

Kuwait supports Mideast's peace effort, stability



Syria rebels in defense of key Aleppo district



Rosberg stuns F1 with retirement bombshell



150 Fils

TRUMP TO NAME RETIRED GEN MATTIS FOR PENTAGON

TRANSITION TEAM PONDERING NEW SANCTIONS ON IRAN



Max 23°
Min 17°



KUWAIT: A German Shepherd dog performs during a beauty contest for German Shepherd dogs in Kuwait City yesterday. The event takes place once a year for two days and features participation of a large number of dog owners and lovers in a society where dog-keeping has become a growing passion for many over the last few years.—Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

FIVE DIE IN 2 DAYS DUE TO ASTHMA ATTACKS IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: Five people have died due to asthma attacks, and breathing difficulties over the past two days, Health Ministry Undersecretary Dr Khaled Al-Sahlawi said yesterday. Hospitals received 844 emergency cases in two days, five of them died, three in Mubarak Hospital and two in the Amiri Hospital, Al-Sahlawi added in a statement. Twenty-six cases were admitted to intensive care units, and 45 to rooms. The rest received treatment.

All emergency clinics are ready to receive any medical conditions that need attention, he said, urging citizens and residents to be cautious and call (112) for emergencies or (151) for medical advice. Meanwhile, head of Al-Asima Health Directorate Dr Fatima Al-Asoumi quashed reports on social media about the closure of two floors in

the Amiri Hospital due to a pandemic virus outbreak of (H1N1), explaining that the only flu virus that has been circulated among the public is that of seasonal flu.

Director of the Amiri Hospital Dr Ali Al-Alanda also dismissed the rumors, blaming bad weather conditions for causing many people to have respiratory problems, especially patients suffering asthma and allergy.

Meanwhile, the ministry of Interior's relation and security information department urged all motorists to be careful while driving in rain to avoid accidents. The department also urged them to call 112 in any emergencies to request help. Intermittent rains continued in many parts of Kuwait yesterday causing road accidents and traffic congestion. — KUNA

WASHINGTON: Breaking once more from presidential custom, Donald Trump is turning to a military man to steer the US military, choosing retired Gen James Mattis, who will be the first career officer to lead the Pentagon since just after World War II.

Mattis, 66, is a Marine Corps general who retired in 2013 after serving as commander of the US Central Command, responsible for directing America's wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Trump, who has referred to Mattis by his nickname "Mad Dog," made the announcement of his choice for defense secretary at a postelection victory rally Thursday night in Cincinnati.

The selection raises questions about increased military influence in a job designed to ensure civilian control of the armed forces. Those traditional concerns revolve around whether a recently retired service member would rely more on military solutions to international problems rather than take a broader, more diplomatic approach. For Mattis to be confirmed, Congress would first have to approve legislation bypassing a law that bars retired military officers from becoming defense secretary within seven years of leaving active duty.



Retired Gen James Mattis

Mattis has a reputation as a battle-hardened, tough-talking Marine who was entrusted with some of the most challenging commands in the US military. In a tweet last month, Trump described him as "A true General's General!" Mattis would be only the second retired general to serve as defense secretary, the first being George C. Marshall in 1950-51 during the Korean War. Marshall was a much different figure, having previously served as US secretary of state and playing a key role in creating closer ties with Western Europe after World War II.

But Mattis hasn't been free of controversy. He was criticized for remarking in 2005 that he enjoyed shooting people. He also drew more recent scrutiny for his involvement with the embattled biotech company Theranos, where he serves on the board. Born in Pullman, Washington, Mattis enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1969, later earning a history degree from Central Washington University. He was commissioned as an officer in 1972. As a lieutenant colonel, he led an assault battalion into Kuwait during the first US war with Iraq in 1991.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump's transition team is examining proposals for new non-nuclear sanctions on Iran, the Financial Times reported yesterday, citing congressional sources who have been in contact with the president-elect's team. Officials with Trump's team have been in touch with fellow Republicans in Congress, where they hold the majority, to discuss possible sanctions separate from last year's Iran nuclear deal that could focus on its ballistic missile program or human rights, the sources told the FT. "They (Trump team members) are already looking closely at their options - and that very much includes non-nuclear sanctions," a congressional official told the media outlet.

The deal that was reached last year between Iran, the United States and five other world powers lifted some sanctions against Tehran in return for restrictions on its nuclear program. — Agencies



BENI HAROUN DAM - A TESTAMENT OF ALGERIA-KUWAIT COOPERATION

ALGIERS: Located in the city of Mila, 490 kilometers eastern Algiers, the Beni Haroun Dam stands as evidence of national economic progression as well as a testament of Algerian-Kuwaiti cooperation. The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) contributed immensely to the completion of the project, donating millions of Kuwaiti dinars to help finish project which began construction in 2002.

According to data by KFAED, the project aimed at meeting the demand for potable water up for about 3.6 million inhabitants in 6 governorates by 2030. It also aimed at providing provision of water for irrigation of about 22,000 hectares, through utilization of about 504 million cubic meters of Beni Haroun Dam. Speaking to KUNA about the project, farmer Mohammad Zawagi said that the dam project brought the area back to life, saying that farms now are thriving due to the abundance of water.

Also providing his input, Agricultural engineer Nouredine Hamouda said that the Beni Haroun Dam opened doors for more professions, noting that fish farms could be easily constructed thanks to the dam. Other than farming and fishing, the Beni Haroun Dam generated around 180 megawatts of electricity, increasing the power capacity in Mila city. With the recent dam loan, KFAED provided four loans to Algeria since 1964, amounting to KD 21.8 million. — KUNA



EMBASSY WARNS KUWAITIS IN INDONESIA AMID PROTESTS

KUALA LUMPUR: Kuwait Embassy in Indonesia urges its nationals to take the necessary precautions and avoid sites of the anti-governor protests, due to be renewed in Jakarta. The planned protests are expected to be staged in Gambir district, and at the Jakarta Convention Center, the House of Representatives, the People's Consultative Assembly, Hotel Indonesia and the National Monument in Monas Square in Central Jakarta, the embassy noted in a statement on Thursday night.

The statement advised the Kuwaiti nationals to report to the embassy on any eventuality via the phone No.: +6281513252597 or +6281290992638. It expressed wishes of safety, security and stability for the friendly republic of Indonesia. On Friday, November 4, violent

protests erupted in Jakarta demanding the ouster of the city's governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, who was accused of blasphemy after making slanderous statements against Muslims and the Holy Quran.

One man died and nearly 200 protesters and police personnel were injured in the bloody clashes. Purnama, a Christian of Chinese descent who is also known as "Ahok", is expected to face interrogation by the Public Prosecution since his opponents filed a lawsuit against him; the date of his prosecution has yet to be specified. Although he apologized for the comments he made in September, his opponents insist on his ouster and gave the government of President Joko Widodo a two-week ultimatum to replace him. — KUNA

KUWAIT ENJOYS HISTORIC AND CULTURAL TIES WITH MALAYSIA

PUTRAJAYA: The historic and cultural ties between Kuwait and Malaysia continue to grow and flourish, Assistant Undersecretary of Cultural Affairs in Kuwait's Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dawood Al-Asousi affirmed yesterday. Al-Asousi made his remarks to KUNA on the sidelines of the Putrajaya International Islamic Arts and Culture Festival (PIIACUF) 2016 in Putrajaya, Malaysia, where he heads the participating Kuwait delegation at the festival. Kuwait is keen on participating in international cultural events, he affirmed, adding that the GCC country aims, through this event, at highlighting its cultural role and displaying the ministry's publications to the public,

including Islamic calligraphy and paintings.

The ministry has previously taken part in several similar events in a number of European, Arab, and Muslim countries, the Kuwaiti official said, adding that those participations were met with high interactions and praises by the visitors. For his part, Kuwait's Ambassador Saad Al-Asousi expressed his joy of the Kuwaiti participation in the international event, indicating that this is the second Kuwaiti participation in PIIACUF, which reflects the country's keenness in highlighting its Islamic arts, heritage, handicrafts, and fashion on regional and international levels. — KUNA



'GULF WALL' MILITARY EXERCISE

DOHA: The Kuwaiti Army's Deputy Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Abdullah Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah has lauded the outcome of a military drill, saying it paid dividends for cadets of the Ali Al Sabah Military Academy. Speaking on the sidelines of the military exercise dubbed, "Gulf Wall" in Qatar, the Kuwaiti army's Deputy Chief of Staff described the drill as "significant" to further qualify the cadets and enhance their military experience through practicing what they have studied at the Academy. "What we have seen today, in terms of skill and performance, is a remarkable accomplishment," he said, adding that he is hopeful that similar exercises will be held.

On the exercise, he said that it would be instrumental in further enhancing ties between Kuwait and Qatar, adding that it also created an opportunity for military officials from both nations to share their know-how with each other. Moreover, General Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nawaf underscored Kuwait's keenness to bolster military ties with its Gulf neighbor. The military drill, held over a period of two weeks with Qatar's Ahmed bin Mohammed Military College, featured participation of more than 300 cadets, in what was the first exercise organized by the venerable military school abroad. — KUNA

FGCCC CONNECTING BLOC'S ECONOMIES

DOHA: Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Mohammed Thunayan Al-Ghanim has stressed the vital role of the Federation of Chambers of the Gulf Cooperation Council (FGCCC) for connecting economic of the member states. Al-Ghanim, who is also FGCCC chairman, said that the federation plays a significant role in designing the economic policies on the Gulf, Arab and international scenes.

The remarks were made on the sidelines of the FGCCC meeting in Doha, Qatar. The FGCCC's role is also essential for activating and supporting the resolutions taken by the GCC Supreme Council for further enhancing pan-GCC economic links and cooperation, he said. On the FGCCC meeting, he said that they had discussed a multitude of common issues, focusing on joint investments and means of boosting trade among the member states.

Referring to the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act (JASTA) recently passed by the US Congress, Al-Ghanim said that Kuwait had adopted discussing it with the GCC economic leaderships, to conclude a vision and submit it to the FCGCCC secretariat. The meeting agreed to issue a statement on JASTA over the coming few days, he noted. Meanwhile, under Kuwait's presidency the FCGCCC will make further efforts to promote economic and trade cooperation among the GCC member states. Today's discussions also addressed various issues related to the private sector and FCGCC reports, in addition to the federation's work program for 2017. — KUNA

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Photo

of the day



Lovebirds captured in a photo in Kuwait. A lovebird is one of nine species of the genus *Agapornis*. They are a social and affectionate small parrot. Eight species are native to the African continent, and the grey-headed lovebird is native to Madagascar. — KUNA

KUWAIT TO CELEBRATE UN DAY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

KUWAIT: Kuwait will be partaking in the celebrations of the United Nations' International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) on December third. Since 1992, IDPD had been highlighting causes connected with people of disability, calling for measures to respect and acknowledge these individuals' importance to society. Speaking to KUNA on this occasion, Director-General of the Public Authority for the Disabled Affairs (PADA) Majed Al-Saleh said that Kuwait's leadership and people were very keen on helping people with special needs to achieve their true potential. Other than celebrating the IDPD, the authority will hold an event on December 13th to commemorate the Arab Day for people with disability, said the official.

The reason behind celebrating these annual occasions was to spread awareness on issues connected to people with disability, said the PADA official, hoping that more insti-

tutes will contribute to the cause. On her part, chairperson of the Kuwaiti Society for Parents of the Disabled Rehab Boursli said that since declaring decree 8/2008, Kuwait took strong strides to better the situation of people with disabilities. Kuwait signed several regional and international agreements for people with disability, said the official, adding that it was important to implement these accords.

She affirmed that the society for parents of the disabled will continue to serve people with special needs on all possible fields, saying that helping this sector of society was paramount for social development in Kuwait. The simplest gesture of support is to have facilities that cater to the needs of people with disability, said Boursli. She affirmed that the society was in good terms with several state and private institutes, collaborating with them whenever it was possible for the sake of people with special needs. — KUNA

'ITALIAN WEEK IN KUWAIT'

KUWAIT: Mother nature, the cradle of all creativity, expressly art, regardless of age, as a potpourri of Italian youngsters tried to simulate nature through surreal paintings inspired by children literature. Corridors of the National Library of Kuwait became easels for paintings of 24 young Italian artists, whose nature-induced creations ended up as covers for children's books. The gallery is part of the 'Italian Week in Kuwait', which will wrap up next Saturday. It is held in collaboration with the National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters. Elisa Ferrazzo, one of the curators said that participants in the event represented Italy's 'creme de la creme' in figurative art, music and philosophy; all for the Kuwaiti public to be exposed to. — KUNA



PAHW: NUMBER OF STATE HOUSING APPLICATIONS DROP 103,000 IN Q3

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) has announced that the waiting list of the state housing applicants has shrank in the third quarter of 2016 to 103,000, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) said. According to the country's plan, the Kuwaiti government aims to build 36,000 units by 2017, KFH's said in its quarterly report on PAHW's housing projects during the third quarter. The PAHW has a number of projects for new residential cities to resolve the hous-

ing problem and meet the growing demand for the state housing units. State housing units are built as per strict technical standards set by the PAHW, the report said. The report estimated that the number of housing applications submitted since the start of the year, at 4,725. It added that the PAHW has distributed 2,413 units in the 12 suburb of South Mutla city project in accordance with the allotments schedule proposed for the current fiscal year. — KUNA



Potpourri of Italian youngsters display surreal paintings in Kuwait

KUWAIT SUPPORTS MIDEAST'S PEACE EFFORT AND STABILITY

ARAB LEAGUE CHIEF URGES END TO ISRAELI OCCUPATION

NEW YORK: Kuwait has reiterated its supportive stance to all international efforts to find peaceful solutions to the diverse Middle East crises and civil conflicts. Kuwait supports all international efforts that were laying the foundation for security and stability in the region, Kuwaiti Diplomat Haya Al-Duraie said in a special session held on the situation in Middle East as a part of the UN General Assembly's 71st session. Al-Duraie, however, lamented that the faltering peace process continued to present a danger to the Middle East. Despite international calls on Israel to end its expansionist policies and violations of human rights, those actions continued, she said.

She stressed Kuwait's commitment to back Palestinian aspirations to establish a state based on pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and also all measures that had been carried out by Lebanon to preserve its sovereignty. On Syria, Al-Duraie noted that the humanitarian situation in Syria continued to be extremely concerning and Syrians now constituted the largest refugee population in the world. She argued that the world could no longer ignore the situation in Aleppo, where indiscriminate bombardments must end and violators of international law must be brought to justice.

The Syrian people had a right to peace and freedom, she said, noting that Kuwait had hosted several international donor conferences and had pledged \$1.3 billion, which had been largely dispersed to United Nations

agencies. On Yemen, she said efforts to reach a solution must be based on the outcome of a national dialogue, the Gulf Initiative and relevant Security Council resolutions. She rejected any unilateral measures in Yemen to create a "Government of salvation". Turning to other situations in the region, Al-Duraie commended Iraq's achievements to combat the so-called Islamic State



Kuwaiti Diplomat Haya Al-Duraie speaks at a special session held on the situation in Middle East as a part of the UN General Assembly's 71st session in New York. —KUNA

group and expressed hope that a political agreement in Libya would help to stabilize that country.

End to occupation
Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the

Arab League Ahmad Abul-Gheit said that the Palestine question remains to be the central cause of the conflicts in the Middle East. To stabilize the region the international community needs to focus on ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and preventing foreign interferences in the domestic affairs of the Arab countries, he stressed.

Abul-Gheit made the comments in a speech to the 2016 Rome Med - Mediterranean Dialogues being held here. He lauded as a constructive the suggestion to build a new regional system in the Mediterranean region, noting that the southern side of the Mediterranean as never been fragmented as it today. Not only Iran, Turkey and Israel, but some western powers as well play negative roles in the Arab countries and interfere in their domestic affairs, he regretted.

The League chief blamed the growth of violent tendencies among the Arab youth on the continued occupation of Arab territories by Israel. The 2016 Rome Med - Mediterranean Dialogues is an annual high-level initiative organized by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and ISPI (Italian Institute for International Political Studies). It aims to draft a "positive agenda" for the Mediterranean region by stimulating debate and new ideas, rethinking traditional approaches and addressing shared challenges at both the regional and the international level. — Agencies

News

In brief



Chairman of the Follow-Up of Government Performance Agency Sheikh Ahmed Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah inspects the construction site of the new passengers building. — KUNA

Kuwait Airport Terminal 2

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Follow-Up of Government Performance Agency Sheikh Ahmed Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday inspected the construction site of the new passengers building (terminal 2) at the Kuwait International Airport. The project team offered Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mishaal and his deputy Dr Rana Al-Faris a visual presentation on terminal 2 major designs, components and the roads to be constructed, as well as the challenges hindering the completion of the project. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mishaal praised the team's great efforts, encouraging them to exert more efforts to overcome the challenges and meet the deadline of completing this project.

KU sets future plan

KUWAIT: Kuwait University (KU) has recently set a number of goals within its main future plan, including enhancing the quality of its education, reinforcing innovation and leadership, attaining sustainability, and boosting its recognition on regional and international levels, an academic official said. These goals have already been forwarded to KU's faculty members to build the University's future plan, Dr Hussein Al-Ansari, KU's President, stated to KUNA on the sidelines of a ceremony held by the College of Business Administration to mark KU's 50th anniversary. The University seeks to enhance the quality of education in its various colleges and institutions, including curricula, graduate studies, education policies and methods, and laws and procedures, Al-Ansari said. He also added that KU also aims at boosting innovation and leadership through launching several initiatives for its students such as building robotics lab, in addition to centers for innovation and business leadership. The school also aspires to attain sustainability in various academic activities and programs, including the ideal uses of human and financial resources, KUS' buildings, and time investment, Al-Ansari noted.



Kuwait University President Dr Hussein Al-Ansari

Youth Theater festival

KUWAIT: Youth Theater festival concluded its 11th edition on Thursday, with seven troupes displaying their works on stage since November 22. The play 'Sneeze' for the Kuwaiti Theater troupe won best overall theatrical work, and its director Abdullah Al-Turkumani won best director award. 'Raya and Sakeena' won award for best harmonized play, while playwright Mariam Nasser won best author for 'Memory in the Shadow'. Ali Al-Husseini won best actor in a leading role in 'Raya and Sakeena', while Heba Al-Durri won best actress in a leading role for 'Majareeh', or the 'Wounded'. Young Nouf Al-Sultan won best actress in a supporting role, while Bader Al-Shuaibi won best actor in a supporting role. Best lighting award went to Abdullah Al-Nassar, best promising actor award went to Rawan Al-Mahdi, while director Meshari Al-Mujaibel won theatrical creativity award.

KUWAIT PARTICIPATING IN BEIRUT'S BOOK FAIR

BEIRUT: For the 60th years in a row, Kuwait's pavilion has been showcasing thousands of books and publications at Beirut international book fair. Kuwait is taking part in this year's event with two pavilions for the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait, and the Academic Publication Council of Kuwait University. The sections include many books on different aspects of Kuwait's history. In a special statement to KUNA, managing director of the Journal of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Sheikhah Suhaila Fahad Al-Sabah said yesterday the university participated every year at Beirut's boor fair to brief readers on new editions of scientific magazines issued by KU.

She stressed keenness on continued participation in this event which gathers authors and writers from different countries in the region and is a platform to share knowledge amongst different cultural institutions. She said that the large number of visitors who are attracted by the pavilion every year prompted Kuwait to double publications this year. The magazines issued by the Kuwait University included valuable academic and scientific topics on engineering, social, educational, administrative and humanitarian sciences, as well as laws,

Sharia and Islamic studies, she stated.

The magazines attracted human rights activists, clergymen, engineers and academics, she affirmed. Abdulaziz Al-Khateeb, supervisor of the center's pavilion, told KUNA in a similar statement that the pavilion included more than 15 new publications, mainly a book on sports in Kuwait since 1902-2015, a

book on the history of Kuwaiti-Lebanese ties and a third one on Kuwait's museums, he added. The fair kicked off on Thursday, with the participation of four Arab countries; Kuwait, Oman and Palestine, in addition to the host country. More than 150 publishing houses from Arab and foreign countries are partaking in the event. —KUNA



Kuwait's pavilion at the Beirut's Book Fair



KFH KICKS OFF TRAINING CAMPAIGN, WORKSHOPS

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has kicked off training campaign and workshops including most employees on applying customers' protection guide requirements within the framework of educating employees and urging them to comply with the Guide's instructions towards customers. The guide has been uploaded on KFH website (kfh.com) to enable employees and customers to have an easy access to the guide and be aware of its contents including customers' obligations and liabilities. An awareness campaigns is being arranged where social media is used to spread awareness among customers concerning the guide articles and objectives.

The training program is fulfillment of all requirements of "Bank Customers Protection Guide" issued by Central Bank of Kuwait. The guide includes general principles aiming to support bank

customers' protection and provide suitable environment to preserve customers' rights. KFH focused and concentrates on customers' interest and full compliance with the rules and regulations of regulatory authorities which endeavors to achieve the best interest of banks and their customers and provide protection through highly advanced and prudent regulatory and legal frameworks.

KFH Customers' Protection Guide comprises significant instructions and regulations which are complementary to previous regulations issued by CBK. Accordingly, KFH has updated or established new policies, procedures and bylaws to cope with the requirements contained in the guide and place them under execution for employees and customers' awareness.

The guide comprises 10 major principles including "Equality and Justice": All banks shall ensure in all transactions with customers that transactions are being executed based on justice, equality, fairness and honesty without any discrimination, "Disclosure and Transparency": Banks are required to provide customers with all information related to services and products in a simple and accurate manner to ensure that customers are aware of all advantages and risks involved.

Other principles include financial awareness and educations, compliance with professional behaviors, protection of customers against fraud, protection of privacy and information confidentiality, provisions of safe electronic systems, processing customers' complaints, observing competitiveness and conflict of interests and protection of customers against foreign support operations.

The guide comprises 10 major principles including "Equality and Justice": All banks shall ensure in all transactions with customers that transactions are being executed based on justice, equality, fairness and honesty without any discrimination, "Disclosure and Transparency": Banks are required to provide customers with all information related to services and products in a simple and accurate manner to ensure that customers are aware of all advantages and risks involved.



KIB'S BOOTH AT KGO

KUWAIT: In line with its efforts to connect with employees in both the public and private sectors, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently organized a booth at the head offices of Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGO). This latest engagement comes as a continuation of KIB's program which focuses on engaging directly with the public, in order to familiarize them with the Bank's diverse range of products and services. "Outreach efforts of this kind are simply a manifestation of our mission to be as close as possible to our customers. Interacting with them on an up-close-and-personal level allows us to enhance their knowledge and awareness about the innovative banking solutions we offer," said Eugene Galligan, Acting General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB.

Galligan further added: "Our KIB staff did a masterful job organizing this booth and inter-

acting with the audience, which resulted in a tremendously positive response from KGO employees. We were able to successfully showcase our products, services and offers which are all designed to meet the needs and aspirations of every segment of the population; from our account packages and cards, to our innovative financing solutions, and much more."

KIB is always looking to connect with its customers and enhance its relationship with them. The Bank continuously seeks to get closer to them, and is committed to maintaining an open dialogue with the public. Additionally, KIB constantly strives to develop its product and services offerings, creating innovative banking solutions crafted to meet the ever-changing needs of both customers and the market. This all comes in line with the bank's strategic vision of becoming the foremost choice for Islamic banking in Kuwait.

Crime

Report

Reckless driver arrested

KUWAIT: A reckless driver has been arrested in Sabahiya. Security sources said that two of the passengers on board were wanted for robbery and drug related cases. In another development, a reckless driver who was celebrating rainfall in his own way narrowly escaped death when fire broke out in his vehicle in Saad Al-Abdullah.

Kuwaiti kidnapped

A female citizen recently reported that two unidentified people had kidnapped her from the doorsteps of her house in Salmiya and took her to Jabriya where they tried to rape her. The girl said three Kuwaitis heard her screaming - and chased the kidnappers' all the way to Jabriya. A case was filed and search is on for the kidnappers.

Policeman files complaint

A traffic policeman recently filed a complaint against a female citizen who insulted him after he issued her a ticket for parking in a no-parking zone in Nugra.

Maid and cleaner

A citizen called police after he heard a strange noise at his housemaid's room. When the police arrived, they saw the maid along side with an Asian cleaner. They were both arrested.

Smashing cars

A Kuwaiti was recently arrested while his two companions managed to escape arrest when a police patrol spotted them walking around in Maidan Hawalli and smashing parked vehicles' windshields. They were found to be heavily drunk. Separately, two juveniles were recently arrested in Farwaniya for smashing vehicles' windows and stealing, said security sources.

Transsexuals arrested

Detectives have arrested four transsexuals in Ahmadi area. They were accused of providing indecent services at a spa.

Saudi escapes death

A Saudi man recently escaped death when a landmine blew up below his vehicle while he was driving in the Kahbara Al-Awazem desert. Security sources said that the man did not hear the explosion because of the rain and thunder. He only noticed it when his vehicle stopped moving. He found out that the tires have been completely destroyed. — Al-Rai/Al-Anbaa

ZAIN LAUNCHES 'PAY ONLINE AND WIN' PROMOTION FOR POSTPAID CUSTOMERS

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced the launch of a new draw promotion that will see a weekly postpaid winner of four valuable prizes when paying their bills using Zain's website or app as well as a grand prize at the final draw at the end of January. Zain launched this exciting promotional campaign to reinforce its leadership position and its pledge in offering the best products and services to meet its customers' personal and professional telecommunications needs, who are considered Kuwait's biggest family of subscribers.

The draw, held weekly until the 22nd of January 2017, will see one weekly winner of four valuable prizes, including iPhone 7, Touch Hotspot LTE-A with free 1.5 TB Prepaid Internet line valid for 3 months, and an entertainment device. The grand prize winner, announced at the end of the campaign, will receive iPhone 7, iPhone 7 Plus, Touch Hotspot LTE-A with free 1.5 TB Prepaid Internet line valid for 3 months, and a PlayStation 4 (1 TB).

Postpaid customers will get one chance to enter the weekly draws as well as the final draw for every KD1 paid through Zain's digital channels, including the company's website (pay.kw.zain.com) and Zain's app avail-

able for iOS and Android. The announcement is a testament of Zain's tireless efforts in rewarding its customer base, the largest in the country. The campaign further demonstrates Zain's pivotal role in Kuwait's telecom sector, sparing no efforts in introducing exceptional offerings for technology and smartphone enthusiasts.



International

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MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, chairs a Security Council meeting in the Kremlin. — AP

STARS BEGIN TO ALIGN FOR PUTIN

ADMIRERS, INTERNATIONAL ALLIES RISING TO POWER

MOSCOW: Held at diplomatic arm's-length for years, Russian President Vladimir Putin is pivoting back to centre stage as his admirers and international allies rise to power, a move that analysts say the Kremlin will be quick to exploit. Most notable among newly-elected leaders is Donald Trump, who on the campaign trail loudly proclaimed his esteem for Putin and met with a round of Kremlin applause in return.

In Europe, France's presidential primaries saw former Prime Minister Francois Fillon, who favors closer relations with Moscow, become the rightwing champion for next year's vote. And in Russia's back yard, pro-Moscow candidates Rumen Radev and Igor Dodon have triumphed in presidential polls in Bulgaria and Moldova respectively. These elections show how Putin's standing has surged, said independent analyst Maria Lipman.

"Russia has been able to considerably strengthen its position on the international scene, and its leader has become attractive in the world," she said. Putin, she said, is riding an "anti-establishment" trend, although unlike figures such as Trump or Radev, he "has been putting this political course into practice successfully for a very long time."

"Leaders who reach out to less educated people, who speak against the establishment, against globalization... are becoming more and more popular," she said. "Putin fits very well into the image of such a leader." A former KGB officer, Putin has been a bogey figure to many on both sides of the Atlantic. He found himself ostracised after the March 2014 seizure of Crimea, which prompted European and US sanctions that hit Russia's economy hard.

Then, in September 2015, he began a bombing campaign in support Syrian President Bashar al-Assad—a ruthless move that prompted accusations by western countries and watchdogs of complicity in war crimes. Today, much of this criticism has been muted, an "evident" sign of strategic success, Lipman said. Putin has ensured that Assad's departure is now more or less off the table and Russia has gained a strong bargaining position on other issues as a result.

But Putin's gains have also come as a result of fumbling by the United States, which has made Russia suddenly look like a viable partner, analysts say. "The warm reception for Putin is mainly the flip side of anti-Americanism and a desire to leave a unipolar world, a yearning to find a new balance in

the world," said commentator Konstantin Kalachev.

European jitters

The European Union, which had already been weakened by the growing power of populist nationalist movements, suffered a serious blow from Britain's June referendum on EU membership. Trump then sent shockwaves through European capitals by appearing to question US commitment to NATO—the alliance that has underpinned western European security for nearly seven decades.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, one of the stronger proponents of Russia sanctions who is up for reelection next year, has already expressed worry for Trump's admiration for Putin, and observers say the EU's main France-Germany alliance would be strained by differences in attitudes toward Putin if Fillon wins. "For Putin it makes more sense to negotiate with an out-of-balance Europe," Kalachev said. "It's easier to reach separate agreements." Washington's global authority eroded "after a number of major international errors," said Lipman. A divided and worried Europe "plays into Putin's hands" by fracturing Western solidarity, she said. — AFP

EX-IS SEX SLAVE FEARFUL FOR WOMEN LEFT BEHIND

DOHUK: Haifa, an Iraqi Yazidi, held up her fingers to show the number of fighters from the Islamic State jihadist group who had bought and sold her for sex during her more than two years in captivity. With an Iraqi campaign now in full swing to wrest back control of Mosul from IS, the Yazidis are fearful for as many as thousands of members of their community still in jihadist hands in the city. "There were seven," Haifa said, including men from Egypt, Morocco and a Palestinian.

Haifa, 36, and her family were among thousands of members of the Yazidi minority shown no mercy by IS when it swept through areas north and west of the Iraqi capital in 2014. The Yazidis are neither Muslims nor Arabs, and the Kurdish-speaking community follows a unique faith despised by the Sunni jihadists. As the extremists advanced, they were singled out for especially cruel persecution in a campaign of violence and kidnapping which the United Nations has branded a genocide.

Men were gunned down and thousands of women-including Haifa and her younger sister-were taken as sex slaves. "There was a place like a market where they put all the Yazidi women, and the fighters came and bought them," Haifa told AFP, asking for a pseudonym to be used. "One fighter bought 21 women at once."

She was taken from her home region of Sinjar to the jihadist's Iraqi stronghold of Mosul before being transported to their Syrian bastion Raqa. "They dealt with us in a really harsh way. They did very bad things to us," she said. Twice Haifa tried but failed to escape. Just a few days ago, she finally managed to run away. She put her freedom down to the help of "good people" but gave no more details. Some Yazidi women who have managed to get away from IS have escaped, others have had their freedom bought.

Thousands remain

Now, as Iraqi forces push into Mosul as part of a major operation to eventually oust IS from the country, the hope for the devastated Yazidi community is that more can be liberated. It is Hussein Al-Qaidi's job to help track them down.

From an anonymous two-storey building in the city of Dohuk in Iraqi Kurdistan, he runs an "Office for Kidnapped Affairs" funded by the local Kurdish authorities. Originally over 6,000 Yazidis-men, women and children-were seized by IS and now some 3,000 remain in jihadist hands, he said. So far only a few Yazidis have been freed as the security forces push their assault on Mosul.

As during previous operations to capture cities from the jihadists, IS fighters are believed to take their Yazidi captives with them as they retreat. But now Iraqi forces have cut the last remaining route from Mosul to IS-controlled territory in Syria-leaving the city surrounded. Qaidi says there could be thousands of Yazidis left in Mosul-and hopes that eventually the community will be able to rebuild.— AFP

IS 'LAST STAND' IN LIBYAN CITY

WASHINGTON: Islamic State group jihadists are making a "last stand" in their former Libyan stronghold of Sirte, where they now control only around two blocks, the Pentagon said Thursday. The IS group had held all of the Mediterranean port city as recently as early this summer, establishing a significant foothold in Libya.

The United States started a bombing campaign in August at the request the UN-supported Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) to help local forces recapture the city more than a year after the IS group seized it. Although the operation has taken months longer than initially expected, it has pushed back the group's control to around 50 buildings. The remaining jihadists are few in number "but they are persistent and fighting to the death," Pentagon spokesman Navy Captain Jeff Davis said. "It's a stubborn area."

"This is ISIL's last stand in Sirte and they are fighting hard," he added, using another acronym for the IS group. The fall of Sirte-the hometown of the slain dictator Moamer Kadhafi located 450 kilometers east of Tripoli-would represent a significant blow to the jihadists, who have also faced a series of setbacks and major assaults in Syria and Iraq. US warplanes, drones and helicopters have conducted 467 strikes since the air operation began on August 1.—AFP



JIBRIN: A Syrian child, who fled with his family from rebel-held areas in the city of Aleppo, reacts as he holds a sandwich on December 1, 2016, at a shelter in the neighbourhood.—AFP

SYRIA REBELS IN DEFENSE OF KEY ALEPPO DISTRICT

'REBELS PUT UP FEROCIOUS RESISTANCE'

ALEPPO: Rebels put up fierce resistance yesterday in a key district of Syria's battered Aleppo, where a regime offensive has left bodies in the streets and sparked global outrage. The government assault on the northern city has spurred a mass exodus of tens of thousands of residents from the opposition-held east and prompted fresh calls by Russia for aid corridors. President Bashar Al-Assad's forces captured northeast Aleppo this week and were focused on seizing Sheikh Saeed, a large district on the city's southeast edges. But anti-government fighters fought back strongly there overnight, rolling back recent government gains, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

"The regime and allied fighters... wanted to take this neighborhood at any cost, because capturing it would allow them to target all remaining rebel-held districts," said Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman. "But rebels put up ferocious resistance, because they knew they would be trapped if Sheikh Saeed fell," he added. Abdel Rahman said opposition forces now once again controlled at least 70 percent of the neighborhood.

Sheikh Saeed borders the last remaining sections of Aleppo still in rebel hands—a collection of densely populated residential neighborhoods where thousands have sought refuge from advancing regime forces. In preparation for street-by-street fighting in these districts, hundreds of fighters from Syria's elite Republican Guard and Fourth Division arrived in Aleppo yesterday, the Observatory said.

The Observatory said four civilians were killed in rebel rocket fire on govern-

ment-held areas, bringing to 59 the civilian toll in the city's west. More than 300 civilians, including dozens of children, have been killed in east Aleppo since the government offensive began on November 15, according to the Observatory. Intermittent clashes yesterday rocked a block of residential buildings on Aleppo's eastern edges, where advancing regime forces have sought to secure the road towards the airport.

AFP's correspondent in east Aleppo said ferocious clashes could be heard in the Tariq Al-Bab district, where regime forces were advancing on Thursday. Civilians had already totally emptied the adjacent neighborhood of Al-Shaar, where a few rebels manned positions in the streets. The escalating violence has been met with international outrage, including a UN warning that east Aleppo could become "a giant graveyard".

No end to deadlock

Russia on Thursday proposed setting up four humanitarian corridors into east Aleppo to bring in aid and evacuated severely wounded people. Moscow has announced several humanitarian pauses in Aleppo to allow civilians to flee, but until the recent escalation, only a handful did so. East Aleppo's residents have been wary of previous such offers because of Russia's support for Assad, including launching a bombing campaign in support of his forces in September 2015. Dozens of families trickled out yesterday, adding to the more than 50,000 people who have poured out of east Aleppo into territory controlled by government forces or local Kurdish authorities, the Observatory said.

Among those fleeing are nearly 20,000 children, according to estimates by the UN's children's agency. "What is critical now is that we provide the immediate and sustained assistance that these children and their families desperately need," UNICEF spokesman Christophe Boulierac told reporters in Geneva. "It's a race against time, as winter is here and conditions are basic."

