds before beating Miguel Cotto six months later with a 12th round TKO. Bradley said he expects Pacquiao to adopt an aggressive game plan. "I'm expecting him to be more aggressive,

he's going to come out like a bat out of hell and try to take my head off," Bradley said, shortly before going face-to-face with Pacquiao at a pre-fight press conference here. The 32-year-old from the Californian desert city of Palm Springs believes, however, that a combative approach from his opponent may play into his hands.

"If he's more aggressive, then it's probably going to give me more opportunities I would think," said Bradley, who showered Pacquiao with praise in what amounted to an endorsement of his opponent's political aspirations. "He's shown over and over again that he's for the people, he's by the people, and that he's a man of his word. And he's always shown that character, integrity," said Bradley. "I really hope you win, man." Roach meanwhile insisted Pacquiao would walk the line between controlled aggression and outright foolhardiness. "We're professionals, we won't make that mistake," Roach said. "We're not going to go in there looking for a knockout. We've never looked for a knockout because if you do it will never happen. The knockouts come as kind of a bonus but we never look for them out there." — AFP



INDIANAPOLIS: Kyrie Irving #2 of the Cleveland Cavaliers shoots the ball during the game against the Indiana Pacers at Bankers Life Fieldhouse. — AFP



LOS ANGELES: Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers (left) takes on Luc Richard Mbah a Moute of the Los Angeles Clippers during their NBA game. — AFP

KOBE LOSES PENULTIMATE HOME GAME OF HIS CAREER

NO JAMES, NO GAME: PACERS ROLL PAST CAVALIERS 123-109

INDIANAPOLIS: Paul George scored 29 points and CJ Miles added 21, helping the Indiana Pacers blow out the Cleveland Cavaliers - with LeBron James getting the night off - 123-109 on Wednesday night. Indiana ended a four-game losing streak in the series and still leads eighth-place Detroit by a half-game. Ninth-place Chicago, still vying for one of the final two playoff spots in the East, is now three games behind the Pacers. The Cavaliers played without the four-time MVP James, who rested after playing Tuesday night in Milwaukee. Without James, Kyrie Irving had 26 points and six assists. Kevin Love scored 23.

CLIPPERS 91, LAKERS 81

DeAndre Jordan and JJ Redick scored 15 points apiece in the Los Angeles Clippers' victory over the Los Angeles Lakers, spoiling the penultimate home game of Kobe Bryant's career. The loss was the Lakers' 62nd of the season, setting a franchise low for the 16-time NBA champions. Bryant scored 17 points for the Lakers, who have a three-game road trip before the third-leading scorer in league history wraps up his 20-year career next Wednesday at home against the Utah Jazz. Blake Griffin and Chris Paul had 13 points apiece before the starters sat out the fourth quarter for the Clippers, who swept the season series with back-to-back wins over the Lakers on consecutive nights. They've won 11 straight over their cross-hallway rivals.

HORNETS 111, KNICKS 97

Kemba Walker scored 34 points, Al Jefferson had 24 and the Charlotte Hornets bounced back from consecutive losses to the Eastern Conference's top teams by beating the New York Knicks 111-97. Charlotte, which fell in Cleveland on Sunday and Toronto on Tuesday, had dropped a game behind Boston and Miami for fourth place.

Walker scored 13 points in the first quarter - more than he had in the entire game a night earlier - and Jefferson helped Charlotte break it open by scoring 10 points in the first 4 min-

utes of the fourth quarter. Derrick Williams had 17 points and 10 rebounds for the Knicks, who lost for the fifth time in six games. Carmelo Anthony returned from a game off to rest and scored 15 points.

WIZARDS 121, NETS 103

Ramon Sessions scored 18 points and had a season-high 13 assists while starting in place of the injured John Wall to help the Washington Wizards defeat the Brooklyn Nets. Bradley Beal scored 25 points, and Marcin Gortat had 16 points and 12 rebounds as Washington remained at least mathematically alive in the Eastern Conference playoff hunt.

