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Kuwait Times **Friday Times**



Min 08°
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www.kuwaittimes.net

NO: 17075 - FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2016

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Amir welcomes King Salman

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KUWAIT WELCOMES SAUDI MONARCH

KUWAIT: The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia arrived in Kuwait yesterday - starting a scheduled official visit during which he would hold talks with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdulaziz was welcomed at the airport by His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, senior sheikhs, Deputy Chief of the National Guards Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Finance Minister and Acting Oil Minister Anas Al-Saleh, ministers, governors, senior State officials, ranking chiefs of the Army, the Police, the National Guards and the fire department.

The Saudi King arrived to formal reception ceremony during which the National Anthems of the two brotherly countries were played. The eminent guest proceeded, with company of His Highness the Amir, to display the Guards of Honor from units of the Kuwait Army. The King shook hands with the attending senior State officials and His Highness the Amir welcomed similarly officials accompanying King Salman. The mission of honor accompanying the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques was chaired by the Deputy Premier and Interior Minister, Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah.

King Salman is accompanied by Prince Khaled Bin

Fahad Bin Khaled Bin Mohammad Al-Saud, Prince Mansour Bin Saud Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Mohammad Bin Fahad Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Talal Bin Saud Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Dr. Mansour Bin Met'eb Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Fahad Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Turki Bin Abdullah Bin Mohammad Al-Saud, Prince Sattam Bin Saud Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Khaled Bin Turki Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Husam Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Dr. Abdulaziz Bin Sattam Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Faisal Bin Khaled Bin Sultan Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Mansour Bin Megren Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Mohammad Bin Abdulrahman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Abdulaziz Bin Nayef Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Abdullah Bin Bandar Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Saud Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Prince Nayef Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and Prince Rakan Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud.

The official Saudi delegation comprised State Minister Dr Ibrahim Bin Abdulaziz Al-Assaf, Minister of Commerce and Investment Dr Majed Bin Abdullah Al-Gasabi, Minister of Information and Culture Dr Adel Bin Zaid Al-Tarifi, Head of the Royal Diwan Khaled Bin Abdulrahman Al-Issa, State Minister for External Trade Dr Nezar Bin Obaid Madani and senior Royal Court. The Saudi and Kuwaiti leaders and official proceeded to Bayan Palace where the eminent guests were accorded with a display by the cavaliers, popular troupes, along with a 21-gun salute. — KUNA



The saga of an impounded car in Kuwait





KUWAIT: File photos shows local authorities including baladiya and interior ministry forces confiscating abandoned cars in Kuwait. Abandoned cars are a reoccurring problem and several hundreds are collected each year.

By Ben Garcia

Dust covered, abandoned cars are common across Kuwait. Locals and expats alike may leave their cars for months on end when they travel. Some never come back and some simply fail to sell the car off or drop at the Amghara scrap yard.

As a consequence, the collection of abandoned cars is a regular activity of the Municipality in cooperation with the newly-formed Kuwait Environment Police (KEP). To give just a few examples, the baladiya confiscated 54 abandoned cars from Bneid Al Gar in September and another such campaign in November in Shuwaikh netted tens more such vehicles.

If you are among those whose car is confiscated, however, be prepared for a lengthy process to either get it back or pay off the fines and relinquish ownership.

Kuwait Times recently spoke with an expat who we'll call Jon. He doesn't speak Arabic and despite living in Kuwait for many years is not familiar with how the system of abandoned or impounded cars work.

Jon first understood he had a problem when he realized his vehicle had been taken from the 'empty' lot near his apartment building in Maidan Hawally where it had been parked for several months. The car no longer worked and hadn't been moved for months.

Where did it go?

Locating the impounded car was Jon's first challenge. First, Jon went to the nearest baladiya office in Salmiya. "I went to Salmiya baladia to take back my car but every person I approached and inquired there have no idea whether I am in the right office or not," Jon said.

There was no record of his car there and an officer at the baladiya suggested he check in Jnoub Surra. But Jnoub Surra is a large area comprised of many neighborhoods. Located between the Fifth and Sixth ring roads, it includes Hateen, Al-Sadeeq, Al-Salam, South Surra and Shuhada areas. Ultimately, after asking several people, Jon found the baladiya office in block three of Hateen, on the second floor of the post office.

In Hateen, he was told that his car was now being held in Amghara, south Amghara to be exact, near Jahra. He had to go to the impound yard in Amghara and confirm that his car was in fact there.

"So I started the work to pay the fines and settle the paperwork for my car. I went to the traffic department in Jabriya (near the blood bank) in order to get the 'daftar' or

car registration. Then I had to go to the traffic department in Shuwaikh, near the Al-Sabah Hospital complex, to pick up a form to cancel the ownership of the car."

Jon returned to Jabriya to cancel his ownership but the traffic police there wouldn't accept the form because he had fines still with the car registered by the baladiya.

So he had to return to Hateen to clear his fines with the baladiya. The fines included KD 100 for the abandoned vehicle, KD 30 for the towing and KD 1 for each day the car is impounded (a total of 24 days) for a grand total of KD 154. Jon also had to pay various ministry stamps to process his paperwork in the traffic department.

"But to pay the fines, I had to go to the main baladiya

office in Salmiya," Jon explained. "After clearing the fines, I went back to Hateen to clear the paperwork and get a clearance paper to take to Amghara. Then I went to Amghara and took my car from the impound lot."

Since the car doesn't run and he had no way to transport it, Jon eventually sold it to a scrap dealer in Amghara for KD 30. But he wasn't finished yet. To close the deal, he had to go back to the place where the car was registered, in this case, Farwaniya traffic department, and cancel his registration.

The lack of clear information, organization and English language services make dealing with such issues incredibly difficult especially for non-Arabic speaking expats.



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KUWAIT: Umm Abdullah at her home in Khaitan. She uses her meagre retirement to fund her grandchildren's education and lives in a tiny, one room flat where she is having trouble paying rent. She is one of many Kuwaiti women who married non-Kuwaiti men and now face financial hardship.

— Photos by Joseph Shagra



LIVING HAND TO MOUTH IN KUWAIT

Kuwaiti woman who married non-Kuwaiti now stuck in financial nightmare

By Nawara Fattahova

In an affluent country like Kuwait with a cradle-to-grave welfare system for its citizens, it's hard to imagine there are destitute Kuwaitis living in abject poverty. Such is the case of a Kuwaiti mother of five children, who was married to an Arab national who died in 2009. Her financial constraints even forced her to offer her kidney for sale, but this extreme step didn't work out in the end.

Um Abdullah, a 60-year-old retired Kuwaiti, is now facing eviction from her flat after not paying the rent for the past three months. She was also evicted from her previous apartment for the same reason last year, and had to live in her car for two weeks with her daughter. A Good Samaritan then paid the rent for her, because of which she managed to stay afloat, until she had to pay the school fees of her grandchildren, which dragged her into debt again.

"I was paying KD 250 in rent for a flat in Rehab area, where I lived for seven years. The landlord then decided to renew the contract and increased the rent to KD 400. He issued an eviction order against me, so I had to pay rent at the court. But I lost the case and had to retroactively pay KD 150 for every month from the time he demanded the increase, which I couldn't do. The police arrived and broke down the door, forcing us to leave the house, and didn't allow us to take any of our belongings except our clothes. My son stayed at his friend's place, while my daughter and I lived in the car," Um Abdullah recalled.

The difficult situation led her to decide to try and sell her kidney. "I found a recipient and went to the hospital to finalize the procedures, but the doctor rejected the transplant due to my advanced age. There are five arrest orders against me for not paying debts, and I'm afraid to even step out," she told Kuwait Times.

Um Abdullah has four sons and one daughter. "One of my sons passed away from heart disease in Egypt. As he was not a Kuwaiti, he moved to Egypt and got married there, before he fell sick and died. His daughter lives with me as her mother has disowned her. I borrowed money to pay for my son's medical treatment for a month and a half, as he was in a coma. With the help of wasta, my granddaughter got her residency, but I had to pay the fines for the past year and half when she didn't have an iqama," said Um Abdullah.

"Another of my sons is married and has five children. He lives in an apartment and earns KD 300 per month. Another son was sentenced to prison for five years, and after a year and half, he received an Amiri pardon, but was deported," she lamented. "My youngest son was studying at an applied education college, but after his brother died and we were kicked out of our house, he failed in his exams and was expelled. My daughter got a scholarship for post-graduation and student aid too. She applied for a job at all ministries and schools after she graduated from Kuwait University with a degree in English literature," Um Abdullah added.

Um Abdullah's parents died many years ago. Her siblings are very old and retired and can't pay for her upkeep as they have limited resources too. "When I moved to this flat, people donated some furniture, and this is how I live," she said.

Um Abdullah dreams to visit the grave of her son who died without seeing her. She also dreams to go for hajj, as she has never performed the pilgrimage in her life. "I don't want donations from people. But if someone wants to help me, they can pay off my debts so that I am free from the arrest orders and can travel, or they can pay the rent of this flat before I am kicked out," she asked matter-of-factly.

INCOSAI CONFERENCE - A PLATFORM TO EXCHANGE EXPERTISE

ABU DHABI: The 22nd International Congress of Supreme Audit Institutions, or INCOSAI, is a highly important gathering for audit officials from the four corners of the globe, a Kuwaiti audit official stated. The conference serves as an important platform for audit agencies officials and experts to exchange expertise of the latest approaches in audit work, Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs at Kuwait's Civil Service Commission (CSC) Essam Al-Mutairi said on the sidelines of his participation in the event, which kicked off Wednesday in Abu Dhabi.

He pointed out that the Kuwaiti delegation would present to the conference two research papers: On sustainable development and the ability of audit agencies to upgrade their technical, accounting and auditing work. He described Kuwait as one of the leading countries in audit action. The CSC has several pioneering initiatives on good governance and application of international audit standards, he said. Al-Mutairi also

congratulated the UAE on hosting the world's most prestigious audit institution for three years (2016-2019).

Running until December 11, INCOSAI 2016 aims to discuss financial oversight and supervision and how to combat corruption in the public sector. Working papers from 165 monetary supervisory agencies from around the world will be discussed during the congress. INCOSAI 2016 provides an important opportunity to underline international operation in enhancing auditing and good governance and management as per the best international practices in oversight over the public sector.

The Congress is the supreme organ of INTOSAI and holds regular meetings once every three years to share experiences, discuss issues, and pass resolutions and recommendations to improve government accountability worldwide. INCOSAI 2016 seeks to promote the professional status of the state in the area of financial control and the fight against corruption in the public sector. —KUNA



Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs at Kuwait's Civil Service Commission (CSC) Essam Al-Mutairi.

SYMPOSIUM EXPLORES PATH TO INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH

'RAISING INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC GROWTH IN ARAB COUNTRIES'

KUWAIT: The IMF Middle East Center for Economics and Finance (CEF) and Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) held a symposium on Wednesday to explore the path to inclusive economic growth. The event, themed "Raising Inclusive Economic Growth in Kuwait and other Arab Countries," was hosted by AFESD and moderated by the CEF's Director Dr Oussama Kanaan. The speakers included Professor James Robinson of the University of Chicago, whose seminal work on the role of institutions in economic development includes the award-winning book *Why Nations Fail*, and Professor Adeel Malik of Oxford University, author of highly influential publications on political economy of the Arab world.

Geographical disparity

The symposium brought to the fore successful economic growth strategies for Kuwait and other Arab countries that benefit all segments of society and take on board future generations' needs. Dr Kanaan provided an overview of the roots of the current economic slowdown, and discussed the special features of inequality in Arab countries along several dimensions beyond simple measures of income distribution. "First, a wide geographical disparity has emerged over time, within most countries, in income, wealth, and access to public services and infrastructure," he said. "Indeed, in many Arab countries widespread protests and demands for inclusiveness have been fanned by discontent in economically neglected, atrophying locations.

"Second, in most countries the younger groups have been increasingly alienated economically and socially, suffering from much higher rates of unemployment, with skills and overall human capital generally ill-matched to the demands of globalized markets. "Finally, income and wealth inequality has increasingly been rooted in differences

across social groups in their ability to exercise their civil rights, often emanating from institutionalized discrimination by gender, religion or national origin," Kanaan pointed out. "Drawing on international country experiences, the panel discussion has aimed at identifying the core ingredients of successful inclusive economic growth strategies, with a view to addressing these different sources and dimensions of inequality," he added.

Unlock latent talent

Professor Robinson argued that economists know very well what leads to sustained economic growth and diversification: the accumulation of human and physical capital, the innovation, creation and adoption of new technology. "To prosper a society has to unlock all of its latent talent. To do this it has to create broad based incentives and opportunities. "It is the institutions of society, the rules, which do this. In his lecture he emphasized that countries which have grown successfully have done so because they moved their institutions (construed broadly) in a more inclusive direction.

"This is just as true of China after 1978, or of Ethiopia after the fall of the Derg in 1991, as it is about the contemporary countries of Western Europe or North America," he went on. However, Professor Robinson noted that the difficulty is that moving institutions in a more inclusive direction is not just a technocratic problem, it is a political and social one. "Promoting economic change and diversification challenges many ways of organizing politics and societies in developing countries and thus creates difficult trade-offs for rulers and politicians.

"It also risks political instability and unleashing forces that are difficult to contain or manage. "Institutional transitions therefore take place when a political and social project emerges which can find a way of balancing these ten-

sions. "These projects often emerge for quite idiosyncratic reasons, as that of Deng Xiaoping did after 1978, or with President Park in South Korea in the 1960s, or the United Arab Emirates in the 1970s. "Importantly, projects that can stimulate growth may not be consistent with the sustainability of that growth and therefore must necessarily adapt and change. In many parts of the world, however, they have never emerged in the first place," Professor Robinson explained.

Growth strategy

Despite these idiosyncracies Professor Robinson argued that we do know quite a bit about what can promote inclusive institutional change on average and what can be done to foment it in particular contexts. He discussed some of the relevant empirical evidence and the type of lessons that Middle Eastern countries could learn from to help their economies prosper and diversify. In the following part of the symposium, Professor Malik started by discussing the importance of an inclusive growth strategy in the Arab world by examining the domestic and regional dimensions of trade liberalization.

He presented a general account of the politics of trade protection in several Arab countries, with a focus on Egypt and Tunisia. Drawing on his recent research on the Egyptian experience, Professor Malik argued that trade liberalization, when it became a policy imperative, was only selectively pursued to suit the interests of politically connected insiders. "Such partial liberalization created rents for insiders that were used to sustain the ruling coalition," he said. "However, these rents were created at the expense of continued exclusion of unconnected firms facing substantial barriers to entry and growth. The resulting economic repression of firms has huge implications for job creation and prospects for inclusive growth in Egypt," he added. —KUNA

AL-MSHABNAJ - SMALL WOODEN BOX HANDMADE BY OLD KUWAITI SAILORS

KUWAIT: During their long sea voyages in search of precious pearls, Kuwaiti sailors in the old days used to make small wooden boxes called Al-Mshabnaj to safe-keep their personal belongings and preserve presents to loved ones back at home. Al-Mshabnaj was usually made out of wood and whatever material available on deck, Kuwaiti craftsman Khaled Al-Hadab said. He said that rope was also an essential crafting material for Al-Mshabnaj, pointing out that the small size of the box was suitable to store some personal items and presents for family and friends. He said that sailors used to hand-pick the right type of wood to make their own personal boxes, adding that they also used to help each other to craft the item as a gesture solidarity and brotherhood. —KUNA



Colorful display of water fountain at Al Shaheed Park. —KUNA



Camels are pictured at a camp in Kuwait's desert. —KUNA photos



Setting up a fence around a camp in Kuwait's desert

CAMP SITES BEAUTIFY KUWAIT DESERT

KUWAIT: With the advent of the cold winter season, camp sites began to sprout in the vast Kuwaiti desert, painting a beautiful picture of people enjoying what nature has to offer away from racket of the city and suburban areas. —KUNA

KUWAITI ATTACKED

KUWAIT: A citizen sought police help after his father was attacked by a man. The son and the father has a previous dispute with the man. Police are looking for the suspect.

Mechanic has accident

A mechanic was involved in an accident while driving a car he was meant to be repairing. The car's owners has filed a complaint with the police.

Mosque desecrated

Criminal detectives arrested a citizen who desecrated a mosque in Abdullah Al-Mubarak area. The imam of the mosque called police according to a security source and told them that a man violated the sacredness of the space.

Beggar arrested

Farwaniya police arrested a Jordanian who was begging inside a shopping mall. The woman entered the country

with a visit visa and then obtained a temporary residence permit. She was sent for deportation and the person who brought her is being questioned.

Thefts around Kuwait

A citizen reported that his motorcycle has been stolen from in front of his home in Waha neighborhood in Jahra. Detectives are investigating. In another incident, a Kuwaiti citizen in Salam area told police that thieves raided his tent and stole his electronic items. And in a third reported case, a Kuwaiti woman accused her maid of stealing KD 400 in Salmiya.

Guard 'commits suicide'

A bedoon man told police that his farm guard hanged himself using an electrical wire. Criminal investigators have launched an investigation.

—Translated from the Arabic press.

News

in brief

'Anti-Corruption day'

KUWAIT: The "International Anti-Corruption Day" provides an opportunity to generate awareness on how detrimental the effects of corruption can be, Kuwait's Anti-Corruption Authority (KACA) said yesterday, adding that it is also a chance to step up efforts against corruption. In a statement to mark the "International Anti-Corruption Day", which falls today, KACA highlighted the need to ratchet up efforts to stifle the spread of corruption all across the globe. Moreover, the statement cited a United Nations (UN) pact established in 2003 to fight corruption, underscoring that Kuwait was amongst the signatories of the agreement that aims to "fight corruption and espouse the merits of transparency."

Humanitarian assistance

CAIRO: Kuwaiti leadership is keen on providing swift humanitarian assistance in time of crises, Director of Environment of Public Authority (EPA) Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said yesterday. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Humoud made this remark at the opening session of the 28th meeting of Arab ministers for environment affairs, which is being currently held at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo. Kuwait has been able to swiftly and efficiently respond to crises in accordance to international regulations, he said. He described Kuwait's response to emergencies as "transparent and indiscriminate."



Director of Environment of Public Authority (EPA) Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah

'Environmental challenges'

CAIRO: Secretary-General of the Arab League Ahmad Abul-Gheit yesterday called for collective Arab action to cope with "environmental challenges" for such an approach constitutes basis of modern-time socio-economic development. Abul-Gheit, addressing the 28th meeting of Arab ministers and officials charged with environmental affairs, called for mapping out a joint Arab strategy to deal with these challenges and setting up national-level "mechanisms" to limit catastrophes. His call came amid growing international concern for the Earth deteriorating climatic conditions and atmosphere, particularly marked with extreme hot summers. The Arab League chief underscored necessity of holding the third Arab forum for limiting catastrophes, as a prelude to the 2017 United Nations Climate Change Conference.

Anesthesia conference

KUWAIT: The seventh edition of a conference on anesthesiology and intensive care will prove instrumental in developing the country's healthcare system, Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi said yesterday. This remark was made by Secretary General of Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization (KIMS) Dr Ibrahim Hadi, who spoke on behalf of Al-Obaidi. Moreover, he noted that the conference would provide physicians with the opportunity to get acquainted with the latest developments in the field of anesthesia and intensive care, germane to heart disorders. The health official highlighted recent headway made in that field, noting that doctors have been able to deal with critical conditions through keeping abreast of the latest medical information, in efforts to give the healthcare sector a much needed boost.

International

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2016

Victory in Aleppo won't end the war, says Assad

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Obama, Trump now trade pleasantries

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Indonesians reel after earthquake

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MOSUL: Iraqis who fled the fighting between Iraqi security forces and Islamic State militants gather to receive humanitarian aid, at a camp for internally displaced people, in Khazir, near Mosul yesterday. —AP

IRAQI TROOPS RETREAT AFTER HOSPITAL BATTLE

TROOPS EXPOSED AFTER MOSUL ONSLAUGHT, MANY CIVILIANS KILLED

BAGHDAD: Iraqi troops who seized a hospital deep inside Mosul believed to be used as an Islamic State military base have retreated after a fierce counter-attack, giving up some of their biggest gains in a hard-fought seven-week campaign to recapture the city.

The soldiers seized Salam hospital, less than a mile (1.5 km) from the Tigris river running through central Mosul, on Tuesday but pulled back the next day after they were hit by six suicide car bombs and "heavy enemy fire", according to a statement by the US-led coalition supporting Iraqi forces.

Coalition warplanes, at Iraq's request, also struck a building inside the hospital complex from which the militants were firing machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades, it said.

Tuesday's rapid advance into the Wahda neighborhood where the hospital is located marked a change of tactics after a month of gruelling fighting in east Mosul, in which the army has sought to capture and clear neighborhoods block by block. The soldiers are part of a US-backed 100,000-strong coalition of Iraqi forces including the army, federal police, Kurdish peshmerga fighters and mainly Shi'ite Popular Mobilisation forces battling to crush

Islamic State in Mosul. Defeating the militants in their Iraq stronghold would mark a major step in rolling back the caliphate declared by the jihadists in parts of Syria and Iraq when they took over Mosul in mid-2014.

But with two years to dig themselves into northern Iraq's largest city, retreating fighters have waged a lethal defence, deploying hundreds of suicide car bombers, mortar barrages and snipers against the advancing soldiers and exploiting a network of tunnels to ambush them in residential areas.

Gates of hell

Soldiers from the army's Ninth Armoured division were left exposed on Tuesday after punching into the Wahda neighborhood. "When we advanced first into Wahda, Daesh (Islamic State) showed little resistance and we thought they had fled," an officer briefed on the operation told Reuters by telephone. "But once we took over the hospital, the gates of hell opened wide".

"They started to appear and attack from every corner, every street and every house near the hospital," said the officer who declined to be identified because he was not

authorised to speak to the media. He said insurgents may also have used a tunnel network reaching into the hospital complex itself. Iraqi military spokesmen have said little about the fighting around the hospital, stressing instead gains they said were being made in other parts of east Mosul, including the llam neighborhood a few districts northeast.

Brigadier-General Yahya Rasoul, a spokesman for Iraq's joint operations command, said on Wednesday "operations are continuing" around Wahda. He could not immediately be contacted yesterday. The statement by the coalition said Iraqi troops "fought off several counter-attacks and six VBIEDs (car bombs) ... before retrograding a short distance, under heavy enemy fire".

The Iraqi officer said that when the troops were inside the hospital complex, fighting off the militants, they came under attack from suicide bombers who he said either infiltrated through tunnels or had been hiding in the hospital grounds. "We don't know, they were like ghosts," he said. Iraq does not give casualty figures or report on its equipment losses, but the officer said 20 soldiers were killed and around 20 armored vehicles were destroyed

or damaged. Those figures could not be confirmed. Islamic State's Amaq news agency said more than 20 vehicles were destroyed and dozens of soldiers killed, and that they had been forced to retreat. Alongside those figures it showed a picture of a smouldering tank, its turret blown off, next to a crater in the road.

Around 280 km (175 miles) southwest of Mosul dozens of people, mainly civilians, were killed on Wednesday in air strikes which hit a western Iraqi town close to the border with Syria, local parliamentarians and hospital sources said. They said the strikes hit a busy market area in the Islamic State-held town of Qaim, in the overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim province of Anbar. Among the victims were 12 women and 19 children.