On a one-day trip to Beirut on Thursday, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier pledged 50 million euros (\$53 million) to organizations serving the "suffering population" of Aleppo. He said the political transition in the United States after Donald Trump was elected president meant world powers should not "aim for a major political solution", but focus on "defusing the conflict". "What we must achieve is an agreement on breaks in the fighting, hopefully leading to a ceasefire so those who are suffering so horribly can finally have their basic needs met," Steinmeier said. The loss of east Aleppo—a rebel stronghold since 2012—would be the biggest blow to Syria's opposition in more than five years. More than 200 civil society groups on Thursday appealed to the UN General Assembly to take action on Syria because "there is no sign that the Security Council deadlock will end anytime soon". They urged "UN member states to step in and request an Emergency Special Session of the UN General Assembly" to end violence in Aleppo and across Syria. The conflict erupted in March 2011 with protests calling for Assad's ouster, and has since evolved into a bloody and highly globalised war that has killed more than 300,000 people.—AFP



VIENNA: Norbert Hofer, presidential candidate of Austria's right-wing Freedom Party, FPOE, gives a speech during the FPOE's last election campaign rally. — AFP

AFTER TRUMP, AUSTRIA FAR-RIGHT EYES POWER

ANTI-IMMIGRATION HOFER NECK-AND-NECK WITH INDEPENDENT

VIENNA: First Brexit. Then Trump. Now Austria? The populist wave unfurling in many countries could claim a fresh victory tomorrow if Norbert Hofer is elected Europe's first far-right president since 1945. Four weeks since Donald Trump's stunning US election victory and five months after Britons voted to leave the EU, polls put the anti-immigration Hofer neck-and-neck with independent ecologist Alexander Van der Bellen.

Austria's presidency is largely ceremonial, but a win for Hofer would be a major prize for Europe's anti-establishment parties ahead of elections next year in France, Germany and the Netherlands. The vote takes place the same day as an Italian referendum on constitutional reforms that could spell the end of Prime Minister Matteo Renzi and renewed political upheaval in Europe's fourth-biggest economy. It ends an 11-month campaign marathon that has been ugly by Austrian standards.

Hofer posters were defaced with Hitler moustaches and Van der Bellen's with dog excrement. His security detail was beefed up after death threats. Hofer, 45, came top in the first round on April 24, knocking out for the first time in the post-war period candidates from the two centrist parties that have long dominated Austrian politics. In a May 22 runoff, Hofer lost by just 31,000 votes to Van der Bellen. But Hofer's Freedom Party (FPOe) secured a re-run

because of procedural errors. The rematch was then postponed because of faulty glue on postal votes.

'Huge frustration'

Hofer, echoing Trump, has stoked and profited from a growing sense of unease about globalisation and multiculturalism, even though wealthy Austria is one of the biggest winners of European integration. Despite migrant numbers falling sharply since 2015, the FPOe has managed to keep immigration on voters' minds by playing on fears of terrorist attacks and of a parallel Islamic society that supposedly rejects Austrian "values". "There is huge frustration," political analyst Thomas Hofer (no relation) told AFP. Voters are "flocking to populist movements and the easy answers that are offered by those parties."

But Hofer also has struck a more moderate tone than FPOe chief Heinz-Christian Strache, who called German Chancellor Angela Merkel "the most dangerous woman in Europe" and has warned of "civil war". With his ready smile, moderate tone and the slogan "unspoiled, honest, good", Hofer won over many centrist voters who in previous years would never have supported the FPOe, a party long accused of having ties to neo-Nazis. But at times he has visibly lost his cool and behind the grin Hofer is a steely key ideologue within his party.

Islam, he has said, "has no place in

Austria" and is a religion "that sees the whole world as a battleground". And Van der Bellen, his opponent, is a "communist" and a "green dictator". "My wife, who goes to church every Sunday, says that she would vote for Hofer if it wasn't for all the people behind him in the FPOe," Werner, a pensioner walking his black-and-white dog in Vienna, told AFP.

'You'll be amazed'

Van der Bellen, 72, a somewhat scruffy economics professor, has at times made it easier for Hofer by coming across as too left-wing, wooden and old. His main strategy has been simply that he is not Hofer. What a Hofer victory might mean is unclear. Hitherto unused presidential powers could, in theory, allow him to fire Chancellor Christian Kern's government.

"You'll be amazed by what's possible," Hofer said before the first round, a comment made much of by Van der Bellen and which Hofer says he regrets having uttered. More realistically, though, his victory could prompt Kern and the centre-right to pull the plug on their unhappy coalition and call early elections. And leading the polls right now is the FPOe. Hofer's election run "is only one part of a longstanding effort to make an FPOe-led government, with real executive power, achievable by the next parliamentary election," said Charles Lichfield from the Eurasia think-tank. — AFP

FRENCH LEFT FIELD OPEN AS HOLLANDE BOWS OUT

PARIS: French President Francois Hollande's dramatic announcement that he will not seek a second term opens the way for his Prime Minister Manuel Valls to make a bid for power in next year's increasingly open election. Hollande's decision to bow to historically low approval ratings and step down next year opens up the leftwing field in an election that is proving more and more unpredictable.

Valls, who had been a loyal prime minister to Hollande until recently but hinted at the weekend he might run against his boss in planned leftwing primaries, is now expected to throw his hat in the ring. Polls show however that no leftwing candidate will reach the second round of the election in May. Surveys currently tip rightwing Republicans party candidate Francois Fillon to become president, beating far-right National Front (FN) candidate Marine Le Pen in the runoff.

But after a wave of populism swept Donald Trump to the White House and led Britons to vote to leave the European Union, no-one is dismissing Le Pen's chances of victory. The full field of candidates remains unknown and the role of independents such as Hollande's 38-year-old former economy minister Emmanuel Macron is difficult to predict.

Torrid presidency

In a solemn TV address Thursday in which he defended his troubled four years in power, Hollande said: "I have decided that I will not be a candidate." The 62-year-old Socialist has endured some of the lowest ratings of any post-war French president and a new poll released just before his announcement showed he would win just seven percent of votes in the first round of next year's election.

His term has been marked by U-turns on major policies, terror attacks, a sickly economy and embarrassing revelations about his private life. Valls hailed Hollande's decision as "the choice of a true statesman". The French press greeted the news with front-page headlines proclaiming "The End", "Goodbye, president" and "Hollande gives up", but there was also praise for his decision. "It is a rare politician who sees clearly enough to remove himself from power in the interests of the greater good," the left-leaning Liberation said in an editorial. Some 80 percent of the French public said they approved of Hollande's choice, according to a poll by Harris Interactive published yesterday.

Even if Valls now decides to stand himself, the Spanish-born premier faces an uphill task according to opinion polls which give him no more than 11 percent of the votes in the first round of the presidential election. The Socialist party began accepting candidates on Thursday for its primaries, due to take place on January 22 and 29. Arnaud Montebourg, a leftist former economy minister, has already submitted his name. Fillon, the favorite for the election, said Hollande's time in power "was ending with a political mess and the failure of power". — AFP



PARIS: French President Francois Hollande delivers a speech after awarding the Legion of Honour (Legion d'Honneur) and the National Order of Merit (Ordre National du Merite) to Olympic and Paralympic athletes at the Elysee Presidential Palace. — AFP

RENZI RALLIES AS REFERENDUM BATTLE GOES DOWN TO WIRE

ROME: Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi heads into a make-or-break constitutional referendum this weekend insisting everything is still to play for in his fight to hold on to power. "Never have there been so many people undecided. The referendum match will be decided in the last 48 hours," the centre-left leader said in a Q and A session on Facebook yesterday. Renzi, 41, is battling to defy opinion polls which point to his proposals to streamline parliament being rejected.

Such an outcome is expected to trigger the reformist premier's resignation after just under three years in office and plunge the country and Europe into a phase of political uncertainty. After Britain's vote to leave the EU and Donald Trump's presidential triumph in the United States, Renzi is being portrayed as next in line to suffer a populist backlash from fed-up and forgotten voters.

The narrative has played strongly internationally but less so in Italy, where the merits of the proposed reform itself have been vigorously debated in a contest which has also focused on Renzi's record and personality. At stake tomorrow is whether to slash the size and powers of the second-chamber Senate and transfer other powers from the regions to the national government.

Renzi has vowed to quit if voters reject changes he says will mean more effective leadership of a country that has had 60 different governments since the constitution was approved in 1948. As a result, it seems certain some disgruntled voters will vote No as a form of protest either against Renzi or over years of economic stagnation.

But the proposals have also come under fire from opponents who see them as ill-considered and potentially opening the door to the kind of authoritarian rule the constitution is designed to prevent. "This reform reduces the autonomy of local authorities and it concentrates too much power in the hands of the government without the necessary checks and balances," former prime minister Massimo D'Alema, a party colleague of Renzi's, told AFP.

Politically and economically, the stakes are high. Renzi sees the emasculation of the second chamber as key to ensuring difficult but necessary legislation does not get blocked or delayed in parliament while saving nearly 500 million euros (\$532 million) a year in operating costs. "If you want to abolish the privileges of the most expensive political caste in the world, you have to vote yes," the youthful premier said yesterday.—AFP

NIGERIAN COURT ORDERS RELEASE OF SHIITE LEADER

ABUJA: A Nigerian court yesterday ordered the release of the leader of a pro-Iranian Shiite group detained since December after his followers clashed with soldiers. The federal high court in Abuja said Ibrahim Zakzaky, who heads the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) and his wife should be released within 45 days and ordered the government to provide them with a new home following the demolition of their residence during the violence.

"The applicant is entitled to have judgment enter in his favor," said Judge Gabriel Kolawole in his ruling on Zakzaky's legal challenge against his detention. The judge also dismissed the argument of the prosecution and secret police that the Islamic cleric was being kept in "protective custody". Kolawole said he would have given an order for the cleric's immediate freedom had his home not been destroyed during the violence.

"The applicant shall be released within 45 days from today," he said, adding that he should be given a "proper and decent" accommodation in a place of his choice in northern Nigeria. The judge also awarded 25 million naira (\$79,000) each to Zakzaky and his wife for unlawful detention. The couple were arrested on December 15, 2015 after two days of bloody clashes between his supporters and soldiers which led to the death of over 300 people, including his two children.

His house and headquarters of the IMN were also razed. Zakzaky was said to have lost an eye and was left partly paralyzed in the violence. The fighting began on December 12 when supporters of the pro-Iranian cleric refused to allow the chief of army staff's convoy to pass through the northern city of Zaria in Kaduna state. In April, rights group Amnesty International accused Nigeria's military of shooting dead some 350 Shiite Muslims, burying them in mass graves and destroying evidence of the crime. He has previously been imprisoned for calling for an Iranian-style revolution to create an Islamic state in the country's north.—AFP



RICHMOND: Newly elected Liberal Democrat MP for Richmond Park Sarah Olney (L) celebrates with her husband Ben (R) and party supporters after winning her seat.—AFP

PRO-EU CANDIDATE WINS 'BREXIT BY-ELECTION'

BATTLE BECAME A MINI-REFERENDUM ON BREXIT

LONDON: Prime Minister Theresa May's government suffered a rebuke over its plans to pull Britain out of the EU yesterday after voters in the London suburb of Richmond ousted a eurosceptic lawmaker in favor of a pro-European candidate. In a stunning upset, Liberal Democrat candidate Sarah Olney overturned a large majority to defeat Zac Goldsmith, who had held the seat for May's Conservative party since 2010, in a battle that became a mini-referendum on Brexit.

"Our message is clear: we do not want a hard Brexit," Olney said as she became her party's ninth MP with 49.68 percent of the vote, compared to 45.15 percent for Goldsmith. "We do not want to be pulled out of the single market, and we will not let intolerance, division and fear win." Goldsmith had resigned in protest at the government's decision to back a new runway at London's Heathrow airport, prompting a by-election in which he stood as an independent, although with Conservative support.

The Lib Dems, who had previously held the seat, sensed an opportunity to win it back by focusing on Goldsmith's support for Brexit, which was at odds with most of his constituents. Flooding the area with campaigners, they highlighted their demands for Britain to stay in the single market and for a second referendum on the final terms of Brexit. "That

message has been resoundingly backed by the people of Richmond Park," said party leader Tim Farron.

'Doesn't change anything'

The Conservative party did not field a candidate in Thursday's by-election and offered its "commiserations" to Goldsmith, who had been re-elected only last year with a 23,000 majority. A spokesman said: "This result doesn't change anything. The government remains committed to leaving the European Union and triggering Article 50 (beginning the formal exit process) by the end of March next year." Visibly downcast, Goldsmith acknowledged the result with a brief statement that defended his decision to resign over Heathrow's expansion, which is strongly opposed in west London due to noise and pollution concerns. But the importance of Brexit was highlighted by the endorsement of his campaign by the UK Independence Party (UKIP), a leading force in securing the vote to leave the European Union in the June referendum.

In that vote, 52 percent of Britons nationwide voted out, while 69 percent of voters in Richmond Park opted to stay in. The defeat caps a tough year for Goldsmith, an environmental campaigner and son of the late tycoon financier Jimmy Goldsmith, who founded the now defunct anti-European Referendum Party. The 41-

year-old lost his bid to become mayor of London in May in a bitter and divisive campaign that saw his party try to paint Labour's Muslim candidate Sadiq Khan as an extremist.

'Real opposition'

Olney, 39, is a newcomer to politics—an accountant who joined the Lib Dems only in May 2015. But her victory is a huge boost for the party, which was almost destroyed in last year's general election after five years in coalition government with the Conservatives. "The message is clear: the Liberal Democrats are back and we are carrying the torch for all of those who want a real opposition to this Conservative Brexit government," Farron said.

The turnout was unusually high for a by-election, at 53.6 percent. The government is currently fighting a legal challenge to prevent parliament having the final say on when Article 50 is triggered, but Olney said that if there is a vote, she will block the move. "That's been a central part of my campaign and now I've been given a very clear mandate that that's what they want me to do," she told BBC News. The High Court ruled last month that parliament must have a vote but the government has appealed to the Supreme Court, which will begin hearing arguments on Monday.—AFP

380,000 AFGHANS RETURN FROM PAKISTAN IN 2016

ISLAMABAD: More than 380,000 registered Afghan refugees have returned from Pakistan this year, the highest number since 2007, the United Nations said yesterday, adding it handed out \$135 million in cash assistance in the last three months alone. Fears of a crackdown on refugees in Pakistan along with a doubling of the UN's cash grant for voluntary returnees to \$400 saw a surge over the border after July this year, the UN has said. "These are unprecedented numbers we did not anticipate. In October alone some 148,000 returned, which is the highest number of returns in one month (sic) since August 2005," Duniya Aslam Khan, a spokesman for UNHCR, told AFP.

At one point UNHCR was processing an average of

5,500 refugees per day, she added. Estimates suggest that a further half a million unregistered refugees may also have returned this year, though the figure could not be verified by officials. The returnees face an uncertain future in an Afghanistan still torn apart by decades of war, where a record half a million people were internally displaced by the fighting in 2016, according to UN figures.

The mass migrations are draining local resources, especially in safer urban areas, officials have said. UNHCR said yesterday the voluntary repatriations will be halted from December 1 for a routine winter break, resuming in March. The break will also allow the agency time to mobilize additional resources, Khan said.

UNHCR had estimated just 50,000 refugees would return in 2016, based on trends from previous years. Khan said some 1.34 million registered refugees still reside in Pakistan. A further half a million undocumented refugees are also estimated to still be in the country, making Pakistan one of the largest refugee-hosting nations in the world. Pakistan has extended a deadline for the refugees to leave its territory from March 2017 to December next year. Some Afghan refugees have been sheltering in Pakistan for decades, first fleeing over the border after the Soviet invasion of 1979. Some 4.2 million Afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan voluntarily under the UNHCR-funded Voluntary Repatriation program since 2002. — AFP

ACTIVISTS REJECT RAKHINE BODY

YANGON: A new body set up by Myanmar's government to investigate allegations of rights abuses against Rohingya in Rakhine lacks credibility, activists said yesterday, as former UN chief Kofi Annan began a visit to the troubled state. Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi has faced a growing international backlash for failing to probe claims the army is carrying out ethnic cleansing of the Muslim minority. But rights groups rejected the new 13-member commission as toothless, noting it includes no Muslims and is led by Vice President Myint Swe, a retired army general formerly blacklisted by the United States.

A close ally of former junta leader Than Shwe, Myint Swe was head of special operations in Yangon when the military government ordered a bloody crackdown on the monk-led protests of the Saffron Revolution in 2007. "We've got little faith in another homegrown commission, particularly if it's headed by a military man," said Matthew Smith, chief executive of Fortify Rights. "This new commission won't be capable of conducting a credible human rights investigation, and it certainly lacks independence. The time for an independent international investigation is now."

Phil Robertson, deputy director of Human Rights Watch in Asia, said the new commission "doesn't look like it's independent or impartial". Suu Kyi's office said the new commission would investigate the raids on police border posts on October 9 that sparked the deadly military lockdown as well as "international accusations" of army abuses. It is the second body created by Suu Kyi to try to heal the religious divide that has split Rakhine state since deadly sectarian unrest killed more than 100 people in 2012.

In August she appointed fellow Nobel laureate Annan to head a separate body, which Buddhist nationalists have bitterly denounced as foreign meddling. Oo Hla Saw, a senior politician from the Arakan National Party, said "the new commission will do nothing different". "I don't have much hope for it," he told AFP. Privately some Muslim leaders in Myanmar also said they were concerned their voices would not be represented, but asked not to be quoted for fear of reprisals.

More than 10,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh in recent weeks, the United Nations said on Wednesday, fleeing a bloody army crackdown in the north of Rakhine state. Arrivals in Bangladesh have told AFP horrifying stories of gang rape, torture and murder at the hands of Myanmar's security forces. Myanmar has denied allegations of abuse, but has also banned foreign journalists and independent investigators from accessing the area.

On Friday, former UN chief Annan was greeted by protesters holding signs reading "Ban the Kofi Annan commission" as he touched down in Sittwe airport on his first trip to Rakhine since the crisis erupted. Commission member Aye Lwin told AFP the trip was for "gathering facts... we won't be giving any conclusion". — AFP



SERREKUNDA: Gambians celebrate the victory of opposition coalition candidate Adama Barrow in the streets. — AP

GAMBIAN PRESIDENT JAMMEH CONCEDES DEFEAT IN ELECTION

SECURITY FORCES DEPLOYED HEAVILY

BANJUL: Gambian President Yahya Jammeh has conceded defeat to the opposition, the chairman of the electoral commission said yesterday, bringing a dramatic end to his 22 years in power. "It's really unique that someone who has been ruling this country for so long has accepted defeat," Aliou Momar Njie told reporters ahead of the results of Thursday's presidential election.

Jammeh, who once said he would govern for a billion years if God willed it, was attempting to win a fifth term with his Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC). Gambian state television told AFP that Jammeh would make a statement later in the day to congratulate opposition leader Adama Barrow, 51. Barrow, a previously unknown businessman, was chosen as the opposition flag bearer by a group of political parties who have joined forces for the first time and won unprecedented popular support.

If the concession is confirmed, Barrow will likely decide to serve a three-year term at the head of a transition reform government in the tiny former British colony with

pristine beaches that occupies a narrow sliver of land surrounded by French-speaking Senegal.

Banjul success

Jammeh campaign manager Yankuba Colley said he was not aware of the electoral commission chairman's statement but said he believed the president would step down if the Gambian people wanted it. "When the Gambians make their verdict, he is someone who is faithful," he told AFP. "It is a difficult result but the man I know will accept whatever comes."

Barrow's camp confirmed the Independent Electoral Commission statement. Thursday's election was marked by an internet blackout that sparked condemnation from rights groups and the United States. But early results yesterday were positive for Barrow as he took the capital Banjul—a traditional Jammeh stronghold. Barrow won nearly 50 percent of the vote in Banjul's three constituencies, according to the IEC, compared to 43 percent for Jammeh. Security forces had deployed heavily in Banjul earlier yesterday amid nervous-

ness over whether Jammeh would accept a ballot box defeat. Before dawn broke, military and police, some covering their faces, set up checkpoints every few hundred meters on the outskirts of the capital, while citizens were inside sleeping or watching the results come in. "Power belongs to the people. You cannot stop us and you cannot stop them," Barrow said at his final rally this week. Jammeh meanwhile had predicted the biggest landslide of his political career.

'Generally peaceful conditions'

The United States said turnout appeared to be high and that the vote took place in "generally peaceful conditions", while the IEC hailed "a very successful election." The US State Department and Human Rights Watch voiced concern however over the blanket cut to internet and international phone calls, as well as claims of voter intimidation. "The government's communications cutoff and threatened protest ban are only likely to increase tensions between the government and opposition groups," said Babatunde Olugboji from Human Rights Watch. — AFP

INDONESIA BLASPHEMY PROTEST DRAWS 200,000

JAKARTA: At least 200,000 conservative Muslims rallied peacefully in the Indonesian capital yesterday in the second major protest against its minority Christian governor, who is being prosecuted for alleged blasphemy. President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, a political ally of the governor who angered hard-liners by being out of the city during their first protest, unexpectedly went to the national monument to join Friday prayers with the sprawling crowd. He called for protesters to leave peacefully. They cheered and then broke into chants calling for Gov. Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama's arrest, but later, people streamed peacefully out of the area and marched to a major traffic circle before dispersing.

The blasphemy controversy erupted in September when a video circulated online of Ahok criticizing detractors who argued the Quran prohibits Muslims from having a non-Muslim leader. It has challenged the image of tolerance associated with Islam in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, and has shaken the government of Jokowi, who accused unnamed political actors of trying to undermine him. The son of former President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is vying against Ahok for Jakarta governor in elections set for February.

Police said Friday they arrested eight people suspected of treason. National Police spokesman Boy Rafli Amar told reporters the group planned to use the protest to incite chaos and overthrow the government. They included Rachmawati, the daughter of Indonesia's founding President Sukarno and the younger sister of former President Megawati Sukarnoputri; retired army Gen. Kivlan Zein; and a well-known musician turned politician Ahmad Dani. Two other people were arrested for alleged crimes under Indonesia's law on electronic information and transactions.

Reduce disruptions

Organizers had agreed to concentrate yesterday's protest around the vaulting monument to reduce disruptions, but the area quickly overflowed. National Police spokesman Rikwanto, who goes by one name, estimated 200,000 people were on the streets. Police put on standby 22,000 officers and 5,000 soldiers. A Nov 4 protest against Ahok, the first ethnic Chinese to be Jakarta governor and the first Christian in half a century, attracted about 100,000 people. After nightfall, it turned violent, with one death and dozens injured.

Police wanted yesterday's protest to disperse in the early afternoon following prayers. Lisnawati Djohar, a resident of West Sumatra's Padang city, said she flew to Jakarta with a dozen friends for the protest. "I've been called to defend Islam," she said. "As a Muslim, I feel guilty if I refuse a demand to defend my religion. I believe Ahok insulted the holy Quran and it's hurt us." Rizieq Syihab, leader of the Islamic Defenders Front, a vigilante group that helped organize the demonstrations, gave a fiery speech to the protest in which he asserted Indonesia would be peaceful if there was no blasphemy and other problems such as gays.

Speaking on the main stage at the national monument, National Police chief Gen. Tito Karnavian called for the protesters to support the legal process in the blasphemy case. The accusation of blasphemy has animated the political opponents of Ahok and Jokowi, including hard-liners who have used the issue to seize a national stage for their extreme agenda, which includes the imposition of Shariah law in a secular nation. Ahok's blasphemy case took a step forward Thursday when it was formally accepted for trial. The offense is punishable by up to five years in prison. Police say Ahok can't leave the country during the case. However, hard-line Muslim groups continue to demand his arrest. — AP



BANGKOK: People hold newspaper images of Thailand's new King Maha Vajiralongkorn outside the Grand Palace.— AFP

NEW CHAPTER OF THAILAND MONARCHY VAJIRALONGKORN BECOMES KING

BANGKOK: Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn became the king of Thailand late Thursday, opening a new chapter for the powerful monarchy in a country still mourning the death of his father. The 64-year-old inherits one of the world's richest monarchies as well as a politically febrile nation, 50 days after King Bhumibol Adulyadej's death. After weeks of complex palace protocols the prince was invited by the head of the National Legislative Assembly (NLA) to ascend the throne in an event broadcast on all Thai television channels.

"I agree to accept the wishes of the late king... for the benefit of the entire Thai people," said Vajiralongkorn, wearing an official white tunic decorated with medals and a pink sash. The somber, ritual-heavy ceremony at his Bangkok palace was attended by the chief of the NLA, junta leader Prayut Chan-O-Cha, and the powerful 96-year-old head of the privy council, Prem Tinsulanonda.

Red-jacketed courtiers looked on as a palace staff member, shuffling on his knees, presented the new king with a microphone through which he delivered his few words of acceptance. King Vajiralongkorn then prostrated himself, hands pressed together in respect, to a small shrine topped by a picture of his father and mother-Queen Sirikit Kitiyakara.

He becomes Rama X of Thailand's Chakri dynasty, but will not formally be crowned until after his father's cremation, which is expected next year. Bhumibol's reign, which ended on October 13,

spanned a tumultuous period of Thai history pockmarked by a communist insurgency, coups and street protests. It also saw breakneck development which has resulted in a huge wealth disparity between a Bangkok-centric elite and the rural poor.

To many Thais, Bhumibol was the only consistent force in a politically combustible country, his image burnished by ritual and shielded by a harsh royal defamation law. The United States offered its congratulations to the new king, saying it looked forward to strengthening ties with Thailand.

"We offer our best wishes to his majesty and all of the Thai people," the State Department said. "His father, King Bhumibol, ruled the Kingdom of Thailand with vision and compassion for 70 years and was a great friend of the United States. "The United States and Thailand enjoy a longstanding, strong, and multifaceted bilateral relationship, and we look forward to deepening that relationship and strengthening the bonds between our two countries and peoples going forward."

Into the limelight

Monks chanted blessings at Buddhist temples to mark the new monarch's ascension—an era-defining moment for most Thais who for seven decades knew only Bhumibol as their king. Vajiralongkorn does not yet enjoy the same level of popularity. He spends much of his time outside of the public eye, particularly in southern Germany where he

owns property. He has had three high-profile divorces, while a recent police corruption scandal linked to the family of his previous wife allowed the public a rare glimpse of palace affairs. Thursday's ascension ends a period of uncertainty since Bhumibol's death prompted by the prince's request to delay his official proclamation so he could mourn with the Thai people. Thailand's constitutional monarchy has limited formal powers but it draws the loyalty of much of the kingdom's business elite as well as a military that dominates politics through its regular coups.

Analysts say Vajiralongkorn, untested until now, will have to manage competing military cliques. In a brief televised address after the ceremony, Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, who as army chief led the 2014 coup, praised the new king "as the head of the Thai state and heart of the Thai people." The Thai monarchy is protected from criticism by one of the world's strictest lese majeste laws, carrying up to 15 years in jail for every charge of defaming the king, queen, heir or regent.

That law makes open discussion about the royal family's role all but impossible inside the kingdom and means all media based inside the country routinely self-censor. Convictions for so-called "112" offences—named after its criminal code have skyrocketed since generals seized power in 2014. Experts say most have targeted the junta's political opponents, many of whom support the toppled civilian government of Yingluck Shinawatra. —AFP

S KOREAN OPPN SEEKING TO IMPEACH PARK NEXT WEEK

SEOUL: South Korea's main opposition parties said yesterday they will push for a vote next week on President Park Geun-hye's impeachment. The opposition had earlier planned to call for a vote this week on whether to impeach Park over a snowballing scandal involving a shadowy longtime confidante. But they later squabbled over when to do so after Park made a conditional offer to resign.

Leaders of the three major opposition parties met and agreed to put an impeachment motion to a floor vote next Friday, according to a statement from the largest opposition Democratic

Party. "From now on, there won't be any cracks among the three opposition parties" over Park's impeachment, the statement said. The opposition lacks enough lawmakers to pass Park's impeachment on its own and needs help from dissenters in Park's ruling party.

A group of anti-Park lawmakers in the ruling party decided Friday to vote for her impeachment if she fails to announce by next Wednesday that she will step down voluntarily in April, according to the office of Hwang Young-cheul, one of the dissenters. They also want her to promise to help ensure a smooth

power transfer to her successor, Hwang's office said. It was unclear how Park will react to the demands. She said Tuesday she would leave office if parliament comes up with a stable power transfer plan. Opposition lawmakers immediately lambasted the overture, saying it was a ploy to buy time and find ways to survive the scandal. The scandal, which has sparked massive street protests and plunged Park's approval rating to 4 percent, is centered around allegations that Park let her friend of 40 years, Choi Soon-sil, manipulate government affairs from the shadows and extort money from businesses. Choi,

who has never had a government job, is a daughter of a late cult leader who served as Park's mentor.

Prosecutors have indicted Choi and two of Park's former aides and accused Park of colluding in their criminal activities. Park denies the allegations, although she has acknowledged she received help from Choi in editing speeches and unspecified "public relations" issues. Park's single five-year term ends in early 2018. If impeached, she will be stripped of her presidential powers until the Constitutional Court rules on her fate within 180 days. —AP

US STILL GRAPPLING WITH LONE WOLF ATTACKS

ONE YEAR AFTER SAN BERNARDINO, DANGER PERSISTS

LOS ANGELES: One year after a newlywed couple stormed an office party in San Bernardino, California, killing 14 people and injuring 22 others, the country is still grappling with how best to thwart such lone wolf attacks. The evolving threat facing law enforcement, experts say, was illustrated again this week in the car-and-knife attack by a Somali-born student in Ohio, the latest in a string of such assaults over the past 12 months.

"We are entering a very dangerous phase because the type of attacks that are occurring are ones that are incredibly difficult to fend against," said Jens David Ohlin, an international law professor and security expert at Cornell University. "These are very low-tech attacks with one or two individuals using a firearm, possibly an automatic weapon ... and in the Ohio attack it was just a car and a knife." Such attacks have exposed the new challenge facing the United States and other western countries as the Islamic State group and other jihadists take their message into cyberspace, using the internet and social media to encourage radicalization. By far the bloodiest occurred in June, when 49 people died in a mass shooting at a nightclub in Orlando, Florida, carried out by a gunman who pledged loyalty to the Islamic State group. But last year's December 2 shooting in San Bernardino by Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik—who left behind a six-month-old daughter—at the time marked the deadliest terror assault in the United States since the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Authorities say the Pakistani-born Malik—who met her future US-born husband on a Muslim dating website and married him in Saudi Arabia—had pledged allegiance to IS on Facebook and was instrumental in radicalizing Farook. San Bernardino brought home to many Americans



SAN BERNARDINO: This file photo taken on December 2, 2015 shows Law enforcement officers searching for the suspects of a mass shooting. — AFP

the reality of the threat from jihadist violence. A number of commemorative events, including a memorial mass, a vigil and a remembrance ceremony, were being held in the area on Friday to mark the one-year anniversary of the attack.

'That world is gone'

Experts say such homegrown attacks are likely to occur more and more often as radical networks exploit the web to recruit and spread jihadist propaganda. Investigators believe the student who injured 11 people in Ohio this week was also inspired by IS, which identified him as a "soldier" of the group. "You're living in a far dif-

ferent world where you don't have this sort of 9/11 model with some terrorist trained overseas coming into the US with a legal or phony visa and then perpetrating an attack," said Abraham Wagner, a senior fellow at the Center for Advanced Studies on Terrorism. "That world has basically passed by... and now you have people recruited often on the internet ... and groups (like IS) are getting better and better at it." Reflecting the view of many in the law enforcement community, Wagner said US intelligence services had failed to monitor and analyze social media postings by IS and its followers because the various agencies were not pooling resources and

"connecting the dots" when trying to identify potential threats. One example of this disconnect, he said, was the Orlando attacker who had been interviewed three times by the FBI for suspected terrorist sympathies but was never charged for lack of evidence. "The FBI didn't have a case against him but had they looked at his social media postings" it would have raised a red flag, Wagner said. "We could do a great deal better with the kinds of technologies and resources we have."

Power of rhetoric

There is also some concern that President-elect Donald Trump's anti-Muslim campaign rhetoric could embolden potential attackers. Trump's choice of national security advisor, Michael Flynn, is a former military intelligence chief who sees militant Islam as the biggest threat to global stability and has courted controversy with statements that critics say border on Islamophobia. "Certainly, the way the Trump campaign couched this as a clash of civilizations between the West and Islam was not helpful and it may make matters worse," Ohlin said. "But it's also important not to overstate the point because the United States was already engaged in a military campaign against ISIS ... before Trump showed up," he said, using an alternate acronym for the group. One other challenge facing the intelligence community as it deals with IS's unprecedented use of the web to further its agenda, is how to protect the country without infringing on basic human rights and international law. But the new reality, for both Ohlin and Wagner, is that the number of lone-wolf attacks on US soil is likely to continue to rise, even with the best possible intelligence. "At the end of the day, there are some you are going to catch and some you are not," Wagner said. — AFP

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INDIANAPOLIS: President-elect Donald Trump arrives on December 1, 2016 at the airport ahead of a visit to the Carrier air conditioning and heating company. — AFP

KU KLUX KLAN EMBRACES TRUMP, BUT RESURGENCE SEEMS UNLIKELY

‘OUR MEMBERSHIP GROWS BY THE DAY’

NEW YORK: In the wake of Donald Trump’s victory and the recent rise of the white nationalist “alt-right,” a 150-year-old racist group has been spreading its wings: The Ku Klux Klan, which today is planning its first post-election rally. “Our membership grows by the day,” said Gary Munker, who identifies himself as a spokesman for the group. The Klan, since its creation in 1866, has called for a white and Christian America; historically, it has resorted to lynchings and racial violence as the means to its end.

Like the former KKK leader David Duke, who supported Trump’s candidacy and was eventually disavowed by the New York billionaire-Munker says he was drawn by the Republican candidate’s language, particularly his attacks against immigrants and his talk of deporting millions. The movement was born in the devastated states of the South in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, just three years after President Abraham Lincoln ordered all slaves in the South to be freed.

Munker, wearing one of the group’s emblematic hooded white robes, claimed that his branch of the KKK—the Loyal White Knights—has 700 members on Long Island, where he lives, and an additional 500 in the rest of New York state. Munker, 36, who calls himself a family man, said people were beginning to “wake up” to what is happening in the country. He said that he joined the Loyal White Knights—one of 40 local or regional groups making up the Klan—five years ago after seeing his quiet and “essentially white” neighborhood change seemingly overnight with the

arrival of subsidized housing units and a much more diverse population.

No resurgence

Munker, who was vague about his full-time profession for fear he might lose his job, is an active member of the Klan: a native of a rural part of Long Island, he regularly distributes tracts in nearby cities in an effort to draw new members. The last time he did this was on November 17, in a parking lot in the village of Patchogue, which entered the dark annals of American racism after a group of high school students taunted and punched and then murdered an Ecuadoran immigrant in 2008.

The discovery of Munker’s leaflets prompted some 200 local residents to organize a rally against racism the following Sunday. Far from the killings or the burning crosses that made the Klan’s grim reputation, leafleting is now the Klan’s chief activity in 14 states and “gives them an extensive geographical reach,” said Carla Hill, an investigative researcher with the Center on Extremism of the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish group dedicated to fighting intolerance.

The latest available data, she said, does not point to a resurgence of the movement, whatever Gary Munker might say: 74 instances of KKK leafleting have been counted so far this year, compared to 86 in 2015. The Loyal White Knights have announced plans for a rally Saturday in North Carolina, without confirming the exact time or place. But even if it does take place, Carla Hill said, it is unlikely to attract much more of a crowd than the Klan’s

last several demonstrations, which rarely drew more than a few dozen participants.

‘Political space’

For Mark Potok, a specialist at the Southern Poverty Law Center, which monitors extremism in the US, even if so-called white nationalism has undeniably gained prominence since the arrival of Barack Obama as the first black US president, the movement appears unlikely to take on significant momentum. Klan membership is no more than 6,000 today, he noted, compared to 40,000 in the 1960s and several million in the 1920s. Still, proponents of white superiority feel that Trump’s election has given them “a political space to present their views as legitimate,” Potok said, adding that “they have not been taken that seriously in 50 years.”

Thus, a conference November 20 in the federally owned Ronald Reagan Building in Washington gathered some 250 white supremacists, some of whom raised their arms in a Nazi-like salute to their far-right leader Richard Spencer and to Trump’s victory. But these “intellectual” extremists, who refer to their movement as the alt-right, “look down on the Klan,” Potok said.