Wall sat out for the first time this season with a sore right knee for the 10th-place Wizards (38-40), who remained 3 1/2 games behind Detroit for the final postseason berth. Thomas Robinson scored 23 points and grabbed 10 rebounds for the Nets, who have lost six straight games by an average of 19.3 points.

CELTICS 104, PELICANS 97

Isaiah Thomas scored 32 points to help the Boston Celtics fend off the short-handed New Orleans Pelicans. Jae Crowder added 14 points, Avery Bradley finished with 13 points and six rebounds, and the Celtics beat the Pelicans for the fourth straight time. Toney Douglas led the Pelicans with 19 points, and Tim Frazier added 18 points and six assists. Six New Orleans players finished in double-figures. New Orleans played without its five top scorers due to injuries, and had only eight active players.

PISTONS 108, MAGIC 104

Reggie Jackson scored 24 points and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope added 18 to help lead the Detroit Pistons over the Orlando Magic. The win kept the Pistons (42-37) in contention in the Eastern Conference playoff race. They remained a half-game behind Indianapolis, which beat Cleveland, for the No 7 spot. The Magic's three-game home win-

ning streak ended. They held a 96-92 lead late in the fourth quarter, but then saw it slip away. Evan Fournier led five Orlando players in double figures with 19 points.

MAVERICKS 88, ROCKETS 86

JJ Barea scored 27 points and the Dallas Mavericks kept a slim cushion over Utah and Houston in the race for the last two Western Conference playoff spots. The Mavericks' fifth straight victory - one shy of a season best - put Dallas (40-38) a game ahead of Utah and two up on Houston with four games remaining for all three teams.

Dirk Nowitzki was limited to seven points on eight shots, but had a crucial strip of James Harden on a drive in the final seconds with the Mavericks clinging to a one-point lead. Harden scored 26 points and Dwight Howard had 14 points and 16 rebounds for the Rockets, who are in danger of missing the

postseason a year after reaching the West finals.

TRAIL BLAZERS 120, THUNDER 115

Al-Farouq Aminu scored 27 points, CJ McCollum had 26 and the Portland Trail Blazers clinched a playoff berth. Allen Crabbe hit four 3-pointers and scored 16 points for Portland as six Blazers scored in double figures. Portland (43-37) won for the fifth time in six games and became the first team in NBA history to earn a playoff berth while returning a roster that had two or fewer players with 1,000 or more minutes from the previous season (Damian Lillard, Chris Kaman). Enes Kanter had a career-high 33 points and 20 rebounds for the Thunder, and Dion Waiters had 25 points. Oklahoma City, which clinched the West's No. 3 seed with Tuesday's win at Denver, rested four starters, including All-Stars Kevin Durant and Russell Westbrook. — AP

NBA results/standings

Dallas 88, Houston 86; LA Lakers 81, LA Clippers 91; Boston 104, New Orleans 97; New York 97, Charlotte 111; Portland 120, Oklahoma City 115; Indiana 123, Cleveland 109; Orlando 104, Detroit 108; Washington 121, Brooklyn 103.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Toronto	52	25	.675	—	Oklahoma City	54	25	.684	—
Boston	46	32	.590	6.5	Portland	43	37	.538	11.5
New York	31	48	.392	22	Utah	39	39	.500	14.5
Brooklyn	21	57	.269	31.5	Denver	32	47	.405	22
Philadelphia	10	68	.128	42.5	Minnesota	26	52	.333	27.5
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	56	23	.709	—	Golden State	69	9	.885	—
Indiana	42	36	.538	13.5	LA Clippers	50	28	.641	19
Detroit	42	37	.532	14	Sacramento	31	47	.397	38
Chicago	39	39	.500	16.5	Phoenix	20	58	.256	49
Milwaukee	32	46	.410	23.5	LA Lakers	16	62	.205	53
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Atlanta	46	32	.590	—	San Antonio	65	12	.844	—
Miami	45	32	.584	0.5	Memphis	42	36	.538	23.5
Charlotte	45	33	.577	1	Dallas	40	38	.513	25.5
Washington	38	40	.487	8	Houston	38	40	.487	27.5
Orlando	33	45	.423	13	New Orleans	29	49	.372	36.5



MAZAR-I-SHARIF: An Afghan horseman controls his horse during a game of the traditional sport of buzkashi during celebrations for the Persian New Year. — AFP photos



MAZAR-I-SHARIF: Afghan horsemen compete for a veal carcass during a game.