An Iraqi military statement said Iraqi air force planes conducted air strikes "on a terrorist hideout" in the area shortly after noon on Wednesday, as well as a second attack on an unspecified location. It said at least 50 terrorists were killed. It gave no details of civilian casualties, but said that the region - and all information coming out of it - was controlled by Islamic State. —Agencies

IS CALLS FOR ATTACKS ON US BASES IN BAHRAIN

DUBAI: The Islamic State group is calling on its followers to launch attacks in Bahrain, including those targeting American military personnel stationed on the tiny island ahead of a visit by the US defense secretary. The appeal for violence came in a video that also urges militants to attack the island amid a wider government crackdown on dissent there.

The slickly produced video surfaced as IS propaganda has waned as the extremists continue to lose territory in

Iraq and Syria under the onslaught of a US-led coalition campaign against them. Bahrain is part of that coalition.

In the IS video, images of Bahraini fighter jets are juxtaposed to footage of an airstrike hitting an IS-held area. It also shows clips of a Bahrain-based Gulf Air flight, the King Fahd Causeway linking the island to Saudi Arabia and other sites in the capital, Manama.

"Below you are the malevolent and the apostate soldiers of tyranny," one fighter says, according to a transcript

provided by the US jihadi-monitoring SITE Intelligence Group.

Bahrain is home to the US Navy's 5th Fleet, as well as a British naval base still under construction. Officials with the 5th Fleet did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In a statement to The Associated Press yesterday, Bahrain's government said it "remains vigilant against terrorist activities and extremism." "Authorities continue to take all necessary steps to preserve security and stability within

the kingdom," it read. The video appeared timed for high-level meetings on the island. A Gulf Cooperation Council conference attended by British Prime Minister Theresa May ended on Wednesday. Weeks earlier, Britain's Prince Charles and wife Camilla visited the island. This coming weekend, Bahrain will host the Manama Dialogue, where US Defense Secretary Ash Carter is scheduled to give the opening address. British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson is also due to attend. — AP

TIGRIS LIONESSE: IRAQI WOMAN FIGHTS FOR REVENGE AGAINST IS

MAKHMUR, Iraq: Wearing a camouflage cap over her headscarf, Miaad Al-Jubbouri cuts an unusual figure among the hundreds of men fighting to retake a village from Islamic State in northern Iraq.

The mother of five was the sole woman among a joint force of Iraqi army and tribal militias who attacked the village of Kanous on Wednesday - one of multiple fronts in a campaign to drive the insurgents from their remaining strongholds in Iraq. Like the men around her, Jubbouri said her motive for taking up arms was hatred of Islamic State, which overran large parts of the country more than two years ago, meting out brutal punishments and killing its opponents, including several of her cousins.

But unlike them, her mere presence on the battlefield goes against the weight of tradition in a society where women are often confined to the home and seldom seen near the frontlines, except when fleeing. "These soldiers are all my brothers; I am proud to be with them," said Jubbouri, to voices of approval from the men standing around her. "They (Islamic State) came to destroy Iraq but we will ... burn those dogs."

Despite the fighting talk, Jubbouri joined the 'Lions of the Tigris' tribal militia just 10 days ago and has no prior combat experience. The militia is one of dozens that have sprung to support Iraqi forces advancing on Mosul - Islamic State's last major urban stronghold in the country - in a US-backed campaign that began in October and is regarded as crucial to dismantling the caliphate the jihadists declared over parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014.

The men treat her more like a mascot than a sister in arms. A Kalashnikov is slung across her small frame, but not once did Jubbouri fire it during Wednesday's battle, and she remained a short distance behind the first line of fire. "They (the men) don't let me go to the very front. They fear for me, but I want to go," said Jubbouri apparently unperturbed by the deafening sound of mortars being fired at Kanous - her hometown. On the roof of a house further forward, a dozen soldiers and militiamen positioned on a roof fired round after round indiscriminately towards the village, facing only light resistance.

Like a Wolf

During the two years she lived there under Islamic State rule, Jubbouri said she secretly informed Iraqi security forces about the militants' movements, and flouted their order that women veil their faces. She left Kanous with her family this summer and joined thousands more displaced Iraqis at a camp in the Kurdish region, where her husband was picked up by security services and put in jail.

Jubbouri is not sure why, but said her husband's name may have been confused with that of a suspect, or that someone bearing a grudge against him may have accused him of links with the militants. "As far as I know he's done nothing wrong," she added, the flag of Iraq tied around her neck like a scarf. After her husband was detained, Jubbouri went south to Tikrit and left her children - aged between one and nine - in the custody of a relative so she was free to join the fight against Islamic State. "My children cried and said, 'We are scared you will die,'" Jubbouri said. "I told them I won't."

Neither her father nor mother are alive, and Jubbouri did not tell her uncles, who might have objected to her taking up arms. Her mother-in-law however encouraged Jubbouri to go and avenge the death of a son who was killed by insurgents in 2012. Jubbouri's husband, who remains in a Kurdish prison, is not aware of his wife's militia role. "He wouldn't be satisfied ... but he knows I am a wolf, that I am a fighter and that I am like a man," she said. — Reuters



GAZA CITY: A Palestinian fires his weapon in the air while mourners wait for the body of Rami Al-Areer, 24, a militant from the Izzedine Al-Qassam Brigades, a military wing of Hamas, who was killed with his colleague inside a tunnel east of Gaza, during his funeral in Gaza City yesterday. — AP

ISRAELIS KILL PALESTINIAN FOR BRANDISHING KNIFE

GAZA TUNNEL COLLAPSE KILLS TWO HAMAS MILITANTS

GAZA: Israeli paramilitary police officers in the occupied West Bank shot and killed a Palestinian who ran toward them brandishing a knife yesterday, police said. Police spokeswoman Luba Samri said the 18-year-old Palestinian had got off a bus at a main West Bank junction and appeared suspicious to border policemen stationed there.

"The suspect did not heed their call to stop, continued to move in their direction and at one point whipped out a knife and began running towards them. The forces opened fire at the terrorist," Samri said. The Palestinian Health Ministry confirmed the Palestinian had been killed, but had no further details on his identity. In recent months, there has been a significant ebb in what had been near-daily Palestinian street attacks that began in October 2015 in which 33 Israelis and two US citizens have been killed in knife, car-ramming and gun assaults.

Israeli forces have killed at least 230 Palestinians over the past 14 months. Israel says at least 156 of them were assailants. Others died during clashes and protests. Palestinians have accused Israeli police and soldiers of using exces-

sive force in many cases, saying assailants could have been stopped or detained without being killed. In several cases, Israel has opened investigations. Israel says one of the main causes of the violence is incitement by the Palestinian leadership, with young men encouraged to attack Israeli soldiers and civilians.

Palestinian leaders say assailants have acted out of desperation, frustrated by the almost 50-year-old Israeli occupation of the West Bank and annexation of East Jerusalem, territories which the Palestinians want for their own state.

Israel captured those lands in the 1967 Middle East war, and maintains tight restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in some areas, especially West Bank checkpoints that border Israel. The last round of peace talks between the sides collapsed in 2014.

Militants killed

Two Hamas militants were killed and three are missing after a tunnel in the Gaza Strip collapsed, the Islamist group's military wing said yesterday. The Al-Qassam Brigades named the two killed as Rami Muneer Al-Arier and Ismail Abdul Kareem Shamali, saying they died "fol-

lowing the collapse of a resistance tunnel." A source close to Qassam said five militants were in the tunnel when it collapsed and efforts were continuing to find and rescue the other three.

Over the years, the Hamas rulers of Gaza have built a labyrinth of tunnels, including those crossing under the border with Israel, for use in any renewed conflict. Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza have fought three wars since 2008 and the territory has been under an Israeli blockade for a decade.

Attack tunnels were a key weapon for Hamas during the last conflict in 2014, with a number of surprise attacks inside Israeli territory. The group also built a vast network of tunnels under the border with Egypt to smuggle weapons and goods of all kinds but those have been severely disrupted by Cairo's establishment of a no-man's land along the frontier. In recent months, at least 23 Gazans have died in tunnel incidents, most of them Hamas militants. In the coming weeks, Israel's state comptroller is expected to submit the final version of a report on the government's lack of preparedness for the threat from infiltration tunnels in 2014. — Agencies

US AND RUSSIA 'POLES APART' ON ALEPPO: EGELAND

GENEVA: The United States and Russia are "poles apart" in trying to agree the terms for evacuating people from besieged east Aleppo in Syria, UN Syria humanitarian adviser Jan Egeland said yesterday. Five months of negotiations over aid plans have all failed and produced "nothing", Egeland said, adding it was up to the United States and Russia to try to coordinate a deal.

As he spoke in Geneva, US Secretary of State John Kerry said after talks in Hamburg with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov he was "hopeful" about reaching an agreement with Moscow over Aleppo, but added he was awaiting "certain feedback and input". "The whole point of having co-chairs is that they are pulling together and they haven't been for quite some time," Egeland told reporters after a weekly

Syria humanitarian meeting of countries with influence in the war.

Opposition groups in eastern Aleppo previously gave mixed signals on how to organize evacuations, but now have dropped their conditions and are simply asking for a pause in the fighting to allow people to leave, Egeland added. Forces loyal to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad have captured the majority of east Aleppo's territory in the past 10 days, but most of the zone's 250,000-275,000 civilians and about 8,000 rebels are still thought to be trapped in the siege.

"Very many are now crammed together, we think, in the remaining area, which may be only 25 percent of what it was in early November," Egeland said. The United Nations has said it estimates about 33,000 people

have been displaced in the past 10 days, including about 20,000 going into government-held areas. Egeland said Syrian authorities say they have registered 30,000 in their areas.

Humanitarian corridors

Russia has been pressing for rebels and their families to be evacuated to the rebel-held town of Idlib, but the rebels have said evacuees should go to northern Aleppo province. Egeland said the local council in Idlib had informed the United Nations the town could not receive any more people because it was already too full of displaced people and there was too much fighting going on.

Russia has said it wants eastern Aleppo's citizens to leave via four humanitarian corridors, although it will not let food go in to supply the hungry

population. Egeland said Russia had been told during the closed-door UN meeting that the creation of a humanitarian corridor meant a pause in the fighting. "Russia said they will definitely be discussing with us how to organize the evacuations but they are not any more promising any pause (in fighting)," he said. However, leaving the talks with Lavrov in the northern German city of Hamburg, Kerry told Russian journalists that he remained hopeful and would continue to work for a solution.

Moscow launched an air war in support of Assad's forces last year, while Washington has supported rebel forces battling the regime. On Wednesday the United States, Britain and France led a joint call for an immediate ceasefire to allow aid to reach Aleppo, in an appeal backed by Canada, Germany and Italy. —Agencies



ALEPPO: Syrian residents of the newly retaken eastern neighborhoods of Aleppo walk through the Bab al-Hadid district as they go back home under supervision of the Syrian pro-government forces yesterday. —AFP

VICTORY IN ALEPPO WON'T END THE WAR, SAYS ASSAD

TROOPS PUSHING FURTHER INTO EASTERN ALEPPO

BEIRUT: President Bashar Assad said in comments published yesterday that Syrian forces' victory in the battle for Aleppo will be a "big gain" for his government but that it will not end of the country's civil war. Assad's comments came as his troops were pushing further into the rebel-held enclave in eastern Aleppo, in swift advances that were hardly possible earlier in the bitter conflict, now in its sixth year. Deeply divided since 2012 between Syrian government and rebel-controlled areas, more than three quarters of the rebel section have now fallen under the government's control, including the symbolically important ancient Aleppo quarters. More than 30,000 of the estimated 275,000 residents of besieged eastern part have fled to western Aleppo.

Yesterday, opposition activists said

intensive bombings took place in Al-Sukkari and Kallaseh neighborhoods in the area still held by rebels. State TV said the troops were about to storm the two districts. Al-Sukkari is in the southern part of eastern Aleppo, an area that has become home to the majority of the displaced civilians who stayed behind. Kallaseh is near the Old City.

The International Committee for the Red Cross said meanwhile that it evacuated 148 disabled civilians and others in need of urgent care from a facility in Aleppo's Old City after fighting had calmed down there. ICRC said in a statement yesterday that the evacuation was undertaken jointly with the

Syrian Arab Red Crescent and was completed late on Wednesday. The people had been trapped in a facility that was originally a home for the elderly and included mental

health patients, elderly orphans, and patients with physical disabilities. Some were injured civilians who had sought refuge there. "They were forgotten," said Pawel Krzysiek, ICRC communication coordinator in Damascus. The evacuees were taken to hospital and shelters in the western, government-held part of Aleppo. Others were not as lucky, with eastern Aleppo residents describing bodies lying on the ground because no one could get to them amid intense fighting. In an emotional plea sent to the media, the head of the eastern Aleppo medical authority called for an immediate cease-fire, saying this was a "last distress call" for help.

"Aleppo is finished. There is nothing left except a few residents and bricks," Mohammed Abu Jaafar said in a recorded audio message shared with reporters. "This may be my last call." —AP

EGYPTIAN AUTHORITIES ARREST SON OF MORSI

CAIRO: An Egyptian official says security forces have arrested the son of ousted Islamist President Mohammed Morsi. The official says that Osama Morsi was wanted by authorities, without providing further details. The state-run news website Al-Ahram reported the arrest, saying Osama is accused of inciting violence.

The official says Osama, one of Morsi's five children, was led away from his house in the Nile Delta on Thursday. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to brief the press. Morsi, Egypt's first freely elected president, was overthrown by the military in 2013. He faces a raft of charges in at least four separate cases and has received death sentences from lower courts. He has not received family visits or had any access to lawyers for three years. — AP

UK FACING 'UNPRECEDENTED' TERROR THREAT: SPY CHIEF

LONDON: Britain faces an "unprecedented" terror threat that will not subside until the Syrian civil war ends, the head of foreign intelligence service MI6 said yesterday. In a rare speech for an intelligence chief, Alex Younger said British authorities had foiled 12 terrorist plots since June 2013 and warned that the "murderously efficient" Islamic State group was still plotting attacks from Syria, despite recent military reverses.

"The plight of the Syrians continues to worsen. I cannot say with any certainty what the next year will bring," Younger told journalists in his first public comments since taking up the post of "C" in 2014. "But what I do know is this—we cannot be safe from the threats that emanate from that land unless the civil war is brought to an end. "We need to take the fight to the enemy, penetrating terrorist organizations upstream," he added. "By that I mean as close to the source as possible."

Younger criticized Russia President Vladimir Putin for propping up Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and warned that "hybrid warfare", incorporating cyber-attacks and propaganda, was an "increasingly dangerous phenomenon" that posed a "fundamental threat" to Western democracies.

"The connectivity that is at the heart of globalisation can be exploited by states with hostile intent to further their aims deniably," he said. Younger played down fears of instability in the wake of Brexit and the rise of Donald Trump, saying he expected "continuity" in Britain's intelligence relationships with the European Union and the United States. "These relationships are long-lasting and the personal bonds between us are strong," he said. — AFP

GHANA OPPOSITION CALLS ON PRESIDENT TO CONCEDE ELECTION DEFEAT

ACCRA: Ghana's main opposition party said yesterday it had an unassailable lead in a presidential election and called on President John Mahama to concede defeat - comments dismissed as "treasonable" by the incumbent's campaign team. Ghana has enjoyed two peaceful transitions of power via elections since 2000, a fact unusual in Africa. But the 2012 election outcome was fiercely disputed and an economic slump caused by plunging commodity prices exposed Mahama's government to a strong opposition challenge in Wednesday's vote.

The New Patriotic Party said its candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo, had taken 53.5 percent of the vote according to its own tally, against 44.8 percent for Mahama based on 92 percent of 29,000 polling stations collated. "We have absolutely won the presidential race and we have a majority in parliament," NPP policy adviser Boakyie Agyarko told Reuters.

A senior official for the ruling party, Samuel Ofose-Ampofo, countered that Mahama was "comfortably ahead" and asked his supporters to remain calm.

"The results are still trickling in and the call and declaration by the NPP is irresponsible and treasonable because it can throw this country into chaos," he said.

Figures shown by various television and radio stations showed the two main candidates running generally neck-and-neck. Privately-owned Joy FM put Akufo-Addo at 48.96 percent and Mahama 48.72 percent with 76 of 275 constituencies counted.

Electoral commission spokesman Eric Dzakpasu said that it would need to verify some results in precincts where the number of votes cast appeared to exceed the number of registered voters, but it would start releasing returns later yesterday. An NPP spokesman said any further delay by the Commission in certifying results "gives suspicion that (it) is trying to overturn the clearly expressed will of the people. — Reuters

AN OFFICER AND A REFUGEE: NEW POLICEMAN STRADDLES WORLDS

BADDAOUI HELPS NEWER REFUGEES AVOID DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

MANCHESTER, NH: Soon after arriving in New Hampshire as a teenager, Abdesselam Baddaoui met two fellow refugees who accidentally ended up involved in a criminal case because, after being instructed about domestic violence laws, the wife mistakenly believed she had to call police any time she and her husband argued.

"He got mad. She got mad, she picked up the phone, called 911. Police are at the door, and arrest the husband. She didn't understand," he said. "That stuck with me."

Sixteen years later, Baddaoui is one of the newest members of the police department in New Hampshire's largest city, where he hopes to help newer refugees avoid such misunderstandings. He and four other recruits, selected from about 200 applicants, were sworn in last week and are beginning months of intensive training.

Manchester, population 110,000, joins a handful of cities nationwide, mostly much larger, where police departments are specifically recruiting refugees amid a political climate in which some quarters accuse them of taking jobs or, in the case of Muslims, posing a potential security threat. No one knows for sure how many former refugees are working as police officers in the US.



AGRIGENTO, Italy: This handout picture released by the Italian police (Polizia di Stato) on November 23, 2016, shows police officer Maria Volpe taking care of Oumoh, 4, a young Ivoirian migrant. —AFP

But cities employing them include New York, Miami, Houston and Minneapolis, said Robert Taylor, a professor of criminology at the University of Texas at Dallas. Others, including some in California, have hired refugees as part-time "public service officers." "Where there is indeed a fairly significant refugee population, the enlightened police departments are reaching out to those communities and trying to say, 'Let's build some bridges, let's build

some trust, let's build a way we can deal with the problems you have in your communities," Taylor said.

Such officers help mitigate not just language barriers, but also cultural barriers, Taylor said - for instance, showing fellow refugees that in the United States, the police are supposed to be the good guys. Baddaoui, 30, was born in Algeria and lived there for 10 years before moving to Syria and then Lebanon. — AFP

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FRENCH 'TAX EVASION FIGHTER' JAILED FOR TAX FRAUD

PARIS: Former French budget minister Jerome Cahuzac, whose brief in government was to crack down on tax dodgers, was sentenced to three years in prison yesterday for tax fraud and money laundering. A court in Paris also gave Cahuzac's ex-wife Patricia Menard a two-year prison sentence for her role in stashing millions of euros abroad from the couple's lucrative hair transplant business.

The scandal was the first of a series that tarnished Socialist President Francois Hollande's government and prompted him to order his ministers to disclose their personal wealth, breaking a taboo in France, where the assets of public officials had long been considered a private matter.

Cahuzac, a 64-year-old plastic surgeon by training, initially denied the allegations and sued the Mediapart news website that broke the story in 2012. Footage of the minister lying to parliament was repeated in an endless loop on French TV news channels after he finally confessed in April 2013, "consumed by remorse", to having a Swiss bank account.

By the end of the trial, Cahuzac had repeatedly admitted his "inexcusable wrongdoing". He remained motionless when the verdict was read out. Chief judge Peimane



PARIS: Gendarmes escort French former budget minister Jerome Cahuzac (C) as he leaves the Paris courthouse following his tax fraud and money laundering trial's verdict yesterday. —AFP

Ghaleh-Marzban said Cahuzac, "who embodied France's tax policy", had committed an offence of "exceptional gravity".

His lawyer Jean Veil said Cahuzac would appeal, arguing that a prison term "was not a suitable punishment" for the crime. Cahuzac said in evidence that he hid funds offshore

to maintain his family's standard of living—which included buying apartments for his children in London and Paris and paying for holidays in Mauritius. The court also handed down a one-year suspended prison sentence and a 375,000-euro (\$405,000) fine to Francois Reyl, a Swiss banker, for assisting

the couple. His bank, Reyl, was fined 1.87 million euros for money laundering.

Like a crime novel

The story of the fraud, which took place between 1992 and 2013, reads like a cross between a cheap airport novel and an international financial crime manual. In one episode, Cahuzac, using the codename "Birdie", was said to have received two cash payments of 10,000 euros on the streets of Paris. The couple used a Royal Bank of Scotland account in the Isle of Man, an off-shore financial centre in the Irish Sea, to channel cheques from English clients of their business.

As the couple's marriage began to falter, Menard also opened an account in Switzerland. Menard's lawyer Sebastien Schapira told the trial the money was "that of fraud, but initially it was that of her work, earned day after day, hour after hour, hair by hair". He described Menard as "naive" and an unwitting accomplice who was "swept up" in the fraud before confessing in December 2013.

She testified that the couple had become locked in a "spiral" of wrongdoing. "I'm extremely ashamed of having done all that," she said. — AFP

MAY SLAPS DOWN FM OVER SAUDI COMMENTS

'JOHNSON WAS NOT SETTING OUT GOVT POLICY'

LONDON: British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson was not setting out government policy when he said Saudi Arabia and Iran were stoking proxy wars across the Middle East, a spokeswoman for Prime Minister Theresa May said yesterday.

Johnson, known for his colorful use of language and tendency to go off-script, told an audience in Rome last week that the absence of real leadership in the Middle East had allowed people to twist religion and stoke proxy wars. It is the latest in a series of gaffes to plague the foreign minister, who even May has jokingly said is hard to keep "on message for a full four days". He has been criticized by some EU officials for using less-than-diplomatic language in talks on Britain's decision to leave the bloc.

May's quick response underlines the

importance of Britain's alliance with Saudi Arabia, which is a major customer for British defense companies. "You've got the Saudis, Iran, everybody, moving in, and puppeteering and playing proxy wars. And it is a tragedy to watch it," Johnson was shown saying in footage posted on the Guardian newspaper's website.

"There are politicians who are twisting and abusing religion and different strains of the same religion in order to further their own political objectives. That's one of the biggest political problems in the whole region," Johnson said. It is unclear from the footage whether he specifically accused Saudi and Iran of twisting religion, though the Guardian reported that Johnson had accused Saudi Arabia of abusing Islam.

The spokeswoman for May said: "Those are the foreign secretary's views,

they are not the government's position on for example Saudi and its role in the region." May, who visited the Middle East this week, met Saudi King Salman and "set out very clearly the government's view on our relationship with Saudi Arabia, that it is a vital partner for the UK particularly on counter-terrorism", she said. "We want to strengthen that relationship." May appointed Johnson, who was key in the campaign for Britain to leave the European Union, in July, after he failed in a bid to become prime minister, cementing her appeal to other Brexit supporters in the ruling Conservative Party.