For the Klan, with its dark history of violence, “can’t make the claim like Richard Spencer that ‘we are standing up for the rights of white people (but) we don’t hate anybody,’” said Potok. But Munker said he mistrusts the smooth talkers of the alt-right: “We are Christians (while) they let anybody in and just that makes me wonder about their integrity,” he said. — AFP

TRUMP’S TOUR BEGINS WITH LOW-KEY CROWD

CINCINNATI: For the first event on his post-election “thank you” tour, US President-elect Donald Trump on Thursday drew a crowd of several thousand people to a Cincinnati arena—but perhaps one that lacked the fervor seen at his campaign rallies. The US Bank Arena in the Ohio city has a capacity of more than 17,000, but on Thursday night before the Republican billionaire was due to take the stage with running mate Mike Pence, about half the seats were empty.

On October 13, a few weeks before Election Day, enthusiastic Trump supporters packed the arena — 21,000 of them, according to the president-elect himself at the time. “It’s cold outside,” said Tim Smolinski, a 63-year-old semi-retired aerospace engineer, who had no trouble finding a good seat along with his wife.

Other attendees said huge traffic jams and sealed-off roads near the venue home to the minor league Cincinnati Cyclones ice hockey team—could explain why the arena was not full. Throughout the presidential campaign, which ended with Trump’s November 8 victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton, the Manhattan property mogul drew huge enthusiastic crowds. But on Thursday, there was no wait at the security checkpoint to enter—and also no lines at the concession stands.

Those present nevertheless were thrilled that the 70-year-old Trump has undertaken what is essentially a victory tour—an unusual step for a newly elected president—in the key swing states that handed him the presidency. “I think it’s just exciting that he even wants to spend the time to acknowledge the people that brought him to the place that he is,” said 71-year-old Terry Babic, 71, who said he is retired but still does radio broadcasting.

Babic said he and his wife drove five hours from Cleveland just to attend. The Trump supporters in attendance said that so far, the president-elect had met their expectations during the transition period before he succeeds Barack Obama on January 20, despite media reports of tensions and hiccups in the process. — AFP

COLOMBIA EMBARKS ON PEACE CHALLENGE

BOGOTA: After pushing a revised peace deal with the FARC rebel group through Congress, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos got down to a far bigger challenge Thursday: implementing it. The lower house’s unanimous vote in favor of the deal set off a countdown to end a conflict that has burned for over half a century and killed more than 260,000 people.

“Today we can say the war has officially ended,” Santos said in a speech. “We all have to continue making sacrifices, but I hope we will do so together.” Interior Minister Juan Fernando Cristo told a news conference that Colombia now faces “an enormous challenge” to implement the accord. Within five days, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, must begin demobilizing and surrendering their weapons. Under the deal, the process must be complete within six months. The FARC will relaunch as a political party. The next step, Cristo said, would be to present Congress with an amnesty for FARC members—the most contested part of the accord.

Santos, who won this year’s Nobel Peace Prize, said “D-Day begins” on Thursday. The delicate transition to peace will take place amid bitter opposition to the deal, which Santos’s rivals say is too soft on the leftist guerrillas. Voters rejected an earlier version of the deal in a referendum last month. That sent peace negotiators back to the drawing board after nearly four years of talks. Rather than risk a second referendum, the government and rebels decided to have the revised deal ratified in Congress. Opponents say the new version includes only token changes. The deal passed unanimously in both houses of Congress, where Santos has a majority. His top opponent, former president Alvaro Uribe, led a walkout by his right-wing party, the Democratic Center.

“How is the Congress going to approve what the Colombian people rejected?” Oscar Ivan Zuloaga, a former presidential candidate for Uribe’s party, said during the House debate. Uribe and his allies argue the deal grants impunity to rebels guilty of war crimes, giving them seats in Congress rather than sending them to jail. — AFP

BUSINESS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2016



US employers add solid 178K jobs in November



NEW DELHI: Indians wait outside a bank to withdraw money in New Delhi yesterday. People have been forced to stand in long queues to change banned notes and also to take out new currency from their accounts after severe limitations were imposed on withdrawal from banks and ATMs. —AP

INDIA 'CASH CATASTROPHE' PROMPTS CHAOS

ORDINARY INDIANS SCRAMBLE TO SPEND AS GOVT RUSHES DEADLINE

NEW DELHI: Indians endured more turmoil yesterday as they rushed to spend old notes at petrol stations before a midnight deadline as the opposition denounced the scrapping of high denomination bills as a catastrophe.

Indians had been given until December 15 to use the old bills at filling stations but the government rushed forward the deadline on Thursday evening, giving people barely 24 hours to spend their old notes. The surprise move sparked uproar among millions of commuters who queued outside filling station to use their bills while an attendant said fights had broken out among frustrated motorists.

"This cannot be right. First you say we have until December 15 and suddenly now you are saying something else," said R S Yadav as he waited for his turn on a rickety two-wheeler in New Delhi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi unleashed chaos with his shock announcement last month that all 500 rupee (\$7.30) and 1,000 rupee notes—some 86 percent of all bills in

circulation—would cease to be legal tender. The sweeping abolition was meant to bring billions in so-called "black", or undeclared, money back into the formal system, the government says.

The so-called demonetization initially won widespread approval but the government has been forced onto the defensive as frustration grows at limits on withdrawing new banknotes.

Cash accounts for 90 percent of transactions in India and the government has said it would take time before new bills are distributed. "I was using my old notes up till now for filling petrol. Now I am dreading going to the bank. The government has no clue what we are being made to go through," said Saurav Mallik, who works in the private sector.

'Catastrophic experiment'

As anger mounted at the continued shortage of cash, the leader of the opposition Congress party accused Modi of experimenting "with the financial future of 1.3 billion

people". In a speech to party supporters, Rahul Gandhi said "the results of this catastrophic experiment will soon be revealed" as a report said that there had already been a sharp fall in consumer spending.

"Every economist of any repute has already condemned it," added Gandhi. Some people have found themselves queuing for many hours to access their own cash while ATMs have been regularly running out of notes. Frequent rule changes in response to pressure from various groups and growing disorder have made matters worse.

Those with old notes are allowed to deposit them into their bank accounts until year end but long bank queues had prompted many to use them at gas stations. This option has now been cut off.

"I worry that there is going to be more confusion and chaos in the days ahead," Saima, who works as an attendant at a petrol filling station, told AFP. "Fights have already been breaking out," Saima, who uses only one name, added.

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley acknowledged it was inevitable that the move would result in queues in a country the size of India. "If you are replacing 86 percent of a country's cash... it is going to be a time consuming exercise," he told a conference in Delhi.

But Jaitley insisted the decision would ultimately have a positive impact as more consumers switch to digital currency rather than cash. "You will reduce the quantum of paper currency and take the country more towards further digitisation," he said.

"The shortage of currency itself is forcing this to happen but that's a development which is for the better." India's economy grew 7.3 percent during the last quarter, but many economists have predicted that the demonetisation will make a big dent in the next set of figures.

A report in The Hindustan Times yesterday said the squeeze was already being felt in many sectors of the economy, including a big drop in sales of mobile phones, home appliances, cars and real estate. — AFP

ISLAMIC BANKS SLOWLY EMBRACE GREEN FINANCE

DUBAI: Islamic banks are gradually embracing socially responsible finance, from renewable energy to microfinance efforts, helping unlock new funding sources for environmentally-friendly projects, an industry survey shows. The two sectors have developed separately from each other, but green projects could benefit from tapping Islamic banks in countries like the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia, where they now hold a quarter of total banking assets.

Around two-thirds of financing in Saudi Arabia follows Islamic principles, which forbid investing in gambling, tobacco and alcohol. This resembles the screening methodology used by ethical funds in Western markets. Commonalities could help converge two fast-growing bond markets: Moody's Investors Service estimates issuance of Islamic bonds, or sukuk, will reach \$70 billion this year, compared to over \$80 billion for green bonds.

Green finance is increasingly important for

Islamic banks seeking to differentiate themselves from their conventional peers, the Bahrain-based General Council for Islamic Banks and Financial Institutions (CIBAFI) said in a report. Islamic banks want to improve their contribution to local economies with job creation, infrastructure and SME financing as top priorities, a survey conducted by CIBAFI between May and August shows.

The survey drew input from 86 Islamic finance institutions across 29 countries mainly

from the Middle East and Southeast Asia, as well as Africa. Around a third of small Islamic banks cited a moderate exposure to the green and renewable energy sectors, compared to 15.5 percent for large Islamic banks.

In Malaysia a local lender has introduced green mortgages to facilitate installation of solar systems, while an Islamic bank in Jordan is developing alternatives to medium-term loans to fund energy efficient and renewable energy projects. —Reuters

AUSTERITY AND PROTESTS AS SUDAN ECONOMY CRUMBLES

SLEW OF SUBSIDY CUTS PUSHES PRICES UP

KHARTOUM: Mohamed Yassin's mini-market occupies a prime spot in Khartoum but its shelves are largely empty as a plummeting currency and slew of subsidy cuts pushes prices up and customers away. "Prices rise daily after the government decisions and what we sell, we can no longer completely replace because our capital is losing value," 44-year-old Yassin told Reuters.

"Sales have dropped significantly ... We don't know how long we can handle it. We're afraid we'll go out of business." Inflation approaching 20 percent and government austerity have fuelled growing discontent and rare protests in Sudan in recent weeks.

Protests have so far been small but, mindful of popular anger that swept away several Arab autocrats in 2011, the government of President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir has been quick to silence media criticism over its handling of the crisis. Sudan's economic problems have been building since the south seceded in 2011, taking with it three-quarters of oil output, the main source of foreign currency and government income.

Its revenues dwindling, the government began reducing fuel and power subsidies in 2013 and announced a new round of cuts in early November that saw petrol prices rise about 30 percent.

At the same time, Sudan has sought to alleviate a dollar shortage by introducing a second exchange rate alongside the official peg of 6.4 Sudanese pounds per dollar. The so-called incen-

tives rate allows the central bank to buy dollars from Sudanese expatriates for about 16 pounds and is meant to boost foreign currency flows into the banking system.

To reduce dollar demand and protect local industry, Sudan also banned imports of meat and fish and raised import tariffs on other goods. But the restrictions have fuelled inflation in a country that relies heavily on imported goods. "Life has become unbearable. Prices of vegetables, meat, sugar and transport are always rising and the government doesn't feel for us. We don't know what to do," said Fatima Saleh, 39, a state employee and breadwinner in a family of five.

Growing discontent

As more Sudanese feel the pinch, unrest is growing. In the past week, Khartoum and other cities have seen rare protests. On Wednesday, more than 150 lawyers held a sit-in in central Khartoum. Elsewhere in the capital, police used tear gas to disperse protesters who blocked a road.

A call by activists for three days of civil disobedience also meant the streets of Khartoum were much quieter than usual this week as some teachers, pharmacists and others stayed home.

Authorities have arrested four dissidents, closed a television channel and seized the print runs of four newspapers over the past week to silence criticism of reforms. Government officials were not available for comment but Rabih Abdel

Fattah, a senior official in Bashir's ruling party, told Reuters the government had to scrap the consumer subsidies.

"The subsidy policies will result in a disaster and a burden on the economy," he said. "The call for civil disobedience failed because those who called for it were suspect and those who backed it have no political weight in the country."

The mounting crisis is taking place in an economy already hobbled by US sanctions. Imposed in 1997 against a government accused of supporting terrorism, the sanctions were tightened in 2006 over Bashir's role in the Darfur conflict. Companies struggle to obtain dollars from banks, which are barred by sanctions from receiving foreign transfers, forcing them to resort to the black market where rates are higher. "Like all importers, we buy foreign currency from the black market in some Gulf countries - and it's sold at higher prices there than in Khartoum due to the US sanctions that prevent transfers into Sudan," said a financial officer at a firm that imports agricultural products.

"We revise the prices of our products daily in relation to the price of the dollar ... we've been in business for many years but this is the most difficult period in our history."

The isolation of Sudan, whose president is wanted for war crimes by the International Criminal Court, limits its options. Unlike neighboring Egypt, whose economic reforms helped it clinch last month a \$12 billion IMF loan, Sudan is on its own. —Reuters



LAHORE: A Pakistani vendor waits for customers at a main fruit and vegetable market in Lahore yesterday. —AFP

MOROCCO USES BUSINESS DIPLOMACY TO WIN FRIENDS IN AFRICA

RABAT: With contracts across Africa running into billions of dollars, Morocco is placing business at the heart of its strategy to win support for its re-entry into the African Union. From Senegal to Madagascar, King Mohammed VI is leading a drive to invest in banking, insurance, telecoms, manufacturing and construction projects. And while it has long nurtured warm ties with its francophone neighbors in West Africa, Morocco is now using mega-projects to mend ties with East African countries long at odds with Rabat over the Western Sahara issue. Rabat officially requested in September to rejoin the African Union, 32 years after quitting the bloc in protest at its decision to accept Western Sahara as a member.

"The Moroccan vision consists of making its national companies real ambassadors in Africa," said Amine Dafir, professor at Hassan II University in Mohammedia near Rabat, who labels the strategy "economic diplomacy."

It is a drive that has seen the monarch lead a cohort of ministers and business leaders on official visits across the continent. In recent months they have been hosted by Rwanda, Tanzania, Gabon, Senegal, Ethiopia and Madagascar, where they finished a 10-day visit on Thursday. Nigeria and Zambia are next on the list. Each trip has resulted in a flurry of business deals. The king's trip to Madagascar in November produced 22 agreements including a vast project to "upgrade" the Pangalanes canal, a series of waterways that extends around 700 kilometres (430 miles) along the country's east coast. Also in November, Morocco signed an agreement to build a giant factory aimed at making Ethiopia self-reliant in fertiliser by 2025. The announcement came during as King Mohammed visited Addis Ababa-seat of the African Union.

'African Strategy'

Morocco quit what was then called the Organization of African Unity in 1984 to protest at the admission of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic declared by the Polisario independence movement. Morocco maintains that Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony under its control, is an integral part of the kingdom. The Polisario Front, which campaigns for the territory's independence, demands a referendum on self-determination. Isolated in Africa for decades, Morocco launched an "African Strategy" in the early 2000s in partnership with its "national champions"-Moroccan firms that have developed branches across the continent. Since then, the kingdom has inked around 500 deals in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the Moroccan think tank OCP Policy Center. The region is now the target of more than 60 percent of its foreign investments. Until 2016, those investments mainly targeted Rabat's francophone West African neighbors, which largely support its position on Western Sahara. — AFP

OIL SOFTENS AFTER OPEC DECISION PROMPTS RALLY

LONDON: Oil prices fell 1.5 percent to steady at around \$53 a barrel yesterday after the biggest weekly rally since 2009 following OPEC's decision this week to cut crude output in order to rein in a global glut. The market focus now shifts to the implementation and impact of OPEC's first production agreement since 2008, which will be joined by non-OPEC producers, after data showed output in Russia rose in November to a post-Soviet high.

Front-month Brent crude futures were down 81 cents by 1153 GMT from their last settlement at \$53.12 per barrel. The contract was up around 12 percent this week, its biggest gain since March 2009. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) futures were at \$50.40, down 65 cents. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, which accounts for a third of global oil supply, will reduce production starting in January by 1.2 million barrels per day, or over 3 percent, to 32.5 million bpd. Russia also agreed to cut output by 300,000 bpd. Russia and other non-OPEC producer are set to

meet with OPEC on Dec. 9. "The lack of firm output commitments from some non-OPEC producers may not be a major cause of concern, but the threat posed by non-compliance and the potential for US shale operators to spoil the party should not be ignored," brokerage PVM Oil Associates said.

"Pockets of unease are already apparent and following the knee-jerk reaction that has produced unsustainable double-digit percentage price gains, signs are that the OPEC-induced euphoria is fading this morning with both crude benchmarks opening on a softer note," PVM added.

Russia said yesterday that its output in November rose slightly to 11.21 million barrels per day, a post-Soviet high. As part of the OPEC deal, Russia has promised to gradually cut its crude output by up to 300,000 barrels per day in the first half of 2017. With cuts only being implemented next year against end-2016 levels, analysts said there was still a possibility that oversupply, which has halved oil prices since 2014, remains in place next year. —Reuters

ERDOGAN URGES TURKS TO CONVERT FOREIGN CURRENCY TO LIRA



ISTANBUL: A man changes money at a change office yesterday in Istanbul. Turks have over the past three months nervously watched the steady decline in value of the Turkish lira against the dollar, seeing it hemorrhage more than 10 percent in the past month alone. —AFP

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan urged Turks yesterday to convert their foreign currencies into gold and lira to stimulate the country's economy as the lira continued its slide against the dollar.

"For those who have foreign currencies under the pillow, come change this to gold, come change this to TL (Turkish lira). Let the lira win greater value. Let gold win greater value," he said during a televised speech in Ankara. "What necessity is there to let foreign currency have greater value?" he asked. However, as he delivered his speech, the lira lost value against the US dollar, reaching lows of 3.51.

After his address, it was trading at 3.55 against the greenback, a loss of over 1.5 percent in value on the day. In November alone, the lira hemorrhaged more than 10 percent against the dollar.

He also suggested that there were

forces "playing games" against Turkey, which Turks could counter by changing their money. He did not say whom he was referring to. "Don't worry, in a short while, we will destroy this game." The Turkish currency was also reacting to Erdogan's repeated insistence on lowering interest rates because, he claims, there is "no other remedy". He referred to the United States, Japan and Europe as examples of where rates are low and questioned why Turkey still had such high rates.

After several months this year of rate cuts, the central bank stepped in with an unexpected hike of 50 basis points in its leading rate last month. But concerns over Turkey's political instability, including the government's race to expand Erdogan's powers, as well as its cracking relationship with the European Union meant a rally in the lira was shortlived after the bank's announcement. — AFP

ENERGY FIRMS SWOOP ON STARTUPS IN TECHNOLOGY RACE

LONDON: Europe's biggest energy companies have ploughed more than 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) into startups, according to Reuters calculations, with several deals announced in the past month as they accelerate a quest for new technologies to outpace rivals.

Taking a leaf out of Silicon Valley's playbook, companies such as Germany's Innogy, France's EDF and Dutch Eneco, as well as oil majors like Total, have set up their own venture capital funds to scour the globe for potentially disruptive technologies. The race is being driven by the fast-changing nature of an industry that has seen traditional energy providers scrambling to keep up with renewable power and seeking any edge over competitors in an increasingly fierce and fragmented market.

Investment targets range from startups developing batteries to store solar power in massive amounts to those creating systems to better manage the use of household appliances like washing machines and thermostats. Companies are casting their nets wide and their funds each typically scan around a thousand pitches from startups a year, but invest in only 1-2 percent of them. The relatively small investment sizes, typically a few million dollars, allow corporates to build up a varied portfolio of speculative investments. Among deals announced in the past month, Norwegian power firm Statkraft's fund, Statkraft Ventures, has invested in smart meter software company Greenbird, while French utility Engie's fund has bet on US home services startup Serviz and Canadian smart grid management platform Opus One Solutions. "Nobody knows where it's (the industry) heading, that's what's exciting about it. Corporations do not know, startups don't know but everyone is trying to own this game," said Petr Mikovec, managing director of Inven, the 180 million euro venture capital fund set up in 2014 by Czech utility CEZ.

The new industry landscape, partly driven by an explosive growth of renewable energy over the past decade fuelled by government subsidies, saw energy firms take 26 billion euros worth of impairments on unprofitable power plants, according to consultancy Capgemini. It has also changed the way some large corporates view venture capital. In the past, venture capital funds were often regarded as luxuries and were among the first spending areas to be scrapped when finances were squeezed. Over the past five years, however, they have become a central part of business models as companies are forced innovate to defend their market share and survive.

The strategy has a somewhat different focus than many other venture capital funds around the world. Rather than seeking significant or quick returns on their investments, these energy company funds are looking for startups they can integrate into their businesses, allowing them to trial and benefit from new tools and techniques. — Reuters

OPEC, NON-OPEC PRODUCERS TO MEET DEC 10 IN MOSCOW

AHEAD OF PROMISED CUT, RUSSIA'S OUTPUT HITS RECORD HIGH

DUBAI: OPEC will meet non-OPEC countries to finalize a global oil limiting pact on Dec. 10 in the Russian capital Moscow, two OPEC sources told Reuters yesterday. OPEC agreed this week to reduce output by around 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd) beginning in January in a bid to reduce global oversupply and prop up prices. It hopes non-OPEC countries will contribute another 600,000 bpd to the cut. Russia plans to use its post-Soviet era record high November oil production as its baseline when it cuts output under this week's deal with OPEC, Deputy Energy Minister Kirill Molodtsov said yesterday.

Russia has promised to gradually cut output by up to 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) in the first half of 2017 as part of a deal with other producers aimed at supporting oil prices. Its daily oil production

rose to an average of 11.21 million bpd in November, a new post-Soviet era high, energy ministry data showed yesterday. That was 500,000 bpd higher than in August, the month before Russia and OPEC reached a preliminary agreement in Algiers to cut production.

Under this week's follow-up agreement, the first between OPEC and Russia since 2001, specific cuts for individual states were set, with almost all OPEC members agreeing to cut from October levels. But Russia will use its November-December output levels, Energy Minister Alexander Novak told reporters on Thursday.

November's production rose only slightly from October, by just 10,000 bpd, ministry data showed. "The peak of daily production for November was 11.231 million barrels," Deputy Energy

Minister Molodtsov told a conference in Moscow.

"All our agreements will clearly be formed around this figure, he said. Lukoil and Surgutneftegas raised output in November while production slipped at fields operated by Rosneft, Gazprom Neft and their joint venture Slavneft, preliminary data showed. Rosneft, Gazprom Neft and Lukoil have all launched new fields this year and increased drilling, despite low oil prices.

Energy Minister Novak said on Thursday that all Russian companies would contribute to Russia's planned output cut. Novak also said Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Oman, Bahrain and other non-OPEC producers could join the deal and that he expected them to jointly match Russia's cut of 300,000 bpd. — Reuters



AHMADABAD: Indian delivery truck drivers wait for customers at a wholesale market in Ahmadabad yesterday. A lot of regular activities involving payment in cash is seeing at least a temporary slowdown after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced demonetization of India's 500 and 1,000-rupee notes, which made up 86 percent of the country's currency. — AP

CALLERS FOR DOLLARS: INSIDE INDIA'S SCAM CALL CENTERS

ALLEGED SCAMS INVOLVED HUNDREDS OF CALLERS FROM INDIA

MUMBAI: In late September, a woman in National City, California, received a voice message on her phone saying she was in trouble with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) over "tax evasion or tax fraud". Panicking, she rang the number and told a man who said he was from the IRS: "I can pay \$500," half the sum demanded. "I could do a payment plan. I just can't pay all of it at once."

"Ma'am, you can pay \$500 today itself. You can do that?" the man asked, adding that lawyers would look at her accounts and work out a monthly payment plan, but she had to pay half now.

In transcripts of the conversation that investigators shared with Reuters, the man told her to keep the phone line open and drive to a nearby grocery store, where she bought \$500 worth of iTunes gift cards and gave the 'agent' the redemption codes. She had just been scammed - one of at least 15,000 people the US Justice Department says lost more than \$300 million in an "enormous and complex fraud" running since 2013. The department last month brought grand jury charges against 56 people in India and the United States for "telefraud" scams run from fake call centers in India.

Investigators have arrested 20 people in the United States, and Indian authorities have made 75 arrests following October raids on three premises in the Thane suburb of Mumbai. Charges include conspiracy to commit identity theft, impersonation of an officer of the United States, wire fraud and money laundering.

Indian police say they are looking for Sagar Thakkar, a man in his early 30s also known as Shaggy, who they believe masterminded the scam. Thakkar was also among those named by the U.S. Department of Justice. Reuters was unable to contact Thakkar for comment; he is not known to have a lawyer, and police believe he fled to Dubai last month. "We are trying to complete the procedure to issue a red corner notice for Thakkar," Parag Manere, a deputy commissioner at Thane police, told Reuters, referring to an Interpol arrest warrant. Police said Thakkar led a lavish

lifestyle, frequenting 5-star hotels and driving expensive cars with proceeds from the scam. He gave one, a 25 million rupee (\$365,000) Audi R8, to his girlfriend. "We have seized an Audi car, and are trying to find other assets of Thakkar," Manere said. The FBI, which is involved in the investigations, declined to comment. The Department of Justice did not respond to requests for comment for this article. At a news conference last month, Assistant Attorney General Leslie Caldwell said the US would seek the extradition of suspects in India, and warned others engaged in similar schemes they could face jail terms. In interviews before the US charges were filed, police, suspects and call center workers in India told Reuters how the scam was run. Training materials and taped conversations, which investigators believe were made by call center instructors for training purposes, shed some light on an operation aimed to exploit the aged and gullible.

"Taught to be tough"

"The revenue was unpredictable. Some days were good, some were bad," Haider Ali Ayub Mansuri, who said he managed operations at one fake call center, told Reuters as he was returned to jail in India last month after a court extended his custody. He is among the 75 arrested by Indian police.

"On a good day, we extracted as much as \$20,000 from a single US citizen," he said. In India, the sheer scale of the operation surprised many. For months, hundreds of young men and women worked nights at several call centers in Thane. Callers posed as IRS officers and threatened their victims, often newly-arrived immigrants and the elderly, into paying fictitious tax penalties electronically - sometimes by buying gift cards and turning over the redemption codes, Indian investigators said. "They used to blast out pre-recorded messages to thousands of citizens who were asked to call back. When they called back, there was a center just like this," said Manere at Thane police.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided premises in early October as call center

workers settled in for their shift. The buildings housed seven call centers, and over a few days more than 700 people were detained. Most have since been released, but told not to leave the city. Callers bullied their victims with the threat of arrest, jail, seized homes and confiscated passports. "There was one instance where an old lady was crying," because she didn't have the money to pay, said a former call center worker who spoke only on condition of anonymity. "But we kept insisting on the money. We were taught to be tough," he told Reuters.

On a follow-up raid in Ahmedabad, 500 kms (310 miles) north of Mumbai, police uncovered what they believe was "a nerve centre for these centers," said Manere. "A lot of money has been transacted. It's been going on for a few years." The police raids found little in the way of documentation, beyond some training materials. Another former worker said this was likely because call center managers stopped employees from bringing pens and phones to work. Reuters was unable to independently confirm the accounts provided by call center workers.

Weekly incentives

Another former worker, an economics graduate, told Reuters she took a job without knowing what the center did. The 12,000 rupee (\$180) monthly salary was well below the going rate for a graduate, she said, but it was a job, and "people aren't hiring."

She said several of her colleagues looked as though they had just left high school. Her first week was spent in training with floor managers. While callers spoke to their victims, she said dozens of trainees squeezed in around the room, and had to memorise pages of dialogue for use on calls. Another former employee said his instructors told him his work was illegal, but there was "nothing to worry about."

Callers made "fast money", another former caller told Reuters. In comments confirmed by investigating officer Mukund Hatote, the worker said: "For every dollar you brought in, you were given two rupees (around three US cents)." — Reuters



SEATTLE: In this Wednesday, March 23, 2016, file photo, Kevin Johnson, president and chief operating officer of Starbucks Corp, holds up one of the coffee company's prepaid Visa debit cards, at the company's annual shareholders meeting in Seattle. — AP

STARBUCKS CEO HOWARD SCHULTZ TO STEP ASIDE

NEW YORK: Howard Schultz, the charismatic head of Starbucks, will step aside as CEO next year, turning a major page in the history of a company he built into an iconic global brand. Having led the company's rise from a sleepy Seattle chain into the world's biggest coffee business, Schultz will stay on as executive chairman and chairman of the board, the coffee giant said Thursday in a surprise announcement that sent the share price down after hours.

The change will take effect April 3. Schultz will hand the reins to president and chief operating officer Kevin Johnson, a close friend who was tapped as number two at the company in 2015 and has been a Starbucks board member since 2009.

The move comes as the firm faces an increasingly crowded market for higher-quality retail coffee shops and seeks to bolster foot traffic. Schultz will devote his time to developing high-end superpremium coffee shops around the world known as Starbucks Reserve Roasteries, the company said in a statement. It plans to open 20 to 30 outlets in the coming years. "I will be here full-time," Schultz told a conference call with analysts. "I am not leaving the company, I am here day to day."

New initiative

Schultz, who joined Starbucks in 1982 as a sales manager, is considered the driving force behind the worldwide success of the coffee chain begun in 1971. He briefly left in 1986 following a dispute with the then-owners to set up his own company, Il Giornale, before buying out their shares in 1987 with support from local small investors.

Starbucks now operates more than 25,000 stores in more than 75 countries, with a turnover of around \$20 billion in fiscal year 2015. Schultz, 63, told The Wall Street Journal on Thursday that the company's new initiative would help maintain in-person sales as consumers increasingly move to online shopping rather than visiting malls, where many Starbucks outlets are located. "I don't have any time horizon that would limit my engagement in the company," he said. "This gives me the entrepreneurial freedom to do what I think I do best." — AFP



An Afghan grave digger, Rasool, 53, digs a grave for three dollars in a graveyard on the outskirts of Mazar-i-Sharif yesterday. — AFP

INDIA'S MINISTER DENIES PLAN TO SPLIT COAL INDIA

BHUBANESWAR: India's power and coal minister Piyush Goyal said yesterday there was no value in splitting up India's biggest coal producer Coal India Ltd and denied any plans to break it up. In a presentation seen by Reuters on Thursday, government officials recommend that Coal India - with a stock market valuation of \$28 billion - should be broken up into seven companies, which they say would make it more competitive and efficient. The proposal, dated Nov. 30, is expected to be presented to Prime Minister Narendra Modi soon, three government officials with direct knowledge of the situation said.

But Goyal said on the sidelines of an investment summit held in the capital city of the east-

ern state of Odisha that the report was "unfounded" and "untrue". "I haven't seen it. If somebody else has seen it then I don't know," Goyal said, referring to the proposal. "I have made my view known in June 2014. Coal India's strength comes from it being one company," Goyal said.

Goyal also said he has asked the board of state-owned aluminium producer National Aluminium Co. to "reconsider" a proposal to set up a smelter in Iran. The company, majority owned by the government, had been scouting for an overseas location to set up a smelting plant. "I believe that we should Make-In-India... Ideally it should be in Odisha where the material is mined," Goyal said. — Reuters

CHINA MUST 'WALK THE TALK' ON TRADE: LAMY

BEIJING: Beijing's pledges to pursue trade liberalization in the face of a potentially more protectionist US under Donald Trump meant it was time for China to "walk the talk" on the issue, former WTO director-general Pascal Lamy said yesterday.

Lamy, also a former EU commissioner who negotiated China's entry into the World Trade Organisation, said that despite a rise in anti-globalization rhetoric, he expected the EU and China to remain key players in keeping international trade open.

But, speaking in the Chinese capital, he added: "China has had a lot of talk of

trade-opening and globalization, and not much walk. "It is time for China to walk the talk," he told a conference at Renmin University's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies.

US President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to ditch the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) once taking office, and analysts say the move could give Beijing an opportunity to forge ahead with its own trade deals and fill a vacuum left by any American withdrawal.

"Whether trade-opening is done multilaterally, bilaterally, regionally, east-west, north-south, that doesn't matter," said Lamy. What matters, he said, was

that "obstacles to trade are reduced. You go the best option you have". A US withdrawal from the TPP would have limited impact on world trade, he insisted. As EU trade commissioner, Lamy negotiated China's 2001 entry into the WTO.

When it joined, it was promised it would attain Market Economy Status (MES) by the end of 2016 — a status that would mean that partners would have to treat the Communist-ruled country as a free market equal when it comes to settling trade disputes.

The EU is opposed to granting it to China, not wanting to let Beijing off the hook over a long series of disputes rang-

ing from steel to solar panels. MES was "a politically-correct notion invented by polite diplomats in order to not to call Communist countries 'Communists'," said Lamy.

At the time, he said, China wanted a maximum waiting period of 10 years, while the US was pushing for 20. "The compromise, surprise, surprise, was 15 years. Typical horse-trading."

Now lawyers were looking at how to re-interpret the agreement, he said. The "EU will recognise China as a market economy, but at the same time will revise its anti-dumping procedures", he said. — AFP

STOCKS, DOLLAR EASE BEFORE US PAYROLLS

LONDON: Global stocks, oil and the dollar eased on Friday as investors took a cautious stance before US payroll data, which may cement the case for a Federal Reserve rate increase, and Italy's referendum on constitutional reform yesterday.

Strong economic data from the United States, including upbeat manufacturing activity and construction spending, have bolstered the view that the Fed will tighten monetary policy faster than expected to keep inflationary pressures in check. US employers probably hired more people in November amid growing confidence in the economy, making it almost certain that the Federal Reserve will raise interest rates later this month.

Stock futures on Wall Street were down 0.3 percent. The S&P 500 is up more than 2 percent since the November presidential election on hopes that President-elect Donald Trump's policies will stoke growth. Yields for 10-year US Treasuries eased after reaching an 18-month high of 2.492 percent overnight. The dollar was on course for its first weekly decline in four weeks against the euro and a basket of currencies as investors trimmed bets following recent gains.

"I don't think we need to overcomplicate things today. You have the Friday factor, there is always a degree of reserve before payrolls. It does also feel as if liquidity is already falling ahead of the end of the year. Some people may be sitting back and waiting for January," said Neil Mellor, a strategist at BNY Mellon in London.

In Europe, the benchmark STOXX 600 fell more than 1 percent dragged lower by industrial and financial stocks. European stocks, down 12 percent this year, are the worst performers among major equity indexes globally and have underperformed peers in the US by about nearly 15 percentage points this year. — Reuters

GOLD DIPS, HEADING FOR WEEKLY LOSS

LONDON: Gold eased yesterday ahead of US jobs data expected to boost confidence in the world's largest economy and strengthen the case for the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates after buoyant factory data the previous day. Bullion is highly sensitive to rising interest rates, which make the non-yielding asset less attractive while boosting the dollar, in which it is priced.

Spot gold edged 0.1 percent lower to \$1,169.66 an ounce by 1138 GMT. The metal fell to its lowest since Feb. 5 at \$1,160.38 in the previous session and is on track for its fourth straight week of losses. US gold futures gained 0.2 percent to \$1,171.60. Capital Economics commodities economist Simona Gambarini said that a December rate rise has already been factored in to gold prices and that US president-elect Donald Trump is uppermost in investors' minds.

"Most investors are now looking at 2017 to see what's going to happen with Trump, what policies he will implement and the inflationary impact of those policies." The dollar index, which measures the greenback against a basket of major currencies, slipped by about 0.1 percent. — Reuters

ASIA BANKERS PUSH OUT SUSPICIOUS ACCOUNTS

WEALTH INDUSTRY BOOTING OUT CLIENTS IN CLEAN-UP

SINGAPORE/HONG KONG: Thousands of clients are being booted out of bank accounts in Asia's wealth management industry, which is cleaning up after a money laundering scandal in Malaysia, the 'Panama Papers' expose, and a global push for tax transparency, bankers say. "For some global wealth managers, up to 30 percent of private wealth clients in Asia are in the firing line," said Benjamin Quinlan, CEO of Hong Kong consultancy Quinlan & Associates. The clean-up is mainly focused on problematic clients in the Asian financial hubs of Singapore and Hong Kong, which manage more than \$1 trillion of managed assets combined.

Bankers expect a new round of consolidation among small wealth managers, as the costs of client due diligence and surveillance become unsustainable. The scrutiny in Asia began in 2014 as banks moved to comply with tougher anti-money laundering rules, top bankers and compliance officers at nearly a dozen banks in Asia told Reuters. But it has really gathered pace this year, they said.

Tax information exchange

The urgency increased with announcements that Switzerland and Singapore were conducting criminal investigations into billions of dollars allegedly misappropriated by Malaysian state investment fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad. Then came the leaked documents in April from Panama law firm Mossack Fonseca on 214,000 offshore companies. They showed Hong Kong was the world's most active centre for the creation of shell firms, which can be used to avoid taxes.