AFGHANISTAN'S ULTIMATE TEST OF MANHOOD: POLO WITH A CARCASS

MAZAR-I-SHARIF: With their whips cracking and neighing horses, an unruly scrum of riders battled in a muddy field for the headless carcass of a calf—this is the Afghan sport of buzkashi. Passion, raw aggression, horsemanship and a fierce competitive instinct were on display in country's biggest annual tournament held in northern Mazar-i-Sharif city, set against a backdrop of the snow-peaked Hindu Kush mountains to celebrate the Persian New Year.

A ferocious version of polo, Afghanistan's national sport is not for the faint hearted. The action is fast and furious as hundreds of horsemen known as chapandaz dressed in colorful robes, baggy trousers and leather boots — wrestle over the dead animal, fighting off competitors eager to snatch it away.

The rider who manages to scoop up the heavy carcass, often after sliding down perilously close to the ground, charges across the dusty pitch, swerves around a pole and drops it into a small circle to score a point. "If you don't whip the horse hard enough, the horse will be too slow and another chapandaz will grab the goat," warns Gulbudin, a 61-year-old spectator. "The sport inspires great passion."

An adrenaline rush swept through the audience despite the dangers as the wild contest, held in late March, raged. The game, banned under the 1996-2001 hardline Taliban regime, is the ultimate test of the Afghan male. It is seen as a rite of passage into manhood in male-dominated Afghanistan.

Not a single woman was in sight among the

players and spectators. In fact, even the horses are all male. "All the chapandaz you see here are former mujahideen fighters," Abdullah Quraishi, a former buzkashi player. "They first fought against the Soviets in the 1980s before waging a fight against the Taliban. Peace has now returned to this area," he said referring to the relatively tranquil province of Balkh, of which Mazar-i-Sharif is the capital.

A wild winter pastime, buzkashi is believed to have originated in central Asia, reputedly around the time of 13th century emperor Genghis Khan. Legend has it that the sport was initially played by warriors using the corpse of a defeated enemy. The sport still has a proud following, primarily among northern Afghanistan's ethnic Uzbeks, Turkmens and Tajiks.

'Men compete with horses'

The game has key parallels with politics in Afghanistan, a country that has seen numerous power swaps and invasions over the course of centuries. Observers argue that a rough and tumble atmosphere and pumped up show of might are common to both.

The sport is also seen as a symbol of prestige and power for Afghanistan's affluent, who alone are capable of buying the best horses, paying for the best players and funding their own pitches. Buzkashi players certainly have to be talented horsemen, as they stay balanced at high speeds and must remain onboard despite rivals trying to push them to the ground.

Players often hold their whips between their



MAZAR-I-SHARIF: Afghan horsemen look on as others compete for a veal carcass during a game.

teeth, or use them to hit other competitors as much as their horses. Despite its inherent violence the game is a welcome distraction in a country decimated by decades of war. "Buzkashi has been a sport for (hundreds) of years," said Haji Sharif Salahi, president of the buzkashi federation in Balkh. "Vice President General Dostum (former warlord) wants to export buzkashi to other destinations such as Dubai and the United States."

Players of the sport compete for individual as well as team glory, but for professional riders like Hassan Pahlawan, buzkashi is a way to earn

a livelihood. Those who manage, after the mad dash around the field, to hurl the carcass back into the circle and score a goal, usually earn cash prizes—sometimes thousands of dollars if the game is sponsored by a wealthy warlord.