Her spokeswoman said May still supported her foreign secretary, adding that Johnson would have the "opportunity to set out the way that the UK sees its relationship with Saudi Arabia" during a visit to the region. — Reuters



LONDON: British Police officers stand on duty outside the Supreme Court in London on the final day of a four-day hearing yesterday. British Prime Minister Theresa May secured a symbolic victory on Brexit yesterday, after MPs agreed not to delay her plans to begin the EU exit talks by the end of March, although she had to promise to give them more details of her negotiating strategy. —AFP

UK MUST NOT BY-PASS SCOTLAND TO TRIGGER BREXIT, COURT TOLD

LONDON: The British government cannot ignore Scotland's wishes by kicking off the Brexit process without going through parliament, Scotland's chief legal officer told the United Kingdom's Supreme Court yesterday.

The court is hearing an appeal by the government against a ruling last month that it requires the assent of the British parliament to trigger Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty—the first formal step towards quitting the bloc—and cannot simply use executive powers.

The devolved government of Scotland, where a majority voted against leaving the European Union, argues that it would be wrong for the British government to use executive powers to take the momentous step of triggering Article 50. "That would by-pass an important constitutional requirement of the United Kingdom," Lord Advocate James Wolffe told the Supreme Court on the fourth and final day of the appeal hearing. Under a constitutional mechanism known as the Sewel Convention, the British parliament must seek consent from the Scottish parliament when it makes laws that have an impact on policy areas that are devolved to the Scottish government. Wolffe argued that Brexit would impact on devolved matters, and that meant the London parliament should be involved. —Reuters

GERMAN AGENCY SAYS RUSSIA IS TRYING TO DESTABILIZE GERMANY

BERLIN: Russia is trying to destabilize German society with propaganda and cyberattacks ahead of the country's general election, Germany's domestic intelligence agency said yesterday. The warning was the bluntest public claim yet from Germany's BfV agency about Moscow's alleged campaign of disinformation and hacking targeting Europe's biggest economy. "There is growing evidence of attempts to influence the federal election next year," said the BfV's head, Hans-Georg Maassen, citing "increasingly aggressive cyberespionage" against political entities in Germany.

Russia has been blamed for the hacking and release of Democratic National Committee emails before the US presidential election. But Moscow has strongly denied involvement in

orchestrating cyberattacks on foreign soil and hit back with allegations of its own against the West. Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for Russian President Vladimir Putin, said last month: "Believe me, we're expecting cyberattacks during election campaigns, every election campaign in Russia. These cyberattacks also happen, and believe me, there are also people behind those tens of thousands of cyberattacks who work from Germany just like other European countries."

Maassen, the BfV chief, expressed particular concern that voters' increasing use of social media could make them more vulnerable to disinformation. "We are worried that echo chambers are being created there," he said, adding that "automated opinion-forming" with bots could be used to spread fake news. — AP



WASHINGTON: In this Nov 10, 2016, file photo, President Barack Obama meets with President-elect Donald Trump in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington. A few months ago they were trading insults. Today it's telephone calls and pleasantries. —AP

OBAMA, TRUMP HURLED INSULTS, NOW THEY TRADE PLEASANTRIES

THE CLUB OF US PRESIDENTS HAS A WAY OF CHANGING THINGS

WASHINGTON: Did anyone see it coming, the apparent new rapport between President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump? Just a few months ago they were regularly flinging insults back and forth. Today they're trading phone calls and pleasantries. Apparently, membership in one of the world's most exclusive clubs, the club of US presidents, has a way of changing things.

On Wednesday, Trump talked about letting bygones be bygones. "I've now gotten to know President Obama. I really like him," he said on NBC's "Today" after Time magazine announced him as its Person of the Year. "We have, I think I can say, at least for myself, I can't speak for him, but we have a really good chemistry together. We talk."

Trump continued: "He loves the country. He wants to do right by the country and for the country, and I will tell you, we obviously very much disagree on certain policies and certain things but, you know, I really like him as a president." Obama hasn't been quite as effusive in his comments about Trump since the Nov. 8 election. But he has repeatedly urged the public and world leaders concerned about a Trump presidency to adopt a "wait-and-see" approach. His argument is that campaigning is different than gov-

erning, and that the reality of holding office will lead Trump to alter his thinking in some cases.

"That's just the way this office works," Obama said. It's unclear how genuine a friendship may develop between two men who have little in common beyond the presidency, or whether it's just Obama exercising a little presidential decorum, leaving the past behind and showing his commitment to a smooth hand-off to the next administration.

It's not the tone many expected just a few months ago. Obama spent much of the campaign almost gleefully denouncing the showy New York businessman as "temperamentally unfit" and "uniquely unqualified" to lead the world's most powerful nation.

Trump wasn't shy about responding, tweeting at one point that Obama "will go down as perhaps the worst president in the history of the United States!" Trump also spent years fomenting the "birther" issue and trying to undermine Obama with false claims that he was not a US citizen, and therefore an illegitimate president.

For that, Obama publicly humiliated Trump at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in 2011, ridiculing his turn as host of a reality TV show and spreader of the birther theories.

White House press secretary Josh Earnest has acknowledged that Obama and Trump have had "at least a handful" of telephone conversations since their 90-minute Oval Office meeting on Nov. 10. But Earnest has declined to say what they talk about or characterize the relationship between them. He did say Trump initiated at least one of the calls.

Trump had said at the White House that he would likely be calling on Obama for his "counsel." Turns out it wasn't just bluster. Paul Light, a New York University professor who studies government, says Obama could simply show Trump two photos, one each from Obama's first and final State of the Union addresses, to illustrate the "aging process" that is the 24-hour, seven-day-a-week presidency.

"What Obama can do for him is kind of help bring him up to date or help him understand what he's gotten himself into," Light said of Trump, who is 70. "Trump may be up to the task, but he doesn't know what the task is."

Ross Baker, a Rutgers University politics professor, said Trump may be sending a "message of reassurance" that he is aware of his own limitations" by publicizing his outreach to Obama. "There's no kind of handbook on how to be president," Baker said. —AP

TRUMP TAPS RET MARINE GENERAL FOR HOMELAND SECURITY

WASHINGTON: Retired Marine Gen John Kelly carved out a reputation as a highly respected, but often outspoken commander who could roil debate with blunt assessments or unpopular directives on issues ranging from women in combat to the treatment of detainees at the Guantanamo Bay detention center. But the man chosen by President-elect Donald Trump to lead the Department of Homeland Security holds a more somber distinction. The battle-hardened veteran, who served three tours in Iraq, is the highest-ranking officer to lose a child in combat in Iraq or Afghanistan.

That status, as part of what the military calls a Gold Star family, puts him in the Cabinet of a presidential candidate who verbally attacked a Gold Star family: The Khans, Muslim-American immigrants who lost a son in Iraq and had criticized Trump at the

Democratic National Convention. Kelly's son, Marine 1st Lt. Robert Kelly, was killed in November 2010 in Afghanistan. Trump's choice, who joined the Marine Corps in 1970, retired this year, wrapping up a three-year post as head of US Southern Command, which spanned some of the more fractious debate over the Obama administration's ultimately failed attempt to close Guantanamo.

Transition officials confirmed Trump's pick of Kelly on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak publicly before any official announcement. If confirmed by the Senate, Kelly would take over the nation's newest federal agency. The department was formed after the Sept. 11 terror attacks to get the US government better-positioned to prevent and respond to incidents.—AP

TRUMP NAMES LONGTIME FRIEND OF BEIJING AS US ENVOY TO CHINA

BEIJING: President-elect Donald Trump will nominate Iowa Governor Terry Branstad as the next US ambassador to China, choosing a longstanding friend of Beijing after rattling the world's second largest economy with tough talk on trade and a telephone call with the leader of Taiwan. The appointment may help to ease trade tensions between the two countries, the world's two biggest agricultural producers, diplomats and trade experts said. Branstad has visited China at least six times, and Chinese President Xi Jinping has traveled to Iowa twice, including once while Branstad was governor.

Branstad's appointment also suggests that Trump may be ready to take a less combative stance toward China than many expected, the experts said. Trump in a statement cited Branstad's qualifications including experience in government and longtime relationships with Xi and other Chinese leaders. The nomination, which will be formally made once the Republican president-elect is sworn in on Jan. 20, was well received, even among some Democrats. "He's tenacious, and trust me, with the Chinese, you need to be tenacious," US Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, a former Iowa governor, said of Branstad.

Trump, who defeated Hillary Clinton in last month's election, has said that when he takes office he intends to declare China a currency manipulator, meaning it keeps the yuan artificially low to make its exports cheap, and has threatened to impose punitive tariffs on Chinese goods coming into the United States. Added to that, his unusual decision to accept a call from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen last week prompted a diplomatic protest on Saturday from Beijing, which considers Taiwan a renegade province. Trump's transition team played down the exchange as a courtesy call, but the White House had to reassure China that its decades-old "one-China" policy was intact.

Branstad's established personal connection with China could help smooth a relationship defined largely by international security matters and by bilateral trade, where the massive US trade deficit with the country is a source of friction. "It means that the Trump team understands that it is important to have an ambassador who has access to Xi Jinping," Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank in Washington, said of the pick.

Branstad called Xi a "longtime friend" when Xi visited Iowa in February 2012, only nine months before he became China's leader. On Wednesday, Branstad said he and Xi have had a "30-year friendship" and added: "The president-elect understands my unique relationship to China and has asked me to serve in a way I had not previously considered." Before his nomination was announced, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang called Branstad an "old friend" of China when asked in Beijing about a Bloomberg report on the appointment, although he said China would work with any US ambassador.

"We welcome him to play a greater role in advancing the development of China-US relations," he told a daily news briefing. Xi's ties to Iowa go back more than 30 years: He visited Iowa in 1985 on an agricultural research trip when he led a delegation from Hebei Province, returning 27 years later and reuniting with some of the people he had met. Trump's stance on China has been in particular focus since Friday's call with Tsai, the first such top-level contact with Taiwan by a US president-elect or president since President Jimmy Carter adopted a "one-China" policy in 1979, recognizing only the Beijing government.



NEW YORK: In this Dec 6, 2016 file photo, Iowa Gov Terry Branstad speaks to members of the media in the lobby of Trump Tower in New York. —AP

WWII SACRIFICE OF 'FREE FRENCH' DEFENDING HONG KONG

HONG KONG: Seventy-five years ago, a handful of idealistic "Free French" took up arms to defend the British colony of Hong Kong in a futile battle against Japanese invaders. But their sacrifice, though largely unknown in their homeland, is not forgotten in Asia. There are six names on the worn stele that pays tribute to them in a corner of the British military cemetery in Stanley, on a hill in the south of Hong Kong island.

"I do not see why these people should be forgotten," says Francois Dremeaux, chairman of the Hong Kong committee of French Remembrances of China. "My job is to make their memory live by giving it meaning," adds the history teacher, who helped oversee a ceremony dedicated to them last week. Dremeaux, who has written a thesis on the French presence in Hong Kong in the interwar period, feels there is much to learn from these men, who in 1941 chose to fight in a battle some 10,000 kilometers from their homeland.

Hong Kong was a British enclave, and there was nothing forcing them to defend it, he adds. "We cannot even say they were defending their colony," Dremeaux said. "They defended an idea, freedom, and did it of their own free will, which makes their sacrifice even more noble." Apart from representatives from the French consulate and army, those attending the modest com-

memoration were largely students from the French international school where Dremeaux teaches. The group sang 'Le Chant Des Partisans', the anthem of the French Resistance—a tune rarely heard on the shores of the South China Sea.

Dissident consul

By June 1940, many in the French community - which numbered around 400 in the late 1930s, had already fled to Indochina. Those who remained largely rallied to the Gaullist Resistance cause. While the French embassy in Beijing was loyal to the pro-Nazi Vichy regime, in diplomatic correspondence Hong Kong consul general Louis Reynaud railed against the "treason" of the armistice Germany demanded and stamped his official telegrams with "V" for victory.

A "Free France" committee was set up in Hong Kong with about 20 active members to recruit volunteers, turn merchant sailors on stopover in port or prepare propaganda broadcasts. Then on December 8, 1941, hours after their surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese invaded Hong Kong, which had been living under the threat of the imperial forces since they seized the nearby Chinese city of Canton—modern day Guangzhou—three years earlier. Some of the Frenchmen joined the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps established by

Britain to support regular forces vastly outnumbered by the Japanese.

Dremeaux picks up the trail of the Free French at several key moments in the 17-day "Battle of Hong Kong", including the fight for the island's sole power plant. While only six names are on the stele, Dremeaux believes around ten took a stand against the Japanese. Among them was Armand Delcourt, a 42-year-old merchant who came to Hong Kong in 1926 and married a Eurasian woman of Japanese and Scottish origins, Captain Roderic Egal, who was in transit from Shanghai when the invasion began, Henri Belle, a sailor passing through Hong Kong who took up arms, and Paul de Roux a director of the Banque d'Indochine.

Egal and Belle were both captured and sent to prison camps, the latter dying in captivity. Roux did not fight but set up a resistance network. He was arrested and tortured, before committing suicide to prevent the enemy forcing him to talk. Delcourt was wounded by two bayonet blows on December 21 while defending a strategic hill pass and executed two days later, shortly before the governor surrendered on Christmas Day. On January 5, 1942, brutalised by the Japanese, his pregnant wife gave birth prematurely in a Hong Kong church to a girl who for decades

would not know the circumstances of her father's death.

"I did not know the full circumstances of my father's death until much later when I was in Australia and received the letter from my father's close friend Carlos Arnulphy who had managed to trace me," Monique Westmore, who now lives in Melbourne, told AFP by email. "I would have loved to have known my father but when I read the documents that are attached (to the letter) I understand that he was a man of great principle—I do sometimes ask myself 'why did you go knowing that your wife was hugely pregnant and also you weren't exactly a young man?'," Westmore wrote.

"The battle of Hong Kong was a total disaster and many people lost their lives." His military death notification praised him as "a continuous example of courage and enthusiasm" in an unequal battle who "cheerfully made the supreme sacrifice, confident in the final victory of France." For Dremeaux, the path chosen by Armand Delcourt resonates strongly today, "a time of withdrawal" when countries are increasingly looking inward. "He was married to a Japanese woman, lived abroad and gave his life for Free France," he said. "To be patriotic is not a contradiction with being open to the world". — AFP

INVESTIGATORS SEEK ANSWERS AS PAKISTAN MOURNS CRASH VICTIMS

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan yesterday mourned the 47 victims of its deadliest plane crash in four years, including a famed rock star-turned-Muslim evangelist, as officials sought to pinpoint the cause of the disaster. Engine trouble was initially believed responsible, but many questions remain, stirring new worries about the safety record of money-losing state carrier Pakistani International Airlines. The ATR-42 aircraft involved in the crash had undergone regular maintenance, including an "A-check" certification in October, said airline chairman Muhammad Azam Saigol.

"I want to make it clear that it was a perfectly sound aircraft," Saigol said. The aircraft appeared to have suffered a failure in one of its two turboprop engines just before the crash, he added, but this would have to be confirmed by an investigation.

"I think there was no technical error or human error," Saigol told a news conference late on Wednesday. "Obviously there will be a proper investigation." Grief erupted online soon after flight PK661 smashed into the side of a mountain near the town of Havelian, in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, on Wednesday, after taking off from the mountain resort region of Chitral.

It crashed just 50 km short of its destination, the international airport in Islamabad, the capital. A PIA spokesman said the pilot, who issued a "mayday" emergency call before the crash, may have prevented an even bigger catastrophe by manoeuvring the plane away from populated areas. "It seems that the pilot directed it away from people's homes. Otherwise there could have been even more damage," Daniyal Gillani told Reuters outside a morgue at an Islamabad hospital where bodies were being identified.

Stunned relatives gathered there, some weeping quietly, others besieging officials with questions. "What can I tell you?" said Raja Amir, as he waited for his mother's remains. "I don't know what we will get of her. There is still another hell to go through."

Remains continue to be brought by helicopter to Islamabad, where DNA tests will be used to identify them. Television images appeared to show rescue officials retrieving the aircraft's "black box" flight recorder from the wreckage, and the airline confirmed the recovery to the Geo News channel. — Reuters

'THE FALL OF HONG KONG' 75 YEARS SINCE JAPAN TOOK THE CITY

HONG KONG: High up on a hillside in the south of Hong Kong, shaded beneath dense green foliage, are the pockmarked remnants of World War II pillboxes, a reminder of the city's failed attempt to fend off a Japanese invasion. It is 75 years since Hong Kong fell—less than three weeks after the Japanese first attacked what was then a British colony. Hours after swooping on Pearl Harbor, bringing a reluctant United States into the war, Hong Kong was an early target in what would become a full-blown Asian campaign for imperial Japan.

Although extra troops had been brought in to bolster its defenses, the outpost of the British Empire was crushed under heavy bombardment in the 18-day Battle of Hong Kong. The brutal confrontation, much less reported upon than other clashes in the Pacific theatre, saw around 1,500 allied troops die trying to defend the territory. Keen to limit potential losses, the British government had initially been reluctant to send reinforcements in to what they saw as an indefensible position, despite Japan's advance into southern China in the late 1930s as part of the ongoing Sino-Japanese conflict.

But in September 1941, Canadian troops were drafted in to boost defenses, joining local, British and Indian soldiers. It was still a token force—the 15,000 allied troops were vastly outnumbered by more than 50,000 Japanese who carried out a devastating aerial attack that wiped out RAF planes at Hong Kong's Kai Tak airport on December 8, the first day of the offensive. The British were relying on Gin Drinkers' Line, an 11-mile military defensive cordon that ran across the hills of Hong Kong's northern New Territories, not far from the border with



HONG KONG: Pipes and drums band, comprised of members of the Hong Kong Police Force and Royal Canadian Mounted Police, leads a procession past tombstones during the Canadian Commemorative Ceremony honoring those who died during the Battle of Hong Kong and World War II, in Hong Kong's Sai Wan War Cemetery. — AFP

southern mainland China. A combination of bunkers, trenches and machine-gun posts, it was designed to combat any southward invasion from the Japanese. But a small group of Japanese forces soon breached a weak point in the line and troops joined them in an all-out assault, forcing the allies to retreat south across the harbor to Hong Kong Island in a matter of days.

As the Japanese pursued them, fierce fighting broke out around the North Point power station on the island's northern shore. Japanese troops then marched south, battling counter attacks in the connecting hills and valleys.

Hours before they eventually surrendered, the allies tried to defend the

island's southern peninsula of Stanley. Injured troops and medical staff there were attacked at St Stephen's College, which was being used as a military field hospital. Horrific testimony from eye witnesses tells how nurses were raped and killed, wounded soldiers attacked and mutilated. In the wake of the massacre, the British governor of Hong Kong officially surrendered to the Japanese on December 25. Japan occupied Hong Kong until August 30 1945, setting up internment camps across the city. General Takashi Sakai, who led the invasion and became governor of Hong Kong during the occupation, was executed by firing squad in Nanking, China, in 1946 for war crimes. — AFP



Marthonis, chief of Kuta Pangwa village, salvages goods from his house which was damaged after an earthquake in Pidie Jaya yesterday. — AFP

‘EVERYTHING DESTROYED’

INDONESIANS REEL AFTER DEVASTATING QUAKE

KUTA PANGWA: When the earthquake struck before dawn, Marthonis and his family had no time to run out of their home before it collapsed into ruins around them. Pinned under concrete in the pitch dark, Marthonis - the chief of Kuta Pangwa village - was not alone. Every house in his small hamlet was flattened when a 6.5-magnitude quake tore through Aceh province in Indonesia's west, killing more than 100 people.

Marthonis' mother was among the dead, crushed in her sleep. "My mother didn't survive. Maybe it was her destiny to die in a disaster like this," Marthonis said. It was not his mother's first encounter with nature's fury: she had survived the destruction of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake, that killed 170,000 in Aceh alone. But for Marthonis - who like

many Indonesians goes by one name - there has been little time to grieve.

Fifteen people from his village died in the quake - so many from one family they were buried in a single grave. As daylight arrived, similar tragedies were unfolding across Aceh, and the scale of devastation becoming clear. Hundreds of homes, mosques and businesses had been reduced to rubble, burying families in their sleep. A frantic search for survivors began, many clawing at the rubble with their bare hands. Rahmawati, 35, was among those pulled from the wreckage five hours after the quake struck. But she was the only one in her family who made it out alive, her husband and two children were crushed by falling debris. "I accept this as fate, because in the end we all will be called back to Allah," she said.

As aid pours into Aceh, the villagers from Kuta Pangwa - like thousands of others across the province - must prepare for a second night eating at temporary kitchens and sleeping in shelters. Hundreds more will spend another evening in ill-equipped health clinics and overcrowded field hospitals, waiting to see a doctor. As the rubble is slowly cleared, and victims laid to rest, the enormous task of rebuilding will begin. But it's impossible for Marthonis to contemplate at this stage, as he still comes to grips with the reality his village - and beloved mother - is gone. "Every one of my villagers' homes is destroyed," he said, gesturing to piles of grey rubble where a neighborhood once stood. "Nothing can be occupied again." — AFP

JAPAN CITY TAGS DEMENTIA SUFFERERS WITH BARCODES

‘LOST AND FOUND’

TOKYO: A Japanese city has introduced a novel way to keep track of senior citizens with dementia who are prone to getting lost - tagging their fingers and toes with scan-able barcodes. A company in Iruma, north of Tokyo, developed tiny nail stickers, each of which carries a unique identity number to help concerned families find missing loved ones, according to the city's social welfare office.

The adhesive QR-coded seals for nails - part of a free service launched this month and a first in Japan - measure just one centimeter (0.4 inches) in size. "Being able to attach the seals on nails is a great advantage," a city worker said. "There are already ID stickers for clothes or shoes but dementia patients are not always wearing those items." If

an elderly person becomes disorientated, police will find the local city hall, its telephone number and the wearer's ID all embedded in the QR code.

The chips remain attached for an average of two weeks - even if they get wet - the official said, citing recent trials. Japan is grappling with a rapidly ageing population with senior citizens expected to make up a whopping 40 percent of the population around 2060. Last month, Japanese police started offering noodle discounts at local restaurants to elderly citizens who agreed to hand in their driving licenses. The offer followed a series of deadly accidents involving elderly drivers a growing problem in a country where 4.8 million people aged 75 or older hold a license. — AFP

RISKING CHINA'S IRE, VIETNAM BEGINS DREDGING ON SOUTH CHINA SEA REEF

SYDNEY: Vietnam has begun dredging work on a disputed reef in the South China Sea, satellite imagery shows, the latest move by the Communist state to bolster its claims in the strategic waterway. Activity visible on Ladd Reef in the Spratly Islands could anger Hanoi's main South China Sea rival, Beijing, which claims sovereignty over the group and most of the resource-rich sea. Ladd Reef, on the south-western fringe of the Spratlys, is completely submerged at high tide but has a lighthouse and an outpost housing a small contingent of Vietnamese soldiers. The reef is also claimed by Taiwan.

In an image taken on Nov 30 and provided by US-based satellite firm Planet Labs, several vessels can be seen in a newly dug channel between the lagoon and open sea. While the purpose of the activity cannot be determined for certain, analysts say similar dredging work has been the precursor to more extensive construction on other reefs. "We can see that, in this environment, Vietnam's strategic mistrust is total ... and they are rapidly improving their defenses," said Trevor Hollingsbee, a retired naval intelligence analyst with Britain's defense ministry. "They're doing everything they can to fix any vulnerabilities - and that outpost at Ladd Reef does look a vulnerability."