Private banks in Asia have also felt the pressure of aggressive tax amnesty programs in Indonesia and India aimed at bringing offshore wealth back home and fear regulators may impose big fines on banks who breach the rules.

Next year a global tax transparency campaign starts to bite: Singapore, Switzerland and Hong Kong will be among 101 jurisdictions to begin collecting tax information that they will share to combat tax evasion.

All of this has "sparked a major review and filtering process," Quinlan



SINGAPORE: People walk past the Standard Chartered building yesterday in Singapore. Singapore regulators announced yesterday fines amounting to over \$5.3 million for two banks that were found to have breached money laundering rules in dealings with an indebted Malaysian state fund. — AP

said, "with one global private bank we spoke to looking to offboard roughly 3,000 wealth management clients in Asia in 2017". Compliance and regulatory costs affecting the banking industry have soared since the 2008 global financial crisis. Consultants LexisNexis Risk Solutions said anti-money laundering efforts are costing banks \$1.5 billion annually in Asia Pacific and rising. Banks globally are expected to spend \$12 billion on anti-money laundering compliance in 2016, says Quinlan & Associates.

No warning

Account and transaction surveillance is expensive, so it is often cheaper for banks to kick out tricky clients, bankers say. For some, there is no warning: they know their accounts have been closed when they suddenly are unable to access them online or get an unexpected cheque in the post, six people working at law firms, funds and service providers said. They said several funds incorporated in the Cayman and British Virgin Islands but operating in Hong Kong, were among those who found their bank accounts abruptly closed. "We had one client whose account was just frozen, and they couldn't get the

money out," said one Hong Kong fund administrator. One corporate account at a global bank in Hong Kong was shut due to the client's inability to provide detailed identities of investors in his company, a direct source told Reuters.

Decades of transactions

New standards adopted two years ago in Asia require banks to clearly identify a client, the client's business and - crucially - the origin of the money deposited. The banks also need to check the clients have paid all due taxes back home. In some cases, compliance staff at large older banks sit glued to old mainframe style computers tucked away in remote parts of the bank. For hours on end, they click through and manually scan decades of transactions, people who conduct these searches told Reuters. According to the head of a major corporate investigation firm, some banks in Hong Kong and Singapore have even used private eyes to perform due diligence on certain customers. Nearly 40 percent of wealth firms in the Asia-Pacific region have cited compliance as their main strategic budget focus next year, EY said in its Global Wealth Report. — Reuters



In this Wednesday Nov 2, 2016, file photo, job seekers attend a New York Department of Citywide Administrative Services job fair, in New York. — AP

US EMPLOYERS ADD SOLID 178K JOBS IN NOVEMBER

UNEMPLOYMENT SINKS TO 4.6%

WASHINGTON: US employers added a solid 178,000 jobs in November, reflecting the steady economy President-elect Donald Trump will inherit. And the unemployment rate hit a nine-year low of 4.6 percent, though mainly because many people stopped looking for jobs and were no longer counted as unemployed. Average hourly pay slipped after a solid gain the previous month. Pay has increased at only a modest pace in the past year.

The report's mixed signals illustrate the challenges facing Trump: Steady job gains and a low unemployment rate suggest that the economy is healthy. But weak pay increases and fewer Americans

working or looking for work point to longer-term challenges.

Fewer than 60 percent of adults have jobs - 3 percentage points lower than when the Great Recession began in late 2007. In part, that trend reflects retirements by the nation's many baby boomers. But it also means hiring hasn't kept up with population growth.

Seven years into the recovery, pay growth is still below healthy levels. And the number of part-time workers who would like full-time jobs is 28 percent higher than before the recession.

Many of these trends - particularly the drop in the proportion of adults with jobs - emerged years before Obama took

office. Trump's challenge will be to try to reverse them. He may get some help from the economy's upswing: As employers continue hiring amid low unemployment, they will likely be forced to offer higher pay. Thicker paychecks, in turn, may draw more people who aren't either working or seeking a job to begin looking again. And businesses may offer more hours to their part-time workers.

There is evidence - such as last month's solid wage gain - that these trends have begun to take hold, though progress has been slow. Still, nearly every economic report since the election has pointed to accelerating growth - key reason why the Federal Reserve is considered certain to raise short-term interest rates at its next meeting later this month. Americans bought homes in October at the fastest pace in nearly a decade. Their willingness to make such a major purchase reflects growing optimism. In fact, according to the Conference Board, Americans are more confident in the economy than at any other point in the past nine years.

They are spending more, too. Solid consumer spending helped propel growth to a 3.2 percent annual rate in the July-September quarter, the best showing in two years. By one measure, nationwide home prices have fully recovered and are even slightly above the level they reached in 2006, before the housing bubble burst.

That steady rise in home prices has boosted Americans' household wealth and helped lift their overall finances. And even as consumers are spending more, pay is rising enough to enable more savings: Americans saved 6 percent of their after-tax income in October, up from 5.7 percent in September. —AP

AMERICAN AIRLINES TO TRIM CUBA SCHEDULES

NEW YORK: American Airlines Group Inc will cut nearly 25 percent of its flights to Cuba in 2017, a company spokesman said on Thursday, attributing the move to travel demand rather than the election of Republican Donald Trump as US president.

Starting in mid-February, American, the world's largest airline, will offer one trip a day instead of two from Miami to Holguin, Santa Clara and Varadero, reducing its daily service to 10 round-trip flights from the current 13, spokesman Matt Miller said in a telephone interview. The airline also hopes to lower capacity on three of the seven routes it operates to Cuba. It plans to use a 128-seat aircraft between Miami and Holguin instead of a 160-seater, and hopes to contract out flights to Camaguey and Cienfuegos to a regional carrier that would use 76-seat aircraft, pending US regulatory approval. The regional partner is Republic Airways Holdings Inc. "This was done purely to remain competitive in the market," Miller said. "We can't speculate on what the next administration may do."

Airlines are generally expected to perform poorly when entering a previously restricted market, but American's decision to prune its Cuban itinerary two months after starting service may come as a surprise in light of the industry's enthusiasm to fly to the Communist-run island.

"If American can't earn the profit that it requires from these routes, they're going to cut back on the flying. It's as simple as that," said Henry Hartevelt, founder of the travel consultancy Atmosphere Research Group. Trump, who takes office on Jan. 20, threatened on Monday to end the recent rapprochement between the United States and its former Cold War foe unless Havana was willing to "make a better deal for the Cuban people, the Cuban/American people and the US as a whole."

The United States and Cuba began normalizing relations in December 2014 after 18 months of secret talks and have since restored full diplomatic ties. They reached a memorandum of understanding that allowed US airlines to start scheduled flights to Cuba this year after a half-century hiatus. President Barack Obama's administration has eased travel restrictions for US citizens, although general tourism remains illegal. Republican leaders in the US Congress oppose ending the decades-long trade embargo against Cuba. — Reuters

MONGOLIA SAYS BANK BONDHOLDERS WILL BE REPAYED IN FULL

ULANBAATAR: Development Bank of Mongolia bondholders can expect their debts to be repaid in full when they fall due next year, a senior finance official said yesterday, even as the state-backed bonds traded below par just three months before maturity. The International Monetary Fund is predicting zero growth this year for Mongolia's once promising economy, as a result of years of declining foreign investment, slower growth in China, and a softer market for its abundant coal resources.

The country pinned between China and Russia is reeling from a balance of payments crisis and a tumbling tugrik currency that the present government has blamed on mismanagement by the prior administration. On Friday, Mongolian finance ministry officials held talks with groups such as the IMF and World Bank to present their plan to buoy the economy. Deputy Finance Minister Khurelbaatar Bulgantuya told a news conference following the talks that Mongolia hoped to work with partners to refinance \$580 million in sovereign-backed debt from the Development Bank of Mongolia due in 2017.

The government could lighten its burden on interest on loans with new "soft" loans that offer easier terms and lower interest for repayment, she said. Renegotiating its debt for a smaller repayment on the principal, known as a haircut, "would be the last resort," she said. "With the IMF, we're looking to refinance." The Development Bank bonds yesterday were trading below par at 97 - just months away from the redemption date in March 2017. "The correction was triggered by President-elect (Donald) Trump's expected protectionist policies and frontier market outflows. The coupon is low and the price fall brings the yield in line with fair value," said a Hong Kong based credit analyst, requesting anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the media. — Reuters

GERMAN CAR SALES REBOUND IN NOV

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German car sales rose in November, recovering from an earlier dip and setting the stage for a strong end to the year, official data showed yesterday.

A total of 276,567 new cars were registered last month, up 1.5 percent on the same month last year, according to the KBA transport authority. The uptick is welcome news for the industry after fewer selling days in October saw car registrations, seen as a key indicator of demand in Europe's top economy, plunge by 5.6 percent. The VDA carmakers' federation separately said that for the whole of 2016 it expected car sales to grow by five percent to nearly 3.4 million vehicles, "the highest level since the start of

the decade", president Matthias Wissmann said in a statement.

Sales were boosted by Germany's robust economy, he said, with low unemployment and high wages pushing up demand, while consumers also took advantage of cheap financing options.

"This is a good year for the automobile industry," Wissmann said.

The VDA expects "similarly high" sales in 2017, he added. Despite the dieselgate scandal, market leader Volkswagen managed to retain nearly 20 percent of the German car market between January and November, though sales were down 3.4 percent compared to a year earlier, the KBA said. — AFP

Kuwait Times Weekender

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Staff members pose for photographs at the unveiling of a Christmas tree by Iranian-born artist Shirazeh Houshiary, in the Rotunda at Tate Britain gallery in London. The tree is part of the gallery's annual festive commissions and the first for a few years after the gallery space was renovated. — AP

Kunis and Kutcher welcome second child

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This image released by Lionsgate shows Ryan Gosling, left, and Emma Stone in a scene from, "La La Land." — AP

Q&A:

GOSLING AND STONE ON 'LA LA LAND' & THEIR MOVIE ROMANCE

Bogart and Bacall. Tracy and Hepburn. Stone and Gosling. The hugely charming Los Angeles musical "La La Land" seals it: Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling have entered the ranks of great cinematic couples. Their easy rapport together was first hinted at with "Crazy, Stupid, Love," and carried through the crime drama "Gangster Squad." Those, though, were only appetizers to Damien Chazelle's "La La Land," in which they star as two flailing aspirants trying to make it in LA. Stone plays an actress, Gosling a jazz pianist. They sing. They dance. They patter like Cary Grant and Katharine Hepburn. "La La Land," a resurrection of joyful 1930s studio musicals on contemporary LA streets, is an impassioned argument for the movies, in all their widescreen glory. And part of that vintage Hollywood experience includes big ol' movie stars.

In an era that has struggled to produce them, Stone and Gosling stand apart as two of our best answers. In "La La Land," they're our version of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, maybe not quite as light on their feet (who is?), but more natural and funnier. How far will they push their on-screen chemistry? "Do you think people would let us do anything together again?" Stone asked her co-star during an interview earlier this fall. "I don't think we'd be allowed."

After greeting warmly (Gosling had been shooting "Blade Runner 2049"), the actors sat down to reflect on why they go so well together, their own tortured paths to Hollywood success and just how deep their movie love runs.

AP: Did either of you hesitate about working together again?

STONE: That was an exciting aspect that it was our third thing together. The characters also have by the end five years between them and I think we'd probably known each other that long by that point. It's kind of nice to not have to find that when the story depends so much on the connection between the two of them.

AP: Did you feel a connection right away on your first film together?

GOSLING: We've been asked to improvise a lot in the films that we've done together. I think even in our first audition we were asked to improvise. That just kind of connects actors in a way that just saying dialogue doesn't do.

AP: The film portrays some soul-crushing auditions. Were they familiar?

STONE: The first audition was inspired by Ryan's story.

GOSLING: Yeah, where I had to cry and this lady took a call in the middle of it. And then just told me to go on, "Pick up where I left off." That was part of what was great about making this

film was Damien encouraged us to bring our experiences to these characters.

AP: How do you feel about being a part of proudly big-screen film like "La La Land" at a time when television is seen as eclipsing the movies?

STONE: I don't think films are less than TV now, but there are some amazing characters on TV, so I understand why people want to do TV. When movies are at their full glory, I think it's pretty mind-blowing. What do you think, Ry?

GOSLING: When I first met with Damien, it wasn't about this. It was just kind of a general meeting. He has a very infectious love of movies but also of the experience of going to the movies. He talked a lot about wanting to make movies that you couldn't watch on your iPhone, that you really wanted to see in a theater with an audience.

AP: Your love of movies seems clear, since you've previously acknowledged stuffing DVDs down your pants.

STONE: You put DVDs down your pants?!
GOSLING: (laughing) VHS. Look, in these kinds of situations, you're encouraged to say anything. And it's celebrated. And then you pay the price for that later.

STONE: Was it to be closer to your favorite movie?

GOSLING: No. It was one story a long time ago where I had to hide an R-rated movie from my parents. It was very intimate. This is the danger of this kind of thing that you do because it haunts us.

AP: Well, it's a very vivid example of movie love.

GOSLING: I do love movies but I love making them more. I've never found something professionally that engages me as much as that. You work with such a large group of people and it's this constant problem solving process that gets you to this end, whatever that is. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. It's always a crashout.

STONE: For me, watching movies is what makes me want to make movies. I'm so inspired by watching movies. The process of making it is engaging but I get so reinvigorated every time I see a great movie. Then I feel like I'm the character in the movie for the rest of the day. Then I realize I can't play that same character I just watched.

AP: What was the first film that you mimicked that way?

STONE: "The Jerk." Also "Hocus Pocus." It was a combination of "The Jerk" and "Hocus Pocus," so it shows my age and not my age. (Turns to Gosling) What was yours?

GOSLING: "Hocus Pocus." — AP

Review

'Man Down' waits too long to deliver worthy message

Man Down carries a poignant message about American veterans' mental health needs, but you may give up on the movie before it gets there. Nothing is clear until the film's final moments, which hit with a gut punch just before the credits roll. Until then, the story is told through disjointed flashbacks that make it hard to know what's going on and who to root for. Director Dito Montiel bounces between boot camp, active duty in Afghanistan and life in post-apocalyptic America, with star Shia LaBeouf's haircut and beard scruff the only real indicator of where we are in time.

LaBeouf's performance is powerful, maybe his best to date, but it's unduly burdened by an erratic story structure that doesn't engender empathy for his character. He plays Gabe, a Marine who enlisted with his lifelong best friend, Devin (Jai Courtney). When we first see the two men, they're dirty and bearded, not in uniform, brandishing guns in a bombed-out city as they desperately look for Gabe's son. Gabe carries a worn picture in his pocket of his wife, Natalie (Kate Mara), and their tow-headed little boy, Jonathan (Charlie Shotwell, heartbreaking in the final scenes). Suddenly, uniformed, clean-shaven Gabe is in an office being questioned by a military counselor (Gary Oldman, disappointingly flat). The counselor is asking about "the incident," and Gabe is stoic.

Then it's basic training at Camp Lejeune, where Gabe and Devin are new recruits being toughened up by an unrelenting drill sergeant. Natalie sweetly shaves Gabe's head as he prepares to ship out to Afghanistan. Now, Gabe and Devin are back from the war, bearded and dirty, wandering dystopian streets and threatening a homeless man as they look for Gabe's family. Now clean-shaven Gabe is driving his son to school as they playfully decide to use the military term "man down" as secret code for "I love you." He promises to send letters from Afghanistan. Now stoic Gabe drops a reluctant tear while talking to the military counselor.

The good guy

The meandering structure creates a little too much mystery for the audience to know where to place its allegiances. Did the



Jai Courtney, from left, Shia LaBeouf and Kate Mara arrive at the Los Angeles premiere of "Man Down" at ArLight Cinemas Hollywood on Wednesday. — AP

Marines have something to do with the disappearance of Gabe's son, so Gabe and Devin have gone rogue? Or did Gabe harm his son, and that's why he's being questioned by a military counselor? That distinction is key if we want to root for the good guy. Screenwriter Adam G. Simon's nonlinear story parses out details in such a way that we don't know enough about Gabe's situation to experience his emotional arc until the very end, which feels like a lost opportunity given its heart-wrenching heft. Without that context, it's hard to fully appreciate LaBeouf's nuanced performance. We don't understand what we're looking at until it's over.

"Man Down" ultimately has a lot to say about the debilitating effects of war and the dismal reality for many veterans who suffer from post-traumatic stress. It just waits too long to say it. "Man Down," a Lionsgate release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "some disturbing violence, and language throughout." Running time: 92 minutes. Two stars out of four. — AP

Kunis and Kutcher welcome second child

Actors Mila Kunis and Ashton Kutcher announced the birth of their second child together, a spokeswoman for Kunis confirmed on Thursday. The couple has yet to name the baby boy born on Wednesday, the website E! News reported. The actors and producers have a two-year-old daughter, Wyatt. They became engaged in February 2014 after a two-year relationship and married in July 2015. Kutcher, 38, and Kunis, 33, met as co-stars on the set of "That '70s show," a television series aired in the United States between 1998 and 2006 in which their characters were also in a relationship.

Kutcher, who also starred in the television series "Two and a Half Men," among his other roles, shot to international fame when he began dating actress Demi Moore, to



whom he was married from 2005 to 2013. Kunis previously had a long-term relationship with actor Macaulay Culkin. — AP

Top Mongolian rapper 'beaten up by Russian diplomat'

One of Mongolia's top rappers was beaten up by a Russian diplomat after performing wearing a swastika—a traditional Mongolian symbol—the singer's lawyer and police alleged yesterday. Amarmandakh Sukhbaatar, known as Amraa and lead singer of Khar Sarnai-Black Rose—took to the stage at an event in Ulan Bator wearing a red deel, a traditional Mongolian robe, embroidered with a swastika. Afterwards he was savagely assaulted by a Russian diplomat, his lawyer and his father told reporters yesterday.

The broken cross symbol is generally believed to have its origins in India thousands of years ago and its use has been recorded centuries ago in Mongolia, long before it was appropriated by Adolf Hitler. Tens of millions of Soviet citizens died fighting against the forces of Nazi Germany in the Second World War, known as the Great Patriotic War in Russia. The singer—who speaks

Russian and was a guest performer on Mongolia's Got Talent last year—was in a coma for around 10 days after the assault, said his father Sevjiidiin Sukhbaatar.

"My son was hit in the face several times with a metal object and was seriously injured. His brain was seriously hurt," he said, wearing a deel and fur hat and displaying a book of traditional swastika patterns. Amraa's songs regularly reference Mongolian history, culture and identity, and he often wears a swastika on stage. But the symbol is also used by far-Right Mongolian nationalist groups. Amraa's lawyer, father and a fellow band member denied social media reports that he cried "Heil Hitler" at the show.

Attorney Gankhuugiin Batbayar said the investigation was being carried out more slowly than usual and the suspect had not been detained. "The suspect must be investigated according to



This picture shows Mongolian rapper Amarmandakh Sukhbaatar performing in Ulan Bator. — AFP

Mongolian law, no matter his status or immunity as a diplomat."

Mongolia was under the Soviet yoke for decades during the Communist era, until a democratic revolution in 1990. But Russian cultural influence endures in many forms, including music and the use of the Cyrillic alphabet. In a statement posted on its website, the Russian embassy said it was investigating press and social media reports of the beating.

"According to our preliminary information," it said, the reports were "distorted, particularly about the date, the number of participants and the circumstances of the accident". A police spokesman told AFP the case was under investigation. "The suspect is a Russian diplomatic officer and the reason he wasn't kept in detention is the injury is not serious," he said. "It's not true that the suspect wasn't arrested because of diplomatic immunity." — AFP



Fashion designer Tommy Hilfger, center, poses with The Rolling Stones, from left, Ronnie Wood, Keith Richards, Mick Jagger and Charlie Watts at the opening night party for 'Exhibitionism' at Industria on Tuesday in New York. — AP

How many days does it take Rolling Stones to make an album?

The Rolling Stones initially went into the studio to create original rock music, but after rehearsing blues songs to flex their musical muscles, they took an unintended path. They recorded an entire blues album, and it only took them three days. "It was really quick, super quick. It was really fun to do something that fast. And you didn't really have time to analyze and think and overdub," Mick Jagger said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "I didn't know if it was any good ... it was just too fast, and I listened back and in the end we used all the songs we recorded."

"Blue & Lonesome," the iconic rock group's first album in 11 years, is out Friday. The 12-track set, recorded last December at British Grove Studios in West London, includes covers of blues songs from Jimmy Reed, Little Walter, Eddie Taylor and more. Eric Clapton, who was recording at the same studio, plays guitar on two tracks, while Jagger plays the harp throughout. The idea of recording a full blues record came after Keith Richards suggested they play Memphis Slim's "Blue and Lonesome" to warm up.

"We had no intention of making a blues album," Richards said. "Let's make a blues album' just ain't us, you know. But at the end of the sessions we said, 'We made a blues album!'" Jagger then started suggesting more artists to cover, from Howlin' Wolf to Willie Dixon: "Mick basically was coming out with most of the ones he wanted to do. — AP

Bringing cumbia music from Argentina and joy to the crowds

With a sparkling smile and chic, refined poise, Mariana Yegros is merging Latin America's cumbia music with electronica and finding growing international success. La Yegros, the Argentine singer's stage name, has been dubbed the "queen of electrocumbia." She brings a modern, club-music edge to the traditional genre of dance music that traces its roots to Colombia's African community. She divides her time between Buenos Aires and the city of Montpellier in the south of France. She found a base there after winning fans at European festivals and nightclubs with her first album, 2013's "Viene de Mi," which brought in influences as diverse as reggae and Arab music.

For her latest album, "Magnetismo," La Yegros worked with the Argentine composer Gaby Kerpel, who has been active both in cumbia and electronic music. A two-month world tour included 18 cities in France and six in the United States. In New York, La Yegros performed for free at Lincoln Center. The enthusiastic crowd there included a man in his 80s who got up, tossed away his cane and danced intimately with a young woman. "I always dreamed of making music that gets people dancing," La Yegros told AFP after the show. "When I was a little girl I dreamed that people would be singing songs with me, and now that it's happening it's really magical," she said. La Yegros is in her 30s but her flowing hair and constant joy make her seem ageless.

From slums to the posh class

Cumbia, born on the Caribbean coast of Colombia when Africans and indigenous people intermingled under Spanish rule, began spreading to other parts of Latin America in the 1940s. The genre, which combines African rhythms and expressive dancing with more melancholic indigenous elements, saw a rebirth in the 1990s among the marginalized of Buenos Aires in what became known as "cumbia villera," or slum cumbia. "I don't think that the prejudice against cumbia is over yet, but we're going in the right direction," La Yegros said.

"It used to be that the chetos would look at people who danced cumbia and say it would be crazy to dance like that," she said, using slang for Argentina's posh class. But she saw a change starting around 2008, when high-end parties in Buenos Aires, especially those frequented by foreigners, would play cumbia interspersed with electronic music. Cumbia mirrors the path of one of Argentina's most famous cultural exports, the tango, which also had African roots and gradually won acceptance among the country's elite before going global.



La Yegros performs at the Atrium at Lincoln Center in New York City. — AFP

An Argentine wanderer

La Yegros, who grew up in Buenos Aires but whose family hails from the subtropical Misiones province bordering Paraguay and Brazil, at first faced challenges in finding a following. "I was living in Los Angeles and then in New York and then I went with my band to try our luck in Buenos Aires," she said. "It was a time of great crisis in Argentina and many people had left. It was a very hard time. Things didn't happen.

"I was making electronic music and 10 people would show up, with five applauding and the rest falling asleep. "It was a period of great frustration for me," she said. "I told myself, 'I wasn't born to be a singer.' I didn't think I could achieve it." She decided to return to New York to join her husband and try to work in fashion, another of her passions.

'What I was born for'

She remains known for her highly eclectic tastes in clothes. At her New York concert, she sported a mini-dress made by a Spanish woman in Shanghai, with a traditional folkloric design in fluorescent colors paired with silver slippers equipped with small LED lights. La Yegros eventually found her way. She now performs with three musicians: an accordion player, a guitarist and a percussionist, all of them Argentines who often rehearse with her over Skype or FaceTime. "I like to compose, but what I like most is singing," she said. "Every night is like staking a claim that this is what I was born for and that I want to die like this." — AFP

Trump, politics on the mind at Art Basel Miami Beach



Views of artworks during the Art Basel Miami Beach Vernissage at the Miami Beach Convention Center in Miami Beach, Florida. — AP/AFP photos



Politics and art have often gone hand in hand. At the Art Basel Miami Beach fair, the biggest and most anticipated of the year in North America, exhibitors certainly have Donald Trump on their minds. Several artists showing at the event, which opened Thursday, have taken on the Republican president-elect, his tough stance on immigration and even the white supremacists who support him—backing he has nevertheless disavowed. “We are in a moment now of great political transformation and social change in America, and a number of works that have been created respond to that,” said the fair’s director Noah Horowitz.

American artist Sam Durant has done two works that take on troubled race relations in the United States. One is a large red backlit sign with words in black vinyl letters that reads “End White Supremacy.” The other, also backlit red with black letters, hangs behind a graffiti-covered cement brick wall—a reference to the wall with Mexico that Trump has vowed to raise—and a stretch of sand.

“Landscape art is good only when it shows the oppressor hanging from a tree by his mother neck.” Rirkrit Tiravanija, an artist from Thailand who lives in New York, is exhibiting a three-panel triptych featuring newspaper pages with big headlines like “Trump Triumphs.” Overlaid on top, in bold red letters on one panel are the words: “The tyranny of common sense has reached its final stage.” Mexican artist Pedro Reyes makes his unease known through a wooden sculpture inspired by the Statue of Liberty, but with tractor-type treads at its base. The title? “Lady Liberty (as a Trojan Horse).”

In total, 269 galleries will display the work of artists from 29 countries through Sunday at Art Basel Miami Beach, the US edition of an event that originated in Switzerland and has grown in popularity over the past 15 years. The artists whose works are on display range from masters such as Spain’s Pablo Picasso and Joan Miro to lesser-known newcomers.



Views of artworks during the Art Basel Miami Beach Vernissage at the Miami Beach Convention Center in Miami Beach, Florida. — AP/AFP photos

Sun, fun and culture

Fears that crowds might skip this year's event out of fear of being bitten by a mosquito carrying the Zika virus seem to have subsided. Zika-carrying mosquitoes showed up in Miami Beach in September, but seemed to have been eradicated after aggressive aerial spraying. "We faced our challenges, we dealt with Zika, but we hope the entire [travel] advisory will go away in a couple of weeks," Miami Beach Mayor Philip Levine told reporters.

Art Basel Miami Beach head Norman Braman said he was happy with how the event has evolved since it began in 2002, and said that its growth in popularity has led to Miami's growing reputation as a destination for art. "An entirely new area, called Wynwood, evolved," said Braman, a reference to an area north of Miami. "Now there are 60 art galleries there." All of Miami, including Little Haiti, "have benefited from the presence of Art Basel," Braman said.

Merchants and gallery owners say the annual fair has been an engine of cultural renovation in Miami Beach, which was previously known mainly for its beaches and wild Spring Break parties. "We are the sun and fun capital," said Levine. "But it's better to be the sun, fun and cultural capital of the world." Several street fairs are being held to coincide with Art Basel, while local museums put on their best exhibitions in an attempt to get the attention of art collectors and gallery owners flocking to the city. Last year, 77,000 visitors came to Miami for Art Basel exhibits. Figures for the 2016 edition will be released at the end of the event. — AFP



55 world heritage sites in danger

Fifty-five out of a total of 1,052 heritage sites around the world feature on the UN cultural organisation's World Heritage in Danger list. By listing such sites, UNESCO is seeking to mobilize the international community to protect them. During its 40th session in July, 2016, in Istanbul, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee added sites in Mali and Uzbekistan to the list, along with Libya's five world heritage sites which have already been damaged by conflict in the North African country.

International protection

Conflict, earthquakes and other natural disasters, pollution, poaching, uncontrolled urbanization and unchecked tourism development pose major problems to world heritage sites, UNESCO

says. It lists two categories of dangers: either "ascertained"-specific and proven imminent threats or "potential", when property faces threats which could negatively affect its world heritage value.

Adding a site to the list allows the allocation of immediate World Heritage Fund assistance to the endangered property. It also alerts the international community to these situations in the hope that it will join efforts to save the endangered sites, and allows conservation specialists to respond efficiently to specific needs.

Some endangered sites

Afghanistan: archaeological remains of Jam (2002) and the Bamiyan Valley (2003).

Iraq: Ashur (2003), Hatra (2015) and

Samarra Archaeological City (2007).

Jerusalem: Old City and its walls (1982).

Mali: Tomb of Askia (2012), Timbuktu (2012), Old Towns of Djenné (2016).

Niger: Air and Tenere natural reserves (1992).

Syria: Ancient cities of Aleppo (2013), Bosra (2013) and Damascus (2013), ancient villages of northern Syria (2013), Crac des Chevaliers and Qal'at Salah El-Din (2013), Palmyra (2013).

Yemen: Historic town of Zabid (2000), old city of Sanaa (2015), old walled city of Shibam (2015).

Numerous national parks are also listed, including in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic and Senegal. The Everglades National Park in the US state of Florida was listed in 2010. — AFP

Rapper Kendrick Lamar performs in Miami for Art Basel party



Kendrick Lamar performs during Art Basel Miami Beach. — AP

Hot, sticky and sweaty, rapper Kendrick Lamar performed Thursday night inside a spaceship looking dome on the beach as part of the Art Basel Miami Beach festivities. During the intimate 75-minute show, Lamar first took off his outer shirt and continually wiped sweat from his face, jokingly complaining that if he had to sweat all night long that crowd better show him some love. Midway through the show he took several water bottles from stage and passed them out to the audience. By the end, the Grammy-award winning singer thanked the crowd of about 400, guessing that some had "lost 10 pounds in sweat."

"That's enough (expletive) sweat to last a lifetime," he said sincerely, thanking the crowd for not caring about musing up their "cardigans" and fancy clothes so they could jump and dance during the close-quartered show. Alicia Keys had the same problem during her performance here last year when the humid South Florida weather kept fogging up her sunglasses. Lamar interacted frequently with audience members, at one point grabbing a woman's hand saying she had made his night. He stopped the show more than once to sign shirts, shoes and other trinkets.

"Your energy is what I pull from when I go into the studio and write what I write so I gotta show back the love," said Lamar, who performed hits including "m.A.A.d city City," "i" and "B——, Don't Kill my Vibe".

As he rapped, black and white images played across the walls and ceiling of the dome. Some were mundane - telephone operators, money counting machines and a space shuttle. But other images included political and pop culture figures. Bill O'Reilly's famous meltdown on "Inside Edition" played repeatedly during one song, and later showed Dick Cheney and President George W. Bush and Muhammed Ali.

The ethereal looking pop-up dome that hosted Amex Music Meets Art outside the Faena hotel looked as if it had dropped from the sky and was just steps away from the waves. Artist Shantell Martin live sketched a massive mural mapped to the beat of the music just outside the dome. The concert was just one of many parties to celebrate the prestigious art fair, which draws a heavy celebrity crowd. Noticing some writing on a fan's clothing that said "Places and Faces," Lamar said he had just written a song with those words and sang a few bars "from a Swisher Sweet to a hotel suite" to an enthusiastic crowd. "We are on the same wave," he said.

Earlier this year, Lamar helped President Barack Obama celebrate his final Fourth of July at the White House. The president has repeatedly said he is a fan of Lamar, saying "How Much a Dollar Cost" as his favorite song of 2015. Lamar saved "Alright", a song that has become a sort of them for police brutality protests, for one of his last numbers, telling the crowd "we celebrate love tonight, not hate." — AP



In this file photo, Melania Trump, wife of Republican Presidential Candidate Donald Trump walks to the stage as Donald Trump introduces her during the opening day of the Republican National Convention in Cleveland. —AP photos



In this file photo, fashion designer, writer and director Tom Ford attends the premiere of "Nocturnal Animals" in New York.

DESIGNER TOM FORD: MELANIA TRUMP 'NOT NECESSARILY MY IMAGE'

Fashion designer Tom Ford says first lady-to-be Melania Trump likely won't be wearing his clothes in the White House. During an appearance on "The View" on Wednesday, Ford said he had been asked to

dress Melania Trump "quite a few years ago" and declined because "she's not necessarily my image." Ford says he is a Democrat and voted for Hillary Clinton in the presidential election, but added that even had Clinton

won, she shouldn't have worn his clothes because "they're too expensive." He says his clothes cost a lot to make and the president needs to "relate to everybody."

Asked if Melania Trump should wear

expensive clothes, Ford replied: "I'm going to leave that to Melania." Designer Sophie Theallat wrote an open letter last month urging colleagues not to dress Melania Trump. —AP



Peshawar Fashion Show



Models present creations by Pakistani fashion designers during a fashion show in Peshawar on December. — AFP photos



A woman preparing the exhibition 'To Audrey With Love' showcasing a retrospective of the work of designer Hubert de Givenchy at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague.

To Audrey with love: A fashion designer's tribute

One of the fashion world's greatest platonic love stories almost never came to pass, when in the 1950s French couturier Hubert de Givenchy at first refused a request to design for Audrey Hepburn. "When Audrey came to me and asked me to make her dresses for the film 'Sabrina', I didn't know who she was. I was expecting Katharine Hepburn," Givenchy said in an emotional press conference for the opening of a new exhibition of his creations in The Netherlands. "She arrived looking so vulnerable, so graceful, so young and sparkling" dressed like "a young girl today" in cotton trousers, ballerina flats and T-shirt which showed off her belly-button, carrying a straw gondolier's hat, the designer recalled.

"But I wasn't really in any condition to make a major wardrobe for 'Sabrina' and I told her, 'No,

Mademoiselle, I can't dress you.'" Luckily for fashionistas everywhere, Hepburn was not to be dissuaded and sweetly invited Givenchy to dinner. By the end of that meal in 1953, the aristocratic French designer had fallen under the spell of the petite actress. So began a creative friendship which lasted down the decades until the British film star died of cancer in 1993. "She persuaded me, how lucky I was to have accepted," Givenchy said.

Creator of personality

The retrospective of Givenchy's designs for his friend and style icon entitled "To Audrey with Love" has just opened at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, and lasts until late March. It is the designer's homage to his muse and Givenchy has personally selected many of the 100 outfits featured in the collection, a few of which have never been seen in public

before, in what he calls a "journey through her wardrobe". In the 1954 romantic comedy "Sabrina", Hepburn appeared alongside then screen heart-throb Humphrey Bogart, and in one key screen wore a sophisticated, floating ivory ball dress edged in black with embroidered black flowers—a Givenchy creation.

The same year, she wore a delicate ivory lace Givenchy creation for the Oscars where she won the Best Actress award for "Roman Holiday". Givenchy was to remain by her side for many of her most iconic films such as the 1961 "Breakfast at Tiffany's" and "Charade" in 1963 and some of his most memorable outfits from those films are on show. Using everything from satin to tulle and silk, his imagination flourished as he designed for Hepburn both on and off-screen. "Givenchy's clothes are the only ones I feel myself in. He is more

than a designer, he is a creator of personality," she once said.

The exhibition has taken a year to put together, with Givenchy, now 89, overseeing every detail, and hoping to pay tribute to his muse's "elegance and style." It also includes a collection of beautiful jewelry, accessories, scarves and hats, as well as sketches, drawings, photos and film stills.

Protected by silk

Imbued with a sense of nostalgia for the fashion of decades past, the collection nonetheless shows how the actress's style has remained remarkably fresh and contemporary. Hepburn knew how to bring her clothes to life through "her beauty, personality and lightness of spirit," Givenchy said. In some ways it is also a homecoming, as Hepburn was the daughter of a British banker and a Dutch baroness, and had deep ties to

The Netherlands. After Hepburn was appointed in 1988 as a goodwill ambassador for the UN children's agency UNICEF, she would often give interviews wearing a simple silk or satin T-shirt. She told Givenchy recounting the horrors of war she had seen that "thanks to this small piece of silk, I feel protected because you are close to me."