"Many years ago at a buzkashi event organized for a wedding, the prize was \$7,000 and a Toyota Prado. It was I who won it," beamed 48-year-old Pahlawan, who claims to have won several competitions over three decades. "In buzkashi, men compete with horses. It is a sport, a passion and a way to earn a living." — AFP



MAZAR-I-SHARIF: An Afghan horseman watches as a horse rolls in the dust as others are prepared to take part in a buzkashi match.



MAZAR-I-SHARIF: Afghan spectators watch as horsemen compete.

WENGER PLAYS DOWN WILSHERE CLUB BRAWL

LONDON: Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger yesterday played down a late-night scrape involving Jack Wilshere and revealed that the midfielder will make his long-awaited return to action this week. Wilshere, 24, was photographed speaking to police in the early hours of Sunday morning after reportedly being rejected from a nightclub in central London.

The England midfielder will play in the club's under-21 fixture against Newcastle United on Friday and Wenger feels that the nightclub incident did not merit the media attention it received. "I've spoken

to him. It looks to be taken out of proportion a little bit," Wenger told a press conference ahead of his side's Premier League clash with West Ham United tomorrow. "These are matters that we like to keep internal. This is a completely private matter. I don't know really what happened."

He added: "There was no training session the next day. He had an off day (day off). You can accept that sometimes the players go out, when they are free the next day, over the weekend. "Overall, what is positive is that he works very, very

hard. The news looks quite good. I think he will have a good test tomorrow night."

Wilshere has not played this season after sustaining a fractured shin in pre-season. His list of injuries is only slightly longer than his record of off-pitch incidents, but Wenger believes that it is fitness concerns, rather than disciplinary matters, that are the only barrier to a successful career.

"At the moment I believe he's a real football brain, Jack Wilshere. He loves football," said the Frenchman. "He's very serious, very dedicated. The only thing

that could stop him from having the career he can make is injuries. "He had the history of his injuries. It's been bad recently. But I hope he can get rid of that and make the career he deserves."

Wenger revealed that midfielders Aaron Ramsey and Mathieu Flamini are in contention for the trip to West Ham after thigh and hamstring injuries respectively. He also confirmed that the club are in talks over a new contract for 19-year-old Nigerian forward Alex Iwobi, who has scored two goals in his last two appearances. — AFP



LEICESTER: Leicester City's English striker Jamie Vardy controls the ball during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Southampton at King Power Stadium. — AFP

LEICESTER WITHIN FOUR WINS OF FAIRYTALE END

LONDON: When Leicester City faced Sunderland on the opening day of the season, even their most optimistic fans were expecting another testing struggle to avoid relegation. As they prepare to visit Sam Allardyce's side in the return fixture on Sunday, some of those supporters are now pre-emptively buying scarves emblazoned with the words 'Premier League Champions'.

While many are no doubt steering clear to avoid tempting fate, four victories from the remaining six games of the season will hand Leicester a maiden top flight title and complete one of the most remarkable fairytales in English soccer history. Leicester lead second place Tottenham Hotspur by seven points heading into Sunday's game and need 12 more to put themselves out of sight. For the Leicester side that plunged to the foot of the table last season, four wins in six games might have seemed like a daunting task.

Yet such has been the collective sense of calm that seems to encircle Claudio Ranieri's

side this year that few are now expecting a collapse in the home straight. The slip-ups and the wobbles have been reserved for the so-called bigger teams, who have all fallen off the pace while Leicester have sailed smoothly through the supposed choppy waters of the title run-in.

Four successive 1-0 victories have propelled Leicester to the verge of success and been testament to the organizational abilities of their Italian coach. Leicester have never kept five consecutive clean sheets in the top flight, but, in a season when past records have counted for little, it would be a brave man, or perhaps a foolish one, to bet against another shut-out against Sunderland, whose relegation woes are intensifying.