Reuters reported in August that Vietnam had fortified several islands with mobile rocket artillery launchers capable of striking China's holdings across the vital trade route. Vietnam's foreign ministry did not respond to a request for comment. The vessels at Ladd Reef cannot be identified in the images, but Vietnam would be extremely unlikely to allow another country to challenge its control of the reef.

Greg Poling, a South China Sea expert at Washington's Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), said it remained unclear how far the work on Ladd Reef would go. Rather than a reclamation and a base, it could be an attempt to simply boost access for supply ships and fishing boats. Ladd could also theoretically play a role in helping to defend Vietnam's nearby holding of Spratly Island, where a runway is being improved and new hangars built, he said.

"Vietnam's knows it can't compete with China but it does want to improve its ability to keep an eye on them," Poling said. Vietnam has long been fearful of renewed Chinese military action to drive it off its 21 holdings in the Spratlys - worries that have escalated amid Beijing's build-up and its anger at the recent Philippines legal action challenging its claims. China occupied its first Spratly possessions after a sea battle against Vietnam's then weak navy in 1988. Vietnam said 64 soldiers were killed as they tried to protect a flag on South Johnson reef - an incident still acutely felt in Hanoi.

Building burst

The United States has repeatedly called on claimants to avoid actions that increase tensions in the South China Sea, through which some \$5 trillion in world trade is shipped every year. Vietnam has emerged as China's main rival in the South China Sea, actively asserting sovereignty over both the Paracel and the Spratly groupings in their entirety and undergoing its own naval modernization. Taiwan also claims both, but its position is historically aligned with Beijing's. The Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, run by the CSIS, says Vietnam has added about 120 acres of land to its South China Sea holdings in recent years.

Regional military attaches say Vietnam's key holdings are well fortified, some with tunnels and bunkers, appearing geared to deterring easy invasion. Vietnam's reclamation work remains modest by Chinese standards, however. The United States, which has criticized China for militarizing the waterway, estimates Beijing has added more than 3,200 acres of land on seven features in the South China Sea over the past three years, building runways, ports, aircraft hangars and communications equipment. Beijing says it is entitled to "limited and necessary self-defensive facilities" on its territory and has reacted angrily to "freedom of navigation" operations by US warships near Chinese-held islands.

Chinese reclamation

In another image provided by Planet Labs, reclamation work in the Chinese-held Paracel Island chain appears to have been damaged by recent storms. China began dredging and land filling earlier this year at North Island, about 12 km north of Woody Island, where it has a large military base and this year stationed surface-to-air missiles. Satellite images in February and March showed dredging vessels working to build a 700 meter sand bridge connecting low-lying North Island with neighboring Middle Island. — Reuters

IF IMPEACHED, S KOREA'S PARK FATE IN HANDS OF NINE JUDGES

SEOUL: If South Korean President Park Geun-hye is impeached in parliament today, she faces an uphill court battle to overturn the motion, experts say, even though the judges were all appointed by her and her conservative predecessor. An impeachment vote appears likely, and the nine-judge Constitutional Court would have up to six months to uphold or overturn it.

Legal experts say the case against the president looks strong, while the overwhelming public mood is for Park to quit, with massive weekly protests calling for her resignation and an approval rating down to just 4 percent. But the conservative make-up of the Constitutional Court would appear to be in Park's favor. For her to be impeached, at least six of the nine judges must uphold the parliamentary motion. The terms of two justices are set to expire soon - one on Jan. 31 and the other on March 13 - and experts say it is unlikely that replacements would be appointed amid the political crisis, potentially leaving just seven judges, the minimum required.

A smaller bench works in Park's favor because the number of judges needed to uphold impeachment remains at six. "Two judges retiring is like two judges voting for overturning," said Chon Jong-ik, a law professor at Seoul National University who served as the court's spokesman during the impeachment trial of President Roh Moo-hyun in 2004. Roh is the only South Korean president to be impeached, but the Constitutional Court overturned the motion. In that case, impeachment was unpopular with the public, which saw it as an abuse of power by the opposition, which held a parliamentary majority.

However, Ha Kyung-chull, who led Roh's nine-member team of lawyers at the trial, said the case against Park - that she allowed a friend to meddle illegally in government affairs - appears to be strong. "The argument will be that, as she has said all along, she has acted believing it's all for the national interest and that she did nothing for personal gain, and she believes that will be sufficiently convincing," said Ha, who served on the Constitutional Court from 1999 to 2004 before entering private practice. But he said there were "clear grounds to support impeachment".

No South Korean president has failed to finish a five-year term under the democratic president set up in 1987. The Constitutional Court will hear arguments from the two sides - the chair of parliament's Judiciary Committee for the impeachment motion and lawyers representing Park - in open hearings before delivering its ruling. Park is unlikely to be present. — Reuters

'RACIST' ROBOT REJECTS ASIAN-FACE PASSPORT PHOTO

WELLINGTON: A New Zealander of Asian descent had his passport photo rejected because it was wrongly believed his eyes were closed, but government officials yesterday said it was a computer error and not discrimination. Melbourne-based Richard Lee was attempting to renew his passport before returning to New Zealand for Christmas only to have facial recognition software at New Zealand's department of internal affairs turn down the application. A computer-generated response said the photo did not meet New Zealand's criteria because the "eyes are closed."

Taiwan-born Lee, 22, who grew up in New Zealand before moving to Australia to study, was not bothered by the rejection, but some of his friends quipped in Facebook posts that perhaps the New Zealand government had a "racist" robot. However, internal affairs spokesman Steve Corbett told AFP their systems did not discriminate "against any specific set of individuals" and in Lee's case the issue was with the lighting.

"The most common error is a problem with lighting casting shadows onto the face, which the facial recognition technology interprets as closed eyes and that was the generic error message sent in this case," Corbett said. Up to 20 percent of photos submitted online are rejected for a large variety of reasons, he added. Lee, who is studying aerospace engineering at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, said he was not bothered by the rejection. "I saw the humor in it and obviously it's a programming error in the recognition software," he told reporters. He posted a copy of the rejection letter on his Facebook page and described the publicity surrounding it as "shameless self promotion" for his alter ego as DJ Richy Fancy. — AFP



JALALABAD: Suspected Islamic State (IS) and Taliban militants are brought before media during a press conference in Jalalabad. Afghan National Directorate Security (NDS) forces arrested three suspected Islamic State (IS) fighters and eight Taliban insurgents during an operation in different parts of Jalalabad city. — AFP

TIES BETWEEN RUSSIA AND TALEBAN WORRY AFGHAN

US GENERAL CALLS RUSSIA A 'MALIGN INFLUENCE'

KABUL: Afghan and American officials are increasingly worried that any deepening of ties between Russia and Taliban militants fighting to topple the government in Kabul could complicate an already precarious security situation. Russian officials have denied they provide aid to the insurgents, who are contesting large swathes of territory and inflicting heavy casualties, and say their limited contacts are aimed at bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table. Leaders in Kabul say Russian support for the Afghan Taliban appears to be mostly political so far.

But a series of recent meetings they say has taken place in Moscow and Tajikistan has made Afghan intelligence and defense officials nervous about more direct support including weapons or funding. A senior Afghan security official called Russian support for the Taliban a "dangerous new trend", an analysis echoed by the top US commander in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson. He told reporters at a briefing in Washington last week that Russia had joined Iran and Pakistan as countries with a "malign influence" in Afghanistan, and said Moscow was lending legitimacy to the Taliban.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova pushed back at Nicholson's comments in a briefing in Moscow on Wednesday, calling them naive and inaccurate. "We have repeatedly said that Russia is not carrying out any secret talks with the Taliban and is not providing it with any kind of support," she said.

Zakharova said Russia favors a negotiated peace in Afghanistan, which can only happen by cultivating contacts with all players, including the Taliban. The Russian embassy in Kabul has scheduled a press conference to discuss Afghan-Russian relations, amid reports that the Afghan parliament plans to investigate Russia's ties with the Taliban.

Afghanistan has long been the scene of international intrigue and intervention, with the British and Russians jockeying for power during the 19th Century "Great Game," and the United States helping Pakistan provide weapons and funding to Afghan rebels fighting Soviet forces in the 1980s. Taliban officials told Reuters that the group has had significant contacts with Moscow since at least 2007, adding that Russian involvement did not extend beyond "moral and political support". "We had a common enemy," said one senior Taliban official. "We needed support to get rid of the United States and its allies in Afghanistan and Russia wanted all foreign troops to leave Afghanistan as quickly as possible."

Moscow has been critical of the United States and NATO over their handling of the war in Afghanistan, but Russia initially helped provide helicopters for the Afghan military and agreed to a supply route for coalition materials through Russia. Most of that cooperation has fallen apart as relations

between Russia and the West deteriorated in recent years over the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria. Incoming US president Donald Trump, who takes office in January, has signaled a desire to improve relations with Russia, meaning future US and Russian policies could change.

Foreign meetings

In recent months, Taliban representatives have held several meetings with Russian officials, according to both Taliban and Afghan government sources. Those meetings included a visit to Tajikistan by the Taliban shadow governor of Kunduz province, Mullah Abdul Salam, said Kunduz police chief Qasim Jangalbagh.

Another recent meeting occurred in Moscow itself, according to an official at the presidential palace in Kabul. Afghan officials did not produce evidence of direct Russian aid, but recent cross-border flights by unidentified helicopters and seizures of brand new "Russian-made" guns had raised concerns that regional actors may be playing a larger role, Jangalbagh said. "If the Taliban get their hands on anti-aircraft guns provided, for example, by Russia, then it is a game-changer, and forget about peace," said another senior Afghan security official.

Islamic State or US?

According to Afghan and US officials, Russian representatives have maintained that government security forces, backed by US special forces and air strikes, have not done enough to stem the growth of Islamic State in Afghanistan. Militants loyal to the radical Middle East-based network have carved out territory along the border with Pakistan, and have found themselves fighting not only Afghan and foreign troops, but also the Taliban, who compete for land, influence, and fighters. Taliban officials dismissed the idea that their ties to Russia had anything to do with fighting Islamic State. "In early 2008, when Russia began supporting us, ISIS (Islamic State) didn't exist anywhere in the world," the senior Taliban official said. "Their sole purpose was to strengthen us against the US and its allies."

That was echoed by Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, who said "ISIS is not an issue". Nicholson said the talk of Islamic State is a smokescreen designed to justify Russian policies. "Their (Russia's) narrative goes something like this: that the Taliban are the ones fighting Islamic State, not the Afghan government," Nicholson said.

"So this public legitimacy that Russia lends to the Taliban is not based on fact, but is used as a way to essentially undermine the Afghan government and the NATO efforts and bolster the belligerents." — Reuters

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2016

Friday Times

Lifestyle

www.kuwaittimes.net

A diver wearing a Santa Claus outfit swims inside a fish-tank at the Aquaria KLCC in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. The scuba-diving Santa Claus is one of the prime attractions in conjunction with Christmas festivities for visitors at the underwater park.—AFP

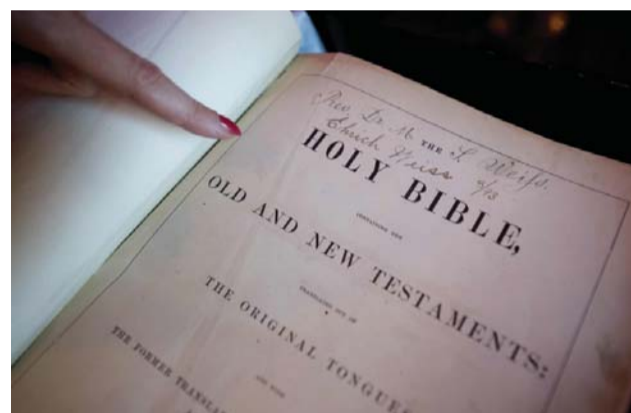
'Handcuff king' Houdini's secrets unlocked in Hungary



The museum's founder, Italian-Hungarian escape-artist David Merlini (left) and New York-based singer-songwriter Tara O'Ingredients Grady (right) show the famed Hungarian-born escape artist Harry Houdini's bible in the 'House of Houdini' museum in Budapest, Hungary. — AFP photos



A New York-based singer-songwriter Tara O'Grady shows the famed Hungarian-born escape artist Harry Houdini's bible in the 'House of Houdini' museum.



Tara O'Grady shows the famed Hungarian-born escape artist Harry Houdini's bible.

'Handcuff king' Houdini's secrets unlocked in Hungary

Ninety years after his death, the secrets of the world's greatest escape artist, Harry Houdini, have been unlocked in a recently opened Hungarian museum devoted to the Budapest-born illusionist. Set high in the capital's lofty Castle district, the House of Houdini lifts the veil on the box of tricks used by the famous magician, who lived most of his life in the United States. Amid gleaming chandeliers and old Chesterfield seats, the red-painted rooms showcase handcuffs and padlocks used by Houdini in performances.

Visitors can also see props from a recent television production on him such as a box from an illusion where a woman appears to be cut in half. There's even a stage where budding magicians charm visitors with card tricks. "I had an urge to pay tribute to Houdini," said museum owner and fellow escapologist David Merlini who has dedicated his life to collecting the items on display. "We are all Houdinis. Everyone has a secret desire sometimes to get out of a certain situation, to be somewhere else, in a different pair of shoes, that is his enduring universal appeal," he told AFP. At the start of December, the museum pulled a new rarity out of its hat—a bible once owned by Houdini.

The book, which he signed as a 19-year-old, was delivered to the museum by its previous owner, New York-based jazz-blues singer Tara O'Grady. "I feel like it has come home," O'Grady, whose family had owned the book since the late 1970s, told AFP after the artefact's handover. The bible had been gifted by Houdini's brother to a nurse in the 1960s who then gave it to her Irish immigrant neighbour, Tara's mother. Little attention was paid to the book, until a friend's recent interest alerted O'Grady to its potential value.

'Wild about Harry'

When Merlini first heard about the bible's reemergence on a Houdini historian's website, "Wild about Harry", he knew he had to have "this special collector's item". "My friends tell me I spend too much on these artefacts but what is of real value today? Real estate? A diamond ring or a nice car? I believe it is what makes you happy," he said. Like his hero, Merlini has made an art of getting himself first into and then out of trouble.

The Hungarian-Italian daredevil has performed stunts around the world, escaping from inside blocks of ice, quick-setting concrete or blazing cars. He has held his breath under-

water for a world record of around 21 minutes and coached Oscar-winning actor Adrien Brody on the 2014 "Houdini" television miniseries that was filmed in Budapest. Merlini says he shares Houdini's "fetish of locks, safes, and the art of escape". Instead of playing with Lego, he collected padlocks as a child.

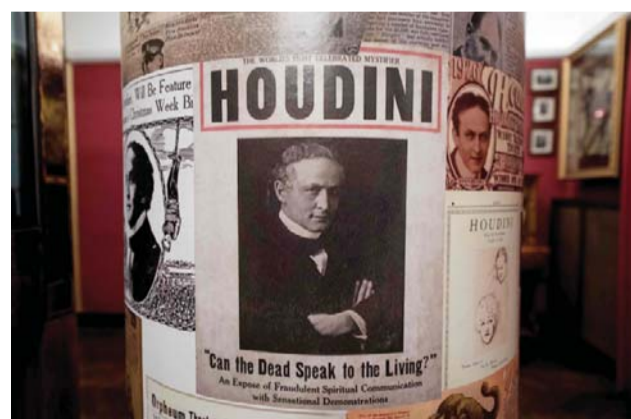
"Escapism is not just about unlocking padlocks. It's the desire to get rid of things that are binding our freedom in a world with so many rules and regulations," observed Merlini, who was born on October 31, the same day as Houdini died. He said it bothered him that Houdini, despite his Hungarian roots, was not publicly acknowledged in his home country. "I couldn't understand why, for such an enormous artist of such calibre, there was not even a sign on the street where he was born," Merlini added. To rectify the situation, he decided to open his private collection to the public earlier this year. Beyond its entertainment value, the museum also employs a researcher who delves into Houdini's mostly unknown early life and family history in Budapest.

'Dark side'

Born Erik Weisz in Budapest in 1874, Houdini and his family left for Appleton, Wisconsin, when he was just four years old. By his late teens, he was performing stunts and using the stage-name "Houdini", a nod to the French magician Jean Eugene Robert-Houdin. Fame arrived thanks to his feats with handcuffs and straitjackets, and sensational escapes from sealed water-filled milk urns, and caskets buried underground. "The world's handcuff king, nothing on earth can hold Houdini a prisoner!" read a contemporary publicity poster. Although Houdini extensively toured Europe, he never put on a show in Budapest. Hungary represented a "dark side" for Houdini, says Merlini. "He was not proud of his Hungarian background because he was a poor Jewish immigrant from Europe (in the US)," he noted. "But we are trying to keep the legend alive." — AFP



The main entrance of the 'House of Houdini' museum is seen at the 1st district of Budapest in Buda Palace quarter.



The "House of Houdini" museum is pictured in Budapest.



A wax figure of Harry Houdini, the famed Hungarian-born escape is seen in the 'House of Houdini' museum.

Dylan snubs Nobel, Santos to accept Peace Prize in Oslo

One sings of peace, the other makes peace: Bob Dylan will not travel to Stockholm on Saturday to accept his Nobel prize, but Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos will receive his award in Oslo for a deal signed with FARC rebels. In Stockholm, where the prizes for literature, medicine, physics, chemistry and economics are traditionally awarded on December 10th, the formal ceremony will be marked by Dylan's no-show, as the first songwriter to win the literary accolade has declined due to "pre-existing" commitments. Since being awarded the prestigious prize on October 14, the music icon has been a somewhat reluctant recipient, refusing to acknowledge it publicly for several weeks.

Amid the silence, a member of the Swedish Academy, which awards the prize, accused Dylan of being "impolite and arrogant". The rock legend finally broke his silence in a newspaper interview two weeks later, calling it "amazing" and saying he would "absolutely" attend the December 10th ceremony, "if at all possible." But two weeks after that, he told the Academy that he had other commitments that prevented him from attending-though no concert is scheduled on his website.

Several other literature laureates have skipped the Nobel ceremony in the past for various reasons-Doris Lessing on grounds of ill health, Harold Pinter because he was in hospital and Elfriede Jelinek due to social phobia-though these cases remain "exceptional", according to the Academy. Dylan has sent a thank-you speech to be read at the gala banquet at Stockholm's City Hall, attended by around 1,300 guests and the Swedish royal family. And just before that, American rock star Patti Smith will sing Dylan's "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" during the prize ceremony at Stockholm's Concert Hall. Dylan, 75, is the first singer-songwriter to win the prize, a choice that stunned literary circles which had expected a more conventional laureate.



This file photo shows US legend Bob Dylan performing on stage during the 21st edition of the Vieilles Charrues music festival in Carhaix-Plouguer, western France. — AFP

No FARC invited

On the same day in Oslo, the Nobel Peace Prize will be presented to Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, the architect of a peace deal that now appears to be well on track after more than a half-century of conflict. His government and the Marxist FARC rebels signed a peace accord on November 24 after suffering a serious setback when a first agreement was rejected by the Colombian people in an October 2 referendum. The shock result appeared to have sent Santos' chances of winning the Nobel up in smoke.

But the Nobel committee surprised punters, reading out Santos' name as the laureate five days later. "The fact that a majority of the voters said 'no' to the peace accord does not necessarily mean that the peace process is dead," Nobel committee chairwoman Kaci Kullmann Five said at the time. The renegotiated peace deal, ratified by Congress instead of being put to a popular vote and including proposals from the opposition, still calls for FARC's disarmament and their transformation to a political movement.

And in the first tangible sign that peace is descending on Colombia, the rebels began destroying their weapons earlier this month. Santos has invited some 40 people to accompany him to Oslo, most of them family members but also some of the peace negotiators, as well as a dozen representatives of the victims of the conflict, which has claimed 260,000 lives, left more than 60,000 missing and 6.9 million people displaced. "No FARC representatives are among the guests," the head of the Nobel Institute, Olav Njolstad, told AFP.

Nor is anyone from the camp of Santos' rival, ex-president Alvaro Uribe, who opposes rebels entering Colombian politics and helped bring down the first peace deal. After holding a press conference at the Nobel Institute on Friday, Santos will receive his prize on Saturday at a ceremony in Oslo's City Hall attended by Norway's King Harald, members of the government and celebrities. The Nobel prizes are traditionally awarded every December 10th, the anniversary of the death of prize creator Alfred Nobel, a Swedish inventor, philanthropist and industrialist. — AFP

Junaid Jamshed, Pakistan's pop pioneer turned preacher, dead at 52

Junaid Jamshed, a pioneer of Pakistani pop who renounced music to become a Muslim evangelist and started one of the country's most successful clothing boutiques was among 47 people killed in a plane crash Wednesday. He died alongside his second wife, Nahya, and is survived by his first wife Ayesha as well as four children. Born in Karachi on September 3, 1964, he shot to fame in the late 1980s as lead singer of the boy band "Vital Signs", where his dashing looks and brooding vocals made him a style icon and heart-throb for a generation emerging from the harsh Islamist rule of military dictator Zia-ul-Haq.

The band's fusion of Western guitar-driven pop set to traditional Tabla beats inspired a new genre-Sufi Rock-that is hugely popular throughout South Asia today. Their greatest hit, "Dil Dil Pakistan", an upbeat ode to the homeland with a synthesizer-heavy 1980s sound, remains an unofficial national anthem. Many of his biggest fans became critics when in the early 2000s he left his career in pop to become a member of the Tableeghi Jamaat, a Sunni evangelical group that preaches its austere brand of Islam throughout the world.

Jamshed ditched his leather jackets and stone-washed jeans for traditional tunic and baggy trousers, grew a beard, and began recording religious 'Naats' hymns that are sung

a capello, because instruments are seen as "haram" (forbidden). Pakistani progressives' disappointment only grew as Jamshed made a series of controversial statements, often targeting women, including famously telling a female TV host that women should not be allowed to drive or leave the home without male guardians.

But his new guise also endeared him to religious conservatives who followed his TV appearances closely and regarded him as a role-model for leaving a decadent lifestyle behind. In 2014, he found himself embroiled in controversy for appearing to criticize one of the Prophet Muhammad's wives in one of his sermons, prompting a blasphemy case against him. He issued a tearful apology and the case was not pursued-his strong connections with the country's religious right seemingly shielding him from the persecution minorities often face when charged or even accused of the same crime.