At the end of her life, they were again united through a piece of material when he visited her at her home in Switzerland as she battled cancer. Hepburn gave him a navy blue quilted coat urging him "when you are sad, wear this and it will give you courage." "From Geneva to Paris, I wept in the jacket she had given me," he said, still overcome with emotion two decades after her death. "Audrey will never go out of fashion. She is current. And her image continues to amaze us." — AFP



French fashion designer Hubert de Givenchy posing at the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, during a retrospective of the designer's work at the exhibition 'To Audrey With Love'.



This file photo taken on October 21, 1991 shows French designer Hubert de Givenchy (left) and American actress Audrey Hepburn talking with each other at the Galliera Museum in Paris during a reception honoring Givenchy for his 40 years in fashion. —AFP



This file photo taken on October 21, 1991 shows actress Audrey Hepburn answering journalists during a reception honoring her friend and fashion designer Hubert de Givenchy in Paris.



This photo shows the Lahaina Court and Custom House in Maui, Hawaii.



Photo shows Lahaina Harbor in Maui, Hawaii. — AP photos

A GIANT BANYAN TREE IN A BEACH TOWN WHERE KINGS WERE BORN

The beach town of Lahaina in western Maui was once the capital of the Hawaiian Kingdom, a place where kings were born. It later became a key port at the height of the 19th century whaling boom. Though it transformed into a mostly tourist area in the 1960s, much of Lahaina's history can still be found sprinkled around town - including in the roots of a giant banyan tree.

"There's just a ton of historical spots in town, really precious, sacred places," said Amy Fuqua, manager of the Lahaina Visitor's Center. Located about 40 minutes from Kahului Airport, Lahaina was known in ancient Hawaiian times as Lele, meaning "cruel sun." It was conquered by Kamehameha the Great in 1795. Front Street, which runs along the shoreline, was known as King's Road, where only kings and queens could walk. It's now the town's main thoroughfare, dotted with historical sites - 62 in all around town - as well as shops and restaurants with spectacular views of the Pacific Ocean and neighboring islands.

Among the historical sites is the Hauola Stone, a chair-shaped stone used by Hawaiian royalty as a birthing site starting around the 14th century. The smoothed-out rock at the

north end of the harbor also was considered to have healing powers.

At the town center is the Lahaina's famous

banyan tree, a 60-foot, multi-trunked tree that covers nearly an acre. Planted in 1873, it is one of the largest banyan trees in the United

States and is still used for celebrations, including one for the tree's birthday every April. It grows new trunks via aerial roots that sink into the ground. And make sure to visit the tree around sunset, when hundreds of mynah birds sing inside its canopy.

"It's kind of the center of town," Fuqua said. "Everyone knows where it's at. It has an important significance to the town and it feels good under there." Not into history? Lahaina offers plenty of other touristy things to do. Instead of whaling, the harbor has now become the launching point for fishing, parasailing, ocean cruising or whale watching in the winter. The restaurants along Front Street are top-notch, offering straight-out-of-the-ocean fish daily.

The tiny Lahaina Civic Center transforms from a local events center into the center of the college basketball universe during the Maui Invitational in the days before Thanksgiving every year. Lahaina also is the hub of western Maui, a gateway to golf courses in Kaanapali and Kapalua, sandy beaches and some of the best snorkeling found anywhere in the world. "There's a lot to do here, even for a small town," Fuqua said. "It's just a cool town." — AP



This undated photo provided by the Hawaii Tourism Authority shows a waterfront view of Front Street in Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii.



Photo provided by the Hawaii Tourism Authority shows a view of Front Street in Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii.



People looking at Lahaina's banyan tree, rising 60 feet and covering nearly an acre in Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii.



Looking for some Christmas sparkle and fun? Find it here

Photo shows a massive Christmas tree covered in lights outside The Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina.

Christmas lights, towering trees and elaborate gingerbread creations are everywhere this time of year. Here are a few favorite places around the country to enjoy holiday sparkle and fun.

New York city

New Yorkers may argue about where to get the best pizza or bagels. But there's no debate over the city's most famous Christmas tree: Rockefeller Center, where a 94-foot Norway spruce is lit up by 50,000 lights. Other attractions include the American Museum of Natural History's origami holiday tree, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Christmas tree and Neapolitan baroque creche, and Lower Manhattan's Luminaries lighting display inside the Winter Garden at Brookfield Place. Macy's, Lord & Taylor, Saks Fifth Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman and Barney's are famous for their holiday windows, but be prepared for crowds and slow-going, especially on Fifth Avenue near the Trump Tower between 56th and 57th streets.

Outside Manhattan, A Slice of Brooklyn Bus Tours marks its 10th anniversary of tours in Brooklyn's Dyker Heights neighborhood, where over-the-top lighting displays are a point of homeowner pride. The New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx hosts a holiday train show with miniature replicas of city landmarks, all made from natural materials like twigs and pinecones, including a tiny Coney Island Cyclone roller coaster. In Queens, the New York Hall of Science hopes to score a fourth consecutive Guinness World Record for the largest gingerbread village.

The Henry Ford, Dearborn, Michigan

Holiday Nights in Greenfield Village at the Henry Ford museum complex near Detroit is a cherished winter tradition, featuring classic Christmas scenes come to life: candlelit windows, roasting chestnuts, carolers, sleigh bells, horse-drawn wagons and Model Ts, Santa and live reindeer, plus period food and nightly fireworks.

The Biltmore, Asheville, North Carolina

The Biltmore House continues a tradition

that started in 1895 when George Vanderbilt opened the 250-room mansion at Christmastime to family and friends. Attractions include more than 70 decorated trees, hundreds of poinsettias and garlands, a 34-foot-tall fir tree in the banquet hall and a 55-foot Norway spruce on the front lawn. Also in Asheville, the Omni Grove Park Inn has more than 150 gingerbread designs on display from the National Gingerbread House Competition.

Southern California

Real snow is not in Southern California's forecast but "magical snowfalls" take place nightly at The Grove in Los Angeles, where you can also see Santa's Cottage and a 100-foot white fir tree. Elsewhere in the region, the retired Queen Mary ocean liner, docked in Long Beach, hosts skating, ice tubing and an "Alice in Wonderland" experience. Descanso Gardens in La Canada Flintridge offers an artsy, interactive lighting display called "Enchanted: Forest of Light." And SkyPark at Santa's Village, a Christmas-themed amusement park, is returning to Lake Arrowhead in the San Bernardino Mountains after being closed for 18 years.

Disney

In Anaheim, California, Disney's California Adventure park looks at celebrations around the world with Festival of Holidays, and debuts Princess Elena, the first Disney princess inspired by Latin American cultures.

The park's World of Color nighttime water show is a new Season of Light production with holiday songs like "Feliz Navidad" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." And three classic Disneyland attractions got a holiday makeover: it's a small world holiday, Haunted Mansion Holiday and Jingle Cruise (aka Jungle Cruise). Main Street fireworks are accompanied by snowfall.

At Walt Disney World in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, it's the first Christmas in years without the Osborne Family Spectacle of Dancing Lights. New holiday attractions include Hollywood Studios' Jingle Bells Jingle BAM! - a projection laser light show with animation and songs. Epcot offers holiday food kiosks

plus "Holidays around the World" storytellers and the Candlelight Processionals. Magic Kingdom has a new stage show, "Mickey's Most Merriest Celebration," as part of Mickey's Very Merry Christmas Party.

Pro tip: You can visit Orlando's Disney Springs without paying park admission. Enjoy a toy festival at the "Once Upon a Toy" shop, where Santa will greet visitors, and a nightly holiday dance party and tree lighting at the fountain outside. There's a tree trail through 15 custom-decorated trees and a new Starbright Holidays show where drones light the night sky with colorful images.

Universal

Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade is recreated nightly at Universal Orlando in Florida through Jan. 1, with balloons, floats and marching bands. At Universal's Islands of Adventure, Seuss Landing has been transformed into Grinchmas, a celebration of the Dr. Seuss classic "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." Universal Studios Hollywood in Los Angeles also hosts Grinchmas with a Who-ville show and photo ops with the Grinch or Max the dog. — AP



This undated photo provided by Walt Disney Company shows remarkable new technology as hundreds of lighted show drones take to the nighttime sky in "Starbright Holidays - An Intel Collaboration," at Walt Disney World's Disney Springs in Orlando, Fla. — AP photos



Photo provided by the New York Botanical Garden shows the Garden's annual holiday train show in the Bronx borough of New York.

OLYMPIC HERO MICHAEL PHELPS LOOKS TO DIP HIS TOES IN TECH

SWIMMING STAR TO ENTREPRENEUR

SAN JOSE: Michael Phelps wants to dive into Silicon Valley's investment opportunities as he tries to make the transition from Olympic swimming star and product pitchman to entrepreneur. "I would love to get involved, whether it's in a couple little startups here and there, take a little risk, have some fun and see where it goes," Phelps said in an interview during a recent visit to San Jose, California, while appearing at Intuit's QuickBooks software conference.

For now, Phelps isn't providing any details about what he is going to do, though he says he has been getting advice from venture capitalists and other experienced investors in Silicon Valley startups.

Getting into tech investing would be a new direction for Phelps, whose business experience to date consists mostly

of his own line of swimwear and endorsement deals with the likes of Under Armour, Visa and Wheaties.

These and other big brands have paid him an estimated \$75 million during his career. That's far more than the \$1.65 million that he received from the US Olympic Committee and Speedo for winning a record 28 medals, including 23 golds, in five Olympics. He's still promoting products; he is currently doing commercials for computer chipmaker Intel in a campaign that began in October.

Ready or not?

Whatever he does next, Phelps isn't ready to start his own investment fund, like retired Los Angeles Lakers star Kobe Bryant did earlier this year with entrepreneur Jeff Stibel. And if Phelps has

ideas for founding a startup of his own, he's keeping them to himself.

Making the leap from pitchman to businessman won't be easy, said David Carter, executive director of the University of Southern California's Marshall Sports Business Institute. "Athletes come and go and many talk a big game, but they don't follow through," he said. Phelps "is really going to have to commit to learning about business and demonstrate his seriousness about it."

Other celebrities have ventured into the tech industry in search of riches, with decidedly mixed results.

Notable successes include rapper and record producer Dr. Dre, who was part of the founding team that sold Beats to Apple for \$3 billion in 2014. Actor Ashton Kutcher co-founded an investment fund in 2010 that made early investments in startups such as the ride-hailing service Uber, the home rental-service Airbnb and the music streaming service Spotify. The fund's value had soared to \$250 million from \$30 million, based on a review of its books earlier this year by Forbes magazine.

Among the flops: HJR Capital, a tech-investment firm that collapsed in 2009, a decade after former San Francisco 49er lineman Harris Barton founded it and later enticed ex-teammates Joe Montana and Ronnie Lott to join him. In Rhode Island, former Boston Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling started a video game company that went bankrupt in 2012.

Phelps is exploring ways to expand his business ventures beyond a line of swimwear and other clothing bearing his "MP" logo. Other products are in the pipeline for next year, though he won't say what.

"I am getting my feet wet," Phelps said with a grin. "2017 will be a big year." — AP



SAN JOSE: In this Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2016, photo, former Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps poses for a portrait while attending the Quickbooks Connect conference as a featured speaker. — AP

NATION'S LARGEST SOLAR INSTALLER TO OPEN FLORIDA FACILITY

ORLANDO: The largest US solar panel installer is moving into sunbaked Florida's residential market after voters last month rejected a utility-backed ballot measure that critics said would make going solar more expensive.

Tesla Motors subsidiary SolarCity said Thursday it is opening an operations center near Orlando and plans to spread into other areas of Florida. A typical operations center employs about 100 people. The company is hiring for sales and installation jobs at its Orlando area facility in Clermont. SolarCity installs custom solar systems that it leases to homeowners, and also maintains and repairs them. In some states, the company sells the power generated by the panels directly to consumers. But in Florida, the law allows only utility companies to sell power directly to consumers. — AP

WOMAN SENTENCED FOR TRYING TO FRAME EX THROUGH FACEBOOK

SANTA ANA: A woman who created a phony Facebook profile of her ex-boyfriend in order to frame the Southern California man for stalking has been sentenced to a year in jail.

Stephani Lawson of Las Vegas was sentenced Wednesday after pleading guilty to perjury and false imprisonment. Prosecutors say Lawson waged a campaign to get Tyler Parkervest of Irvine, California, arrested last year after the couple broke up.

City News Service says Lawson filed eight police reports alleging Parkervest made Facebook threats to kill her and her daughter and at one point held her in his car at knifepoint. But prosecutors say Lawson lied about the attack and sent the threats to herself. Parkervest was arrested four times and charged with stalking, kidnapping, battery and making threats. The charges were dropped last month. — AP

REDDIT CRACKS DOWN ON 'MOST TOXIC USERS' OF PRO-TRUMP FORUM

CALIFORNIA: Reddit CEO Steve Huffman has announced a plan to crack down on the "most toxic users" of a forum on the site used to discuss President-elect Donald Trump.

Huffman writes in a post on the link-sharing and discussion plat-

form that the actions being taken against some users of a forum titled "The_Donald" range from "warnings to timeouts to permanent bans." Some commenters in the forum have repeatedly harassed Huffman. — AP



This photo provided by Plox shows the "Star Wars" Death Star levitating bluetooth speaker. It's a little tricky to set up, but once you get the Death Star positioned correctly over its base, it floats in the air thanks to well-placed magnets and a little help from "The Force." — AP

WACKY GIFTS FOR THE TECH-SAVVY PERSON WHO HAS EVERYTHING

NEW YORK: The latest technology can make for an easy holiday gift, but when it comes to the ultra-tech-savvy people in your life, finding a cool gadget they don't already own can be tough. Fear not! From "Star Wars"-themed speakers to radiation-blocking boxer briefs, there's a lot to pick from for all the super geeks in your life.

Death star levitating speaker

That's no moon. It's a \$180 wireless speaker shaped like the Death Star from "Star Wars." It's a little tricky to set up, but once you get the Death Star positioned correctly over its base, it floats in the air thanks to well-placed magnets and a little help from the Force. The Death Star rotates with a tap. The sound quality is pretty good, and the rechargeable battery will give you five hours of sound. Just keep it away from rebel fighter pilots.

Anti-radiation underwear

It's a Faraday cage for your, um, crown jewels. Silver fibers woven into Spartan's boxer briefs are designed to block radiation from electronics. That's good news for men who might be worried about their laptops spending too much time on their laps. But while recent research has pointed to a possible link between radiation from wireless devices and decreased sperm count, studies are far from conclusive, so there's no reason to panic just yet. Until January, the underwear is available only on Spartan's website for about \$45.

D imaging

Got a friend with mice or termites in their house? WalabotDIY is a 3-D-imaging tool that lets you see deep into your walls. The device attaches to an Android phone (sorry, iPhone users) and lets you see up to four inches through drywall, cement and other materials, just like Superman's X-ray vision.

How? Sensors pick up heat from mice motion and termite nests. At a recent demonstration, heat from hiding rodents could easily be seen in glowing red on a device screen. The sensors also will let you know the depth and location of pipes, wires and other objects to avoid if your next home improvement project calls for drilling into your walls. The WalabotDIY is available online for \$200.

Lego phone cases

Ever wish your smartphone or tablet could keep your fussy children entertained long after it runs out of battery?

Belkin's Lego cases offer hands-on play, bringing new meaning to the term "screen time." The back sides are covered with those familiar Lego dots, giving kids something to attach their creations to during long road trips and painful visits to grandma's house with no Wi-Fi. Of course, they help protect the devices when dropped, too.

Cases are available for the iPhone 6 and 6S (\$45), 6 Plus and 6S Plus (\$50), and the iPad Mini (\$60). There's no version yet for the iPhone 7 or Android. Belkin makes these under license from Lego, so they should work fine with standard Lego bricks. — AP

HOW A TRUMP ADMINISTRATION COULD SHAPE THE INTERNET

NEW YORK: Under a President Donald Trump, cable and phone companies could gain new power to influence what you do and what you watch online - not to mention how much privacy you have while you're at it.

Many experts say that Republicans who generally oppose regulation are likely to take charge at the Federal Communications Commission, the government's primary telecom regulator. That alone could mean the end of rules designed to protect privacy and individual choice on the internet. Those rules were enacted over the past several years under the Obama administration.

Under Trump, "the FCC will be a lot more focused on getting government out of the way," said Berin Szoka, president of TechFreedom, a think tank that opposes much regulation. Phone and cable companies routinely protest that regulation lead them to invest less in their networks, harming their ability to deliver better service.

Deregulation raises concerns for consumer advocates - not just in terms of rolling back rules, but also potentially allowing more huge mergers, which several analysts expect despite Trump's campaign swipes at big media. Under the coming administration, a laxer FCC could result in even higher cable and internet bills, worse customer service and fewer choices, says Harold Feld, senior vice president at public-interest group Public Knowledge.

Of course, it's difficult to know exactly what to expect, given Trump's aversion to policy specifics and frequent reversals during the campaign. Representatives for Trump's transition team didn't reply to requests for comment.

Net neutrality

One possible first target: Rules that aim to protect individual choice and innovation on the internet.

Suppose that firing up Netflix or YouTube led only to delays and stuttering playback that still counted against the limited data in your broadband plan - a sharp contrast to the speedy video app offered by your phone or cable company, which incurs no data costs. That's one scenario the Obama-era FCC sought to ward off with "net neutrality" regulation that requires internet providers to treat all data traffic equally on their networks, as the internet has historically worked.

Without net neutrality, your access to many popular services might be degraded by your local cable or phone company. Startups could have trouble delivering new video or virtual-reality services. Companies that provide internet service could find it easier to push their own options instead.

The net-neutrality rules are popular, so they're not likely to completely disappear under Trump. But the FCC might well be more restrained in enforcing them.

Internet providers could use subtle tactics and behind-the-scenes maneuvers to change people's behavior and make more money, suggested Matt Wood, policy director at the public-interest group Free Press. Consumers might eventually find that they have fewer services to choose from online, or that using them is more difficult or expensive.

Privacy, openness and internet access

If the Trump FCC whacks away at existing regulations, cable and phone companies are going to find it a lot easier to mine your browsing habits and other information for data they can use to target ads at you.

Verizon, for example, is eager to build a digital-ad business to compete with Google and Facebook. But recent privacy rules force them to ask customers for permission before using their data. Those companies have made no secret of their dislike for this requirement.

The FCC's effort to "open up" the cable box in ways designed to give you more options for hooking up TVs and streaming gadgets to cable service is likely dead. Its effort to subsidize internet for low-income people may face budget cuts, although cable companies do offer separate cheap internet options for low-income people. — AP

POLICE MAKE 5 ARRESTS IN CYBERCRIME TAKEDOWN

MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN LOSSES

PARIS: US and European officials say they've knocked out a cybercrime group accused of inflicting hundreds of millions of dollars in losses worldwide, putting five key suspects in custody.

The European Union police agency said Thursday the sweep was "unprecedented in its scale" and resulted in the seizure of 39 servers and hundreds of thousands of internet domains used by the Avalanche network, a major player in the market for cybercrime services. Unlike some past seizures - which grabbed crooks' infrastructure while leaving the masterminds free to reorganize their networks - officials say they're confident they've struck a fatal blow this time. "We have arrested the top, the head of the snake," Fernando Ruiz, the head of operations at Europol's Cybercrime Center, told The Associated Press ahead of the announcement. "We are sure that this will have a very huge impact."

Ruiz called Avalanche "the perfect example of crime as a service," saying the massive network was rented out by players across the underworld to send spam, direct malicious software and to recruit money mules. As a cybercriminal, Ruiz said, "you will contact this organization, and this organization will give you all you need."

He said the arrests Wednesday followed months of preparation and years of investigation by law enforcement agencies. In a separate statement, the US Department of Justice said 40 different countries were involved and accused the network of hosting some of the world's most pernicious malware as well as several money laundering campaigns.

Unique

German Interior Minister Thomas de



BERLIN: German Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere speaks about the arrest of heads of a group called Avalanche on Thursday. —AP

Maiziere told reporters at a press conference in the town of Lueneburg that the size of the operation was "unique." The network came into focus in 2012 after German officials began looking into the spread of fake police ransomware - an early form of extortion software designed to trick users into thinking their computers had been locked down by law enforcement - according to Orla Cox, the director of security intelligence at Symantec Corp., a California-based security firm which participated in the investigation. That inquiry eventually widened to include dozens of other law enforcement agencies investigating a wide array of misdeeds.

German authorities alone would eventually record 1,336 crimes in connection with the group. Neither US or European officials would issue precise figures but both said losses connected to the gang's activities reached into the hundreds of millions.

German officials suggested other, potentially lower-ranking members of the gang appear to have escaped the global dragnet. Prosecutors there said they were able to identify 16 people at the group's "leadership level" and a court in the German town of Verden had issued arrest warrants for seven of them. It's not clear how many, if any, of the seven people being sought by German authorities overlap with the five individuals arrested Wednesday.

Ruiz, of Europol, declined to give any details of those arrested or even say where they had been detained, saying the countries where the arrests took place had asked not to be identified. Cox, with Symantec, confirmed that some suspects were still at large but said law enforcement was still pretty sure they'd beaten Avalanche, given the sheer scale of what they'd seized. "We can never say it's completely done but confidence levels are high this time around," Cox said. — AP

SPACE SHIP MALFUNCTIONS, BREAKS UP OVER SIBERIA

MOSCOW: An unmanned Russian cargo spaceship heading to the International Space Station broke up in the atmosphere

over Siberia on Thursday due to an unspecified malfunction, the Russian space agency said.



BAIKONUR, Kazakhstan: In this photo dated Tuesday, Nov. 29, 2016 the Soyuz-FG rocket booster with the Progress MS-04 cargo ship is installed on a launch pad. — AP


The Progress MS-04 cargo craft broke up at an altitude of 190 kilometers (118 miles) over the remote Russian Tuva region in Siberia that borders Mongolia, Roscosmos said in a statement. It said most of spaceship's debris burnt up as it entered the atmosphere but some fell to Earth over what it called an uninhabited area.

Local people reported seeing a flash of light and hearing a loud thud west of the regional capital of Kyzyl, more than 3,600 kilometers (2,200 miles) east of Moscow, the Tuva government was quoted as saying late Thursday by the Interfax news agency.

The Progress cargo ship had lifted off as scheduled at 8:51 p.m. (1451 GMT) from Russia's space launch complex in Baikonur, Kazakhstan, to deliver 2.5 metric tons of fuel, water, food and other supplies. It was set to dock with the space station on Saturday. —AP



00:50 River Monsters
01:45 Bondi Vet
02:40 Big Fish Man
03:35 Tanked
04:25 Into The Pride
05:15 Gator Boys
06:02 River Monsters
06:49 Big Fish Man
07:36 Swamp Brothers
08:00 Swamp Brothers
08:25 Big Fish Man
09:15 Lone Star Law
10:10 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
11:05 Wildest Europe
12:00 Tanked
12:55 Bondi Vet
13:50 Into The Pride
19:20 Lone Star Law
20:15 Big Fish Man
21:10 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
22:05 Tanked
23:00 Lone Star Law
23:55 Gator Boys



00:40 Da Vinci's Machines
01:30 How Do They Do It?
01:55 Food Factory
02:20 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
03:10 Mythbusters
04:00 Sci-Fi Saved My Life
04:48 Da Vinci's Machines
05:36 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
06:24 Mythbusters
07:12 How Do They Do It?
07:36 Food Factory
08:00 How Do They Do It?
08:26 Food Factory
08:50 Food Factory
09:14 Food Factory
09:38 Food Factory
10:02 Food Factory
10:26 How Do They Do It?
10:50 How Do They Do It?
11:14 How Do They Do It?
11:38 How Do They Do It?
12:02 How Do They Do It?
12:26 Unchained Reaction
13:14 Unchained Reaction
14:02 Unchained Reaction
14:50 Unchained Reaction
15:38 Powering The Future
16:26 Mythbusters
17:14 Mythbusters
18:02 Mythbusters
18:50 Mythbusters
19:40 Mythbusters
20:30 Science Of The Movies
21:20 What On Earth?
22:10 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
23:00 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design



00:10 Hank Zipzer
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Violetta
01:45 The Hive
01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:40 Hank Zipzer
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:30 Violetta
04:15 The Hive
04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:10 Hank Zipzer
05:35 Binny And The Ghost
06:00 Violetta
06:45 The Hive
06:50 Mouk
07:00 Jessie
07:25 Jessie
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
08:20 Star Darlings
08:25 Rolling To The Ronks
08:50 Disney Mickey Mouse
08:55 Jessie
09:20 Descendants Wicked World
09:25 Elena And The Secret Of Avalor
10:30 Welcome To The Ronks
10:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
10:50 Best Friends Whenever
11:15 Disney Cookabout
11:40 The Little Mermaid
13:05 Access All Areas: Moana

13:20 Bizaardvark
13:45 Bizaardvark
15:25 Jessie
15:50 Jessie
16:15 Bizaardvark
16:40 Liv And Maddie
17:05 Descendants Wicked World
17:10 Elena Of Avalor
17:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
18:00 Gravity Falls
18:25 Elena And The Secret Of Avalor
19:35 Dog With A Blog
20:00 Star Darlings
20:05 Disney Cookabout
20:30 Elena Of Avalor
20:55 Liv And Maddie
21:20 Best Friends Whenever
21:45 Good Luck Charlie
22:10 Girl Meets World
22:35 H2O: Just Add Water
23:00 Binny And The Ghost
23:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

03:45 Art Attack
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
04:25 Calimero
04:45 Loopdidoo
05:00 Art Attack
05:25 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 Calimero
05:50 Zou
06:00 Loopdidoo
06:15 Art Attack
06:35 Henry Hugglemonster
06:50 Calimero
07:00 Zou
07:20 Loopdidoo
07:35 Art Attack
08:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
08:30 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
09:00 Sofia The First
09:30 Doc McStuffins
10:00 PJ Masks
10:30 The Lion Guard
11:00 Sofia The First
11:30 Goldie & Bear
12:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
12:30 Doc McStuffins
13:00 Doc McStuffins
13:30 Miles From Tomorrow
14:00 Miles From Tomorrow
14:30 The Lion Guard
15:00 The Lion Guard
15:30 PJ Masks
16:00 PJ Masks
16:30 Sofia The First
17:00 Sofia The First
17:30 Goldie & Bear
18:00 Goldie & Bear
18:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:30 PJ Masks
20:00 Doc McStuffins
20:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
21:00 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
21:30 Sofia The First
22:00 Goldie & Bear
22:30 Goldie & Bear
23:00 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
23:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse

06:00 Fashion Bloggers
06:25 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
07:20 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
08:20 E! News
09:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
10:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
11:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
13:05 E! News
14:05 Just Jillian
15:00 Botched
16:00 Botched
17:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
18:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
19:00 E! News
20:00 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
21:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
22:00 Just Jillian
23:00 E! News
00:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
00:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:50 Botched
02:20 E! News



00:00 Another Period
00:25 Matt Braunger: Shovel Fighter
01:15 Broad City
01:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
02:05 The Jim Gaffigan Show
02:30 Broad City
03:00 Nathan For You
03:25 Ridiculousness
04:15 Key And Peele
04:40 Ridiculousness
05:30 Workaholics
05:55 Workaholics
06:20 Key And Peele
07:15 Ridiculousness
08:30 Workaholics
08:55 Workaholics
09:20 Tosh.0
09:45 Tosh.0
10:10 Ridiculousness
10:35 Key And Peele
11:25 Ridiculousness
12:15 Tosh.0
12:40 Tosh.0
13:05 Workaholics
13:30 Workaholics
13:55 Ridiculousness
14:45 Workaholics
15:10 Key And Peele
15:35 Tosh.0
16:00 Tosh.0
16:30 Key And Peele
16:55 Tosh.0
18:15 Key And Peele
19:03 Ridiculousness
19:50 Lip Sync Battle
20:13 Impractical Jokers I Special - Joker's Choice
20:37 Ridiculousness
21:00 The Daily Show - Global Edition
21:30 South Park
21:54 Broad City
22:18 Matt Braunger: Shovel Fighter
23:05 Another Period



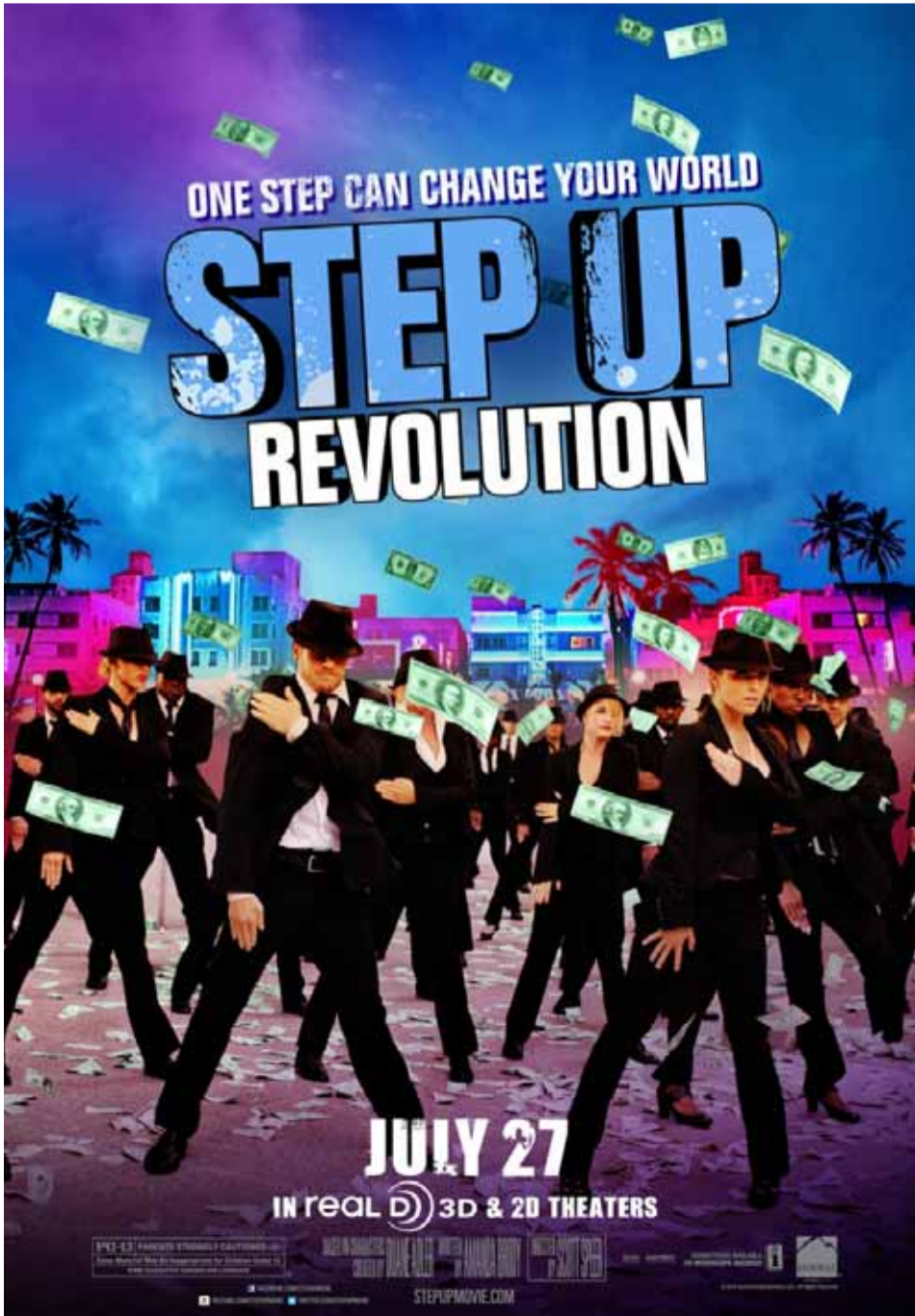
01:10 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
02:00 Sacred Steel Bikes
02:50 Street Outlaws
03:40 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Storage Hunters
06:25 Storage Hunters
06:50 Storage Hunters UK
07:40 Storage Hunters
08:05 How It's Made: Dream Cars
10:10 Gold Rush
11:00 Deadliest Catch
11:50 Catching Monsters
12:40 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
13:30 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
14:20 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
16:50 Sacred Steel Bikes
17:40 Dive Wars Australia
18:30 Incredible Engineering
Blunders: Fixed
19:20 What On Earth?
20:10 Sherpa
21:50 Edge Of Alaska
22:40 Gold Rush
23:30 What On Earth?