Now-or-never

Allardyce's side are four points adrift of Norwich City in 17th and entering the now-or-never part of the season when they will have to start winning or become resigned to their fate. Tottenham, whose hopes of catching Leicester were dented by their 1-1

draw with Liverpool at Anfield last weekend, could find themselves 10 points adrift of the leaders by the time they host Manchester United later on Sunday.

United are involved in a local battle with Manchester City for fourth place and the final Champions League qualification spot and would love nothing more than to salvage an inconsistent season by overhauling their rivals in the table. City, buoyed by a gritty 2-2 draw at Paris St Germain in their Champions League quarter-final first leg on Wednesday, host West Bromwich Albion, who are comfortably placed in mid-table.

Third place Arsenal, whose hopes of taking anything from the campaign look forlorn as they trail Leicester by 11 points, albeit with a game in hand, travel to West Ham United tomorrow. Newcastle United, who are battling local rivals Sunderland to avoid relegation, visit Southampton, while Norwich play at Crystal Palace. Alan Pardew's Palace are three points above Norwich, but seemingly in freefall after failing to win a league game since December. — Reuters

SWISS POLICE SEARCH UEFA OFFICES IN PANAMA FALLOUT

GENEVA: Swiss authorities raided the headquarters of European football, Iceland named a new prime minister and the world's largest drugs company merger fell apart on Wednesday, as the fallout from the Panama Papers scandal gathered pace.

Police searched UEFA's Geneva offices as part of a probe into a Champions League television rights deal signed by Gianni Infantino before he became the president of world football's governing body. Piling pressure on FIFA, already reeling from a vast bribery scandal, Uruguayan Juan Pedro Damiani resigned as an ethics judge after he was linked in the papers to another disgraced football official wanted in the United States.

In Iceland, authorities called elections in the autumn and appointed agriculture minister Sigurdur Ingi Johannsson as premier after his predecessor was forced out over allegations he hid millions of dollars of investments in the country's banks.

Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson was the first political scalp of what is thought to be the biggest ever leak of inside information in history, after a worldwide media probe into 11.5 million inside documents from a Panama law firm. The year-long investigation, published on Sunday, revealed the hidden offshore assets of some 140 political figures, including 12 current or former heads of state, as well as celebrities, sports stars and dozens of billionaires. The revelations from the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) have shone a light on the murky world of offshore tax dealings which, though legal, can be used to hide assets, launder the proceeds of crime or conceal politically inconvenient wealth.

People close to Russian President Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping's relatives, Argentine footballing great Lionel Messi and film star Jackie Chan have all been named as owning offshore accounts with Mossack Fonseca. But the Panama law firm also counted criminals among its clients, including "drug traffickers from Mexico, Guatemala and Eastern Europe" and people and companies under US and European sanctions, said Sueddeutsche Zeitung, the German newspaper that obtained the documents.

In the first taste of how the revelations could reshape the world of business, Pfizer said a \$160 billion merger with Allergan to create the world's largest pharmaceuticals company would not go ahead after Washington moved to tighten taxation rules.

Panama under fire

Countries around the world have been piling pressure on Panama to reform its financial sector, which has been trying to head off a feared international clampdown on its offshore business. France has added Panama to its "grey" list of world tax havens, and Finance Minister Michel Sapin on Wednesday called on the OECD group of wealthy nations to do the same.

"Unfortunately Panama has a bit of a tendency to make U-turns, to play the good guy and then the bad guy. This cannot go on," Sapin told French radio on Wednesday. Panama hit back, however, after days of being hammered in the world's media.

President Juan Carlos Varela on Wednesday called on OECD countries "to return to the table for dialogue and seek agreements, and to not use these events to affect Panama's image". Alvaro Aleman, minister for the presidency, warned France of "a law that sets out retaliation measures against countries that include Panama in 'grey lists'". One of Mossack Fonseca's founders, Ramon Fonseca, told AFP it had lodged a criminal complaint with Panamanian prosecutors over the data breach, which he blamed on a computer hack launched from abroad. — AFP

WOLFSBURG COACH TELLS MARCELO 'STOP ACTING'

WOLFSBURG: Wolfsburg coach Dieter Hecking has told Real Madrid defender Marcelo to "cut out the acting" following his antics during his team's 2-0 Champions League quarter-final first-leg defeat in Germany.