In addition to his preaching, Jamshed set up a upmarket clothing boutique in 2002, a highly profitable business that today boasts a strong presence across the country. In his last tweet, Jamshed posted pictures of himself with fellow preachers in scenic northern Chitral, from where the ill-fated Pakistan International Airlines flight 661 made its final journey. "Heaven on Earth Chitral. With my friends in the Path of Allah," he tweeted. His death was mourned by clerics, politicians and music fans. "Gutted by reports of JJ's untimely demise. His voice expressed the emotions of a whole generation in the 1990s. RIP," tweeted cultural critic Nadeem Farooq Paracha. — AFP

In this photograph Pakistani Ingredients television show host Junaid Jamshed presents an Islamic quiz show Shan-e-Ramadan in Karachi. — AFP



This combination of pictures created on December 07, 2016 shows actor Russell Crowe (left) in a May 15, 2016, file photo, at the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes. US rapper Azealia Banks performing at the Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts in a June 29, 2013, file photo. — AFP

ACTOR RUSSELL CROWE WON'T BE CHARGED FOR SCUFFLE WITH RAPPER

Los Angeles prosecutors have decided not to file charges against actor Russell Crowe over a scuffle earlier this year with rapper Azealia Banks. In a court filing on Tuesday, the Los Angeles District Attorney's office said the actor appeared justified in throwing the singer out of his Beverly Hills hotel room during an October 15 party after she reportedly became belligerent. The 25-year-old rapper had filed a police report against the Oscar-winning actor following the incident, claiming he grabbed her by the neck, used a racial slur and spat on her.

But prosecutors said if anyone was to blame for the incident, it appears to be Banks, who witnesses at the party described as either drunk or on drugs. "Several attendees describe Banks, not Crowe, as the assaultive party," prosecutors said in a charge evaluation worksheet that explains their decision. "Witnesses state that prior to being ejected from the hotel room by Crowe, Banks repeatedly used a racial epithet, was verbally aggressive to party attendees and threatened to break a glass to cut the throat of a female guest and/or Crowe," the filing states.

It adds that Banks had admitted to making insulting statements before the 52-year-old actor threw her out of his suite and that she had

no visible injuries when she reported the incident to police. Prosecutors said it would also be inappropriate to file criminal charges against Crowe for spitting on Banks' gloved hand. "It was incidental to preventing more serious threatened violence," the filing said.

The rapper took to Facebook on Wednesday to express her dismay over the decision. "Seriously heartbroken over this news of my case against Russell Crowe being thrown out," she wrote, adding that her attorney had failed to properly represent her. "One thing I won't do is let this ruin any parts of me," she added. "I've done enough crying in 2016, and 2017 won't be the year I allow the media or anyone else to control my narrative." The rapper earlier this year was suspended from Twitter after a stream of racist and Islamophobic invective against former One Direction heartthrob Zayn Malik, whom she accused of copying her style. Banks, who is African American and has long been notorious for provocative social media postings, later apologized for her rant. — AFP



Grammy country committee rejects Beyonce song

Beyoncé earned a whopping nine Grammy nominations Tuesday, including best rock performance, but the singer's twangy song "Daddy Lessons" was rejected by the Recording Academy's country music committee. A person familiar with the Grammy nomination process told The Associated Press on Wednesday that Beyoncé submitted "Daddy Lessons" - from her album "Lemonade" - to the country category.

The person, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the person was not allowed to speak publicly about the topic, said the country music committee rejected the song. If Beyoncé's song had made it through, it would have been eligible for honors such as best country song and country solo performance. Beyoncé performed "Daddy Lessons" at last month's Country Music Association Awards alongside the Dixie Chicks. — AP

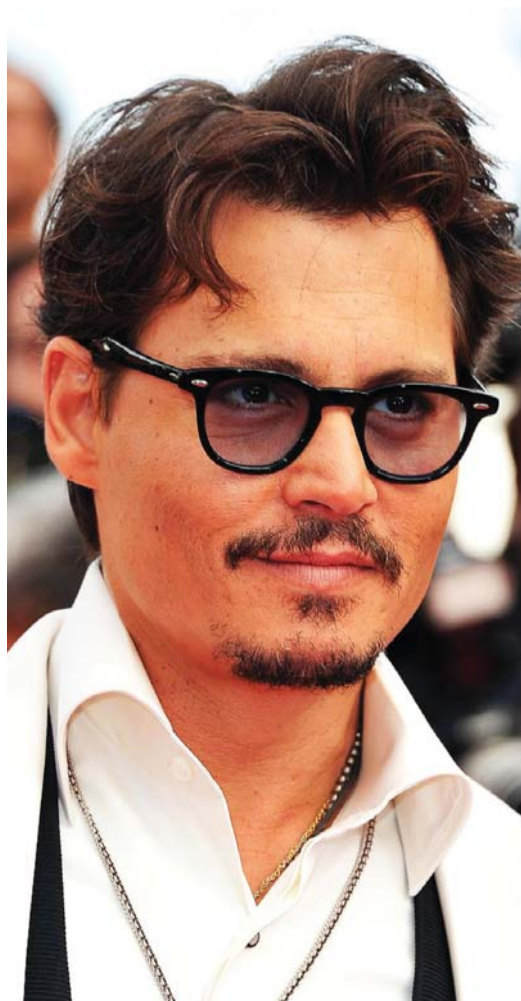
SIA AND FILMMAKER-HUSBAND ERIK ANDERS LANG SEPARATE

Grammy-nominated singer Sia and her filmmaker-husband, Erik Anders Lang, are separating. In a statement released through a spokesperson Wednesday, Sia and Lang said "after much soul searching and consideration we have made the decision to separate as a couple."

They were married in August 2014. They said they are "dedicated to remaining friends." No more details were provided. Sia, who has written songs for Beyoncé, Rihanna, Katy Perry and others, is known for her own hits like "Chandelier" and "Cheap Thrills." She earned three Grammy nominations Tuesday, including best pop vocal album for "This Is Acting." Lang's website says he has created documentaries for Louis Vuitton, Honda, MTV and other companies. —AP



In this file photo, filmmaker Erik Anders Lang, left, and singer Sia attend the after party for the premiere of 'The One I Love,' in Los Angeles. — AP



JOHNNY DEPP RANKED MOST OVERPAID ACTOR FOR SECOND STRAIGHT YEAR

The annual Forbes list of the top 10 most overpaid actors in Hollywood ranks Johnny Depp in the top spot for the second year in a row. To compile the list, Forbes' analysts examined the last three significant movies (released on at least 2,000 screens) the actor was in prior to June, then calculated the operating income of those films and then divided that by the star's estimated pay for those films to come up with a number for final return on investment. Related Taylor Swift, One Direction Named Highest-Paid Celebrities Under 30.

By that model, Depp returned about \$2.80 for each dollar he was paid. Depp last starred in Disney's "Alice Through the Looking Glass," which generated a disappointing \$300 million worldwide on a \$170 million budget. The movie opened at the same time that a judge issued a restraining order against Depp after spouse Amber Heard alleged he had abused her. The couple reached a \$7 million divorce settlement in August.

Depp starred last year in the comedy "Mortdecai" and the crime drama "Black Mass," which grossed a respective \$47 million and \$100 million worldwide. He'll appear next in "Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man Tell No Tales." Will Smith ranks second with \$5 for every dollar he was paid. His drama "Concussion" grossed \$48 million worldwide for Sony on a \$35 million budget while "Focus" generated \$160 million in global box office on a \$50 million budget. Related Michael Jackson Tops Prince, David

Bowie on 2016 List of Highest-Earning Dead Celebrities

Channing Tatum wound up third on the list with \$6 for every dollar he was paid. Even though "Magic Mike XXL" performed solidly with \$120 million in worldwide grosses on a \$15 million budget, his number was held down by "Jupiter Ascending" with worldwide grosses of \$183 million on a \$175 million budget. Adam Sandler, who topped the 2013 and 2014 Forbes overpaid actor lists, was sixth. Julia Roberts is the only woman on the list, landing in ninth place. The entire top 10:

- Johnny Depp, returns \$2.80 for each \$1 paid
- Will Smith, returns \$5 for each \$1 paid
- Channing Tatum, returns \$6 for each \$1 paid
- Will Ferrell, returns \$6.50 for each \$1 paid
- George Clooney, returns \$6.70 for each \$1 paid
- Adam Sandler, returns \$7.60 for each \$1 paid
- Mark Wahlberg, returns \$9.20 for each \$1 paid
- Leonardo DiCaprio, returns \$9.90 for each \$1 paid
- Julia Roberts, returns \$10.80 for each \$1 paid
- Bradley Cooper, returns \$12.10 for each \$1 paid-Reuters

Marrakech Fest salutes Director **Abdellah Masbahi**, comedian Abderrahim Tounsi

The 16th Marrakech Festival paid tribute on Tuesday to the late director-producer Abdellah Masbahi, and 80-year old comedy actor Abderrahim Tounsi. Often known as Abderraouf, Tounsi created a Moroccan Chaplin-style character that was hugely popular in the 1970s and early 1980s, typically wearing a red hat as he represented the humble "fool" who could poke fun at authority.

Tounsi was nominated in 2011 by Belgium's Foundation des Nuits de l'Humour Arabe as the best Moroccan comedian of the 20th century. Although extremely popular he was overlooked by the local film industry. This inspired director Nassim Abassi to make a feature film, "My Uncle," recuperating his character for one of the key roles. Screening at Marrakech after the career tribute, it features Tounsi as the uncle of a young struggling actress (Alia Erkab).

Abassi's previous film with Tounsi, "Majid," was also shown in an open air screening on Tuesday, in the presence of the actor, in Marrakech's iconic Place Jemaa e-Fna, which is replete with snake charmers and fortune tellers. It received a rapturous reception from the locals. The atmosphere inside Marrakech's Palais des Congres for the homage was equally ecstatic as Tounsi arrived dressed in jacket with a red lining featuring the Moroccan five pointed star inside, which he playfully showed to the photographers. The ceremony began with the in memoriam tribute to Abdellah Masbahi, which was hosted by leading local film critic, Mohamed Bakrim.

Defining experience

Born in 1936 in El Jadida in Morocco, Masbahi studied economics in Switzerland and screenwriting in ESEC in Paris. After being appointed as director of the Moroccan film agency, he worked in Egypt in the Cairo Film Studios. That proved a defining experience which heavily influenced him when he began producing a series of films and TV movies and series. In 1983 he was commissioned to direct "Why Afghanistan?" starring Irene Pappas but the film was never completed. He remained active as a producer until his death in September, 2016.



Abderrahim Tounsi arrives for the 16th Marrakech International Film Festival Opening Ceremony in Marrakesh, Morocco. — AFP

Bakrim described Masbahi as someone who was highly symbolic, a great man and professional who was one of the pioneers of Moroccan cinema. This year's Marrakech fest has also paid an in memoriam tribute to Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami and Bakrim said that although the two directors explored different paths, they both shared a deep love for cinema. Bakrim said that Masbahi was so passionate about cinema that his life couldn't be separated from his cinema and vice versa.

He noted that against the backdrop of the emerging Moroccan cinema in the 1970s, known as the "decade of auteurs," which used new cinematic language to challenge ideas and morals, Masbahi chose a more classic approach, linked to the Egypt's film powerhouse, to reach audiences across the Arab world. He said that Masbahi dreamt of a cinema project that could explore popular themes attaining an international dimension, intimately linked to the idea of building a pan-Arab film industry. But Masbahi had the courage to address controversial

topics, such as social hypocrisy, drugs and geo-political conflict, Bakrim noted.

Movies are eternal

Masbahi's daughter, Imane, who is a director and distributor, went on stage to receive the tribute and was clearly moved by the occasion. "Dad you left us," she said, wiping a tear from her eye. She added: "I can still see you lying on your bed in hospital, talking about the script of your next movie. When I was little I thought that you were eternal, but you told me only movies are eternal. You were right." She then added that for the tribute they had inspected the copies of his old films which made her sad because of their poor condition. She then launched an appeal for a film restoration initiative so that her father and other deceased Moroccan cinematographers may "rest in peace."

Tounsi's tribute was hosted by Moroccan actress Hanane El Fadili. She described Tounsi as a legendary artist with a rich career, who is beloved by kids and adults all around Morocco. She said that Tounsi avoided stereotypes and addressed serious and deep messages, daily concerns and denounced abuse and corruption. "When the streets were empty it meant one of two things - either the national soccer team was playing or you were on TV."

Fadini went on to ask why comedy is so absent from Moroccan films. Her final remark was: "You were a spokesperson for the voiceless in Morocco. You taught us to laugh about everything but also not to cry about everything. You have been the representative of the poor. But today I confidently say that you are the boss." After ascending to the stage, accompanied by his daughter, Tounsi received a three minute standing ovation to loud cheers. He stated that it was the happiest day of his life and dedicated the award to "all those who have loved and supported me over decades." He signed off with his renowned fiendish cackle, to the delight of the packed audience. — Reuters

EGYPTIAN AUTEUR YOUSRY NASRALLAH ON COOKING UP A WEDDING COMEDY WITH POLITICAL OVERTONES

Yousry Nasrallah is one of Egypt's most highly regarded filmmakers, known for depicting his country's social and political complexities in multi-layered movies such as "Gate of the Sun" (2004), "Aquarium" (2008) and "After the Battle" (2012) which was a meditation on the Tahrir Square revolution. His latest, "Brooks, Meadows and Beautiful Faces," which screens in Dubai's Arabian Nights section, after launching in Locarno and Toronto, is a comedy about a family of cooks preparing a wedding feast in a small Egyptian village. Nasrallah also heads the fest's main jury. He spoke to Variety about his transition towards making seemingly lighter fare in what are dark times for Egyptian audiences.



Yousry Nasrallah

The tagline for this film is: "You don't need politics to make a political film... Love, pleasure, beauty and food are serious enough." It's clearly more than a bucolic culinary romp. In 1999 I made a documentary called "On Boys, Girls and the Veil." The lead character was the actor Bassem Samra [who appears in many of

Nasrallah's films, including in "Brooks"] who then introduced me to his family in the countryside. They fascinated me. They were cooks, they were very lecherous and lots of fun. They had a relationship to life that I liked. So I started writing the script, but it was too political. It was a time [before the revolution] when politics were monopolized by the state and film directors felt compelled to make political films. But it was not my intention to make a political movie, so I put it aside. And every time I finished a film I would pick up the script [for "Brooks"], and then put it aside once again.

Commercial screenwriter

Then recently I decided to do it precisely because I felt there wasn't much left to say, politically, about how bad the situation in Egypt is. And that I needed to go back to certain fundamental things. You know the three basic things that mobilized people in the 2011 revolution were: bread, freedom, and dignity. That's what this film is about! Tell me about working with Ahmed Abdallah, who is known as a hit-making screenwriter in Egypt. Yes, he is a very commercial screenwriter. He did a few films which I really liked. One was "Elfarrah" ("The Wedding"). But I don't think in terms of working with commercial or non commercial writers. It's about intelligence and talent. He's good at dealing with a multitude of characters. His contribution to this particular project was basically writing dialogues and discussing the last section of the film with me, which I changed. He's funny, he has that sense of repartee. It was fun working with him. But most of the script, including the wedding, I wrote myself. I'm a cook, so I know what I'm talking about when I deal with cooks.—Reuters

'Star Wars' fans get early Christmas gift with 'Rogue One'

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, fans had to wait years between "Star Wars" movies-but the space saga is back with the most hotly-anticipated spin-off in cinema history. Just 12 months after "The Force Awakens" shattered numerous box office records, Lucasfilm is unleashing "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" as an early Christmas gift for its millions of devotees. With just over a week to go before its December 16 US release, excitement is building for the eighth installment in George Lucas's sci-fi saga, which recorded the second-highest first day of domestic pre-sales ever (behind "The Force Awakens").

The job of building on Lucas's legacy falls to British filmmaker Gareth Edwards, who recalled the nerve-jangling moment when the legendary director called him to deliver his verdict on the film after a preview screening. "I don't want to put words into his mouth but I can honestly say that I can die happy now," Edwards said as he relived last week's telephone conversation with Lucas, one of the most financially successful filmmakers in history.

Edwards-addressing the world's media at Industrial Light and Magic, Lucasfilm's special effects studio in San Francisco-described how it was the one green light he could not live without. "To be honest-and no offense to anyone here-it was the most important review to me, what George thought of it. You know, you guys are important too, but come on-he's kind of God," he told a room of critics. "Rogue One" is part of an attempt to revitalize the franchise since Disney bought Lucasfilm in 2012, when it was still reeling from grim reviews for the much-

maligned 1999-2005 prequel trilogy. The idea was to bring out a sequel trilogy with a movie every other year-starting with "The Force Awakens" in 2015 -- and intersperse those releases with an "anthology trilogy" of one-off, standalone movies in the even years.



'Rogue One' star Diego Luna (left) sits with Director Gareth Edwards during an interview at Lucasfilm's Industrial Light and Magic studio in San Francisco, California. — AFP

The 41-year-old Edwards-who most recently made "Godzilla" (2014) after dazzling critics with his directorial debut, lo-fi creature feature "Monsters" (2010) -- is among a new wave of "auteurs" handpicked to ensure the strategy succeeds. J.J. Abrams got off to a good start with "The Force Awakens," which made \$2 billion to become 2015's biggest release, not to mention the most successful Disney motion picture and the third-highest grossing movie of all time. —AFP

ROASTED DUCK IS EASIER AND MORE DELICIOUS

The prospect of roasting a duck strikes many a home cook as a mountain too high, but I'm not sure why. It's definitely no more complicated than cooking a whole turkey, and I think it tastes far better. Some folks surely suspect that duck is gamey, but that's only true of some wild ducks. It's not true of the kind known as Pekin (or Long Island) duck, the domesticated product most widely available at supermarkets.

Other folks shy away because they've heard that duck is too fatty and rich. Sure enough, there is a fair amount of fat in duck, but most of it is in and under the skin. The meat itself actually is quite lean. And - surprise! - duck fat, unlike beef fat and most kinds of poultry fat, boasts some of the same healthy attributes as olive oil.

So this holiday season why not roast a duck? As noted, it's pretty simple. However, you do need to set aside enough time to let the bird cook properly in the oven, just as you would when roasting a turkey. The goal is a bird with crispy skin and moist meat. The easiest way to make it happen? Roast the duck

low and slow, pricking the skin every so often to drain out the fat. (Do be careful, however, not to prick the meat; you don't want to lose any juices from the meat.) At the end of the process, the duck is treated to a final crisping in a high-heat oven, then retired for a nice long rest to let the juices redistribute before the bird is carved.

The slow-roasting process provides you with ample time to make a succulent sauce from the bird's giblets, neck and wings. Those parts are browned in a saucepan along with onions, carrots and garlic, then simmered in chicken broth, and finally finished with green peppercorns and Dijon mustard. (You're welcome to lose the peppercorns if they're too hot for you.) The end result is a wonderfully tasty duck swimming in a French-style sauce. Fancy! And much more interesting than turkey. Your guests will think you are a culinary genius.



BISTRO-STYLE SLOW-ROASTED DUCK

Ingredients

Start to finish: 4 hours 50 minutes (50 minutes active)

Servings: 4

5-1/2- to 6-pound Pekin (Long Island) duck

Salt and ground black pepper

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

1 small yellow onion, finely chopped

1 small carrot, coarsely chopped

2 cloves garlic, smashed with the side of a knife

1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 stalk celery, coarsely chopped

2 sprigs fresh thyme

1 bay leaf

3 cups low-sodium chicken broth

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

2 tablespoons drained bottled green peppercorns, packed in brine

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

Preparation

Heat the oven to 250 F. Remove the neck and giblets from the cavity of the duck, pat dry and reserve. (Save the liver for another use, such as sauteing and serving on toast.)

Cut the last two joints of the wings off and reserve. Remove the excess fat from the cavity of the duck and cut off the flap of skin at the back end of the duck. (You can save the skin and fat to render into duck fat for future use.) Rinse the duck under cold water and pat dry with paper towels.

Using the tip of a paring knife, prick the duck all over, in 1/2-inch intervals, inserting the knife at an

angle to pierce just the skin, not the flesh. Make sure to prick the skin around the leg thigh joint thoroughly, as there is a lot of fat stored there. Season the duck well with salt and pepper. Place on a rack in a roasting pan and roast on the oven's middle shelf for 3-1/2 hours, removing the roasting pan after the first and second hour of roasting to re-prick the duck skin.

After the duck has roasted for 3-1/2 hours, carefully pour off all the fat at the bottom of the roasting pan (reserving it for other uses, such as sauteing potatoes), and increase the oven temperature to 450 F. Return the duck to the oven and roast it for 10 minutes. Transfer the duck to a platter, cover with foil, then let it rest for 30 minutes before carving.

While the duck is roasting, cut the neck and wings into 1 1/2-inch pieces. In a large saucepan over medium-high, heat the vegetable oil. Add the neck, giblets and wings. Cook, stirring often, until golden brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium and add the onion, carrot and garlic. Cook until the vegetables are lightly browned, 5 to 8 minutes.

Add the tomato paste and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add the celery, thyme, bay leaf, broth and 1 cup water. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook, skimming off any scum that rises to the surface and adding water to the saucepan if the liquid dips below the bones, until the duck is ready to come out of the oven.

While the duck is resting, strain the stock and discard the solids. Measure the liquid. You should have about 1-1/2 cups. If you have more, boil the liquid down. If you have less, add water. In a small bowl, whisk together the flour and 1/4 cup water. In the saucepan, bring the duck stock to a boil, add the flour mixture in a stream, whisking. Bring the mixture back to a boil and simmer 4 minutes. Stir in the green peppercorns and mustard, then season the sauce with salt and pepper. Carve the duck and serve each portion with some of the sauce.

Wintertime comfort-in-bowl is savory, meaty braised beef

By Melissa D'Arabian

Ask my daughter Oceane what her favorite food is and she will shoot back, without hesitation, "braised ribs." Who doesn't love the comforting meaty aroma that fills the house from ribs cooking slowly in Dutch-oven full of savory, gently-bubbling liquid? That's wintertime comfort-in-bowl if you ask me.

Braising is a long-honored method of cooking which coaxes out tenderness and deep flavors from tougher cuts of meat. The basic technique involves a Dutch oven and four main steps: Brown the meat and remove, cook the mirepoix (chopped onion, celery and carrot), deglaze the pan with liquid, and finally return the meat to the Dutch oven, cover and let cook low and slow in the oven or on the stovetop until tender. Ribs are excellent candidates for braising with high fat content and tough flesh that need hours to soften.

My whole family loves braised beef ribs, but I wondered how easily I might be able to swap out a leaner cut of meat without alienating my little fans? Turns out: Cutting out a bunch of fat was pretty easy. I sliced up a bottom round roast (about 1-1/2 inch-thick) into chubby sticks, about the size and shape of ribs, and I just called them "boneless ribs" at the dinner table. The kids marveled at the ease of eating without the bones and no one was the wiser on

the lower-fat swap. (Plus, I saved money too, which was a bonus.)

Without the full fat and bones, however, I needed a smidge more work to get that richness and flavor of traditional braised ribs. First, I added mushrooms to the braise for earthiness and savory umami with nary an extra calorie to be found - either halved or chopped will work, depending on whether you want them to be visually present, or disappear.

Second, I learned not to go too low in fat, or the resulting meat will be dry, despite being soaked in sauce. Bottom round was a magical happy spot; top round was less successful. Third, if you can, use the oven for the braising; the stovetop required a little more temperature management. Last, note that braising times will vary, so taste and test. Lower fat meat will not need as long as the fattier connective tissue-laden cuts we usually braise.

You can even serve your lower fat braise on cooked quinoa, brown rice, or sauteed cauliflower rice for an extra-healthy version. Or do what we did: mix half whole wheat couscous and half quinoa for a happy kid-friendly compromise.