00:00 Doc McStuffins
00:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
00:35 Zou
00:50 Loopdidoo
01:05 Art Attack
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:45 Calimero
02:00 Zou
02:15 Loopdidoo
02:30 Art Attack
03:00 Calimero
03:15 Zou
03:30 Loopdidoo



00:00 BBQ Crawl
00:30 BBQ Crawl
01:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:00 Man Fire Food
02:30 Man Fire Food
03:00 Chopped
04:00 Guy's Grocery Games
05:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
05:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
06:00 Chopped
07:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes
08:00 The Kitchen
09:00 Siba's Table
09:30 Siba's Table
10:00 The Pioneer Woman
10:30 The Pioneer Woman
11:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
11:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
12:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
12:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
13:00 Chopped
14:00 Man Fire Food
14:30 Man Fire Food
15:00 Guy's Big Bite
15:30 Guy's Big Bite
16:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
16:30 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
17:00 The Big Eat
17:30 The Big Eat
18:00 Chopped
19:00 Man Finds Food
19:30 Man Finds Food
20:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
20:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
21:00 The Big Eat
21:30 The Big Eat
22:00 Man Finds Food
22:30 Man Finds Food
23:00 Chopped



ONE STEP CAN CHANGE YOUR WORLD
STEP UP REVOLUTION
JULY 27
IN REAL D 3D & 2D THEATERS



06:00 Danger Mouse
06:25 K.C. Undercover
06:50 Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister
07:15 Supa Strikas
07:40 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
08:10 Mighty Med
08:35 Lab Rats
09:00 Lab Rats
09:25 K.C. Undercover
09:50 K.C. Undercover
10:20 Supa Strikas
10:45 Supa Strikas
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
11:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
12:00 Richie Rich's Christmas Wish
13:45 Danger Mouse
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Counterfeit Cat
14:40 Atomic Puppet
15:05 Atomic Puppet
15:30 Atomic Puppet
15:55 Atomic Puppet
16:25 Atomic Puppet
16:50 Star Wars Rebels
17:15 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
17:40 Counterfeit Cat
18:10 Gravity Falls
18:35 Like Father Like Santa
20:20 Star Wars Rebels
20:45 Mighty Med
21:10 Pickle And Peanut
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Guardians Of The Galaxy
22:10 Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister
22:35 Boyster
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA



00:00 America's Book Of Secrets
01:00 Ancient Aliens
02:00 Missing In Alaska
03:00 Ancient Discoveries
03:50 WWII: Europe's Secret Army
04:40 Serial Killer Earth
05:30 America's Book Of Secrets
06:20 Cities Of The Underworld
07:10 The Universe
08:00 Ancient Aliens
09:00 Missing In Alaska
10:00 Ancient Discoveries
11:00 WWII: Europe's Secret Army
12:00 Serial Killer Earth
13:00 America's Book Of Secrets
14:00 Ancient Aliens
15:00 Missing In Alaska
16:00 Ancient Discoveries
17:00 WWII: Europe's Secret Army
18:00 Serial Killer Earth
19:00 Cities Of The Underworld
20:00 Cities Of The Underworld
21:00 Cities Of The Underworld
22:00 Cities Of The Underworld
23:00 Cities Of The Underworld



03:15 EJ NYC
04:10 EJ NYC
05:05 EJ NYC

STEP UP REVOLUTION ON OSN MOVIES HD

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2016



- 00:20 Ozzy & Jack's World Detour
- 01:10 The Rise And Fall Of El Chapo
- 02:50 Pawn Stars Australia
- 03:15 Pawn Stars Australia
- 03:40 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
- 04:30 American Restoration
- 05:00 Billion Dollar Wreck
- 06:00 Lost In Transmission
- 06:50 Lost In Transmission
- 07:40 Pawn Stars Australia
- 08:05 Pawn Stars Australia
- 08:30 Counting Cars
- 08:55 Mountain Men
- 09:45 Aussie Pickers
- 10:35 Shipping Wars
- 11:00 Shipping Wars
- 11:25 Counting Cars: Best Of
- 11:50 Counting Cars: Best Of
- 12:15 Billion Dollar Wreck
- 13:05 Ozzy & Jack's World Detour
- 13:55 Hunting Hitler
- 14:45 Time Team
- 15:35 Counting Cars
- 16:00 Counting Cars: Best Of
- 16:25 Counting Cars: Best Of
- 16:50 Aussie Pickers
- 17:40 Shipping Wars
- 18:05 Shipping Wars
- 18:30 Pawn Stars
- 18:55 Pawn Stars South Africa
- 19:20 Ozzy & Jack's World Detour
- 20:10 Mountain Men - Closest Calls
- 21:00 Billion Dollar Wreck
- 21:50 Forged In Fire
- 22:40 Time Team
- 23:30 Mountain Men - Closest Calls



I AM NUMBER FOUR ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

- 23:30 Shark Men
- 00:20 Dead Or Alive
- 01:10 Animals Behaving Badly
- 02:00 Gorilla Murders
- 02:50 Animal Armory



- 00:30 Scrubs
- 01:30 Man Seeking Woman
- 02:30 Difficult People
- 03:00 Black-Ish
- 03:30 The Goldbergs
- 04:00 Cooper Barrett's Guide To Surviving
- 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 05:30 George Lopez
- 06:00 The Grinder
- 06:30 Community
- 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 08:00 Cooper Barrett's Guide To Surviving
- 08:30 George Lopez
- 09:00 Black-Ish
- 09:30 Community
- 10:00 New Girl
- 10:30 Community
- 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 12:00 The Grinder
- 12:30 Cooper Barrett's Guide To Surviving
- 13:00 George Lopez
- 13:30 Men At Work
- 14:00 The Goldbergs
- 14:30 Community
- 15:00 New Girl
- 15:30 Scrubs
- 16:00 Scrubs
- 16:30 The Grinder
- 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 18:00 2 Broke Girls
- 19:00 Wrecked
- 19:30 Dr. Ken
- 20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 21:00 Scrubs
- 21:30 Cougar Town
- 22:00 Saturday Night Live
- 23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers



- 00:00 Mr. Robot
- 01:00 Secrets And Lies
- 02:00 Survivor: Millennials vs Generation X
- 03:00 Satisfaction
- 04:00 Live Good Morning America
- 06:00 Lie To Me
- 07:00 Drop Dead Diva
- 08:00 Bones
- 09:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 10:00 Lie To Me

- 11:00 Secrets And Lies
- 12:00 Bones
- 13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 14:00 Drop Dead Diva
- 15:00 Stitches
- 16:00 Live Good Morning America - Weekend



- 00:00 V/H/S Viral
- 02:00 Alien Outpost
- 04:00 Jurassic Hunters
- 06:00 Jupiter Ascending
- 08:15 Swelter
- 10:00 I Am Number Four
- 12:00 Mutant World
- 13:45 Jupiter Ascending
- 16:00 Swelter
- 18:00 I Am Number Four
- 20:00 S.W.A.T.
- 22:00 Sherlock Holmes



- 04:00 Bottle Rocket
- 06:00 Jack
- 08:00 The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy
- 10:00 Bottle Rocket
- 12:00 Hope Springs
- 14:00 Bringing Down The House
- 16:00 The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy
- 18:00 Blended
- 20:00 The Foot Fist Way
- 22:00 Ted
- 00:00 Scary Movie 4
- 02:00 The Foot Fist Way



- 01:00 Odd Thomas
- 03:00 Eden (2015)
- 05:00 A Mother Betrayed
- 07:00 A Stranger In Paradise
- 09:00 Stranded
- 11:00 Odd Thomas
- 13:00 Chef
- 15:00 Viktor
- 17:00 Stranded
- 19:00 Oliver's Deal
- 21:00 Cake
- 23:00 Third Person



- 00:00 The Incredible Adventures Of Professor Branestawm

- 01:00 The Last Song
- 03:00 Little Women
- 05:00 Step Dogs
- 07:00 The Last Song
- 09:00 Minions
- 11:00 Little Women
- 13:00 Frozen
- 15:00 Mostly Ghostly: Have You Met My Ghoulfriend
- 17:00 The Land Before Time: Journey Of The Brave
- 19:00 The Lone Ranger
- 21:30 Paranorman
- 23:00 Mostly Ghostly: Have You Met My Ghoulfriend



- 01:00 Perfect Sisters
- 03:00 Step Up Revolution
- 05:00 Dolphin Tale 2
- 07:00 Taken 3
- 09:00 Cinderella
- 11:00 Pitch Perfect 2
- 13:00 The Intern
- 15:15 Where Hope Grows
- 17:00 A Kind Of Murder
- 19:00 Brooklyn
- 21:00 Barbershop: The Next Cut
- 23:00 The Brothers Grimsby



- 01:15 Moomins And The Comet Chase
- 02:45 Scooby-Doo! And Kiss: Rock And Roll Mystery
- 04:30 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
- 06:00 When Marnie Was There
- 07:45 Marco Macaco
- 09:15 K-9 Adventures: Legend Of The Lost Gold
- 11:00 Savva
- 12:45 Scooby-Doo! And Kiss: Rock And Roll Mystery
- 14:30 Columbus In The Last Journey
- 16:00 Evolution Man
- 18:00 K-9 Adventures: Legend Of The Lost Gold
- 20:00 Scooby-Doo! And The Beach Beastie
- 21:00 Marco Macaco
- 22:30 Columbus In The Last Journey



- 01:45 Farewell, My Queen
- 03:30 Eight Men Out
- 05:30 Arlington Road
- 07:30 Monkey Kingdom
- 09:00 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The

- 15:00 Explorer
- 16:00 Engineering Connections
- 17:00 Mega Factories
- 18:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 19:00 Explorer



- 03:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 03:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 03:48 Harvey Beaks
- 04:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
- 04:36 The Haunted Hathaways
- 05:00 Max & Shred
- 05:24 Henry Danger
- 05:48 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
- 06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 06:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 07:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 07:48 Winx Club
- 08:12 Harvey Beaks
- 08:36 Breadwinners
- 09:00 Get Blake
- 09:24 Rabbids Invasion
- 09:48 Henry Danger
- 10:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
- 10:36 The Haunted Hathaways
- 11:00 Winx Club
- 11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 11:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 12:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 12:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 13:00 Breadwinners
- 13:24 The Loud House
- 13:48 Harvey Beaks
- 14:12 Rabbids Invasion
- 14:36 Henry Danger
- 15:00 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
- 15:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 15:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 16:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 16:36 The Loud House
- 17:00 Sanjay And Craig
- 17:24 Harvey Beaks
- 17:48 Breadwinners
- 18:12 Henry Danger
- 18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
- 19:00 100 Things To Do Before High School
- 19:24 Game Shakers
- 19:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 20:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 20:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 21:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 21:24 Breadwinners
- 21:48 Breadwinners
- 22:12 Sanjay And Craig
- 22:36 Sanjay And Craig
- 23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 23:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 23:48 Henry Danger
- 00:12 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
- 00:36 Max & Shred
- 01:00 The Haunted Hathaways
- 01:24 Sanjay And Craig
- 01:48 Sanjay And Craig
- 02:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
- 02:36 SpongeBob SquarePants



- 03:50 Mission Pluto
- 04:45 Shark Men
- 05:40 Wicked Tuna
- 06:35 Mygrations
- 07:30 Wild Congo
- 08:25 Dog Whisperer
- 09:20 Dog Whisperer
- 10:15 Laverstoke Mill
- 11:10 Narco Bling
- 12:05 Hacking The System
- 12:30 Hacking The System
- 13:00 Science Of Stupid
- 13:30 Science Of Stupid
- 14:00 Machine Impossible



Hope Springs



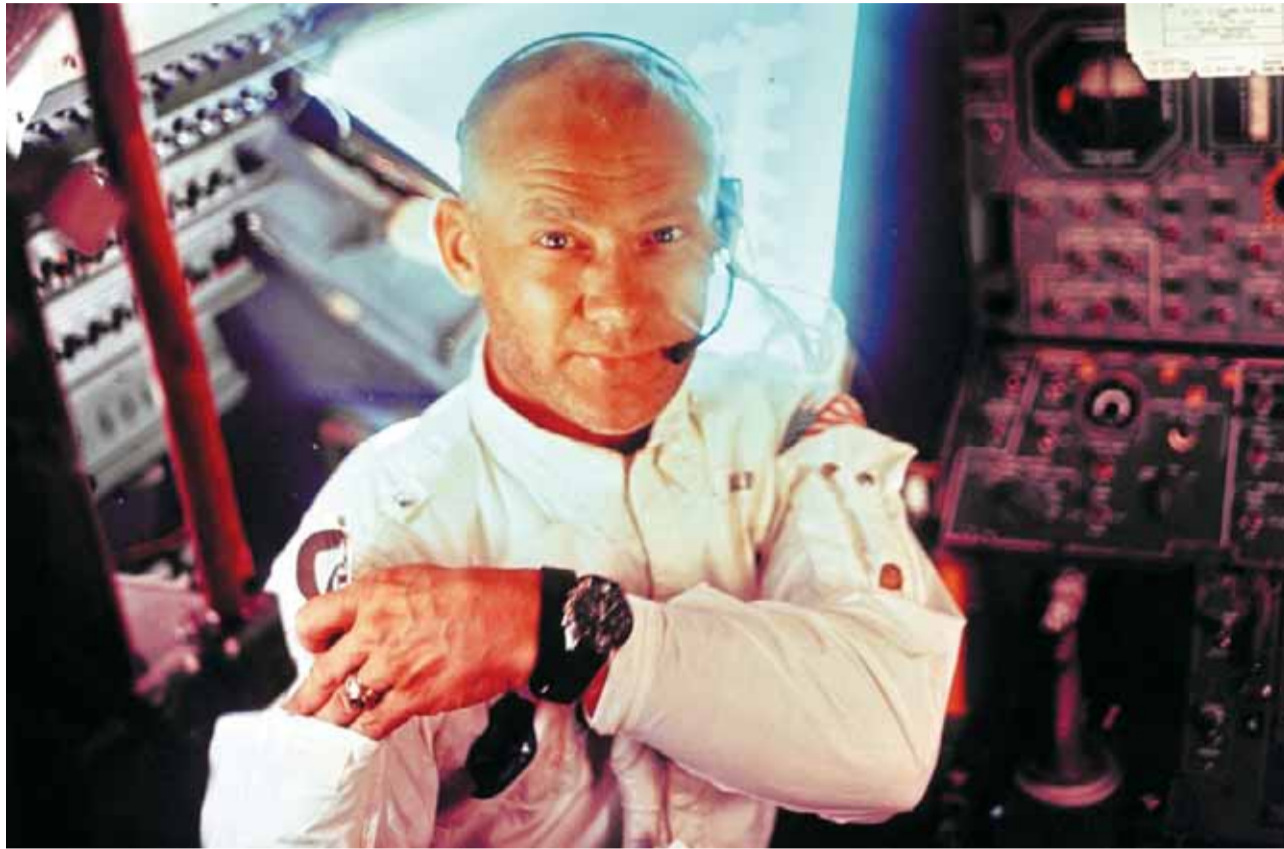
HOPE SPRINGS ON OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY



- 03:05 Emmerdale
- 03:30 Emmerdale
- 03:55 Coronation Street
- 06:00 Eggheads
- 06:30 Don't Tell The Bride
- 07:30 Don't Tell The Bride
- 08:30 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
- 09:45 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
- 11:00 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
- 11:50 Grantchester
- 12:40 Vera
- 14:30 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
- 15:20 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
- 16:10 Tonight At The London Palladium
- 17:00 Don't Tell The Bride
- 18:00 Don't Tell The Bride
- 19:00 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
- 19:50 Tonight At The London Palladium
- 20:40 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
- 22:10 Eggheads
- 22:40 Coronation Street
- 23:10 Coronation Street
- 23:35 Coronation Street
- 00:05 Coronation Street
- 00:35 Coronation Street
- 01:00 Don't Tell The Bride
- 02:00 Coronation Street
- 02:30 Coronation Street
- 02:55 Coronation Street



- 03:45 Wild Scotland: Highlands
- 04:40 Man V. Monster
- 05:35 Hunter Hunted
- 06:30 Monster Fish
- 07:25 Nordic Wild
- 08:20 Dr. K's Exotic Animal
- 09:15 Zoo Confidential
- 10:10 Make You Laugh Out Loud
- 11:05 Fish Tank Kings
- 12:00 Shark Men
- 12:55 Dead Or Alive
- 13:50 Animals Behaving Badly
- 14:45 Mega Hammerhead
- 15:40 Japan's Hidden Secret
- 16:35 Predator Patrol
- 17:30 Expedition Wild
- 18:25 Animals Gone Wild
- 19:20 Mega Hammerhead
- 20:10 Japan's Hidden Secret
- 21:00 Predator Patrol
- 21:50 Expedition Wild
- 22:40 Animals Gone Wild



IN SPACE: This NASA file photo taken on July 21, 1969 shows Apollo 11 space mission US astronaut Buzz Aldrin back aboard the lunar module "Eagle" after spending more than 2-1/2 hours on the lunar surface. —AFP

MOONWALKER BUZZ ALDRIN STABLE AFTER SOUTH POLE HEALTH SCARE

MEDICALLY EVACUATED FROM SOUTH POLE

WELLINGTON: Retired astronaut Buzz Aldrin, the second man to walk on the Moon, was recovering in a New Zealand hospital yesterday after being medically evacuated from the South Pole while on a tourist trip, his management said.

Aldrin, 86, was "evacuated on the first available flight out" after experiencing health problems, said a statement from Antarctic tour operator White Desert. It said Aldrin-later found to have fluid on his lungs-was flown out after his "condition deteriorated", describing the move as "a precaution."

An update on Aldrin's website said he was taken to Christchurch, New Zealand, where he was receiving hospi-

tal treatment. "(He) currently has fluid in his lungs but is responding well to antibiotics and being kept in overnight for observation," it said. "His condition is stable and his manager, who is currently with him, described him being in good spirits."

Aldrin's management also tweeted a photograph of the spaceman smiling and looking alert in his hospital bed. His illness in the remote frozen continent sparked a 4,400 kilometer (2,700 mile) mercy dash. First, the US National Science Foundation dispatched a humanitarian medical flight to the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station.

From there, another flight took

Aldrin to McMurdo Station on the Antarctic coast, and then to New Zealand, where he arrived at 4:25 am local time Friday. "After a grueling 24 hours we're safe in New Zealand," his manager Christina Korp tweeted.

'Here I come'

In 1969, Aldrin and Neil Armstrong became the first men to walk on the Moon, as part of the Apollo 11 mission. Armstrong stepped out of the lunar module first, uttering the now famous words, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind." Aldrin, clad in a bulky white spacesuit, hopped out next. "Beautiful, beautiful. Magnificent desolation," Aldrin said on July 20, 1969.

In recent years, he has authored books for adults and children and advocated establishing a permanent human colony on Mars. Aldrin is an avid user of Twitter, and tweeted in recent days about his trip to the South Pole. "I could be a little underdressed for Antarctica. Although I tend to be hot blooded," he wrote on November 27, posting a picture of himself wearing a black and red Mars shirt. "South Pole, here I come!" he wrote a day later.

Born in Montclair, New Jersey on January 20, 1930, Aldrin was educated at the prestigious West Point military academy in New York state. He joined the US Air Force and flew 66 combat missions in the Korean War, shooting down two enemy fighter jets.

He earned a doctorate in astronautics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and devised manned space rendezvous techniques-an orbital maneuver during which two crafts dock in space-that were later adopted by NASA. — AFP

SCIENCE PANEL URGES REWRITE OF FOOD ALLERGY WARNING LABELS

WASHINGTON: "Made in the same factory as peanuts." "May contain traces of tree nuts." A new report says the hodge-podge of warnings that a food might accidentally contain a troublesome ingredient is confusing to people with food allergies, and calls for a makeover.

Foods made with allergy-prone ingredients such as peanuts or eggs must be labeled so consumers with food allergies know to avoid them. But what if a sugar cookie picks up peanut butter from an improperly cleaned factory mixer?

Today's precautionary labels about accidental contamination are voluntary, meaning there's no way to know if foods that don't bear them should - or if wording such as "may contain traces" signals a bigger threat than other warnings.

Wednesday, a report from the prestigious National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine said it's time for regulators and the food industry to clear consumer confusion with labels that better reflect the level of risk.

Today, "there's not any real way for allergic consumers to evaluate risk," said National Academies committee member Stephen Taylor, a University of Nebraska food scientist. He said research raises concern that consumers might simply ignore the precautions, "essentially a form of playing Russian roulette with your food."

Food allergies are common and sometimes can trigger reactions severe enough to kill. About 12 million Americans have long been estimated to have food allergies, and scientists question if they're on the rise. But Wednesday's National Academies report found that while food allergies are a serious public health problem, no one knows exactly how many people are affected - because that hasn't been properly studied, in either children or adults. The report urged government researchers to rapidly find out, a key first step in learning whether allergies really are increasing and who's most likely to suffer.

The panel also recommended

Better informing new parents about allergy prevention. Recent research has found that introducing potential allergy-triggering foods such as peanut butter before age 1 is more likely to protect at-risk children than the old advice to wait to try those foods until tots are older.

Better education for consumers and health professionals alike about the differences between true food allergies and other disorders that people sometimes misinterpret as allergies, such as lactose intolerance and gluten sensitivity.

Better training for restaurant workers, first responders and others about helping people avoid foods they're allergic to, and how to treat severe allergic reactions with a quick jab of the drug epinephrine, often sold as an EpiPen.

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America welcomed the recommendations as a "roadmap" of ways to improve the lives of families with food allergies.

The labeling recommendation, if eventually adopted, could mark a big change in how allergic consumers decide what packaged foods are safe to eat.

The report said the Food and Drug Administration should replace the "precautionary" label approach with one that's risk-based. The idea: Determine a safety level for different allergens - just how much of a "trace" of peanuts or eggs or milk could most people with allergies tolerate? The resulting labeling would give consumers more information in deciding if they'd take a chance on a food or not, said Taylor, who pointed to a similar voluntary system in Australia and New Zealand. — AP



WASHINGTON: This Nov 30, 2016, photo shows part of a food label that states the product "may contain traces of peanut and other tree nuts". — AP

FRANCE FINDS BIRD FLU ON FARM IN SETBACK FOR EXPORTS

PARIS: France reported a severe case of bird flu yesterday on a duck farm in the southwest, another setback for French poultry and foie gras exports which were hit by a similar outbreak a year ago. The H5N8 avian influenza virus was confirmed at a farm in the Tarn region, the agriculture ministry said, days after the virus was detected among wild birds in northern France and following outbreaks in Europe linked to migrating birds.

The H5N8 virus has never been detected in humans, unlike some other strains, but it led to the culling of millions of farm birds in Asia in 2014 before spreading to Europe. The new case means France, the European Union's biggest poultry breeder, will

not be able to regain for now its international status as being free of the highly pathogenic flu.

It had aimed to recover that status on Dec. 3 had no further cases been found, the ministry said in a statement. Now it won't be cleared for at least another 90 days, delaying a return to normal trade with countries such as Japan that imposed blanket bans on French poultry products during the previous wave of outbreaks. "The immediate consequence is regarding the bird flu-free status," Marie-Pierre Pe, spokeswoman for foie gras makers' group CIFOG, said. "This outbreak puts back by four months the possible reopening of trade barriers." — Reuters

BIGGEST TORNADO OUTBREAKS ARE SPAWNING MORE TWISTERS

WASHINGTON: The most extreme tornado outbreaks are mysteriously spawning many more twisters than they did decades ago, a new study claimed.

The once-every-five-years-or-so outbreak that might have involved 12 tornadoes 50 years ago now has on average about 20, said Columbia University applied physics professor Michael Tippet, lead author of the study in Thursday's journal *Science*.

The study comes in the end of a year that has been on track to have the fewest tornadoes on record, but is also on the heels of the outbreak Tuesday night and Wednesday morning that killed five people and injured at least 46 in Alabama and Tennessee — precisely the kind of outbreak Tippet studied.

As of now, there were 36 tornado reports Tuesday in Alabama, Tennessee, Mississippi and Louisiana, half of them were the stronger type Tippet studied, said meteorologist Patrick Marsh of the National Weather Service's Storm Prediction Center in Norman, Oklahoma.

Tippet and colleagues looked at just the most extreme outbreaks and tornadoes that are above the minimal wind rating and found a steady uptick in the biggest outbreaks since the mid-1960s. "Something's up," Tippet said. "The tornadoes that do occur are occurring in clusters. It's not any increase in the (total) number of tornadoes."

Marsh said until Tuesday's outbreak, there had been 830 tornadoes all year, which was below the previous low for that date of 920. The normal number through late November is closer to 1,300. While 2011 was one of the busiest tornado years for the size of twisters that Tippet studied, 2012 was one of the quietest, he said.

Unlike other spikes of extreme weather in recent years, Tippet and colleagues could not find the fingerprints of man-made global warming in the change. "It's not what we expected," Tippet said. "Either it's not climate change because not everything is, or it is some aspect of climate change we don't understand yet."

Eight outside experts were split about whether the study made sense. "This is really important step forward in the detection in the change of frequency of occurrence of these events," Stanford University professor Noah Diffenbaugh said.

But some of the other scientists said improved reporting and urban sprawl increases the number of recent tornadoes and negates some of the trend Tippet found. They also disagree with the particular type of measurements that Tippet used and some of his definitions. "It's a useful exercise," said Oklahoma University meteorology professor Howard Bluestein, "but I would be very, very careful in accepting it." — AP



ROSALIE, Alabama: In this Nov. 30, 2016, photo, Gregg Jefferey, left, and his son Tyler help a family friend clean up their business at Rosalie Plaza after a possible tornado ripped through the town. — AP



LES CAYES, Haiti: This file photo taken on October 15, 2016 shows UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visiting a shelter in the Lycee Phillippe Guerrier. — AFP

UN CHIEF BAN APOLOGIZES TO HAITIAN PEOPLE OVER CHOLERA EPIDEMIC

'WE SIMPLY DID NOT DO ENOUGH'

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Thursday apologized for the first time to the people of Haiti for the role played by the world body's peacekeepers in sparking a devastating cholera epidemic in the country.

"On behalf of the United Nations, I want to say very clearly we apologize to the Haitian people," he said three times in Haitian Creole, French and English to the UN General Assembly. "We simply did not do enough with regards to the cholera outbreak and its spread in Haiti," Ban said. "We are profoundly sorry for our role."

According to numerous independent experts, cholera was introduced to Haiti by infected Nepalese UN peacekeepers sent to the Caribbean country after the massive 2010 earthquake. Cholera, a disease that is transmitted through contaminated drinking water and causes acute diarrhea, is a major challenge in a country with poor sanitary conditions.

The cholera epidemic has claimed more than 9,000 lives in Haiti, the most impoverished country in the Americas, and infected 800,000 people. The United Nations reiterated its rejection of claims that it is also legally responsible for the damages from the health emergency. "We do not change our basic legal position," UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson told reporters.

Ban insisted the UN has "a moral responsibility to act." "This has cast a shadow upon the relationship between the United Nations and the people of Haiti," he said. "It is a blemish on the reputation of UN peacekeeping."

A 'new approach'

The UN chief also formally presented the 193-nation General Assembly with a "new approach," a two-pronged program to help the families of the cholera victims

and support the battle against the disease. The UN hopes the new proposal will raise \$400 million over two years, but funding for prior UN assistance to Haiti has been slow to arrive. Ban urged donors to finance the program. "On the scale of global humanitarian and development needs, limited sums are required to eliminate cholera in Haiti," he pleaded. "This mission is realistic and doable. Cholera is a treatable and preventable disease. It can be controlled and eliminated."

Since the outbreak of cholera in Haiti and the ensuing accusations against the UN peacekeepers, the United Nations has steadfastly argued its missions enjoy diplomatic immunity from prosecution. That immunity has been upheld by US courts in rejecting several lawsuits filed by victims seeking millions of dollars in damages for negligence.

To lift that immunity would jeopardize UN peacekeeping operations, Eliasson said. "This is a true apology," he said, adding that Ban "wanted to do it before the end of his term" on December 31.

Philip Alston, UN special rapporteur

on extreme poverty and human rights, said in an October report to the General Assembly that the UN's position "flouted the applicable international law" and "undermined the credibility of the organization."

In August, the UN recognized for the first time that it brought cholera to Haiti and had a "moral responsibility" toward the victims, promising material aid.

Two programs

Ban confirmed Thursday that two programs were planned, each costing \$200 million. One will strengthen the fight against the epidemic, which resurged after Hurricane Matthew devastated the country in early October, and improve the country's sanitary infrastructure.

Some 72 percent of Haitians have no toilets at home and 42 percent still lack access to drinking water, the UN says. The other program includes measures to prioritize aid to cholera victims and their families. It would support locally led projects, such as health care, micro-lending and education financing. — AFP

MASSACHUSETTS WOMAN SAYS DNA TESTS CONFIRM MOUNTAIN LION

PETERSHAM, Massachusetts: A Massachusetts woman whose horse was injured in June says DNA testing has confirmed that a mountain lion visited her property.

The cats are rare in Massachusetts. The state has confirmed just two reports in the past 20 years. Anne Marie Zukowski, of Petersham, tells *The Telegram & Gazette* her horse suffered two large gashes on its shoulder. State wildlife officials investigat-

ed and determined the horse was injured when it scraped against a gate latch, not in an animal attack.

Zukowski says she collected hair and blood samples from a fence on her property and sent it to Florida for testing. The geneticist who did the tests thinks the horse may have been frightened by a mountain lion.

Police say there have been no reported mountain lion sightings in town. — AP



COMMERCE CITY, Colorado: In this Monday, Oct 5, 2015, file photo, a black-footed ferret looks out of a crate used to take it to a site to be let loose during a release of 30 of the animals by the US Fish and Wildlife Service at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.—AP

RARE FERRETS SETTling IN, MAKING BABIES AT NEW COLORADO HOME

A YEAR IN A WILDLIFE REFUGE

DENVER: Dozens of slinky, ferocious and rare ferrets are settling in and making babies at their new home in Colorado, one year after they were released at a wildlife refuge outside Denver.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service counted 47 endangered black-footed ferrets last month at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge. That includes 20 out of the original 28 captive-born ferrets that were released there in 2015, a survival rate of 71 percent. "Seventy-one percent is phenomenal for survival," said Kimberly Fraser, an outreach specialist for the federal ferret program.

Searchers also found nearly two dozen ferrets that were born at the refuge - a promising sign for the campaign to bring the animals back from the brink of extinction. "Just seeing the first one is an amazing thing," said David Lucas, the refuge manager. "And to see another, and another, and another.... It was higher than we expected." Here's a look at black-footed ferrets and an update on the program to save them:

About black-footed ferrets

They are furry, weasel-like critters that grow up to 2 feet long and 21/2 pounds. They mainly eat prairie dogs. They're native to the West, from Canada to Mexico, but their numbers plummeted as prairie dogs were exterminated or died from plague, and ferret habitat was reduced by development. Black-footed ferrets were once thought to be extinct,

but a small colony was discovered in Wyoming in 1981. Researchers have been trying to restore the population since then. They're protected under the Endangered Species Act.

How many are left?

About 300 live in the wild at 28 reintroduction sites in Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Montana, New Mexico, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming, and in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan and the Mexican state of Chihuahua. Nine were released last week at Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota.

Another 300 captive-born ferrets are being prepared for release at six breeding centers. Black-footed ferrets have been released twice at Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Refuge, in October 2015 and September of this year. While the 2015 ferrets are doing well, teams found only five of 15 released this year. Researchers say they're not worried. The 2016 ferrets were released into the same prairie dog colony as the 2015 group because researchers didn't realize how many survivors were still there. Some newcomers might have moved to less crowded territory and eluded the counters last month, Lucas said.

How do you count ferrets?

Teams searched for 10 nights at the Colorado refuge last month, using lights to spot the telltale emerald reflection from the ferrets' night-vision eyes.

Once they located ferrets, searchers

placed elongated, burlap-covered traps over their burrows. Because the traps resembled part of the burrow, the naturally curious ferrets climbed in. Searchers could distinguish captive-born ferrets from those born at the refuge because ID chips were implanted in captive-born animals before their release.

The wild-born ferrets were vaccinated for plague, canine distemper and rabies, implanted with a chip and turned loose again. Captive-born ferrets had been vaccinated before they were originally released at the refuge.

How many is enough?

The Fish and Wildlife Service has a goal of 3,000 breeding adult ferrets in at least 30 populations in at least nine states. At the Rocky Mountain Arsenal refuge, the goal is about 77 to 120 ferrets, said Nick Kaczor, assistant manager of the refuge.

What's next

The Fish and Wildlife Service plans to release about 20 more ferrets at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal refuge, but no date has been set, Lucas said. The next release will be in a different part of the refuge.

If the refuge colony thrives, some ferrets born there could be moved to bolster populations in other states because they've shown they can survive in the wild. "Those wild-born ones, man, they were feisty, they were aggressive," Kaczor said. "You can tell they have that fighting instinct."—AP

MAGIC-MUSHROOM COMPOUND BOOSTS CANCER PATIENTS' MINDSET

MIAMI: Cancer patients often experience mental anguish and stress, but a single dose of a hallucinogen found in psychedelic mushrooms, along with psychological counseling, improved their mindset, two studies said Thursday.

The approach "significantly lessens mental anguish in distressed cancer patients for months at a time," said the findings in the *Journal of Psychopharmacology*. The first study, led by researchers at New York University's Langone Medical Center, involved 29 people who were given psilocybin, a naturally occurring component of so-called "magic mushrooms" that is an illegal drug in the United States.

All the people in the study had advanced cancers, whether involving the breasts, gastrointestinal tract or blood. They had also been diagnosed as suffering from serious psychological distress related to their disease. After their treatment, 80 percent experienced lasting relief from their distress for more than six months.

A similar study by researchers at Johns Hopkins University involving 51 patients also showed big improvements in anxiety and depression. Most patients said their quality of life improved, and they had more energy, better relationships with family members and were doing well at work. "Several also reported variations of spirituality, unusual peacefulness, and increased feelings of altruism," said NYU Langone in a statement.

"Our results represent the strongest evidence to date of a clinical benefit from psilocybin therapy, with the potential to transform care for patients with cancer-related psychological distress," said lead investigator Stephen Ross, director of substance-abuse services in psychiatry department at NYU Langone. "If larger clinical trials prove successful, then we could ultimately have available a safe, effective, and inexpensive medication-dispensed under strict control to alleviate the distress that increases suicide rates among cancer patients." —AFP

COMPUTER GAMES RELIEVE PHANTOM LIMB PAIN: STUDY

PARIS: Amputees who played computer games using a virtual, on-screen arm, experienced relief from the phantom pain that often afflicts people who have lost a limb, scientists said yesterday. Fourteen amputees who took part in a trial reported dramatic pain reduction after 12 sessions which saw them "using" their missing arm in virtual reality.

Patients reported a near 50-percent reduction in pain duration, frequency and intensity, according to a study published in *The Lancet* medical journal. "The results from our study suggest that it may be useful to 'exercise' the phantom limb," said study lead author Max Ortiz Catalan of the Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden.

People who have lost an arm or leg often report pain where the limb used to be—sometimes years after the amputation and often severe enough to affect their quality of life and mental health. Phantom limb pain occurs when nerve endings at the amputation site continue sending pain signals to the brain, making it think the limb is still there.

There are few effective treatments. One existing method involves the patient use their remaining arm while looking in a mirror to make it appear to the brain, in the reflection, as if it is the missing arm moving. It does not always work and cannot be used by double amputees. The virtual reality therapy is based on a similar premise. It makes the patient "move" the lost arm to perform certain on-screen tasks, including steering a video game car.

The patients see themselves on the screen with a virtual arm where their real limb used to be, and see it move as they control it with their mind—effectively bringing the aching phantom arm to life. The participants had electrodes attached to their stumps to register the signals sent to the brain. The method "allows the patient to reactivate areas of the brain that were used to move the arm before it was amputated, the university said in a statement. "No other existing treatment for phantom limb pain generates such a reactivation of these areas of the brain," it added.

The treatment would not be suitable for patients with nerve injuries or those who cannot move their stumps, the authors noted.—AFP

CALIFORNIA HOSPITALS TAKE OBESITY FIGHT TO SUPERMARKETS

WILL WHAT I BUY BE HEALTHY?

IRVINE: Enter a US supermarket and the dilemma is all-too common: Will what I buy be healthy? Fattening? A substitute? That's when many wish they had a specialist at their side. "Shop with Your Doc," a program organized by a network of hospitals in California, aims to help with that, stationing doctors and nutritionists in supermarkets to aid customers in navigating food choices in a country where a third of the population is obese.

Chih-I Lee, shopping in a supermarket in the city of Irvine, admits that she has a weakness for fizzy soft drinks but assures that her three children do not drink them and they eat all their vegetables. Sara Foronda worries about diabetes, which runs in her family, and struggles to look away from alluring cookies on display. Mike Keegan wants to buy organic products but sometimes they are too expensive so he takes home substitutes. All are pushing shopping carts at a supermarket in the small city of 260,000 residents located about 37 miles (60 kilometers) southeast of Los Angeles.

And suddenly they cross paths with a white coat-clad woman. She is Monica Doherty, a nurse specialized in family medicine. "We are educating consumers on healthy options to help them maximize their health," said Doherty, all the while clarifying consumers' misconceptions and giving advice including recipes. Substitute mashed potatoes with cauliflower puree, for example, or sweet soft drinks with carbonated water, no sugar added, she suggested. That is valuable advice to shoppers making their way down aisles crammed with mouth-water-

ing temptations, much of it processed and packaged.

Nutrition training

Obesity is an epidemic in the United States, affecting 32.6 percent of the population, according to the World Health Organization, and 36.5 percent, according to the US government. Although California has a relatively lower incidence, at 24.2 percent, Orange County, where Irvine is located, has an alarming rate: six out of 10 adults there are obese. "Obesity many times is multifactorial, and poor choices in the grocery store is one piece of it," said Richard Afable, the doctor who is chief executive and president of St. Joseph Hoag Health, in an interview.

St Joseph Hoag Health has been organizing these "Shop with Your Doc" days for three years now, and usually holds them during the holiday season when people tend to throw dietary caution to the wind. The program aims to indirectly fight obesity by being focused on education, "almost training in nutrition," Afable said.

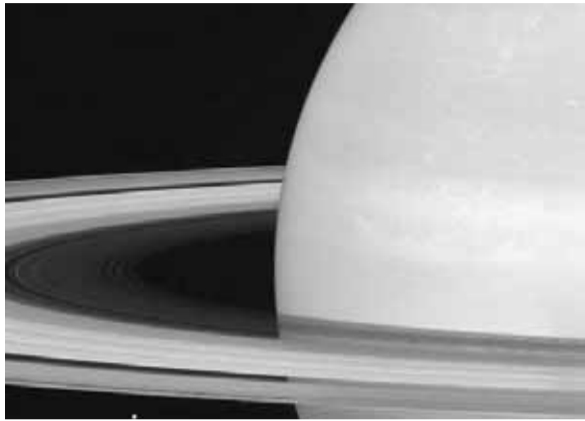
Similar programs have sprung up in other states, such as Arizona and Pennsylvania, and some of the major supermarket chains employ nutritionists. At the Irvine supermarket, the fight for healthier eating begins at the entrance, where a smiling Marina Sarwary offers to take customers' blood pressure. And while the cuff tightens and the reading is registered, she offers dietary recommendations. Doherty, meanwhile, is in the aisles, escorted by Jai Coutra, a program employee whose job is to hand out com-

plimentary bags with brochures and a container and spoon to help teach healthy eating. "Trying to encourage you to look at the balance in your diet: eating whole grain and avoiding processed food, less sugar, taking away the sodium," he told Foronda in the vegetables section.