The Brazil left-back thrust his head towards Wolfsburg midfielder Maximilian Arnold's chest in the 69th minute of Real's shock defeat, then crumpled to the turf,

clutching his face.

Arnold, who scored Wolfsburg's second after a penalty from Ricardo Rodriguez, was shown a yellow card, while Marcelo escaped a booking for the incident. "Marcelo is an actor," fumed Hecking. The Wolfsburg coach sought out the Real star at Wolfsburg's Volkswagen Arena stadium after the game to tell him not to try anything similar for the return

leg in Madrid on Tuesday. "I told Marcelo to cut his acting out. He couldn't have complained if he'd found himself no longer on the pitch after that scene," added Hecking. "Arnold got a yellow card he didn't deserve. That annoyed me, because there was no need."

Arnold gave a tongue-in-cheek answer when asked about the incident following his heated exchange with Marcelo on the

pitch. "We ended up talking about our haircuts," said the German with a grin. Marcelo's theatrics were ridiculed on social media and drew comparisons to his fellow Brazilian Rivaldo's play-acting at the 2002 World Cup. Swiss full-back Rodriguez converted a penalty in the 18th minute before Arnold slotted home on 25 minutes to leave Real with it all to do next week in Madrid. — AFP

PELLEGRINI: CITY MUST CUT OUT THE MISTAKES

PARIS: Manchester City manager Manuel Pellegrini admitted his side must not repeat the defensive errors that marred their Champions League quarter-final, first leg with Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday despite the 2-2 draw giving them the edge.

Away goals by Kevin De Bruyne and Fernandinho at the Parc des Princes mean City have the upper hand ahead of next Tuesday's return, but those strikes sandwiched a farcical goal gifted to Zlatan Ibrahimovic and an Adrien Rabiot effort for PSG. The French champions also saw Ibrahimovic have a penalty saved by Joe Hart early on with the game still goalless, so the evening could have gone far worse for Pellegrini's men.

"In the first half we made an important mistake that we cannot continue to do if we want to stay in the competition," said Pellegrini of the awful mix-up between Hart and Fernando that allowed Ibrahimovic to score. "The second goal of PSG was offside. It was not a mistake of the defense but of the linesman.

"But it is important also to keep that mentality because when you receive the goal that we conceded in the last minute of the first half and then you concede a goal that is offside, it is not easy to try to recover, but I think this team has the personality and they believe in what they do. "They always try to attack and we scored the second goal."

Nevertheless, Pellegrini refused to label his side as the favorites to advance now as City eye a first ever Champions League semi-final and the Chilean also said it was "very difficult to answer now" if captain Vincent Kompany will be back in time for the second leg in six days.

Selection headache

However, his opposite number Laurent Blanc is left with a selection headache for the return after both David Luiz and Blaise Matuidi picked up bookings that mean they will be suspended for the second leg. Marco Verratti and Javier Pastore will also miss the game due to the injuries that prevented them from featuring in Paris as PSG go to England having to overcome the handicap of those away goals.