BRAISED BEEF RIBS



Ingredients

Start to finish: 3 hours, including about 2 hours inactive braising time

Servings: 6

2-Ingredients **Ingredients** 1/2-pound bottom round, (or eye of round) about 1 1/2 inches thick

1 tablespoon grapeseed or other neutral cooking oil

2 tablespoons flour

1 yellow onion, chopped, about 1 cup

1 carrot, finely chopped, about 1/2 cup

1 stalk celery, finely chopped, about 1/3 cup

5 cloves garlic, smashed

2 teaspoons fresh thyme, minced, or 1 teaspoon dried thyme

4 ounces baby bella mushrooms, wiped clean, trimmed and halved or chopped

Dash of red pepper flakes (optional)

3 tablespoons tomato paste

1 cup red wine

1-1/2 cup beef broth

1 bay leaf

Salt and pepper

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 325 F. Pat the meat dry gently with a paper towel and slice crosswise into boneless "ribs." Season with salt and pepper and then sprinkle all over with flour, rubbing the flour gently with your fingers to coat meat on all sides. Heat the oil in a large, heavy Dutch oven or braising pot over medium heat.

Brown the meat on all sides until golden and crusty, about 3-4 minutes per side. Remove the meat with tongs and place on a plate and set aside. Add the onion, carrot and celery to

the Dutch oven (do not wipe it out) and cook, stirring frequently with a wooden spoon, until vegetables begin to soften, about three minutes. Add the garlic, thyme, mushrooms and pepper flakes and cook, stirring until very fragrant, about two more minutes.

Add the tomato paste, and cook for another minute so it caramelizes and deepens in flavor. Deglaze the pan with wine and broth, and let bubble for a minute or two to let most of the alcohol evaporate. Add the meat back into the pan, along with any juices. Add another 1/2 cup or so of water so the liquid covers the meat about halfway. Cover the Dutch oven with a lid and bake until meat is tender, about 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Check the meat halfway through and add a little water if the braising liquid gets low. Serve the meat with the braising liquid spooned on like gravy. — AP



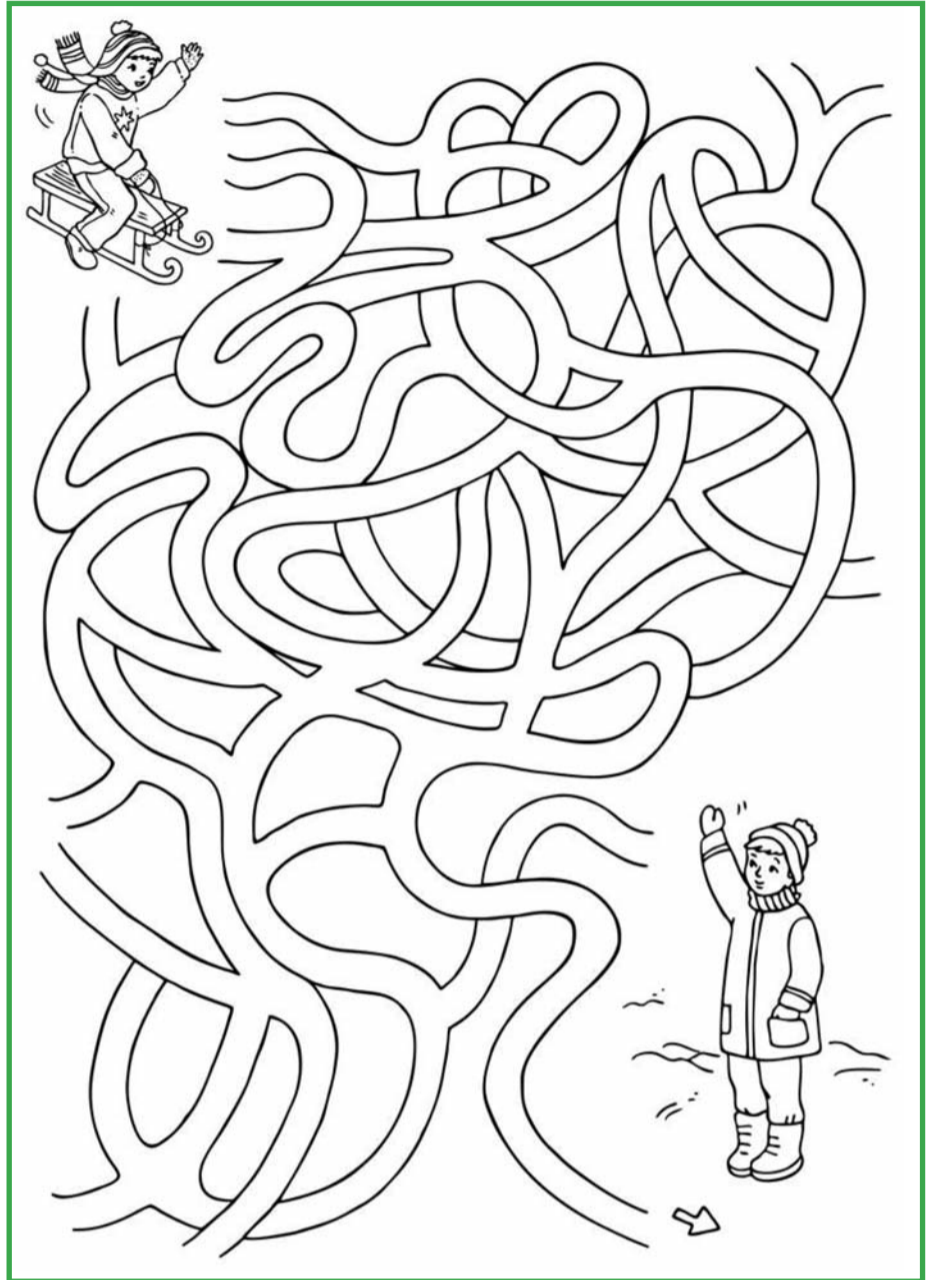
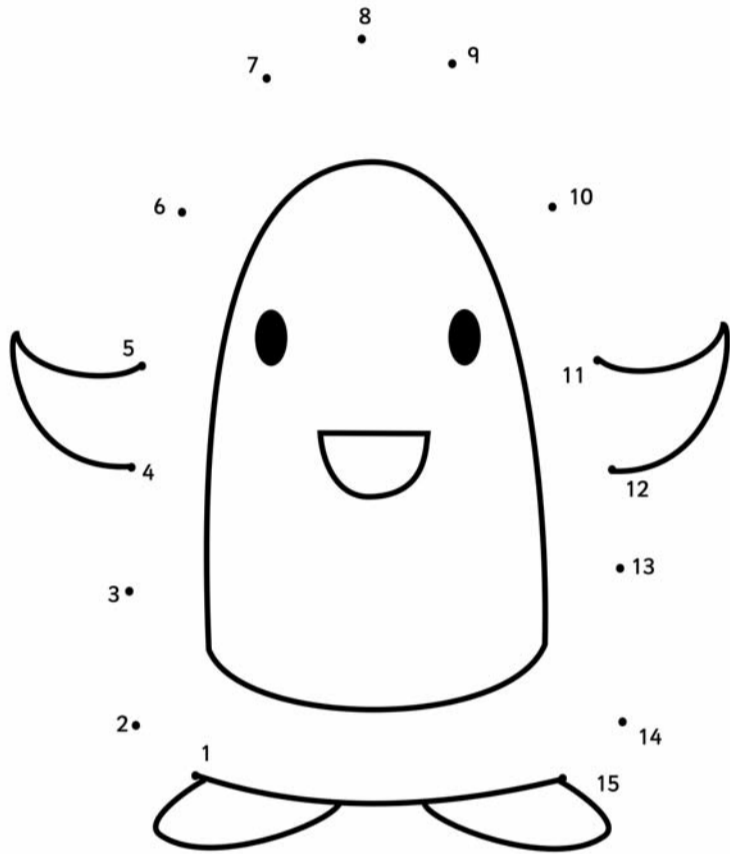
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Friday Times

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2016

Kids

Penguin Dot to Dot



Winter Word Scramble

Unscramble the winter themed words and join them to the pictures on the right. We've done the first one for you!

treniw

winter

ocat

volgse

swon

lafnoweks

timnets

tobos

smonwan

niwd

cie katsgine

kingis

tha



Winter Alphabet Challenge

Can you come up with a Winter themed word for each letter of the alphabet?

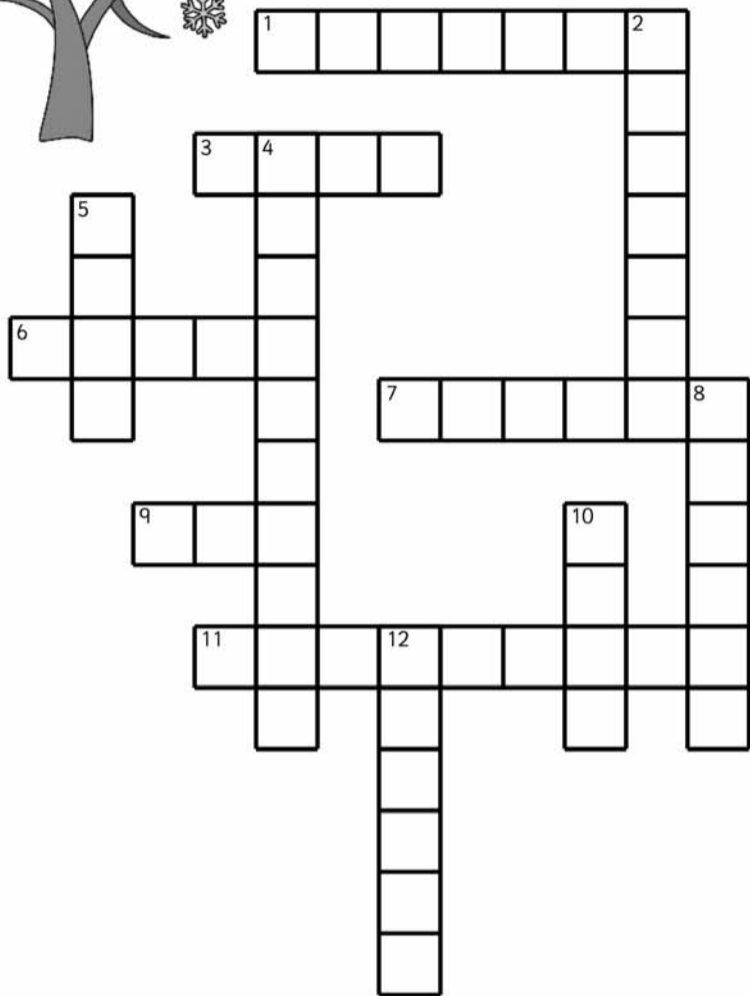
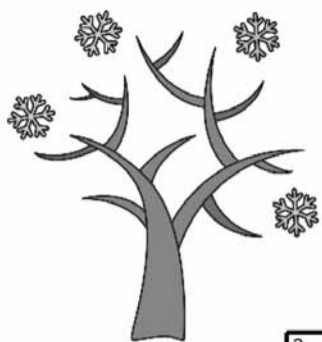


A	_____	N	_____
B	_____	O	_____
C	_____	P	_____
D	_____	Q	_____
E	_____	R	_____
F	_____	S	_____
G	_____	T	_____
H	_____	U	_____
I	_____	V	_____
J	_____	W	_____
K	_____	X	_____
L	_____	Y	_____
M	_____	Z	_____





Winter Picture Crossword



Across

Down



Find The Differences!





Friday Times Travel

In the shadow of Tavan Bogd: Wild western Mongolia



The rugged and remote far reaches of western Mongolia are a series of wild landscapes capped by glacier-wrapped mountains, divided by green river valleys and shadowed by soaring peaks. This area is home to the famous Kazakh eagle hunters and has some of the best preserved petroglyphs in the country.

But it is the majestic Altai Mountains that dominate this isolated corner of Mongolia. Straddling the borders with Russia and China, the Tavan Bogd is a cluster of Mongolia's soaring peaks and a draw for climbers, trekkers and horse riders. It culminates in the dramatic 4374m Kh,iten Peak, the highest point in the country.

On the road: Dramatic landscapes

The western frontier town of Igii is little more than a stepping stone to the area's real attraction - the landscape fringed by distant snow-capped mountains. The vast steppes and great distances in Mongolia make road trips mandatory. Bumping over rutted dirt trails across open plains and ploughing through mud-soaked river valleys is part of the adventure leading to Tavan Bogd. Driving a Furgon, a Russian ex-military jeep, is a popular choice especially when grunt overrides grace.

The road from Igii passes through small villages with brightly colored rooftops, past wandering camels and grazing livestock, and across miles of pristine wilderness. Scattered across the landscape are 'deer stones', upright stone slabs engraved with flying deer or other stylistic symbols. These Bronze Age megaliths are believed to mark ritual or burial sites.



Tavan Bogd

In the Altai Tavan Bogd National Park, glaciers carve rivers of frozen ice between the snow-topped mountains of the Tavan Bogd. These 'Five Saints' include B,rged, Malchin, Olgii and Nairamdal Uul mountains, as well as Mongolia's highest peak, Khuiten Uul.

The scenery in this remote area is stunning. Clear rivers fed by ice-melt tumble down the valleys, a rainbow assortment of wildflowers carpet grassy meadows and white peaks dominate the skyline. Horses and camels can be hired from local Tuvan and Kazakh nomads at the trailhead at the end of the road in the Tsagaan Gol valley. Camels in the snow might seem strange but they are valued as cargo carriers, transporting camping equipment and gear on horse-riding tours.

The 16km trail to the base camp is a pleasant hike (or ride), climbing gradually through alpine meadows to the crystalline Potanii Glacier. It's possible to hike the length of the 12km glacier but peak-baggers will want to summit one of the Saints. Kh,iten Uul is a technical climb requiring ice axes and crampons but Malchin Peak (4050m) is a straightforward six hour uphill trek. Malchin's ridge line straddles the Russian border and the summit views are worth every aching muscle and gasping breath. This land of snow and ice is home to the elusive snow leopard and the legendary Mongolia Almas, believed to be a cousin to the yeti. But don't count on seeing either the wild cat or the wild man.

Rock art and wild ibex

In the shadow of the Tavan Bogd massif are some of the most complex and exquisite petroglyphs to be found in Central Asia. In Tsagaan Saal and in Tsagaan Gol valley, rock art dating from the Neolithic and Bronze Ages give an insight into the life of ancient days. The images include ibex with long curved horns, deer with chandelier antlers, mounted bowmen, camels drawing wagons, snow leopards and rudimentary ger tents. The sacred mountain of Sheveed Uul in the Tsagaan Gol valley holds a storybook of images extending for 15km around its flanks. As well as ancient rock art, local knowledge credits Sheveed Uul as home to roughly 400 wild ibex.

A number of endangered mammals live in the Altai Mountains including the snow leopard, wolf and argali sheep - a mountain sheep with impressive corkscrew horns. One mammal that thrives in these mountains is the delightful marmot. If they aren't standing 'lookout', their chubby bottoms can be seen bouncing across the fields and disappearing into a burrow.



Kazakh culture

It's not only the landscape of western Mongolia that distinguishes it from the rest of the country. Ninety per cent of the population here are ethnic Kazakhs. In cen-

turies past, when the first Kazakh nomads migrated to the eastern side of the Altai Mountains to graze their sheep on summer pastures, they didn't realise their descendants would populate the Bayan-÷lgii province of western Mongolia. After the Mongolian Revolution in 1921, a permanent border was set up and an enclave of Kazakh culture remained.

Kazakh is spoken here and the ancient Kazakh tradition of eagle hunting is revered. For over 2000 years, central Asian nomads have caught and trained eagles to catch prey. The golden eagle is a magnificent bird - a regal and powerful ruler of the skies. Hunters catch young birds, preferring the bigger, stronger females. After five to ten years, the eagles are released back into the wild to live free once again.

Whether Mongolian or Kazakh, hospitality prevails in this part of the world. Nomads will often invite you into their gers, which are basically large round tent-like structures made from felt and canvas. Kazakh-style gers are typically larger than Mongolian gers, and furnished with richly decorated carpets and wall hangings. Expect offerings of yak tea, fried bread, sour cheese and fermented mare's milk. You'll then wash it all down with home-made vodka, a potent but surprisingly smooth brew.

Make it happen

With a bit of time and patience, independent travellers can organize jeep hire and supplies from ÷lgii. If time is tight, organized tours are your best option. RAW Wildlife Encounters (rawildlife.com.au) is a globally recognized and reliable company promoting country owned travel programs with a focus on sustainable travel and wildlife experiences. They offer customized tours in Mongolia, as well as set travel packages. (www.loneplanet.com)





Aries (March 21-April 19)

There is work to be done today and concentration on the work at hand is your top priority. If your work comes under scrutiny, you will definitely feel much pleasure from the comments you hear. Now is the time you feel secure in the professional realm of life. A shopping spree may find you wanting to spend more than necessary; avoid extravagance this afternoon. On the subject of spending, be careful with your bets as well. You may feel disappointment when expected money does not come; a delay is the only problem here. Relationships begun during this time will have long-lasting results. You will have insights into your needs and perhaps those of a romantic partner. You and your loved one plan an out-of-town trip for this weekend.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your ideas and thoughts may not meet with the support you would like-patience. There is no need, however, to give up on your ideas. Step back and wait a few more days. Do not become caught up in some sort of a proving-a-point time warp. Like the cheshire cat, you can smugly step aside and wait for a more acceptable time. More than likely, you are just ahead of most people's ideas of how things should be for a while. Again, slow and easy will get you to your goals with a great deal of satisfaction. With weather changes likely soon, you prepare the plants, animals and home for any extreme weather. This afternoon, you plan and then prepare home and hearth with warm, delicious meals and treats that would satisfy a bear all winter.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You are very busy today, concentrating on doing the very best job you can. A friend or co-worker shares a confidence. This could draw you into a project requiring discretion. At work today, a slow and steady mindset will help you reach your destination with success. If there is something you have wanted to tackle, chances are that this is the best time to make your plans. You are ready for a new body and this winter you concentrate on making this a reality. Transformation takes more than a few days, however. As you can see, this is a goal-setting time. You concentrate on ways in which to better your health. Remember, plenty of water will help you feel full and flush the toxins as well. Walk, don't run.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

This busy day brings with it many interruptions. You are at your very best now when it comes to dealing and working with others... Now you need to put a polish on how to stay focused through the interruptions. You will know just what to do when you take a few minutes to study the situation. This afternoon you will happen across a bit of news that will be of benefit to you later. Keep a file folder for random notes and you will have more time to review the topics later, thus avoiding more interruptions. This evening there are temptations to spend too much of your hard-earned money on things that catch your eye. Just remember that you will still be obligated to pay the piper, if you listen to the music. Romance is very likely this evening.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Stick with what you know best-this may not be a good time to try out new things or break away from the old routine. Now is the best time to complete unfinished business, including personal banking. There is a need for a reprieve from demanding realities and pressures of late. This may mean you can say yes to a weekend with your friends at a health spa or retreat of some sort. Your companions are less critical and most supportive of your hard work. They offer hopeful inspiration for your ideas toward change. Your creative talent earns admiration this evening. Perhaps you are preparing for the holiday ahead by putting up decorations or cooking special candies for surprise gifts and holiday presents. Animals gain your attention this evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

If you have been procrastinating about making a date with someone special, applying for the right job, or in some way making yourself known, now is the time to act. You will appear perhaps more charming and refined than usual. You may also find this a time when your career takes a turn, and that could require some careful thought and good judgment on your part. The current flow of events may dictate a path that runs a temporary route but you are able to handle any difficulty. Keep working toward your goals, you have some good opportunities opening up on the horizon because you dare to try your wings with new experiences. You have the ability to demonstrate great understanding of the needs of others and this ability endears you to people.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

New ways to get your message across or an easy working style will make conversations and interactions go well. You may find yourself more talkative than usual. A dialogue with someone your senior may be very insightful. Feeling nostalgic and domestic will emphasize your need for a feeling of roots. The family, home, relatives and real estate all play a large part in your life this season. This may be a time of adjustment: a time that the traveler sees the past, the road behind; the present, where they stand; and the future, where the roads ahead vanish into the horizon. The choices for career have been acceptable and now it is time to build upon your relationships and secure the connection. Tonight is a great time to enjoy an evening with friends or loved ones.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This could prove to be an excellent time to take risks and to dare to be a little on the unconventional side. You will prosper through new insights. Your career could open up by taking the road less traveled and by daring to be the odd man out, or working to prove the advantage of some new approaches. New and interesting involvement in some new studies could find you dabbling in such things as politics, law, education, religion and metaphysical or philosophical studies. You should not be bored! You have a lot of confidence that happy outcomes are possible, no matter what the story. With a realistic goal in mind, you may add ability, discipline, hard work, sacrifice, time and experience to the mix; success happens.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

If you have not noticed, your attitude is more placid than most when it comes to understanding the human condition. Nothing seems to surprise you and you listen with an open mind. You are not guarded; you just have a keen acceptance of differences. You may be considering a new profession at this time and law, politics, religion or psychology holds your interest. Another idea is acting. Consider a night class in some form of acting and add this as a new hobby for yourself. You need the diversion and will be uplifted by the exercises. You always have two career choices: one job possibility from education and one from your experience and training. It is rare to meet a person who understands humanity as well as you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may find that this is not the best time for considering anything of great importance. If you are not working today, you may find yourself staying close to home. If you have the seniority, the vacation time or sick time due you, consider taking this day to do a little shopping or to just enjoy the day as a day of rest. Shopping, walking among the shoppers, breathing in fresh air instead of stuffy office air-you will soon feel your energies return along with that healthy feeling. You have gone out to acknowledge the wildness in you-using it to your advantage and tempering its force with understanding. Now it is time to return to your own world with renewed interests. If you do not have the ability to take off today, exercise to refurbish your energies.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Things of a personal nature may be pushed aside just now. Work, family and responsibilities are important at this time. During the noon break, you will be able to walk and adjust your mood. Anything new or unusual may catch your eye and give you ideas of some art project to attempt. Later this evening you might sketch, take notes or talk about some new idea you have to family members or friends. If you allow your creative and intuitive nature to surface, you could find many nice things develop. New answers to old problems are possible. Archaeology, ship-building, greek gods and goddess are the fun things that reward your attention with some fun discoveries for yourself. You enjoy telling a new story to a young person this evening.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

A difficult situation in the workplace this morning gives you the perfect scenario to come to the aid of your co-workers. You see the problem for what it is and you do not involve yourself personally or emotionally so as to give honest answers, when asked. Onlookers are impressed and the situation may be entered into your employee progress report as the beginning of a new job identity for you. Detecting the real difficulty in solving problems is just what you like. Soft lights against a hill-side mark the outline of where you live and walk with a loved one this evening, bringing all things romantic to your mind. Poetry, art, nature and all things beautiful are only the foundation of what is on your mind tonight. This day ends peacefully.