The 40-year-old stay-at home mother, fearing diabetes, said it was difficult to stay away from sweets. "It's hard because you go up and down the aisle and you see cookies and I try to get away from the cookies, I get an apple, or yogurt with berries," she said.

Real cost

"They are saying 'eat a little smarter, little bit healthier' and I'm already there, looking at labels-before I never used to do that," said Keegan, 56, a computer warehouse manager. Healthy food is more expensive, especially in the United States where the government subsidizes crops like corn and soybeans, key ingredients in junk food. Getting people to eat better is part of a big socioeconomic problem, according to experts. "We too often confuse affordable food with cheap food," wrote Mark Bittman, a food journalist who is a fellow at the Union of Concerned Scientists, a non-profit science advocacy group, in his blog. The long-term solution "starts with making sure that every American has enough money to buy good food at its real cost," said Bittman, a former columnist for The New York Times. To do that, he said, would require food policy that encourages agriculture at its true cost, helping the 14 percent of the US workforce whose livelihoods depend on producing that food. — AFP



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MARRAKECH, Morocco: Members of International delegations pose for a group photo outside the COP22 climate conference on yesterday, in Marrakesh. —AFP photos

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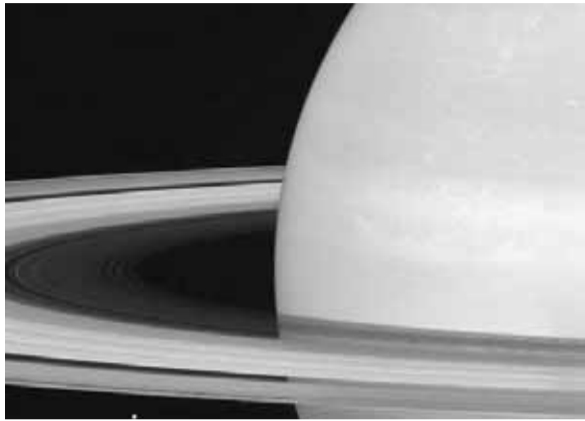
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Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
وفهد علي المخيزيم



Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY

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| SHARQIA-1 TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA | 11:30 AM 1:30 PM 3:45 PM 6:00 PM 8:15 PM 10:30 PM 12:45 AM | FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM ARRIVAL | 9:30 PM 12:15 AM |
| SHARQIA-3 FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM ALLIED ALLIED FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM ALLIED ALLIED | 11:30 AM 2:15 PM 4:45 PM 7:15 PM 10:00 PM 12:30 AM | AVENUES-1 TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA GHOST COINS TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA GHOST COINS | 11:45 AM 2:00 PM 4:15 PM 6:30 PM 8:45 PM 11:00 PM 1:15 AM |
| MUHALAB-1 TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA ARRIVAL DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM ARRIVAL | 11:30 AM 1:45 PM 4:00 PM 6:30 PM 9:30 PM 12:15 AM | AVENUES-2 FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM -3D -4DX 12:15 PM FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM -3D -4DX 3:00 PM FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM -3D -4DX 5:45 PM FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM -3D -4DX 8:30 PM FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM -3D -4DX 11:15 PM | |
| MUHALAB-2 ALLIED TROLLS ALLIED ARRIVAL ALLIED ALLIED | 12:30 PM 3:00 PM 5:00 PM 7:45 PM 10:15 PM 12:45 AM | AVENUES-3 DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi | 11:30 AM 2:30 PM 5:30 PM 8:30 PM 11:30 PM |
| MUHALAB-3 TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA | 12:45 PM 3:00 PM 5:15 PM 7:30 PM 9:45 PM 12:05 AM | AVENUES-4 TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA AE DIL HAI MUSHKIL -Hindi TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA | 12:30 PM 2:45 PM 5:00 PM 8:00 PM 10:15 PM 12:30 AM |
| FANAR-1 ARRIVAL FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM ARRIVAL ARRIVAL GHOST COINS ARRIVAL | 11:45 AM 2:15 PM 5:00 PM 7:30 PM 10:00 PM 12:05 AM | AVENUES-5 DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi ALLIED FRI FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi ALLIED | 1:00 PM 1:30 PM 4:00 PM 6:45 PM 9:45 PM 12:45 AM |
| FANAR-2 ALLIED ALLIED ALLIED FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM ALLIED ALLIED | 11:30 AM 2:00 PM 4:30 PM 7:00 PM 9:45 PM 12:15 AM | 360° 1 ALLIED ALLIED ALLIED ALLIED ALLIED ALLIED | 11:30 AM 2:00 PM 4:30 PM 7:00 PM 9:30 PM 12:05 AM |
| FANAR-3 DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi AE DIL HAI MUSHKIL -Hindi DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi | 11:45 AM 2:45 PM 5:45 PM 8:45 PM 11:45 PM | 360° 2 TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA | 12:45 PM 3:00 PM 5:15 PM 7:30 PM 9:45 PM 12:05 AM |
| FANAR-4 TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA | 1:00 PM 3:30 PM 5:45 PM 8:00 PM 10:15 PM 12:30 AM | 360° 3 THE WHOLE WORLD AT OUR FEET ECHOES OF WAR THE WHOLE WORLD AT OUR FEET ECHOES OF WAR THE WHOLE WORLD AT OUR FEET ECHOES OF WAR THE WHOLE WORLD AT OUR FEET | 11:30 AM 1:30 PM 3:45 PM 6:00 PM 8:15 PM 10:30 PM 12:45 AM |
| FANAR-5 TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA NO FRI+SAT TROLLS FRI+SAT TROLLS TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA | 11:30 AM 2:00 PM 2:00 PM 4:30 PM 6:30 PM 9:00 PM 11:30 PM | AL-KOUT.1 TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA | 12:45 PM 3:00 PM 5:15 PM 7:30 PM 9:45 PM 12:05 AM |
| MARINA-1 ALLIED ALLIED TROLLS ALLIED ALLIED ALLIED | 12:15 PM 2:45 PM 5:30 PM 7:30 PM 10:00 PM 12:30 AM | AL-KOUT.2 ALLIED ALLIED ALLIED ALLIED ALLIED | 12:30 PM 3:15 PM 5:45 PM 8:00 PM 10:15 PM 12:45 AM |
| MARINA-2 TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA | 12:45 PM 3:00 PM 5:15 PM 7:30 PM 9:45 PM 12:05 AM | AL-KOUT.3 ARRIVAL FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM ARRIVAL FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM ARRIVAL ARRIVAL | 11:30 AM 2:00 PM 4:45 PM 7:15 PM 10:00 PM 12:30 AM |
| MARINA-3 ARRIVAL FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM ARRIVAL ARRIVAL | 11:30 AM 1:45 PM 4:30 PM 7:00 PM | AL-KOUT.4 TAHT AL TARABEZA TAHT AL TARABEZA NO FRI+SAT TROLLS FRI+SAT TROLLS | 11:45 AM 2:00 PM 2:00 PM 4:30 PM |

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Fakhruddin holder of Indian Passport No. K-3650949 & Civil ID No. 281112702289 has changed my name from Hakim Fakhruddin Ikhlas to Hakimuddin Gakher hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Hakimuddin Gakher. (C 5244)

I, Mohan Lal Jangir old name S/o Omkar Mal Jangir holder of Indian Passport No. M8397095 and Civil ID No. 268020305095 has changed my from Mohan Lal Jangir to Mahaveer Prasad Jangir hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known

by name of Mahaveer Prasad Jangir. (C 5242)

I, Daba Peer Kolata S/o Kolata Meah Saheb holder of Indian Passport No. J-3963274 & Civil ID No. 281042501712 has changed my name from Daba Peer Kolata to Shaik Kolata Dadapeer hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Shaik Kolata Dadapeer. (C 5243)

SITUATION VACANT

Driver needed for Kuwaiti family part-time or full-time. Contact: 60623330 (C 5245) 2-12-2016

Hospitals

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Sabah Hospital | 24812000 |
| Amiri Hospital | 22450005 |
| Maternity Hospital | 24843100 |
| Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital | 25312700 |
| Chest Hospital | 24849400 |
| Farwaniya Hospital | 24892010 |
| Adan Hospital | 23940620 |
| Ibn Sina Hospital | 24840300 |
| Al-Razi Hospital | 24846000 |
| Physiotherapy Hospital | 24874330/9 |

Clinics

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Rabiya | 24732263 |
| Rawdha | 22517733 |
| Adailiya | 22517144 |
| Khaldiya | 24848075 |
| Khaifan | 24849807 |
| Shamiya | 24848913 |
| Shuwaikh | 24814507 |
| Abdullah Salim | 22549134 |
| Al-Nuzha | 22526804 |
| Industrial Shuwaikh | 24814764 |
| Al-Qadisiya | 22515088 |
| Dasmah | 22532265 |
| Bneid Al-Ghar | 22531908 |
| Al-Shaab | 22518752 |
| Al-Kibla | 22459381 |
| Ayoun Al-Kibla | 22451082 |
| Mirqab | 22456536 |
| Sharq | 22465401 |
| Salmiya | 25746401 |
| Jabriya | 25316254 |

Prayer timings

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Fajr: | 05:02 |
| Shorook | 06:26 |
| Duhr: | 11:38 |
| Asr: | 14:30 |
| Maghrib: | 16:49 |
| Isha: | 18:11 |



WORDSEARCH PUZZLE

Elvis

Find and circle all of the words, names, songs, and movies that have to do with Elvis. The remaining letters spell a line from an Elvis song.

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

- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| AARON | GOOD LUCK CHARM | LITTLE SISTER | STUCK ON YOU |
| ALL SHOOK UP | GOSPEL | LOVE ME TENDER | SUN RECORDS |
| BLUE HAWAII | GRACELAND | MEMPHIS | SURRENDER |
| BURNING LOVE | GYRATING | ONE NIGHT | SUSPICIOUS MINDS |
| CLAMBAKE | HEARTBREAK HOTEL | PRISCILLA | THE KING |
| COLONEL PARKER | HOUD DOG | RCA | TOO MUCH |
| DON'T BE CRUEL | IN THE GHETTO | RETURN TO SENDER | TUPELO |
| DRAFTED | JAILHOUSE ROCK | ROCKABILLY | U.S. ARMY |
| G.I. BLUES | KENTUCKY RAIN | ROUSTABOUT | VERNON |
| GIRL HAPPY | KING CREOLE | SHE'S NOT YOU | VIVA LAS VEGAS |
| GLADYS | LISA MARIE | | |

Yesterday's Solution

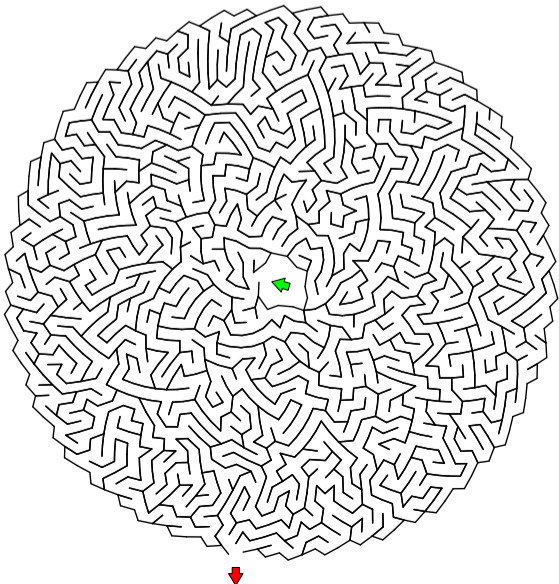
Spring

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

- | | | |
|------------|------------|-----------------|
| ALLERGIES | FROGS | RAIN |
| APRIL | GOLF | RENEWAL |
| BASEBALL | GRASS | ROBINS |
| BEEES | GREEN | SEASON |
| CROCUSES | GROWTH | SNOWMELT |
| CYCLAMENS | IRISES | SOFTBALL |
| DAFFODILS | LILIES | SPRING BREAK |
| DANDELIONS | MARCH | SPRING CLEANING |
| EASTER | MAY | TULIPS |
| EQUINOX | NEW LEAVES | WARMER |
| FLOWERS | PLANTING | WET |

The hidden sentence is: APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS

CHALLENGING MAZE



CROSSWORD 1449

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
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| 18 | | | | 19 | | | | | | | 20 | | |
| 21 | | | | | | 22 | | | | 23 | | | |
| 24 | | | | 25 | | 26 | | | 27 | 28 | | | |
| 29 | 30 | | | | | 31 | | | | 32 | | 33 | 34 |
| 35 | 36 | | 37 | 38 | | | | | 39 | | 40 | | |
| 41 | | | 42 | | | 43 | 44 | 45 | | | 46 | | |
| 47 | | 48 | | 49 | 50 | | | | | 51 | | | |
| 52 | | | | 53 | | | | | | | 54 | | |
| 55 | | | 56 | | | | 57 | | | | 58 | | |
| 59 | | | | 60 | 61 | | | | 62 | | 63 | 64 | 65 |
| 66 | 67 | 68 | | 69 | | | 70 | | 71 | | | | |
| 72 | | | | 73 | | 74 | | | 75 | | | 76 | |
| 77 | | | | 78 | 79 | | | | | | | 80 | |
| 81 | | | | 82 | | | | | | | | | 83 |

ACROSS

- Mentally or physically infirm with age.
- Changed in order to improve or made more fit for a particular purpose.
- An enclosed space.
- (Norse mythology) Goddess of old age who defeated Thor in a wrestling match.
- A Bantu language spoken in the coastal regions of eastern Kenya.
- Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
- The habitation of wild animals.
- Of heavy boots.
- The cry made by sheep.
- A four-wheeled wagon that runs on tracks in a mine.
- An extension at the end and at right angles to the main building.
- A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
- Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
- (used of count nouns) Every one considered individually.
- Minor or subordinate.
- The distinctive form in which a thing is made.
- Date used in reckoning dates before the supposed year Christ was born.
- A member of a North American people formerly living in the Colorado river valley in Arizona.
- A Kwa language spoken by the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- An informal term for a father.
- A river in eastern France.
- Owed and payable immediately or on demand.
- Short and fat.
- Large northern deer with enormous flattened antlers in the male.
- Indian religious leader who founded Sikhism (1469-1538).
- Capital of the state of Oregon in the northwestern part of the state on the Willamette River.
- A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
- The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
- (botany) Especially of leaves.
- A sharply directional antenna.
- An inactive volcano in Sicily.
- Shrubby tree widely distributed along tropical shores.
- The ossicle between the malleus and the stapes.
- Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
- A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
- Freedom to deviate deliberately from normally applicable rules or practices (especially in behavior or speech).
- A worthless lazy fellow.
- Of flax, hemp, or jute, so as to promote loosening of the fibers from the woody tissue.
- Read or interpret wrongly.

83. The inner and longer of the two bones of the human forearm.

DOWN

- Informal terms for money.
- (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
- Of or relating to neuroglia.
- Letters and packages that are transported by aircraft.
- The ninth month of the Hindu calendar.
- A picture (or series of pictures) representing a continuous scene.
- Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
- Relating to the pineal body.
- An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
- The boy whose upbringing was described by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
- A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
- A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
- The sixth month of the civil year.
- A boy or man.
- Submit or yield to another's wish or opinion.
- A low-lying region of west central France on the Bay of Biscay.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- Japanese mathematical physicist who proposed that nuclear forces are mediated by massive particles called mesons which are analogous to the photon in mediating electromagnetic forces (1907-1981).
- A brief description given for purposes of identification.
- Bottle that has a narrow neck.
- American poet (born in England) (1907-1973).
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- (football) Of advancing the ball by throwing it.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
- Type genus of the Anatidae.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- (of tempo) Leisurely n.
- Sports that involve bodies of water.
- Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
- Unknown god.
- A mountain in the Himalayas in Nepal (27,790 feet high).
- Located inward.
- A white powder with a pleasant taste and odor.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- A woody climbing usually tropical plant.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- Stairway in India leading down to a landing on the water.
- An inflammatory disease involving the sebaceous glands of the skin.
- Employed in accomplishing something.
- Any of various trees of the genus Ulmus.
- Fiddler crabs.
- Being one more than one.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

DODT HOLDS HALFWAY LEAD IN AUSTRALIAN PGA

GOLD COAST: Australia's Andrew Dodt fired a five-under 67 to hold a two-shot halfway lead in the Australian PGA Championship with Adam Scott making his move at the Royal Pines Resort yesterday.

Overnight leader Dodt fought his way to the top of the leader board after Ashley Hall carded a three-under 69 to be the early clubhouse leader.

Dodt holed six birdies and a bogey in the lowest round of the day to get to 12 under and lead at the halfway stage of the European Tour co-sanctioned event. World number seven and 2013 US Masters cham-

pion Adam Scott surged home in 32 for a second consecutive round of 68 to be at eight under and four strokes behind Dodt.

New Zealander Ryan Fox was in joint third with Scott after a three-under 69 and a shot clear of American Harold Varner III, who carded a par 72. Dodt, who has made just seven of 20 cuts this season, is chasing his third European Tour title.

"The first handful of holes were really solid then I made a few birdies," Dodt said. "Then the back nine was as good as it gets. I hit a lot of fairways, a lot of greens and holed some putts." Hall made birdies on

the 12th, 14th, 15th and last in his remaining seven holes while Varner's birdie-birdie finish to complete his weather-delayed first round lifted him to the top of the leaderboard with Dodt. Hall added a hat-trick of gains from the 13th and when he made another birdie on the third, he was four shots clear. A triple-bogey was to follow on the next hole as he found the water and missed a short putt before recovering with birdies on the fifth and eighth.

Scott made a slow start, bogeying the second but he got back level on the ninth and that proved a catalyst as he came

home in at 32, adding birdies on the tenth, 12th, 15th and 16th.

"It was a good day to do it because it wasn't that easy," Scott said. "My striking was crisp at the ball. It was strong. I started driving the ball properly and it carried onto the rest of my game as well."

Varner battled back from back-to-back double-bogeys on the 15th and 16th with three birdies in his last five holes to sit a shot ahead of Australian John Senden and fellow American Julian Suri. Greg Chalmers, Brad Kennedy and Thailand's Natipong Srithong were at five under. — AFP

IOC GIVES BACKING TO TOKYO'S WARRING FACTIONS

TOKYO: The International Olympic Committee (IOC) yesterday predicted that bickering 2020 Tokyo Games organisers will come together to produce a workable budget as costs threaten to spiral out of control.

IOC vice president John Coates, who heads the coordination commission for the Tokyo Olympics, insisted Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike and local organising committee head Yoshiro Mori could find common ground despite clashing over proposed venue changes.

"Yes, I'm confident that governor Koike and president Mori and the two organisations that they lead can work together," Coates told a news conference after concluding a two-day visit to Tokyo.

"They wouldn't have participated in the four-party political working group could they not."

Koike and IOC president Thomas Bach last month agreed to hold discussions involving the IOC, local organisers, the Tokyo metropolitan government and the Japanese central government to explore ways to save money.

Warnings that ballooning costs could hit a staggering \$30 billion-four times the initial estimate, and almost triple that of the 2012 London Olympics-have cast a shadow over Tokyo's preparations.

But a pledge this week by Japanese organisers to put an \$18 billion cap on the overall costs did not go far enough, according to Coates. "The IOC are not in a position yet to accept a budget of \$20 billion," he said. "This was a ceiling budget, a consolidated budget. The IOC just isn't going to sign off on a budget which we think exceeds the cost of the budget the Games can be staged for."

SNOWBALLING COSTS

Coates warned that Tokyo's snowballing costs could scare off potential host cities considering bids for future Olympics.

"(Accepting such a budget) would be giving the wrong impression," he said. "It would also not help us in terms of other candidate cities prospectively so there is still work to be done. 'It's clear we all have a common objective of saving costs.' Koike earlier this week dropped a proposal to move the 2020 Olympic canoeing venue outside Tokyo, promising instead to cut construction costs on that and another facility.

Her proposal would have taken the event 400 kilometres (250 miles) north of Tokyo to Miyagi prefecture, one of the areas hardest hit by Japan's 2011 tsunami disaster.

The idea was shot down by Mori and Tokyo 2020 organisers, who argued that such a move was impractical and could even increase costs.

Asked about her apparent climb-down, Koike gave a cryptic reason for escalating costs. "Look, in the end the taxpayer will end up footing the bill and I have a responsibility to them," she said. "There are lots of black-headed mice involved here," she added, in a veiled reference to the failure to curb costs.

Koike also said Tokyo will build a new aquatic centre with 15,000 seats costing less than the original plan for a 20,000-seat arena. However, a decision on whether to build a new volleyball venue in Tokyo or use an existing one in Yokohama, south of the capital, was postponed until later this month. — AFP



NASSAU: Tiger Woods of the United States hits a shot from a greenside bunker on the 14th hole during round one of the Hero World Challenge at Albany, The Bahamas on Thursday in Nassau, Bahamas. — AFP

TIGER FIRES ONE-OVER 73 IN RETURN FROM 16-MONTH LAYOFF

NASSAU: Showing flashes of the form that made him a 14-time major champion before stumbling late, Tiger Woods fired a one-over-par 73 Thursday at the Hero World Challenge in his long-awaited return to competition.

Woods, who has missed 16 months following back surgery, made three consecutive birdies to share the lead at four under after his first eight holes of the 18-man invitational event he hosts in the Bahamas.

But Woods went five over from there and a closing double bogey left him nine strokes adrift of leader J.B. Holmes.

"All in all, I felt pretty good," Woods said. "It could have been something really good. I hit the ball in three bushes and a water (hazard). Got it going sideways."

Fomer world number one Woods, who has fallen to 898th in the rankings, birdied the par-5 third and sixth, par-4 seventh and par-3 eighth holes at 7,302-yard Albany Golf Club in his first competitive round since August 2015. On the par-5 ninth, the course's longest hole at 603 yards, Woods sent his tee shot into tall weeds and sand left of the fairway, botched a chip and took the first bogey of his comeback.

"I didn't play the par-5s very well in the middle part of the round and consequently got it going the wrong way," Woods said.

Another par-5 bogey came at 11 and while Woods birdied the par-5 15th, he found a double-bogey disaster at the par-4 16th and pulled his tee shot into the water to set up his woes at the last.

"Let a good round slip away at the end," Woods said. "Some bushes and some rocks and it can go sideways." Woods was 17th in the field and will play in the first pairing Friday alongside Rio Olympic champion Justin Rose of England, who shot 74.

Woods played Thursday alongside fellow American Patrick Reed in often windy conditions to end his longest career layoff after 466 days. Clad in black shirt, pants, cap and shoes, Woods found the left rough on his first shot but put his approach 15 feet from the hole and tapped in for an opening par. By then, surprisingly, Woods found himself into a rhythm, saying the best part of the day was "how quickly I got into the competitive flow of the round."

"By the time I hit my second tee shot, I found the flow of the round. That came pretty fast after not playing for 16 months."

Woods went over a raised green at the par-5 third hole but chipped to 18 inches and tapped in for his comeback's first birdie. Revealing a bald spot on the back of his head when removing his cap to wipe sweat, Woods appeared fit and swung with

comfort and ease.

Woods sank eight-foot birdie putts at the par-5 sixth and par-4 seventh and followed with a two-foot birdie putt at the par-3 eighth before his bogey at nine, a hole he eagled in a pro-am Wednesday.

DOUBLE BOGEYS SPELLED DOOM

Woods found sand left and right of the fairway at the par-5 11th and took a bogey. At the par-3 12th, Woods made a tense four-foot par putt. At 14, he found greenside sand and then a bunker but escaped with par after making a 15-foot putt, pumping his right fist even before the ball fell. At the par-5 15th, Woods gave himself a 10-foot eagle putt but rolled it two feet past the cup and settled for birdie.

But double bogey sixes at 16 and 18 doomed what could have been a solid round. A poor iron shot at 16 found sandy weeds and he found water off the 18th tee then hit the flagstick on his par chip.

Woods blamed his poor finish on errors, not fatigue. "I just made some really silly mistakes, mistakes I don't normally make, but I haven't played in a while," he said. "I can clean that up. We've got three more days. Wind's supposed to pump on the weekend and I'll be playing a little bit better." — AFP

AUSTRALIA COACH LOOKS TO DEFUSE MAXWELL-WADE ROW

SYDNEY: Australia coach Darren Lehmann is to hold clear-the-air talks ahead of the one-day series against New Zealand after recalled all-rounder Glenn Maxwell criticised wicketkeeper Matt Wade. Maxwell said on Thursday that he had been disappointed at some of the decisions by Wade, his captain in the Victoria state side, to bat ahead of him in matches this year. "I think the wicketkeeper should be batting at seven unless you're trying to squeeze an extra bowler into your lineup," Maxwell said on Thursday.

When asked why Wade had batted ahead of him, Maxwell replied: "Because he's captain, and he chooses the batting order." Lehmann said he would speak to power-hitting Maxwell to try and resolve the issue.

"Yeah, we will (speak about it)," Lehmann told reporters at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Friday. "Obviously disappointed but we'll work through those issues. It's difficult but again we'll work through it behind the scenes.

"We're confident they can work together." Maxwell, who was dropped from the Australian team after failing to post any substantial scores in the previous 12 months, has said he would like to push for a recall to the test side for next year's tour of India. His batting, however, had not even made him an option for the just completed third test against South Africa, where Australia overhauled their side in an effort to shake them out of a slump, the coach said.

"(He) hasn't made a hundred for two years," Lehmann added. "Are you going to pick a bloke who hasn't made a hundred in two years?" Victoria batsman Rob Quiney had some blunt advice for his team mate Maxwell. "I think he just needs to lip it and just make some runs," Quiney told EON Sports radio on Friday.—Reuters



OAKLAND: Golden State Warriors' Kevin Durant (35) falls onto Houston Rockets' Patrick Beverley during the second half of an NBA basketball game Thursday, in Oakland, Calif. Houston won 132-127 in double overtime. —AP

ROOT BACKS COOK TO CONTINUE AS CAPTAIN

MUMBAI: Joe Root expects Alastair Cook to continue to lead England for "a few years to come" amid rising speculation on the future of the 31-year-old as test captain. The left-handed opening batsman triggered doubts about his captaincy when he told the Cricketer magazine that he did not know "how much longer I am going to carry on. It could be two months, it could be a year".

He was forced to clarify his comments on the eve of the opening test of the five-match series against India at Rajkot and said he was doing the job on a series-by-series basis. But with England trailing 2-0 after three tests, Cook's future has come under renewed speculation. The 25-year-old Root is England's best batsman, vice-captain and seen as a natural successor to Cook, who had to leave his newborn daughter and family behind in October for a test series in Bangladesh.

Root said he had seen no indication from his captain to suggest he was contemplating giving up the job and said the team's batsmen had let their skipper down. "I think he is coping all right," Root said of Cook. "He's very professional and you don't really get much from him in that respect. I imagine it must be quite tough being away from a new child and family and everything. "You could put a lot of blame on Cooky but actually it is the responsibility of the batters to make those big scores. You can blame whoever you want, but we have to take responsibility for our own game." Cook, who surpassed Michael Atherton's England record of 54 matches as test captain after the first test in Rajkot, replaced Andrew Strauss as skipper in 2012.

He has led England to 24 victories, including a 2-1 series win over India the last time they toured the South Asian country in 2012.

"I think he is pretty set on captaining for a few years to come and I hope he does because I think he is a brilliant leader and I've really enjoyed playing under him," Root said. "I'm quite happy with the role I'm playing at the moment and genuinely, honestly I think he is the right man. "I hope we get these results we want in the last two games, and we can put right what has been quite a frustrating last couple of weeks."

Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium will host the penultimate test of the series from Thursday, while the final test will be played in Chennai from Dec. 16. — Reuters

HARDEN, ROCKETS SNAP WARRIORS' 12 GAME WIN STREAK IN 2 OTs

OAKLAND: James Harden notched his fourth triple-double of the season with 29 points, 15 rebounds and 13 assists, and the Houston Rockets outlasted the Warriors 132-127 in double overtime Thursday night to end Golden State's 12-game winning streak. Harden put his team ahead on a 30-footer with 3:12 left in the second overtime and hit a pair of free throws with 2:10 to go following a flagrant foul on Draymond Green. Eric Gordon followed Harden's free throws with a floating jumper and scored 23 off the bench as Houston snapped an eight-game skid to the Warriors, who lost MVP Stephen Curry with 3:25 left in the last extra session when he was whistled for a charge. Ryan Anderson also scored 29 with five 3-pointers and the teams combined to shoot 88 3s, 44 apiece. Kevin Durant matched his season high with 39 points to go with 13 rebounds. Green had 20 points, 15 rebounds and nine assists. Curry scored his team's first six points in the initial overtime and finished with 28 points and five assists.

CLIPPERS 113, CAVALIERS 94

J.J. Redick scored 23 points, Blake Griffin matched a career high with 11 assists and Los Angeles bounced back from a brutal loss with a victory over Cleveland, which has lost two straight for the first time as defending NBA champion. Chris Paul scored 16 and DeAndre Jordan had 15 rebounds for the Clippers, who blew an 18 point lead and fell in double

overtime at Brooklyn on Tuesday. Los Angeles took control with a 13-2 run to open the third quarter. Kyrie Irving scored 28 and LeBron James 16 for the Cavs, who were outplayed for the second game in a row. Cleveland lost at Milwaukee on Tuesday, when coach Tyronn Lue pulled his starters in the second half and J.R. Smith wandered off the floor during play and gave up an easy basket.

HORNETS 97, MAVERICKS 87

Kemba Walker scored 18 points and Charlotte beat Dallas for its third win in the last four games. Michael Kidd-Gilchrist added 14 points and Jeremy Lamb had 12 off the bench for the Hornets, who remained in first place in the Southeast Division. Harrison Barnes scored 17 points and Justin Anderson added 15 for the Mavericks, who have lost 10 of their last 11 games. The Hornets led by two when Walker drained a long 3-pointer to beat the shot clock with 3:51 to give his team the spark it needed. Lamb followed with a driving layup that resulted in a three-point play to push the lead to 86-78. The Mavs would battle back behind Barnes to cut the lead to three, but Lamb hit two free throws and Walker buried a 3-pointer from the right wing with 41 seconds left.

GRIZZLIES 95, MAGIC 94

Marc Gasol scored 25 points, including a pair of free throws with 12.2 seconds remaining to give Memphis a victory over Orlando.

Gasol's free throws completed a 14-point comeback in the fourth quarter as Memphis snapped a two-game losing streak. Troy Daniels finished with 19 points for the short-handed Grizzlies, who dressed nine players due to injuries. Andrew Harrison had 11 points and eight assists. Evan Fournier scored 28 points for the Magic, while Nikola Vucevic had 18 points and 11 rebounds. Jeff Green scored 12 of his 14 points early in the fourth as Orlando built a double-digit lead.

BUCKS 111, NETS 93

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 23 points, eight rebounds and eight assists, Jabari Parker scored 22 points and Milwaukee beat Brooklyn. Malcolm Brogdon and Tony Snell each added 13 points for the Bucks, who followed their impressive victory over Cleveland with their third straight win. Brook Lopez scored 15 points, Sean Kilpatrick had 14 and Bojan Bogdanovic added 13 for the Nets, who outlasted the Los Angeles Clippers in overtime on Tuesday and were trying to win consecutive games for the first time this season. The Bucks continued their dominance of the Nets since Jason Kidd left Brooklyn for the Milwaukee coaching job. Milwaukee led by one in the third quarter when the Bucks went on a 14-2 run to go up 77-64. Milwaukee took a 90-78 lead into the fourth quarter, led by Antetokounmpo's 11 points in the third, and never looked back. — AP

WENGER DEFENDS ARSENAL TREATMENT OF CROCKED CAZORLA

LONDON: Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger has defended the club's handling of Santi Cazorla after it emerged that the midfielder could miss a further three months because of impending ankle surgery. The 31-year-old's Achilles problem had already sidelined the Spain international for nine games. Wenger said last week he hope Cazorla would be back in a fortnight and there was further bad news yesterday for the veteran French manager when it was announced that full-back Mathieu Debuchy could be out for six weeks with a "severe" hamstring injury.

Asked if he had any regrets over Arsenal's treatment of Cazorla, Wenger replied: "No I don't because we always liaise with Santi's people and he is treated

the way we wanted him to be treated.

"It is always very sensitive. Bone inflammation, you never know how long it will last. For me it's very bad news. You always know the date of the surgery but never the date where the player will play again.

"I always try to put absolutely everything in place to avoid surgery because it creates anxiety and rehab. When you can avoid it, you have to avoid it.

"In this case, unfortunately we have come to that conclusion. Now they tell me that he will be out for two months at least but two months can sometimes be three as well. "What's going wrong is that he has an inflammation at the back of his foot. The anti-inflammatory injections have not got rid of it. The surgeon decided to have an

exploratory surgery-that means open and see what's going on in there."

Arsenal, currently three points adrift of Premier League leaders and London rivals Chelsea, do have alternative midfield options in Francis Coquelin, Aaron Ramsey, Mohamed Elneny and Granit Xhaka, with Wenger saying he had no plans to seek a replacement for Cazorla during the January transfer window.

"Not really, no," said Wenger. "In midfield we have many players. There are two reasons-first of all we have the number and the quality and secondly, in the January transfer market, you will not necessarily find a Cazorla, even if you wanted to.

"Santi is desperate to play football. He's only happy on the football pitch. I've spo-

ken to him, of course. He himself wants to get out of that vicious circle of going out and coming in again. He just wants to cure it." Debuchy injured his hamstring just 16 minutes into his comeback, the France international in the XI that beat Bournemouth 3-1 last weekend despite not starting an Arsenal game in over a year.

"It's a severe hamstring injury. Six weeks (out), I think," said Wenger. "Look, it's frustrating for me, but even more for him because he fights very hard. He is a guy who has exceptional attitude and is very serious. "Overall, I think that he is absolutely disappointed, but he is as well a fighter and he will fight to come back," added Wenger ahead of Arsenal's trip across London to West Ham today. — AFP

NO TIME TO TAKE FOOT OFF PEDAL, WARNS COE

MONACO: The IAAF has the chance to distance itself from "grotesque stories" of corruption when members vote Saturday on a raft of revolutionary reforms drawn up by president Sebastian Coe. Since Coe took office in August 2015, the IAAF has been mired in the fall-out from disgraced predecessor Lamine Diack, at the centre of a corruption scandal in which several former senior IAAF officials were found to have bribed Russian athletes to keep quiet over positive doping tests. "Now is not the time to take our foot off the pedal. We have a momentous opportunity on Saturday to restore credibility and pioneer a new era of transparent and accountable sports administration," Coe said.

"We are guardians, not owners of this sport and as such we have an obligation to lay the right foundations for future generations who will sit in our places and compete in our events."

Coe, whose proposals go before a Special Congress on Saturday, added: "This is a pretty important week in the history of our sport. Because I do not want us ever to return to the grotesque stories that even over the last few days we have been waking up to."

The latest revelations, coming as yet more athletes were stripped of medals following re-tests dating back to 2008, saw French newspaper Le Monde and German broadcaster ARD report that the practice of covering up Russian anomalies was more widespread than initially thought. Coe's reforms, with a nod to Diack's abuse of the presidency, include stripping himself of some powers, with the president and IAAF Council not allowed to serve more than 12 years and with more checks put in place.

They also push for gender balance, handing athletes a greater voice and crucially establishing an independent integrity unit that would manage all anti-doping matters and be responsible for greater intelligence gathering.

"This is a moment to be bold, not to be timid," Coe said. "The reforms create the strongest set of foundations upon which we need to build new fans, create new formats, to find new partners and frankly to create new and exciting events.

"We must engage with young people, we must find new fans - and that sits at the heart of our strategy." Coe needs the backing of two-thirds of the 214 federations that will vote on Saturday to get the proposals passed. "We must accept that the reputation of the IAAF and athletics has been tarnished by events that came to light a year ago," Coe says in his 'Time for Change' manifesto.

"We still have a lot of work to do to restore our reputation, credibility and trust within our own sport and the wider world of sport." Coe seems to have wide support from athletes, Kenya's 800m great David Rudisha saying: "Our sport has been going through a lot of turbulence of late, one being the problems with doping and there's a lot that needs to be done.