"It's not the first time we have conceded goals at home but we have shown that we can score goals away from home," said Blanc, whose side eliminated Chelsea in the last 16. "I think if we can do better defensively we can create chances and score goals in Manchester." He added: "When you talk about the two players who will be suspended you can add that to the negatives tonight. — AFP



PARIS: Manchester City's Spanish midfielder David Silva (L) vies with Paris Saint-Germain's French midfielder Adrien Rabiot during the UEFA Champions League quarter final football match between Paris Saint Germain (PSG) and Manchester City. — AFP



WOLFSBURG: Real Madrid's French coach Zinedine Zidane (L) looks on as Wolfsburg's Brazilian midfielder Luiz Gustavo controls the ball during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final, first-leg football match between VfL Wolfsburg and Real Madrid. — AFP

ZIDANE FUMES AS REAL CRASH AT WOLFSBURG

WOLFSBURG: Zinedine Zidane admitted Real Madrid suffered an El Clasico hangover as they crashed to a 2-0 Champions League quarter-final, first-leg, defeat at Wolfsburg on Wednesday. Just five days after ending Barcelona's 39-game unbeaten run with a 2-1 away win, Real were humbled as Wolfsburg ignored their struggling mid-table form in Germany's top flight.

Real never recovered as first-half goals from Swiss defender Ricardo Rodriguez and Maximilian Arnold put the hosts 2-0 up at the Volkswagen Arena with 25 minutes gone. Wolfsburg now have the upper hand ahead of Tuesday's return leg at the Bernabeu. "I'm not happy, above all with the first-half. This can happen if you don't play with intensity from the start," said coach Zidane, who made just one change from the team which beat Barca. "We wanted to play here just like we did on Saturday, it was an intensive game for us (in Barcelona) and we were flat in the first-half here. "Now we have a chance in the return leg and it's good we've got a game in three days (at home to Eibar) to get over this defeat.

"We had our problems, not just in the intensity, but also in our movement. "We didn't expect the 2-0 defeat and we need to analyze where we went wrong and make corrections." Zidane even said he was proud of his players and took full responsibility for the result. "I have to find the reasons for the defeat and the solutions," he added. Real's six-game winning streak was ended as Wolfsburg picked up their first win in four games since beating Gent in the last 16 of the tournament. It was a poor performance from Real's star forwards as Gareth Bale was kept quiet and Cristiano Ronaldo rarely shook of his markers.

'Obviously frustrating'

France forward Karim Benzema went off on 41 minutes after a knock. Bale was left frustrated at not being awarded a first-half

penalty after a heavy challenge in the area from Luiz Gustavo. "I felt I got to the ball first and he hit me, so it is obviously frustrating, but we have another game," said the Welshman. "We just have to make sure now that in the return we win by three goals."

Wolfsburg coach Dieter Hecking gambled by starting inexperienced Brazilian Bruno Henrique on the right wing, who set up Arnold's goal. Centre-back Naldo played his first game since dislocating his shoulder in February and helped subdue the Real attack. There was little hint of the drama to come when Real's Cristiano Ronaldo put the ball in the Wolfsburg net after just 74 seconds, but the offside flag went up. The hosts took a shock lead on 18 minutes when Real midfielder Casemiro put in a clumsy foul on Wolfsburg striker Andre Schuerrle and Rodriguez nailed the spot kick. Arnold then slotted home on 25 minutes as Wolfsburg capitalised on some woeful Real defending. "When Madrid leave the door open, you have to take the chance to go through it," said Hecking. "There was contact (on Schuerrle) and it was a clear penalty.

"In Henrique, we had a weapon which Real hadn't bargained for. "I have to give my team their due, they did everything we talked about, annoyed Real and put ourselves in a good position for the return leg." But goal-scorer Arnold insists nothing has been decided yet.

"There is no point getting carried away. We'll have to play just as well in Madrid or maybe even better," he said after scoring his first Champions League goal. Defender Pepe said Real had been badly punished for leaking both goals in the opening 25 minutes. "We have to comeback, we had 20 bad minutes they took advantage of," said the centre-back. "We didn't take our chances. In a competition as important as the Champions League you pay for that. "The tie is not over yet, we have another game at home with the fans on our side." — AFP

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LOS ANGELES: Kobe Bryant #24 of the Los Angeles Lakers shoots the ball during the second half of an NBA game between the Los Angeles Clippers and Los Angeles Lakers on April 6, 2016 at Staples Center. — AP

Kobe loses penultimate home game of his career

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