COUNTRY CODES

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



00:20 Wheeler Dealers
01:10 Salvage Hunters
02:00 Marooned With Ed Stafford
02:50 Sharks Among Us
03:40 Fat N' Furious: Rolling Thunder
04:30 The Liquidator
05:00 How It's Made: Dream Cars
05:30 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Blue Collar Backers
06:50 Incredible Engineering
Blunders: Fixed
07:40 World's Top 5
08:30 Catching Monsters
09:20 Deadliest Catch
10:10 Kings Of The Wild
11:00 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
11:50 Car vs Wild
12:40 Alcatraz: Escaping The Rock
13:30 Fast N' Loud: Demolition
Theatre
14:20 Sacred Steel Bikes
15:10 Street Outlaws
16:00 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
16:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
17:40 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
18:30 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
19:20 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
20:10 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
21:00 Fast N' Loud: Demolition
Theatre
21:50 Sacred Steel Bikes
22:40 Street Outlaws
23:30 Alcatraz: Escaping The Rock

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 Dog With A Blog
07:25 Dog With A Blog
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
08:20 Elena Of Avalor
08:45 Star Darlings
08:50 Liv And Maddie
09:15 Jessie
09:40 Jessie
10:05 Jessie
10:30 Teen Beach Movie
12:20 The 7D
12:35 Austin & Ally
13:00 Liv And Maddie
13:25 Liv And Maddie
13:50 Shake It Up
14:15 Shake It Up

14:40 Dog With A Blog
15:30 Good Luck Charlie
15:55 Good Luck Charlie
16:20 Girl Meets World
17:10 Elena Of Avalor
17:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
18:25 Descendants Wicked World
18:30 Liv And Maddie
18:55 Star Darlings
19:00 Good Luck Charlie
19:25 Disney Mickey Mouse
19:30 Austin & Ally
19:55 Descendants Wicked World
20:00 Backstage
20:25 Tsum Tsum Shorts
20:30 Elena Of Avalor
20:55 Best Friends Whenever
21:20 Jessie
22:10 Jessie
22:35 H2O: Just Add Water



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
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 Goldie & Bear
09:30 Miles From Tomorrow
10:00 Miles From Tomorrow
10:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
11:00 Sofia The First
11:30 The Lion Guard
12:00 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
12:30 Little Mermaid
13:00 Sofia The First
13:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
14:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
14:30 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
15:00 The Lion Guard
15:30 Sofia The First
16:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
16:30 Doc McStuffins
17:00 The Lion Guard
17:30 PJ Masks
18:00 The Adventures Of The Disney Fairies
18:30 Goldie & Bear
19:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:30 Little Mermaid
20:00 PJ Masks
20:30 Sofia The First
21:00 Welcome To McStuffinsville
22:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
22:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
23:00 The Adventures Of The Disney Fairies
23:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse



06:00 Supa Strikas
06:25 Supa Strikas
06:50 Counterfeit Cat
07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
07:15 K.C. Undercover
07:40 Atomic Puppet
08:10 Lab Rats Elite Force
08:35 Danger Mouse
09:00 Lab Rats: Crush, Chop & Burn
09:50 Kirby Buckets
10:45 Gravity Falls
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
11:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
12:00 Counterfeit Cat
12:30 K.C. Undercover
12:55 K.C. Undercover
13:20 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
13:45 Lab Rats
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Lab Rats
14:40 Counterfeit Cat
14:50 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
15:05 K.C. Undercover
15:30 Atomic Puppet
15:55 Lab Rats
16:25 Danger Mouse
16:50 Future-Worm!
17:15 Lab Rats
17:40 Lab Rats
18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
18:10 Supa Strikas
18:35 Supa Strikas
19:00 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
19:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:55 K.C. Undercover
20:20 Counterfeit Cat
20:45 Mighty Med
21:10 Pickle And Peanut
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Guardians Of The Galaxy
22:10 Ultimate Spider-Man
22:35 Boyster

10:55 Sunday Night At The Palladium
11:50 The Chase
12:45 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Sunday Night At The Palladium
15:10 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
16:00 Broadchurch
16:55 Broadchurch
17:50 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
18:45 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street



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 Your Bleeped Up Brain
05:30 America's Book Of Secrets
06:20 Cities Of The Underworld
07:10 Ancient Discoveries
08:00 Ancient Aliens
09:00 Missing In Alaska
10:00 Ancient Discoveries
11:00 WWII: Europe's Secret Army
12:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain
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 Your Bleeped Up Brain
19:00 Ancient Aliens
20:00 Missing In Alaska
21:00 Ancient Discoveries
22:00 WWII: Europe's Secret Army
23:00 Serial Killer Earth
History HD
00:20 Billion Dollar Wreck
01:10 Britain's Bloodiest Dynasty
02:00 Storage Wars
02:25 Storage Wars: Best Of
02:50 Banger Boys
03:40 American Restoration
04:05 American Restoration
04:30 Pawn Stars
05:00 Time Team
06:00 Time Team
06:50 Time Team
07:40 Hoard Hunters
08:30 American Restoration
08:55 Alone
09:45 Swamp People
10:35 Ice Road Truckers
11:25 American Restoration



00:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
02:00 Killer Kids
03:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
04:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
05:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
06:00 Killer Kids
07:00 The First 48
08:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
09:00 Homicide Hunter
10:00 It Takes A Killer
10:30 It Takes A Killer
11:00 Killers
12:00 Killers: Behind The Myth
13:00 Killers: Behind The Myth
14:00 Killers: Behind The Myth
15:00 The First 48
16:00 Gangs Of Britain...
17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
18:00 I Killed My BFF
19:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
20:00 Homicide Hunter
21:00 It Takes A Killer
21:30 It Takes A Killer
22:00 The First 48
23:00 50 Ways To Kill Your Lover



00:30 Prototype This
01:20 Secret Space Escapes
02:10 How The Universe Works
03:00 Untamed & Uncut
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 How It's Made
05:05 How It's Made
05:30 Dirty Jobs
06:20 Mythbusters
07:00 Kenny The Shark
07:25 Awesome Adventures
07:50 Bad Dog
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Prototype This
10:20 Mythbusters
11:10 Dirty Jobs
12:00 Bad Dog
12:50 Ultimate Survival
13:40 How It's Made
14:05 How It's Made
14:30 Dirty Jobs
15:20 Mythbusters
16:10 Kenny The Shark
16:35 Awesome Adventures
17:00 Battle Bots
17:50 Now That's Funny
18:40 Prototype This
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Mythbusters
21:10 Battle Bots
22:00 Now That's Funny
22:50 Untamed & Uncut



BRICK MANSIONS ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD



00:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
00:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:50 E! News
02:50 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
05:30 Fashion Bloggers
06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
06:55 E! News
07:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
08:10 E! News
09:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:00 E! News
12:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 E! News
15:15 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
19:00 E! News
20:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians



00:10 Sunday Night At The Palladium
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase
03:25 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs
03:55 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs
04:20 Gino's Hidden Italy
04:45 Together
05:15 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
06:10 Sunday Night At The Palladium
07:05 The Chase
08:00 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs
08:30 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs
09:00 Gino's Hidden Italy
09:30 Together
10:00 The Doctor Blake Mysteries



00:20 Man V. Lion
01:10 Planet Carnivore
02:00 Swamp Lions
02:50 Deadly Instincts
03:45 Snakes In The City
04:40 My Life Is A Zoo
05:35 Swamp Lions
06:30 Deadly Instincts
07:25 Snakes In The City
08:20 My Life Is A Zoo
09:15 Animal ER
10:10 Wild Congo
11:05 America's National Parks
12:00 Shark Men
12:55 Natural Born Monsters
13:50 Deadly Game
14:45 Swamp Men
15:40 My Life Is A Zoo
16:35 Animal ER
17:30 Viper Queens
18:25 America's National Parks
19:20 Swamp Men
20:10 My Life Is A Zoo
21:00 Animal ER
21:50 Viper Queens
22:40 America's National Parks
23:30 Shark Men



00:10 Explorer
01:00 Disappeared: The Search For Cody Dial
02:00 Locked Up Abroad
02:55 Air Crash Investigation
03:50 Explorer
04:45 Science Of Stupid
05:10 Science Of Stupid
05:40 Car SOS
06:35 Disappeared: The Search For Cody Dial
07:30 Nazi Megastructures
08:25 WWII's Greatest Raids

- 09:20 Science Of Stupid
- 09:45 Science Of Stupid
- 10:15 Locked Up Abroad
- 11:10 To Catch A Smuggler
- 12:05 Kung Fu Motion
- 13:00 WWII's Greatest Raids
- 14:00 Nazi Megastructures
- 15:00 Disappeared: The Search For Cody Dial
- 16:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 17:00 To Catch A Smuggler
- 18:00 Taboo Compilations
- 19:00 Air Crash Investigation
- 20:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 20:50 To Catch A Smuggler
- 21:40 Taboo Compilations



- 00:15 Louie
- 00:22 Louie
- 00:30 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 00:53 Olive The Ostrich
- 00:58 Olive The Ostrich
- 01:03 Max & Ruby
- 01:26 Wanda And The Alien
- 01:37 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 01:48 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 02:00 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 02:22 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 02:45 Zack & Quack
- 03:05 Team Umizoomi
- 03:28 Louie
- 03:35 Louie
- 03:40 Olive The Ostrich
- 03:44 Olive The Ostrich
- 03:49 Paw Patrol
- 04:01 Paw Patrol
- 04:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 04:35 Dora The Explorer
- 04:59 Max & Ruby
- 05:07 Bubble Guppies
- 05:29 Little Charmers
- 05:41 Shimmer And Shine
- 06:05 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 06:27 Zack & Quack
- 06:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 07:00 Paw Patrol
- 07:13 Paw Patrol
- 07:36 Dora The Explorer
- 08:00 Wanda And The Alien
- 08:11 Zack & Quack
- 08:22 Dora And Friends
- 08:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 09:10 Paw Patrol
- 09:20 Paw Patrol
- 09:35 Shimmer And Shine
- 09:58 Dora The Explorer
- 10:21 Paw Patrol
- 10:45 Little Charmers
- 10:57 Bubble Guppies
- 11:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 11:40 Zack & Quack
- 11:52 Team Umizoomi
- 12:15 Louie
- 12:22 Louie
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- 20:00 Wanda And The Alien
- 20:11 Zack & Quack
- 20:22 Dora And Friends
- 20:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 21:10 Paw Patrol
- 21:35 Shimmer And Shine
- 21:58 Dora The Explorer



STONEHEARST ASYLUM ON OSN MOVIES HD



- 00:30 Wolf Creek 2
- 02:15 Area 407
- 04:00 Heatstroke
- 06:00 Con Air
- 08:00 Six Days Seven Nights
- 10:00 Brick Mansions
- 12:00 Batman Unlimited: Monster Mayhem
- 14:00 Con Air
- 16:00 Six Days Seven Nights
- 18:00 Ladder 49
- 20:00 Armored
- 22:00 Bullet



- 01:00 Peter Pan Live!
- 03:15 The Education Of Little Tree
- 05:15 Eragon
- 07:15 Rugrats Go Wild
- 09:00 Beyond The Mask
- 11:00 Eragon
- 13:00 Step Dogs
- 15:00 Minions
- 17:00 Little Women
- 19:00 The Incredible Adventures Of Professor Branestawm
- 20:00 The Last Song
- 22:00 Minions



- 00:00 Magic Mike XXL
- 02:00 True Story
- 03:45 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part I
- 05:45 Stonehearst Asylum
- 07:45 Hello Carter
- 09:15 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part I
- 11:15 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part II
- 13:30 The Song
- 15:30 The Age Of Adaline
- 17:30 My Old Lady
- 19:15 Suffragette
- 21:00 Bridge Of Spies
- 23:30 Mad Max: Fury Road



- 00:00 The To Do List
- 02:00 Blue Streak
- 04:00 The Beautician And The Beast
- 06:00 Superfast
- 08:00 The Bad News Bears (2005)
- 10:00 The Beautician And The Beast
- 12:00 Vampire Dog



- 14:00 Caveman
- 16:00 The Bad News Bears (2005)
- 18:00 Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2
- 20:00 Talladega Nights
- 22:00 Save Your Legs!



- 01:45 Second Coming
- 03:30 Secret Window
- 05:15 Days Of Heaven
- 07:00 The Truth About Emanuel
- 09:00 Batkid Begins
- 11:00 Second Coming
- 13:00 Secret Window
- 15:00 Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
- 17:00 Batkid Begins
- 19:00 Hard Eight
- 21:00 Siberian Education
- 23:00 Enemy



- 01:15 Ghatothkach - Master Of Magic
- 03:00 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
- 04:30 Moomins And The Comet Chase
- 06:00 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
- 07:30 The Olsen Gang In Deep Trouble
- 09:15 The Wild Thornberrys Movie
- 11:00 Alpha Dogz: Pups United
- 12:45 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
- 14:30 The Heart Of The Oak
- 16:00 Hey Arnold! The Movie
- 18:00 The Wild Thornberrys Movie
- 20:00 Scooby-Doo! Moon Monster Madness
- 22:00 The Heart Of The Oak
- 23:30 Hey Arnold! The Movie



- 00:40 Da Vinci's Machines
- 01:30 How Do They Do It?
- 01:55 Food Factory
- 02:20 How To Build... Everything
- 02:45 How To Build... Everything
- 03:10 Mythbusters
- 04:00 Sci-Fi Saved My Life
- 04:48 Da Vinci's Machines
- 05:36 How To Build... Everything
- 06:00 How To Build... Everything
- 06:24 Mythbusters
- 07:12 How Do They Do It?
- 07:36 Food Factory
- 08:00 How Do They Do It?

- 08:26 Da Vinci's Machines
- 09:14 Mythbusters
- 10:02 Powering The Future
- 10:50 How Do They Do It?
- 11:14 Food Factory
- 11:38 How To Build... Everything
- 12:02 How To Build... Everything
- 12:26 Da Vinci's Machines
- 13:14 Mythbusters
- 14:02 How Do They Do It?
- 14:26 Food Factory
- 14:50 Powering The Future
- 15:38 How To Build... Everything
- 16:02 How To Build... Everything
- 16:26 Da Vinci's Machines
- 17:14 Mythbusters
- 18:02 Sci-Fi Saved My Life
- 18:50 Da Vinci's Machines
- 19:40 Powering The Future
- 20:30 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
- 21:20 How Do They Do It?
- 21:45 Food Factory
- 22:10 Sci-Fi Saved My Life
- 23:00 Through The Wormhole With



- 00:45 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 01:35 90 Days To Wed
- 02:50 Love At First Swipe
- 03:15 Cake Boss
- 03:35 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 04:20 Little People, Big World
- 04:45 Little People, Big World
- 05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 06:00 Little People, Big World
- 08:30 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 09:20 7 Little Johnstons
- 10:10 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 11:00 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 11:50 Love At First Swipe
- 12:15 Love At First Swipe
- 12:40 Love At First Swipe
- 13:05 Love At First Swipe
- 13:30 Love At First Swipe
- 13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 14:45 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 15:35 Cake Boss
- 16:00 Cake Boss
- 16:25 Cake Boss
- 16:50 Cake Boss
- 17:15 Cake Boss
- 17:40 Cake Boss
- 18:05 Cake Boss
- 18:30 Love, Lust Or Run
- 18:55 Love, Lust Or Run
- 19:20 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 20:10 7 Little Johnstons
- 21:00 Outdaughtered: Busby Quints
- 21:50 Sister Wives
- 22:40 Separated At Birth
- 23:30 Breaking Amish: Brave New World - The Shunning...



- 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 Your Bleeped Up Brain
- 05:30 America's Book Of Secrets
- 06:20 Cities Of The Underworld
- 07:10 Ancient Discoveries
- 08:00 Ancient Aliens
- 09:00 Missing In Alaska
- 10:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 11:00 WWII: Europe's Secret Army
- 12:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain
- 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 Your Bleeped Up Brain
- 19:00 Ancient Aliens

- 20:00 Missing In Alaska
- 21:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 22:00 WWII: Europe's Secret Army
- 23:00 Serial Killer Earth



- 00:20 Billion Dollar Wreck
- 01:10 Britain's Bloodiest Dynasty
- 02:00 Storage Wars
- 02:25 Storage Wars: Best Of
- 02:50 Banger Boys
- 03:40 American Restoration
- 04:05 American Restoration
- 04:30 Pawn Stars
- 05:00 Time Team
- 06:00 Time Team
- 06:50 Time Team
- 07:40 Hoard Hunters
- 08:30 American Restoration
- 08:55 Alone
- 00:40 Suspicion
- 01:30 Deadly Women
- 02:20 Six Degrees Of Murder
- 03:10 Nowhere To Hide
- 04:00 Suspicion
- 04:48 I Almost Got Away With It
- 05:36 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
- 06:24 Love The Way You Lie
- 07:12 Blood Relatives
- 08:00 I'd Kill For You
- 08:50 I Almost Got Away With It
- 09:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
- 10:30 Love The Way You Lie
- 11:20 Blood Relatives
- 12:10 A Crime To Remember
- 13:00 I'd Kill For You
- 13:50 I Almost Got Away With It



- 14:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
- 15:30 Love The Way You Lie
- 16:20 Blood Relatives
- 17:10 I Am Homicide
- 18:00 I'd Kill For You
- 18:50 I Almost Got Away With It
- 19:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
- 20:30 Beauty Queen Murders
- 21:20 Blood Relatives
- 22:10 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
- 22:35 Momsters: When Moms Go Bad
- 23:00 Forbidden: Dying For Love
- 23:50 Nightmare Next Door



THE TO DO LIST ON OSN MOVIES COMEDY HD

WORD SEARCH

Comedy Movies 2

Find and circle all of the comedy movies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional comedy movie.

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

- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| AIRPLANE | DUCK SOUP | LIFE OF BRIAN | SABRINA |
| ANALYZE THIS | EMMA | MASH | SPLASH |
| ANTZ | FARGO | OFFICE SPACE | STIR CRAZY |
| ARTHUR | GET SMART | PARENTHOOD | STRIPES |
| BANANAS | GROUNDHOG DAY | PATCH ADAMS | THE JERK |
| BEST IN SHOW | HAPPY GILMORE | POLICE ACADEMY | THE PINK PANTHER |
| BILLY MADISON | HOME ALONE | RAISING ARIZONA | THE TRAMP |
| BLUES BROTHERS | HORSE FEATHERS | RATATOUILLE | TOMMY BOY |
| BOWFINGER | ICE AGE | REAL GENIUS | TOOTSIE |
| BULWORTH | JUNO | ROXANNE | WAYNES WORLD |
| CADDYSHACK | KINGPIN | RUTHLESS PEOPLE | WORKING GIRL |
| DAVE | | | |

Yesterday's Solution

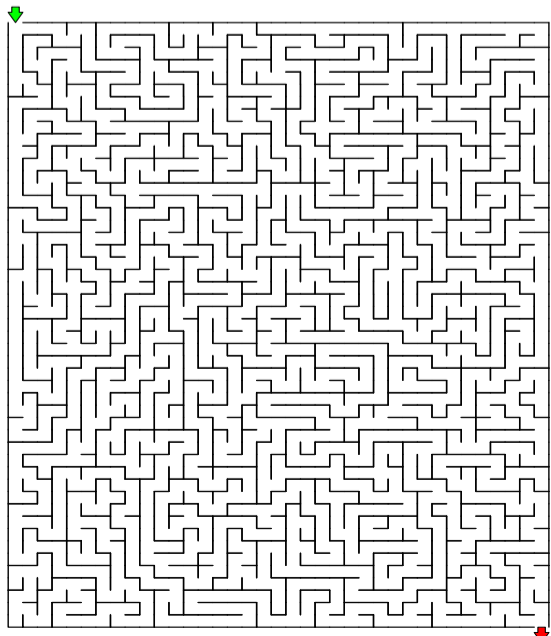
Meryl Streep Movies

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

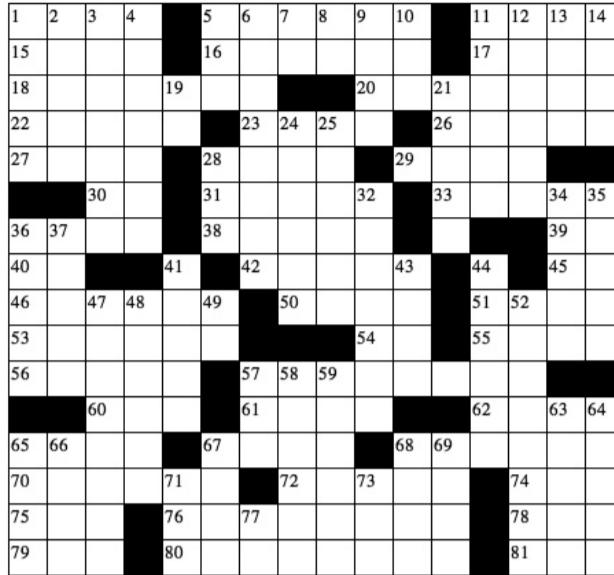
- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| A CRY IN THE DARK | HEARTBURN | OUT OF AFRICA |
| ADAPTATION | IRONWEED | PLENTY |
| BEFORE AND AFTER | JULIA | PRIME |
| DANCING AT LUGHNASA | KRAMER VS. KRAMER | RENDITION |
| DARK MATTER | LIONS FOR LAMBS | SHE-DEVIL |
| DEATH BECOMES HER | MAMMA MIA | SILKWOOD |
| DEFENDING YOUR LIFE | MANHATTAN | SOPHIE'S CHOICE |
| DOUBT | MARVIN'S ROOM | STILL OF THE NIGHT |
| EVENING | MUSIC OF THE HEART | THE DEER HUNTER |
| FALLING IN LOVE | ONE TRUE THING | |

The hidden movie is:
LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

CHALLENGING MAZE



CROSSWORD 1455



ACROSS

- Varying in color when seen in different lights or from different angles.
- A unit of weight used in some Spanish speaking countries.
- A bachelor's degree in library science.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
- Preparatory school work done outside school (especially at home).
- A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria and closely related to Hausa.
- Rich Middle Eastern cake made of thin layers of flaky pastry filled with nuts and honey.
- Italian violin maker in Cremona.
- A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
- A red fluorescent dye resulting from the action of bromine on fluorescein.
- A Loloish language.
- A software system that facilitates the creation and maintenance and use of an electronic database.
- Diabetes caused by a relative or absolute deficiency of insulin and characterized by polyuria.
- Kindly endorsement and guidance.
- A promontory in northern Morocco opposite the Rock of Gibraltar.
- A flat mass of ice (smaller than an ice field) floating at sea.
- A city in southeastern South Korea.
- Before noon.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- A unit of elastance equal to the reciprocal of a farad.
- A state in New England.
- Small genus of erect perennial shrubby herbs.
- A river in northwestern Russia flowing generally west into the Gulf of Finland.
- The 16th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- (of linens or clothes) Smoothed with a hot iron.
- An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
- A soft heavy toxic malleable metallic element.
- Dried out by heat or excessive exposure to sunlight.
- A female person who has the same parents as another person.
- A polite name for any woman.
- Taken or to be taken at random.
- A doctor's degree in music.
- Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
- Administer an oil or ointment to.
- An implement used to propel or steer a boat.
- A run that is the result of the batter's performance.
- An official who evaluates property for the purpose of taxing it.
- A member of the Siouan people inhabiting the valleys of the Platte and Missouri rivers in Nebraska.
- An ancient Hebrew unit of capacity equal to 10 baths or 10 ephahs.
- Any of numerous small slender long-tailed parrots.
- Range of what one can know or understand.