"Fighting doping must be a collective of all people starting with the citizen, athlete, manager, coaches and everyone who loves sport. Only one body cannot fight and succeed in this fight." Norwegian Rune Andersen, currently head of the IAAF Taskforce looking into steps Russia is taking in its anti-doping fight, said the creation of the Athletics Integrity Unit was "ground-breaking".

"It strikes me that the new Integrity Unit could play a very important role in future in speeding up the resolution of cases and imposition of sanctions, and in helping the IAAF monitor and guide the efforts of non-compliant national federations to bring themselves back into compliance with the anti-doping and other integrity requirements of IAAF members," Andersen said. — AFP



SOCHI: This file photo taken on May 01, 2016 shows Mercedes AMG Petronas F1 Team's German driver Nico Rosberg celebrating on the podium after winning the Formula One Russian Grand Prix at the Sochi Autodrom circuit. Nico Rosberg announced yesterday shock retirement days after winning Formula One title. — AFP

ROSBERG STUNS FORMULA ONE WITH RETIREMENT BOMBSHELL

LONDON: Nico Rosberg stunned Formula One yesterday with the shock announcement that he was retiring only days after achieving a lifetime ambition by winning his first world championship with Mercedes.

"From the moment when the destiny of the title was in my own hands, the big pressure started and I began to think about ending my racing career if I became world champion," the German said in a statement.

"On Sunday morning in Abu Dhabi, I knew that it could be my last race and that feeling cleared my head before the start. I wanted to enjoy every part of the experience, knowing it might be the last time," the 31-year-old added.

The driver, who had given no previous indication of his intentions, said he had made the decision the day after the title race.

Rosberg, who was due to attend the governing FIA's gala prize-giving in Vienna later on Friday along with team mate and triple world champion Lewis Hamilton, did not say what he planned to do next. He will leave with a record of 23 wins in 206 races - putting him equal 12th on the all-time lists with Brazilian triple champion Nelson Piquet - and as only the second son of a champion to take the title.

His Finnish father Keke was champion with Williams in 1982.

Nico Rosberg was also the first German driver to win the Formula One title with a German car and team, and now becomes the first champion to walk away without defending the title since Frenchman Alain Prost in 1993. "Since 25 years in racing, it has been my dream, my 'one thing' to become Formula One World

Champion. Through the hard work, the pain, the sacrifices, this has been my target. And now I've made it," he said. "I have climbed my mountain, I am on the peak, so this feels right. My strongest emotion right now is deep gratitude to everybody who supported me to make that dream happen."

HAMILTON RIVALRY

Rosberg's battles with Hamilton, his boyhood friend and rival in karting, have lit up the last couple of seasons - and provided plenty of headlines - and he said that too had taken its toll.

"This season, I tell you, it was so damn tough," said the man who also partnered seven-times champion Michael Schumacher, and beat him, in his early career at Mercedes.

"I pushed like crazy in every area after the disappointments of the last two years; they fuelled my motivation to levels I had never experienced before. And of course that had an impact on the ones I love too." The Monaco-based German married his childhood sweetheart Vivian in 2014 and they had a daughter last year. A devoted family man, Rosberg said his wife was the first person to know his decision.

He acknowledged that his retirement had put his "racing family" in a difficult position, although Hamilton will now be an even stronger favourite to win his fourth title next season.

Rivals also will see a dream vacancy that every driver on the starting grid would jump at if given the chance, Mercedes being the most dominant team in the sport with 19 wins in 21 races this season. — Reuters

BARKOV'S GOAL GIVES PANTHERS 2-1 OT WIN OVER RED WINGS

DETROIT: Aleksander Barkov scored on a breakaway 2:04 into overtime, lifting Florida to a 2-1 win over the Detroit Red Wings on Thursday night and giving interim coach Tom Rowe his first victory with the Panthers. Florida, playing its second game with Rowe, had lost its last two games. Detroit was 3-0-1 after losing four straight and nine of 11. The Red Wings went ahead 1:23 into the game when Henrik Zetterberg scored on their first shot, ending a six-game drought. But they struggled on offense the rest of the night. Florida's Vincent Trocheck had a goal negated late in the opening period when Detroit coach Jeff Blashill challenged that Panthers defenseman Jason Demers was offside. Demers made up for it by scoring with 1:45 left in the first, pulling the Panthers into a tie on a shot that was redirected off Detroit defenseman Danny DeKeyser.



DETROIT: Florida Panthers defenseman Keith Yandle (3) tries to clear the puck from Detroit Red Wings' Dylan Larkin (71) and Gustav Nyquist (14) during the third period of an NHL hockey game Thursday, in Detroit. —AP

BLUES 5, LIGHTNING 4

Vladimir Tarasenko scored three goals and Kevin Shattenkirk added two as St. Louis earned its third straight win. The Blues have won six straight at home. Jake Allen made 22 saves while improving to 12-33. Tampa Bay lost its season-high fourth consecutive game. Tarasenko, who leads the team with 13 goals, recorded his fourth career hat trick. He scored twice in the game's opening 9:37 to stake his team to a 2-0 lead. Cedric Paquette scored twice for the Lightning, who have been outscored 19-9 during their four-game skid. Nikita Kucherov and Tyler Johnson also scored.

SABRES 4, RANGERS 3

Jack Eichel scored two goals in the third period, and the Sabres earned their second straight victory. Buffalo's winning streak coincides with the return of Eichel, who missed the first 21 games with a high ankle sprain. The 20-year-old center had a goal and an assist in Buffalo's 5-4 win in Ottawa on Tuesday and has recorded a point in seven straight games dating to last season. Johan Larsson and Brian Gionta also scored for Buffalo. Anders Nilsson made 22 saves while subbing for starting goaltender Robin Lehner, who is day to day with a hip injury. Ryan McDonagh, Rick Nash and Marc Staal scored for the Rangers, and Henrik Lundqvist made 30 saves.

PENGUINS 6, STARS 2

Sidney Crosby had a goal and two assists, leading the Penguins to the win. Crosby scored his league-leading 16th goal in the second period and assisted on Conor Sheary's

sixth as Pittsburgh scored three goals in the final 4 minutes. Eric Fehr's third of the season was the 100th of his career and Patric Hornqvist's seventh came on the power play. Marc-Andre Fleury made 33 saves for Pittsburgh. Fleury, who won for the first time in five starts, has six wins in his last nine home games. Tyler Seguin and Devin Shore scored for Dallas. Antti Niemi, playing in his 400th career game, stopped 34 shots. The Stars have lost three straight and seven of their last 10.

BLACKHAWKS 4, DEVILS 3, OT

Marian Hossa scored his team-leading 12th goal through a screen at 1:31 of overtime, lifting the Blackhawks to the win. Hossa's shot through traffic from high in the slot beat Cory Schneider on the glove side, moments after New Jersey's Mike Cammalleri hit the post on a prime chance against Corey Crawford. Travis Zajac had three goals for New Jersey, including the tying score at 8:49 of the third. Schneider made 29 stops in the Devils' fourth straight loss. Artem Anisimov, Niklas Hjalmarsson and

Marcus Kruger scored in the second period for Western Conference-leading Chicago, which has won two in a row and three of four overall. Crawford finished with 30 saves.

BLUE JACKETS 3, AVALANCHE 2

Boone Jenner scored the winning goal with 11:03 remaining, Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 18 shots and the Blue Jackets beat the slumping Avalanche. Jenner knocked in his third goal of the season on a no-look pass from Cam Atkinson after a turnover deep in Colorado's end. Brandon Saad and Nick Foligno staked the Blue Jackets to a 2-0 lead with first-period goals. Blake Comeau scored in the second period and Samuel Henley followed with his first NHL goal as the Avalanche rallied. Comeau nearly tied the game with 2:09 remaining when he tipped in a shot. But the officials reviewed the play and waved off the goal after ruling he knocked it in with a high stick. The Avalanche dropped to 0-3-1 on their current homestand.

KINGS 4, COYOTES 3

Trevor Lewis scored off a turnover with 4:05 left and Los Angeles held on for the win. Jordan Nolan scored his first two goals of the season for the Kings, and Anze Kopitar added two assists to help Los Angeles win for the sixth time in seven games. Jeff Zatkoff made 25 saves. Martin Hanzal scored twice for the Coyotes in the first period. Mike Smith had 29 saves, but gave up two goals in the final seven minutes. The Coyotes pulled Smith for an extra attacker for the last 1:34, but couldn't draw even.

ISLANDERS 3, CAPITALS 0

Shane Prince, Brock Nelson and Jason Chimera produced three goals in less than 4 1/2 minutes of the third period, leading the Islanders to their first three-game winning streak of the season. Islanders goalie Jaroslav Halak made 38 saves for his first shutout of the season and 40th of his NHL career. New York entered with the fewest points in the Eastern Conference, including just one victory in eight road games, and was playing the second half

of a back-to-back, while Washington was coming off a four-day break. But Alex Ovechkin and the Capitals went 0 for 6 on the power play, making that once-vaunted unit 0 for 10 over the team's past two games, both losses.

BRUINS 2, HURRICANES 1, SO

Ryan Spooner and David Pastrnak scored in a shootout, lifting Boston to the win. Jeff Skinner's bid to extend the shootout fell short when he was stopped by Bruins goalie Anton Khudobin. Skinner also was turned away by Khudobin on a breakaway in the closing seconds of overtime. Khudobin pumped his fists after earning his first win of the season. Torey Krug scored in the third period for Boston, and Khudobin finished with 29 saves. Pastrnak made a pair of dekes and slipped the puck past Cam Ward for the winning goal. Jacob Slavin scored in the shootout for Carolina, which lost for the fourth time in five games. Ward made 34 saves.

FLYERS 3, SENATORS 2, OT

Claude Giroux scored his second goal of the game 40 seconds into overtime, sending Philadelphia to the road win. Michael Del Zotto also scored, and Steve Mason made 19 saves. The Flyers have won three in a row to improve to 12-10-3. Mike Hoffman and Ryan Dzingel scored for Ottawa, and Mike Condon made 29 saves. The Senators dropped to 14-8-2.

OILERS 6, JETS 3

Mark Letestu and Leon Draisaitl each had two goals and an assist, powering Edmonton to the victory. The Oilers went 3 for 4 on the power play, including Letestu's goals. Patrick Maroon and Benoit Pouliot also scored, and Connor McDavid had three assists. Jets rookie Patrik Laine had two power-play goals to lift his overall season total to 15, a goal behind Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby for the NHL lead. Bryan Little also scored for Winnipeg. Cam Talbot made 21 saves for his 12th win of the season. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 23 of the 29 shots he faced before Michael Hutchinson came in to make four saves in just over 12 minutes of relief. — AP

NHL results/standings

Boston 2, Carolina 1 (SO); Buffalo 4, NY Rangers 3; Pittsburgh 6, Dallas 2; NY Islanders 3, Washington 0.

| Western Conference | | | | | | Eastern Conference | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|----|-----|----|--------|-----------------------|----|----|-----|----|--------|
| Central Division | | | | | | Atlantic Division | | | | | |
| | W | L | OTL | GF | GA PTS | | W | L | OTL | GF | GA PTS |
| Chicago | 16 | 6 | 3 | 72 | 63 35 | Ottawa | 14 | 8 | 2 | 57 | 59 30 |
| St. Louis | 14 | 7 | 3 | 67 | 67 31 | Boston | 13 | 10 | 1 | 57 | 54 27 |
| Minnesota | 11 | 8 | 3 | 62 | 47 25 | Tampa Bay | 13 | 11 | 1 | 75 | 70 27 |
| Nashville | 11 | 8 | 3 | 65 | 57 25 | Florida | 12 | 10 | 2 | 60 | 61 26 |
| Dallas | 9 | 10 | 6 | 63 | 85 24 | Detroit | 11 | 10 | 3 | 58 | 61 25 |
| Winnipeg | 11 | 13 | 2 | 69 | 78 24 | Toronto | 10 | 9 | 4 | 70 | 74 24 |
| Colorado | 9 | 12 | 1 | 49 | 66 19 | Buffalo | 9 | 9 | 5 | 48 | 60 23 |
| Pacific Division | | | | | | Metropolitan Division | | | | | |
| San Jose | 14 | 9 | 1 | 58 | 50 29 | NY Rangers | 16 | 8 | 1 | 91 | 63 33 |
| Anaheim | 12 | 8 | 4 | 62 | 56 28 | Pittsburgh | 14 | 7 | 3 | 75 | 72 31 |
| Edmonton | 13 | 10 | 2 | 76 | 66 28 | Columbus | 13 | 5 | 4 | 70 | 50 30 |
| Los Angeles | 13 | 10 | 1 | 62 | 61 27 | Washington | 13 | 7 | 2 | 57 | 51 28 |
| Calgary | 11 | 13 | 2 | 60 | 77 24 | Philadelphia | 12 | 10 | 3 | 80 | 82 27 |
| Vancouver | 10 | 12 | 2 | 55 | 73 22 | New Jersey | 10 | 7 | 6 | 58 | 62 26 |
| Arizona | 8 | 11 | 3 | 54 | 69 19 | Carolina | 9 | 9 | 5 | 55 | 61 23 |
| | | | | | | NY Islanders | 9 | 10 | 4 | 59 | 67 22 |

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L)

COWBOYS HOLD ON AGAINST VIKINGS FOR 11TH WIN

NFL results/standings

Dallas 17, Minnesota 15.

American Football Conference

AFC East

| | W | L | T | OTL | PF | PA | PCT |
|-------------|---|---|---|-----|-----|-----|------|
| New England | 9 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 293 | 197 | .818 |
| Miami | 7 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 249 | 240 | .636 |
| Buffalo | 6 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 281 | 236 | .545 |
| NY Jets | 3 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 196 | 266 | .273 |

AFC North

| | | | | | | | |
|------------|---|----|---|---|-----|-----|------|
| Baltimore | 6 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 218 | 201 | .545 |
| Pittsburgh | 6 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 266 | 222 | .545 |
| Cincinnati | 3 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 213 | 245 | .318 |
| Cleveland | 0 | 12 | 0 | 1 | 197 | 352 | 0 |

AFC South

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|------|
| Houston | 6 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 194 | 236 | .545 |
| Tennessee | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 308 | 296 | .500 |
| Indianapolis | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 270 | 301 | .455 |
| Jacksonville | 2 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 214 | 293 | .182 |

AFC West

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|------|
| Oakland | 9 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 307 | 275 | .818 |
| Kansas City | 8 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 252 | 214 | .727 |
| Denver | 7 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 266 | 219 | .636 |
| San Diego | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 313 | 291 | .455 |

National Football Conference

NFC East

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|----|---|---|---|-----|-----|------|
| Dallas | 11 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 333 | 228 | .917 |
| NY Giants | 8 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 231 | 213 | .727 |
| Washington | 6 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 280 | 264 | .591 |
| Philadelphia | 5 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 254 | 213 | .455 |

NFC North

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|------|
| Detroit | 7 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 247 | 238 | .636 |
| Minnesota | 6 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 233 | 209 | .500 |
| Green Bay | 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 274 | 289 | .455 |
| Chicago | 2 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 178 | 264 | .182 |

NFC South

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|-----|-----|------|
| Atlanta | 7 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 358 | 302 | .636 |
| Tampa Bay | 6 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 249 | 264 | .545 |
| New Orleans | 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 334 | 307 | .455 |
| Carolina | 4 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 276 | 281 | .364 |

NFC West

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|----|---|---|-----|-----|------|
| Seattle | 7 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 224 | 187 | .682 |
| Arizona | 4 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 245 | 228 | .409 |
| Los Angeles | 4 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 170 | 236 | .364 |
| San Francisco | 1 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 228 | 344 | .091 |



MINNEAPOLIS: Dallas Cowboys free safety Byron Jones (31) celebrates in front of Minnesota Vikings tight end Kyle Rudolph, right, after breaking up a pass in the end zone during the second half of an NFL football game Thursday, in Minneapolis. The Cowboys won 17-15. — AP

STUTTERING SPURS LOOK FOR KANE INSPIRATION

LONDON: Tottenham host Swansea on Saturday hoping Harry Kane can celebrate signing a new contract by continuing his hot scoring streak and helping them get their season firing again. The England forward sealed an improved deal that ties him to the Londoners until 2022 — a timely boost for a club in a bad patch on the pitch. They go into the Swansea game having lost their last two matches, firstly at Monaco in the Champions League, a result that meant they cannot qualify for the next stage, and then at London rivals Chelsea in the Premier League. That ended Tottenham's unbeaten start to the league campaign, an achievement which had been all the more impressive since Kane was sidelined by an ankle injury in September.

But with four goals in the four games since he returned to fitness, there is no doubting that Kane will be the man to watch at White Hart Lane once again. Tottenham will kick off in fifth, seven points adrift of leaders Chelsea, but Kane is confident of making up that ground.

"The form of the last couple of months hasn't been where we want it to be because we've set such high standards," the 23-year-old said. "But it isn't the time to panic or be worried. The performance against Chelsea was very good, even though we didn't win, which was disappointing. "We're in a good place. We're not far off the top and we've a very long way to go this season."

Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino is understandably delighted to see Kane make a long-term commitment to the club. And the Argentine is confident Spurs can get back to the form that saw them defeat then-leaders Manchester City in early October. "Against Chelsea we lost but we recovered the feeling that we can play well," Pochettino said. "This week has been perfect because we could spend time together and train hard. We held a lot of meetings and the answer from the players was fantastic. "We need to deliver Saturday and do a great job to try and get the three points." — AFP

MINNEAPOLIS: Dez Bryant sashayed through the Dallas locker room with an unmistakable swagger and had nothing but good things to say about his adversity this time around.

It was a stark change from a week ago, when he sparred with Washington cornerback Josh Norman on Thanksgiving. The trash talking Dez and the polite Dez share one thing in common: they both win. Bryant caught four passes for 84 yards and the go-ahead touchdown in the fourth quarter, helping the Cowboys win their 11th straight game with a 17-15 victory over the Minnesota Vikings on Thursday night.

In a hard-fought battle with cornerback Xavier Rhodes, Bryant's 56-yard catch set up Ezekiel Elliott's 1-yard TD in the first half. Bryant caught an 8-yard scoring pass in the fourth quarter after a fumbled punt by Minnesota's Adam Thielen. "I knew coming into this game it was going to be a tough match and I had to be on my 'A' game," Bryant said. "Because if I wasn't, he can get the best of you. We had a good battle. We shared our thoughts throughout the game. It was good thoughts. It's nice playing games like that."

Elliott rushed for 86 yards on 20 carries for the Cowboys (11-1). They have the longest single season winning streak in franchise history. Sam Bradford threw a 3-yard touchdown pass to Jerick McKinnon with 25 seconds to play, but the 2-point conversion pass failed. Bradford argued for a penalty after he was hit in the face by a defender, but there was no call for the Vikings (6-6). Minnesota played without coach Mike Zimmer after he had emergency eye surgery Wednesday night.

"I'm sick and tired of the reffing in this league right now," Vikings defensive end Brian Robison said. "I'm sick and tired of it. You've got holding calls all over the place that people don't want to

call. Bradford gets hit in the face at the end of the game and you don't call it. I'm not laying this loss on reffing, but at some point it's got to get better."

Bradford completed 32 of 45 passes for 247 yards, Danielle Hunter had two sacks and Kai Forbath kicked three field goals for Minnesota, which has lost six of the last seven games after a 5-0 start.

Vikings special teams coordinator Mike Priefer was elevated to head coach for the game and it remains unclear how long Zimmer will be out. Minnesota's third-ranked defense did their fiery leader proud, holding the explosive Cowboys offense to season lows in points, yards (264) and first downs (13).

"It's not the best game we played, but we showed up when we needed to and made the plays at the end," Elliott said.

KEY PLAY

With Dallas' offense doing nothing, Kyle Wilber made the play of the game when he punched the ball out of Thielen's hand, then pulled the ball away as the two rolled to the turf. Officials initially did not catch the fumble, but a heads-up challenge by Jason Garrett got the call overturned and Prescott found Bryant on the next play.

CATCHLESS IN MINNEAPOLIS

Cowboys tight end Jason Witten did not catch a pass, snapping a team-record streak of 130 straight games with a reception dating to 2008.

A TD TO TIE TD

Elliott's 1-yard plunge in the second quarter gave Dallas a 7-3 lead. It was his 12th touchdown rushing this season, tying him with Tony Dorsett for most by a rookie in Cowboys history.

BRADFORD UNDER SEIGE

Playing behind a patchwork offen-

sive line that included center Nick Easton making his first career start in place of the injured Joe Berger (concussion), Bradford was under pressure all night long from a Cowboys defense that has often struggled in that area this season. Bradford was sacked three times and had to leave the game on the final drive of the second quarter after taking a helmet from Maliek Collins to his rib cage. After getting some medical attention during halftime, Bradford was able to remain in the game.

"I had to take a deep breath," he said. "After that they were fine." The bad news on the injury front for the Vikings came for safety Harrison Smith, who left the locker room on crutches with a walking boot on his left foot. He has been fighting through an ankle injury over the last several weeks.

ZIMMER TRIBUTE

Before the game, the Vikings played a short video of Zimmer addressing the team during a practice. Zimmer's primary message: "Do your job."

That has been a common theme during his three seasons in Minnesota, and the organization likely wanted the players to hear it one more time before taking the field. After the video, a picture of Zimmer was put on the big screen with a "Get Well Soon" message attached.

"They fought to the bitter end, and I know coach Zimmer would've been very, very proud of them," Priefer said.

Cowboys: Dallas heads to New York on Dec. 11 to face the Giants, the only team to have beaten the Cowboys this season.

Vikings: Minnesota will travel to Jacksonville on Dec. 11 to face the Jaguars, hoping the extra time off will be enough for Zimmer to recover and return to the sideline. — AP

AROUND 350 VICTIMS REPORT UK CHILD SEX ABUSE

LONDON: Around 350 people have come forward to tell British police they were victims of child sexual abuse by football coaches, deepening a scandal that has rocked the sport.

The scale of the abuse began to emerge last week after a string of ex-footballers, including England internationals, told of the crimes inflicted upon them, including years of being repeatedly raped.

The National Police Chiefs' Council said a "significant" number of calls had been made to them after the players spoke out about what they suffered as children.

Announcing the figures, the NPCC said they were based on existing investigations dating back to 2014 as well as a new helpline set up by British charity the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). The NSPCC said the helpline received 860 calls in its first week, enabling it

to refer 60 cases to police or social services within three days of the hotline launching.

That was more than triple the number of referrals made in the first three days of the helpline set up for victims of Jimmy Savile, a serial paedophile and late BBC television presenter. "We are working closely with the Football Association to ensure that the response to this significant and growing number of victims, at all levels of football, is coordinated effectively," said Chief Constable Simon Bailey, the NPCC's lead officer for child protection. He encouraged anyone with information about child abuse in football to come forward, "regardless of how long ago the abuse may have taken place".

A quarter of the police forces across Britain are investigating cases that have made daily headlines over the past two weeks.

Greater Manchester Police said they had

identified 10 suspects and its inquiry was widening on a daily basis. "We are investigating reports from 35 victims and we have identified 10 suspects," said GMP Assistant Chief Constable Debbie Ford.

FA chief executive Martin Glenn said on Thursday he does not believe child abuse within British football has been covered up.

"It will help uncover some issues that can't happen again, but do I think there has been a cover-up? I doubt it," said Glenn, whose organisation has established an internal review of the allegations.

The scale of the abuse began to emerge after ex-footballers Andy Woodward, Steve Walters and Paul Stewart revealed last week the abuse they suffered at the hands of youth coaches. Convicted child molester Barry Bennell has been accused by several footballers of abusing them when he worked for

Crewe Alexandra, Manchester City and Stoke City across three decades beginning in the 1970s. He is the target of five separate police investigations and on Tuesday was charged with eight counts of child abuse, prosecutors said. Former Newcastle United player David Eatock is the latest player to speak out about his suffering. Now 40, he said he had been a victim of former youth coach George Ormond, who was sentenced to six years in jail in 2002 for offences committed over almost 25 years. "One of the more difficult parts for me is that I wasn't as young as some of the others," Eatock told The Guardian newspaper. "I was 18 when I got to know George Ormond. I can still remember the look on his face, how terrifying it was."

He added: "It has been like a knot in my brain and I'm now trying to pick apart that knot." — AFP

LOURINHO OFFERS SCHWEINSTEIGER RAY OF LIGHT AT MAN UNITED

MANCHESTER: Bastian Schweinsteiger might still have a future at Manchester United. It seemed the former Germany captain would be on his way out of Old Trafford in January when he was told to train away from the first-team squad for the first few months of the season, and even written off as an asset in United's published accounts in September.

But the 32-year-old Schweinsteiger has impressed United manager Jose Mourinho with his attitude and determination. Having been asked to rejoin training with the senior team last month, the midfielder made his first appearance of the season as a substitute in United's 4-1 win over West Ham in the English League Cup quarterfinals on Wednesday.

Suddenly, Schweinsteiger is on Mourinho's radar. Mourinho, famously dubbed the "Special One" during his time at Chelsea, is calling Schweinsteiger the "Powerful One."

"In the summer, we try to make something happen for Bastian to have a different future," Mourinho said Friday. "He decided to stay, even in difficult circumstances. He worked for that, he deserved that little happiness of the last match."

"In January, he will be the powerful one, probably with better feelings than before now he is working with the team. I think he understands our dynamic, our philosophy."

Schweinsteiger, who joined United in July 2015 and still has 11/2 years left on his contract, has a fight on his hands to regain a regular first-team place with Paul Pogba, Ander Herrera, Michael Carrick and Marouane Fellaini seemingly ahead of him in the midfield pecking order.

Given the strides he has made to earn Mourinho's confidence in the past two months, Schweinsteiger can still hope. And the reaction he got at Old Trafford when he came on against West Ham suggested United fans would be happy to see more of the 2014 World Cup winner.

"He is another one who can help us," Mourinho said. "During the season, you have injuries, suspensions ... Of course, it was 3-1 and he played for 10 minutes (against West Ham), but he was ready. He is another one in the squad working to have more chances." There are a few more in that situation. Attacking midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan has made two starts in the past week after being

mostly overlooked by Mourinho since joining from Borussia Dortmund in the offseason. He also impressed against West Ham, setting up two goals and potentially doing enough to keep his place for Sunday's match at Everton in the Premier League.

Then there's Anthony Martial, the 20-year-old France forward who was United's top scorer in his debut year last season. He has been in and out of the team under Mourinho, who has sometimes preferred Juan Mata, Jesse Lingard and Marcus Rashford in the wide positions.

Martial doubled his tally for this season with two goals against West Ham and looks to be responding to some pointed comments by Mourinho in the British media.

"He is working. Working harder than before, to be honest," Mourinho said. "When you score two goals, maybe it helps your happiness to be back, your confidence levels to be back."

Mourinho will be back in the dugout at Goodison Park after serving his second touchline ban of the season in the West Ham match. —AP



SANT JOAN DESPI: FC Barcelona's Luis Suarez, left, controls the ball during a training session at the Sports Center FC Barcelona Joan Gamper in Sant Joan Despi, Spain, yesterday. FC Barcelona will play against Real Madrid today in a Spanish La Liga soccer match, dubbed 'el clasico'. — AP

BARCA DESPERATE TO BREAK MADRID'S UNBEATEN STREAK

MADRID: Barcelona are the more desperate side as Real Madrid visit Catalonia today for the first El Clasico of the season boasting a six-point lead at the top of La Liga. Madrid have won 15 more points in all in La Liga under the guidance of Zinedine Zidane since the sides last met in April and are riding a 31-game unbeaten run in all competitions.

"On Saturday we have more to play for than Madrid, they can lose, we can't," said Barcelona defender Gerard Pique. Barca are off to their worst league start in nine seasons. However, coach Luis Enrique believes much of the media criticism of his side has been overblown, citing the institutional crisis that Barca overcame in the January his debut season in 2015 to win the treble. "We remain favourites for

all the titles, but it is evident we have to improve," said Enrique. "We lack consistency, but don't exaggerate. In my first season you (the media) exaggerated and we ended up winning the treble."

The biggest match in club football is expected to capture an audience of 650 million people worldwide, according to figures released by La Liga.

"I am not going to say it is just another game, it is a very important match, it has a special meaning....a special taste," Real president Florentino Perez told AFP. "No one hides that it has a worldwide impact, it is seen by millions of people across the world, like the World cup final."

Yet, the composed Zidane refused to accept that a first Liga title in five years would be Madrid's to lose should they

bag victory at the Camp Nou.

"I am not thinking about the consequences," he said after giving a goalscoring debut to his son Enzo in Madrid's 6-1 Copa del Rey thrashing of Cultural Leonesa on Wednesday. "We are thinking about preparing well for the game, and whatever happens, it will not be decisive."

Both sides are blighted by injury concerns. Madrid will be without Gareth Bale with the Welshman now set to miss up to four months after an ankle operation, whilst Toni Kroos is also sidelined by a broken foot. Tough tackling midfielder Casemiro made his first appearance in two months in midweek and could come into contention to partner the Croatian duo of Luka Modric and Mateo Kovacic. —Reuters



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE 2016/2017

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Manchester City v Chelsea beIN SPORTS 2 HD beIN SPORTS 11 HD EN | 15:30 |
| Sunderland v Leicester City beIN SPORTS 4 HD | 18:00 |
| Tottenham Hotspur v Swansea City beIN SPORTS 2 HD | 18:00 |
| Crystal Palace v Southampton beIN SPORTS 7 HD | 18:00 |
| West Bromwich Albion v Watford beIN SPORTS 9 HD | 18:00 |
| Stoke City v Burnley beIN SPORTS 13 HD EN | 18:00 |
| West Ham United v Arsenal beIN SPORTS 2 HD beIN SPORTS 11 HD EN | 20:30 |

SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA DIV

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Granada v Sevilla beIN SPORTS 3 HD | 15:00 |
| Barcelona v Real Madrid beIN SPORTS 1 HD beIN SPORTS 3 HD | 18:15 |
| Leganes v Villarreal beIN SPORTS 3 HD | 20:30 |
| Atletico v Espanyol beIN SPORTS 3 HD | 22:45 |

Italian Calcio League Serie A

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Juventus v Atalanta beIN SPORTS 4 HD | 22:45 |
|--|--------------|

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA 1ST DIV

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Dortmund v Monchengladbach beIN SPORTS 5 HD | 17:30 |
| Leverkusen v Freiburg beIN SPORTS | 17:30 |
| Wolfsburg v Hertha Berlin beIN SPORTS | 17:30 |
| Werder Bremen v Ingolstadt beIN SPORTS | 17:30 |
| Hoffenheim v Koln beIN SPORTS | 17:30 |
| Leipzig v Schalke beIN SPORTS 5 HD | 20:30 |

FRENCH LEAGUE 1ST DIV

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Montpellier v Paris Saint beIN SPORTS 6 HD | 19:00 |
| Metz v Lyonnais beIN SPORTS 9 HD | 22:00 |
| Monaco v Bastia beIN SPORTS 6 HD | 22:00 |
| Guingamp v Nantes beIN SPORTS | 22:00 |
| Girondins de Bordeaux v Lille beIN SPORTS 7 HD | 22:00 |
| Angers v Lorient beIN SPORTS | 22:00 |



MUNICH: This combination of picture made on December 1, 2016 shows (from L) Real Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo in Madrid, on November 19, 2016, Atletico Madrid's French forward Antoine Griezmann in Munich on May 3, 2016, and Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi in Barcelona. Fifa announced yesterday that Real Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo, Atletico Madrid's French forward Antoine Griezmann and Argentinian forward Lionel Messi are the final nominees for The Best FIFA Men's Player Award. — AFP

FIFA NOMINATES RONALDO, MESSI AND GRIEZMANN FOR BEST OF 2016

AFC NAMES OMAR ABDULRAHMAN 'PLAYER OF THE YEAR'

PARIS: FIFA yesterday said it had nominated Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi and Antoine Griezmann to battle it out for the accolade of world player of the year. Real Madrid star Ronaldo is favourite for the crown after winning the Champions League and also Euro 2016 with Portugal, albeit he exited the final win over France with an early injury.

Perennial rival Messi of Barcelona and Argentina, the reigning player of the year, had a less stellar year by his exacting standards. Griezmann meanwhile suffered double heartache with France and Atletico Madrid at Euro 2016 and in the Champions League.

German Olympic champion Melanie Behringer will go up against Brazilian veteran Marta and US star Carli Lloyd for the women's accolade. Real Madrid's Zinedine Zidane will vie with Leicester miracle worker Claudio Ranieri and Portugal boss Fernando Santos for the title of top coach. Despite benign relative coaching novice, Zidane led Real to the Champions League after replacing Rafael Benitez mid-season at the Bernabeu. Ranieri shocked the football world when he led Leicester to a first ever league crown in England while Santos ensured Portugal finally broke their major title duck.

"I am getting better day by day and continue to learn. But maybe it is too early for me to be up there among the three nominees," Zidane reflected modestly. The title of best women's coach will go either to US handler Jill Ellis, Germany's Silvia Neid or Sweden's Pia Sundhage.

FIFA will bestow its "Best" awards on the winners at a Zurich gala evening on January 9.

Meanwhile, the football star of Al-Ain SC and the UAE national team Omar Abdulrahman, nicknamed as Amoori, has been named the 2016 AFC Player of the Year at a glittering ceremony here on Thursday.

Beaten to the 2015 award by compatriot Ahmed Khalil, the prodigiously tal-

ented 25-year-old made up for that disappointment by topping this year's shortlist ahead of Iraq's Hammadi Ahmed and Wu Lei from China, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said.

Abdulrahman's recognition comes after the diminutive midfielder played pivotal roles in guiding Al Ain to this season's AFC Champions League final, and the UAE to within touching distance of a place at the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia.

Despite failing to land silverware with Al-Ain at the end of a domestic season which saw the Emirati giants finish

second in the league and runners-up in the President's Cup, Abdulrahman shone brightly during his side's quest for AFC Champions League glory.

In total, the midfield maestro garnered eight Most Valuable Player Awards, three goals and plaudits galore as Al Ain stormed through the Group Stage, overcame Zobahan, Lokomotiv and El Jaish in the knockout phase and then lost to Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors over two legs in the final after which Abdulrahman was duly voted the Toyota Most Valuable Player of the Competition. —Agencies

CLAUDIO RANIERI DEFENDS SPLUTTERING LEICESTER

SUNDERLAND: With their Premier League title defence in disarray, Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri has been forced to defend the spluttering champions ahead of today's trip to Sunderland.

Ranieri backed his title-winning stars after criticism of their league form, which has fallen well below last season's remarkable standards. The Italian, whose team are only two points above the relegation zone, attempted to explain the difference between his side's stellar Champions League performance in their debut season and their poor displays in domestic games.

Ranieri was also forced to defend his club's transfer business as questions intensify about the impact of their signings.

Club record buy Islam Slimani, who is in line to start at the Stadium of Light, is the only one of the new recruits to make a significant impact with five goals in 10 games since the forward's arrival from Sporting Lisbon.

But Ranieri said: "The recruitment is very good and I'm very happy, but it's not always certain when you bring

in new players they start very well.

"Riyad Mahrez started (playing well) in his second year. If he need six or seven months, imagine the others."

Ahmed Musa, a striker signed from CSKA Moscow, has started just five league games so far, while winger Bartosz Kapustka has not played at all.

Free transfer defender Luis Hernandez has made just three league appearances and goalkeeper Ron-Robert Zieler has been unconvincing. Midfielder Nampalys Mendy, who was signed from Nice to replace the influential N'Golo Kante after his move to Chelsea, has made just one appearance due to injury.

But Mendy, 24, could return to the squad at Sunderland after training this week following ankle surgery.

"He has worked with us and done all the training sessions this week pain-free," Ranieri said.

"He lacks stamina but he is getting better. I have to decide but think he is OK for the bench. Maybe he can play for half an hour."

Meanwhile, Adnan Januzaj insists Leicester hold no fears for struggling Sunderland. —AFP

Shrimpy



 SHRIMPYKW  1 802 662



HAD
ENOUGH?!

A chicken wearing a red apron is holding a blue sign that says "HAD ENOUGH?!".

EAT MORE
SHRIMP

A chicken wearing glasses is standing behind an orange sign that says "EAT MORE SHRIMP".