DOWN

- A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
- Leafless East Indian vine.
- A city in central Florida.
- (British) A light midafternoon meal of tea and sandwiches or cakes.
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- A railroad depot in a theater of operations where military supplies are unloaded for distribution.
- An artificial language for international use that rejects all existing words and is based instead on an abstract analysis of ideas.
- A Russian river.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- Great coolness and composure under strain.
- Resembling the sound of a brass instrument.
- (New Testament) Disciple of Jesus.
- The complete duration of something.
- A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of the prehistoric Aegean civilization.
- Large European marine food fish.
- Any of various long-tailed rodents similar to but larger than a mouse.
- With suavity.
- (folklore) A corpse that rises at night to drink the blood of the living.
- Make amendments to.
- (Scotland) A landowner.
- The Uralic language spoken by the Yeniseian people.
- The front of the head from the forehead to the chin and ear to ear.
- Small genus of Eurasian herbs.
- Wedge-shaped stone building block used in constructing an arch or vault.
- Relating to or being within or near the inner side or limit.
- A public promotion of some product or service.
- A reference book that is published regularly once every year.
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- 1 species.
- A city of northern Poland near the mouth of the Vistula River on a gulf of the Baltic Sea.
- Make less active or intense.
- English romantic poet notorious for his rebellious and unconventional lifestyle (1788-1824).
- A slight rounded elevation where the malleus attaches to the eardrum.
- An independent agency of the United States government responsible for aviation and spaceflight.
- Wild plum of northeastern United States having dark purple fruits with yellow flesh.
- (British slang) An absolute certainty.
- (Scotland) A small loaf or roll of soft bread.
- The compass point midway between east and southeast.
- A soft silver-white or yellowish metallic element of the alkali metal group.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

4	8	2						6
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Yesterday's Solution

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

SURGEON GENERAL CALLS YOUTH VAPING A PUBLIC HEALTH THREAT

WASHINGTON: The US surgeon general is calling e-cigarettes an emerging public health threat to the nation's youth. In a report being released yesterday, Surgeon General Vivek Murthy acknowledged a need for more research into the health effects of "vaping," but said e-cigarettes aren't harmless and too many teens are using them.

"My concern is e-cigarettes have the potential to create a whole new generation of kids who are addicted to nicotine," Murthy told The Associated Press. "If that leads to the use of other tobacco-related products, then we are going to be moving backward instead of forward." Battery-powered e-cigarettes turn liquid nicotine into an inhalable vapor without the harmful tar generated by regular cigarettes. Vaping was first pushed as safer for current smokers. There's no scientific consensus on the risks or advantages of vaping, including how it affects the likelihood of someone either picking up regular tobacco products or kicking the habit.

Federal figures show that last year, 16 percent of high school students reported at least some use of e-cigarettes - even some who say they've never smoked a conventional cigarette. While not all contain nicotine, Murthy's report says e-cigarettes are the most commonly used tobacco-related product among youth. Nicotine is bad for a developing brain no matter how it's exposed, Murthy said.

"Your kids are not an experiment," he says in a public service announcement being released with the report. It's already illegal to sell e-cigarettes to minors. Earlier this year, the Food and Drug Administration issued new rules that, for the first time, will require makers of nicotine-emitting devices to begin submitting their ingredients for regulators to review. The vaping industry argues the regulations will wipe out small companies in favor of more harmful products, and likely will lobby the incoming Trump administration to undo the rules.

Murthy's report calls on parents and health workers to make concerns about e-cigarettes clear to young people. He said local officials should take action, too, such as including e-cigarettes in indoor smoke-free policies. —AP

US LIFE EXPECTANCY DROPS FIRST TIME SINCE AIDS CRISIS PEAK

MIAMI: Life expectancy in the United States dropped last year for the first time since the peak of the HIV/AIDS crisis more than 20 years ago, as deaths rose from nearly every major cause, federal data showed yesterday. The total US population's life expectancy in 2015 was 78.8 years, a decrease of 0.1 year from 2014, said the report by the National Center for Health Statistics.

Deaths from eight of the top 10 causes mounted, including spikes in accidental deaths among children and deaths from Alzheimer's disease in the elderly. The report did not delve into the reasons for the across-the-board decline in life expectancy from birth, but experts pointed to economic struggles, drug addiction and the increasing burden of dementia on an aging population as potential factors. Across the nation, 86,212 more people died in 2015 than a year earlier.

"This is unusual," said lead author Jiaquan Xu, an epidemiologist at the NCHS, which is part of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "2015 is kind of different from every year," Xu told AFP. It "looks like much more death than we have seen in the last few years." The last time life expectancies at birth dropped for the total US population was in 1993, a year when the deaths from AIDS reached a peak in the United States, compounded by a bad flu year that resulted in more flu and pneumonia deaths, he said. Homicide and accidental death rates also went up that year. For 2015, the

data also showed a 1.2 percent increase in the death rate for the total population, and this "rose significantly for the first time since 1999," noted the report.

Drop for men and women
For US men, life expectancy

World Health Organization.

Women in Japan currently have the longest average lifespan at 86.8 years, while men in Switzerland can anticipate 81.3 years. Sierra Leone has the lowest life expectancy, with women at 50.8 years and men at 49.3. In the United



AUSTIN, Indiana: In this March 24, 2015 file photo, a syringe is pictured along West Main Street in downtown Austin. The long decline in HIV infections among white people who inject drugs has stalled, another grim side effect of the nation's drug abuse epidemic. —AP

dropped 0.2 years from 76.5 years in 2014 to 76.3 years in 2015. For US women, life expectancy decreased 0.1 year to 81.2 years in 2015. The overall downward trend in America stands in sharp contrast to the situation worldwide, where global life expectancy has increased five years from 2000 to 2015, according to the

States, life expectancy has stagnated nationwide in recent years. Federal data from 2014 showed a slight downturn in life expectancy for white people, which experts said could be due to rising drug abuse-particularly the prescription painkiller epidemic-and poverty. But this year, there was no single cause. —AFP

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PAGE



Kuwait Times

248 33 199



Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
فهد علي المخيزيم



Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM



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



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (08/12/2016 TO 14/12/2016)

SHARQIA-1		THE LAST KING	1:45 PM	THE LAST KING	1:45 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	9:45 PM
THE LAST KING	12:00 PM	THE LAST KING	4:00 PM	AE DIL HAI MUSHKIL -Hindi	4:00 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	12:05 AM
THE LAST KING	2:00 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	6:15 PM	Special Show "MOANA"	4:00 PM		
DHRUVA - Telugu	3:30 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	8:00 PM	DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	7:00 PM	AL-KOUT.3	
TAHT AL TARABEZA	4:15 PM	THE LAST KING	9:45 PM	TAHT AL TARABEZA	10:00 PM	THE LAST KING	12:30 PM
DHRUVA - Telugu	6:30 PM	THE LAST KING	12:05 AM	THE NEIGHBOR	12:15 AM	THE LAST KING	2:45 PM
DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	6:30 PM					THE LAST KING	5:00 PM
DHRUVA - Telugu	9:30 PM	FANAR-4		AVENUES-5		TAHT AL TARABEZA	7:15 PM
WOLVES AT THE DOOR	12:30 AM	MOANA	11:30 AM	MOANA	12:30 PM	TAHT AL TARABEZA	9:30 PM
WOLVES AT THE DOOR	9:30 PM	MOANA	1:45 PM	MOANA	11:45 AM	TAHT AL TARABEZA	11:45 PM
WOLVES AT THE DOOR	11:15 PM	MOANA	4:00 PM	MOANA	3:00 PM		
WOLVES AT THE DOOR	1:00 AM	MOANA	6:15 PM	Special Show "MOANA"	3:00 PM	AL-KOUT.4	
		MOANA	8:30 PM	MOANA	5:30 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	1:00 PM
SHARQIA-2		THE LAST KING	10:45 PM	Special Show "MOANA"	5:30 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	3:00 PM
MOANA	12:45 PM	THE LAST KING	1:00 AM	MOANA	8:00 PM	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	4:45 PM
MOANA	3:00 PM			THE LAST KING	10:30 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	6:45 PM
MOANA	5:15 PM	FANAR-5		THE LAST KING	12:45 AM	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	8:30 PM
MOANA	7:30 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	1:00 PM			WOLVES AT THE DOOR	10:30 PM
THE LAST KING	9:45 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	3:00 PM	AVENUES-6		WOLVES AT THE DOOR	12:45 AM
THE LAST KING	12:05 AM	DHRUVA - Telugu	3:30 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	11:45 AM		
		WOLVES AT THE DOOR	4:45 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	1:45 PM	BAIRAQ-1	
SHARQIA-3		DHRUVA - Telugu	6:30 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	3:45 PM	MOANA	12:00 PM
THE NEIGHBOR	12:15 PM	DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	6:30 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	5:45 PM	MOANA	2:15 PM
THE NEIGHBOR	2:15 PM	DHRUVA - Telugu	9:30 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	7:45 PM	MOANA	4:30 PM
THE NEIGHBOR	4:15 PM	DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	9:30 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	9:45 PM	MOANA	6:45 PM
THE NEIGHBOR	6:15 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	12:30 AM	THE NEIGHBOR	11:45 PM	MOANA	9:00 PM
TAHT AL TARABEZA	8:15 PM					TAHT AL TARABEZA	11:45 PM
THE NEIGHBOR	10:30 PM	MARINA-1		AVENUES -7		BAIRAQ-2	
THE NEIGHBOR	12:30 AM	THE NEIGHBOR	12:45 PM	FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM		MOANA	11:45 AM
		THE NEIGHBOR	3:00 PM	12:00 PM		TROLLS	2:00 PM
MUHALAB-1		TROLLS	5:00 PM	LAF WA DAWARAN	2:45 PM	TROLLS	4:00 PM
TAHT AL TARABEZA	11:30 AM	THE NEIGHBOR	7:00 PM	TROLLS	5:00 PM	MOANA	6:00 PM
TAHT AL TARABEZA	1:45 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	9:00 PM	LAF WA DAWARAN	7:00 PM	TAHT AL TARABEZA	8:15 PM
DHRUVA - Telugu	4:00 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	11:00 PM	FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM		THE NEIGHBOR	10:30 PM
DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	4:00 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	1:00 AM	9:30 PM		THE NEIGHBOR	12:30 AM
DHRUVA - Telugu	7:00 PM			ALLIED	12:30 AM		
DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	7:00 PM	MARINA-2				BAIRAQ-3	
DHRUVA - Telugu	10:00 PM	THE LAST KING	11:30 AM	360°- 1		THE LAST KING	11:30 AM
TAHT AL TARABEZA	10:00 PM	THE LAST KING	1:30 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	12:45 PM	THE LAST KING	1:45 PM
TAHT AL TARABEZA	1:00 AM	THE LAST KING	3:30 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	2:45 PM	THE LAST KING	4:00 PM
		TAHT AL TARABEZA	5:45 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	4:45 PM	DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	6:15 PM
MUHALAB-2		TAHT AL TARABEZA	8:00 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	6:45 PM	THE LAST KING	9:15 PM
THE NEIGHBOR	11:45 AM	THE LAST KING	10:15 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	8:45 PM	THE LAST KING	11:30 PM
DHRUVA - Telugu	1:45 PM	THE LAST KING	12:30 AM	THE NEIGHBOR	10:45 PM		
THE NEIGHBOR	1:45 PM			THE NEIGHBOR	12:45 AM	PLAZA	
THE NEIGHBOR	3:45 PM	MARINA-3				KATTAPPANAYILE RITHWIK ROSHAN -Malayalam	
UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	5:45 PM	MOANA	1:00 PM	360°- 2		3:45 PM	
THE NEIGHBOR	7:45 PM	MOANA	3:15 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	1:15 PM	DHRUVA - Telugu	3:45 PM
THE NEIGHBOR	9:45 PM	MOANA	5:30 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	3:15 PM	KATTAPPANAYILE RITHWIK ROSHAN -Malayalam	
THE NEIGHBOR	11:45 PM	MOANA	7:45 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	5:15 PM	6:45 PM	
		WOLVES AT THE DOOR	10:00 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	7:15 PM	DHRUVA - Telugu	6:45 PM
MUHALAB-3		WOLVES AT THE DOOR	12:05 AM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	9:15 PM	DHRUVA - Telugu	9:45 PM
MOANA	1:15 PM			WOLVES AT THE DOOR	11:15 PM		
THE LAST KING	1:30 PM	AVENUES-1		WOLVES AT THE DOOR	1:15 AM	LAILA	
MOANA	3:30 PM	DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	12:30 PM			MOANA	4:15 PM
MOANA	5:45 PM	MOANA	3:30 PM	360°- 3		MOANA	6:30 PM
MOANA	8:00 PM	MOANA	6:00 PM	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	12:15 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	8:45 PM
THE LAST KING	10:15 PM	DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	8:15 PM	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	2:15 PM	THE LAST KING	10:45 PM
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				UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	6:15 PM	AJIAL.1	
FANAR-1		AVENUES-2		UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	8:15 PM	KATTAPPANAYILE RITHWIK ROSHAN	3:30 PM
THE NEIGHBOR	1:15 PM	MOANA -3D- 4DX 12:00 PM		UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	10:15 PM	DHRUVA - Telugu	3:30 PM
THE NEIGHBOR	3:15 PM	MOANA -3D- 4DX	2:30 PM	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	12:15 AM	KATTAPPANAYILE RITHWIK ROSHAN	6:30 PM
THE NEIGHBOR	5:15 PM	MOANA -3D- 4DX	5:00 PM			DHRUVA - Telugu	6:30 PM
THE NEIGHBOR	7:15 PM	MOANA -3D- 4DX	7:30 PM	AL-KOUT.1		DHRUVA - Telugu	9:30 PM
THE NEIGHBOR	9:15 PM	MOANA -3D- 4DX	10:00 PM	MOANA	1:15 PM		
THE NEIGHBOR	11:15 PM	FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM -3D -4DX	12:30 AM	THE LAST KING	1:30 PM	AJIAL.2	
THE NEIGHBOR	1:15 AM			MOANA	3:30 PM	DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	3:45 PM
				MOANA	5:45 PM	CHENNAI 600028 II: Second Innings (Tamil)	3:45 PM
FANAR-2		AVENUES-3		MOANA	8:00 PM	DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	6:45 PM
UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	11:30 AM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	12:15 PM	THE LAST KING	10:15 PM	CHENNAI 600028 II: Second Innings (Tamil)	6:45 PM
UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	1:30 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	2:15 PM	THE LAST KING	12:30 AM	DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	9:45 PM
TAHT AL TARABEZA	3:30 PM	DHRUVA - Telugu	1:30 PM			CHENNAI 600028 II: Second Innings (Tamil)	9:45 PM
UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	5:45 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	4:30 PM	AL-KOUT.2			
TAHT AL TARABEZA	7:45 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	6:15 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	11:45 AM	AJIAL.3	
TAHT AL TARABEZA	10:00 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	8:15 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	1:45 PM	KAVI UDDHESHICHATHU..? -Malayalam	3:30 PM
UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	12:15 AM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	10:15 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	3:45 PM	KAVI UDDHESHICHATHU..? -Malayalam	6:30 PM
		WOLVES AT THE DOOR	12:15 AM	THE NEIGHBOR	5:45 PM	KATTAPPANAYILE RITHWIK ROSHAN -Malayalam	
FANAR-3		AVENUES-4		THE NEIGHBOR	7:45 PM	9:30 PM	
THE LAST KING	1:30 AM	MOANA	11:30 AM				

Friday Times BUSINESS

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ECB ADDS HALF A TRILLION EUROS TO STIMULUS PLAN

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Saudi arms industry may take years, says chief



CAIRO: In this Nov 19, 2016 file photo, an Egyptian carries a basket of bread, in Cairo. Yesterday, Egypt's president defended the tough economic measures his government has undertaken, saying there was no alternative in the face of deteriorating economy. — AP

ECONOMIC REFORMS ARE NO 'PICNIC:' SISI EGYPT'S HEADLINE INFLATION SURGES TO 19.4% AFTER CURRENCY FLOAT

CAIRO: The Egyptian president defended yesterday the tough economic measures undertaken by his government, saying there was no other alternative in the face of the country's deteriorating economy.

"Structural reforms" are an imperative for Egypt, Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi said, adding that the newly implemented measures are no "picnic."

Al-Sisi's remarks were his first since the government's unprecedented floatation of the Egyptian pound last month, meant to ensure that Egypt qualifies for a \$12 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, which the agency approved almost a week later. In the move, the pound lost about half its value, plunging to around 18 to the dollar, a huge setback in a country heavily dependent on imports ranging from food items to raw materials. With salaries remaining largely the same, nearly everyone in the country effectively had a sudden, large pay cut.

The painful measures earned praise from the IMF and the international business community, but caused price hikes for the cash-



Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi speaks during the final day of a major economic conference, in Sharm el-Sheikh. — AP

strapped population, with Al-Sisi risking a serious political backlash.

"The decision to carry out reforms ... was not easy," Al-Sisi told a gathering of clerics ahead of the Prophet's Birthday, a major Islamic holi-

day. "The task requires hard work and patience." Al-Sisi blamed the deteriorating economy on the past several years of unrest that have shaken Egypt since the ouster of autocratic President Hosni Mubarak in a 2011 popular uprising.

Elected in 2014 - almost a year after Al-Sisi as army chief led the ouster of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi, following mass protests against the Islamist's one-year-rule - Al-Sisi has since depended on billions of dollars of assistance from Gulf Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia.

Inflation surges

Egypt's headline inflation surged to an eight-year high of 19.4 percent in November, in the first report on price rises since the central bank floated the currency and hiked fuel prices last month. Annual urban consumer price inflation jumped from 13.6 percent in October, the official CAPMAS statistics agency said in a statement, to reach its highest level since Nov. 2008, when it exceeded 20 percent.

CAPMAS said food and beverage inflation

reached 21.5 percent in November, an eye-watering number for tens of millions of Egyptians who scrape by day to day. Egypt abandoned its peg of 8.8 Egyptian pounds to the US dollar on Nov 3, floating the currency in a dramatic move that has since seen it roughly halve in value.

The move helped Egypt secure a \$12 billion three-year loan from the International Monetary Fund to support an economic reform program that has seen the government introduce Value Added Tax, cut electricity subsidies and sharply raise import duties all the space of a few months.

The measures have had the effect of reducing imports and dramatically increasing prices in the country of more than 90 million. Economists have forecast inflation of up to 20 percent by year-end on the back of the currency depreciation. They expect prices to keep rising into next year. "The inflation rate will continue to rise in December and the first quarter of 2017. Don't forget that the government hiked customs tariffs this month," said Reham El Desoki, senior economist at regional investment bank Arqam Capital. — Agencies

SAUDI ARMS INDUSTRY MAY TAKE YEARS, SAYS CHIEF

KINGDOM STRIVING TO BECOME SELF-RELIANT

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia is striving to develop a homegrown defense industry but cutting reliance on foreign equipment will take years, the head of a major military development firm said yesterday. The kingdom is the world's third-biggest defense spender, but only two percent of that outlay is local.

Riyadh targets 50 percent domestic defense content by 2030, under a wide-ranging vision to diversify the oil-dependent economy. "It's going to take some time to put it into practice. You're talking about a few years down the road," Mohamed Al-Mady, governor of the kingdom's Military Industries Corporation, told AFP when asked how soon products could be available.

It is too early to say what type of gear the kingdom could manufacture because a "final strategy" is still being developed, he said. "Then we will know exactly which sectors" will be the focus, Mady said on the sidelines of the Asbar World Forum in Riyadh.

The Saudi defense industry currently consists of just seven companies and two research and development centers. It has already begun developing spare parts, armoured vehicles and ammunition but will expand "to higher value and more complex equipment such as military aircraft," according to the kingdom's economic diversification plan, known as Vision 2030. With the strategy still evolving, Mady could not say whether aircraft production was a realistic goal.

Since March last year, the kingdom has spent billions of dollars on a military intervention against rebels in Yemen, where it leads an Arab coalition supporting the country's internationally recognized government with air strikes and other aid. Saudi Arabia has traditionally bought its arms from



RIYADH: Saudi's head of Military Industries Corporation, Mohamed Al-Mady, attends a panel discussion during the ASBAR World Forum, yesterday in the capital Riyadh. — AFP

the United States, Britain and France. "We visited a number of countries around the world to learn from their experience" in defense manufacturing, Mady told the forum, specifically citing South Korea and Turkey.

"We need all types of products that we brought from outside," said the former vice chairman and CEO of Saudi petrochemicals giant SABIC. "We have to manufacture them locally." — AFP

ROSNEFT SHARES SOAR ON GLENCORE, QATAR DEAL

MOSCOW: Shares in Russian oil giant Rosneft soared yesterday after the Kremlin announced the 10.5 billion euro (\$11.3 billion) sale of a stake to commodities trader Glencore and Qatar's sovereign fund.

President Vladimir Putin late Wednesday hailed the surprise deal for 19.5 percent of the state-controlled firm as the largest in the global energy sector for 2016, a major fillip for the strongman leader as he seeks to plug the country's growing deficit. The sell-off is part of a broader privatization drive and comes despite Moscow being mired in Western sanctions over the crisis in Ukraine that have played a major part in plunging the country into recession.

Rosneft stock was up some five percent by 1100 GMT on the Moscow Exchange to 374 rubles (\$5.9, 5.5 euros), valuing the company overall at around 58 billion euros. Swiss-based Glencore and the sovereign fund of gas-rich emirate Qatar will go fifty-fifty on the deal, which leaves the Russian state controlling just over 50 percent of the country's largest oil firm.

The sale of the stake in Rosneft was long in the pipeline but up until the last minute most observers expected the company itself to buy the shares from the government.

Rosneft chief Igor Sechin told Putin on Wednesday the firm had taken part in talks with "more than 30 companies, funds, professional investors, sovereign funds, financial institutions from countries in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region" ahead of the deal.

The final agreement is being partly funded by a cash from "one of the major European banks", he said, without naming the lender. Investment bank Renaissance Capital said in a note that it was an Italian bank financing the lion's share of the purchase by Glencore.

A statement from Glencore said that the deal "will be conditional on the subsequent finalization of all relevant financing, guarantee and other agreements," and could be closed in mid-December.

Just business

Sechin pointedly thanked Putin at the Kremlin meeting and said that the deal was only made possible thanks to his "personal input." Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov insisted the sale was strictly business and said it showed Russian companies remained attractive for overseas investors despite the poor economic climate.

"This deal is exclusively commercial," he said. "Russian assets, especially leading assets, are of considerable interest to investors both at home and abroad."

The sale comes after oil prices have risen to more than \$50 a barrel after OPEC members last week hammered out a deal to cut oil output for the first time in eight years.

Once a little-known firm, Russia's Rosneft has enjoyed a meteoric rise under Putin. Headed by the ex-KGB agent's powerful ally Sechin, it has scooped up some of the most prized assets in the Russian oil sector in a series of controversial deals. Moscow—which is not a member of OPEC—has said it is ready to reduce crude output by 300,000 barrels a day in the first half of next year.

OPEC and non-OPEC members are set to meet in Vienna on Saturday to discuss the implementation of the deal to slash output. Experts predict that if oil prices remain higher than expected, the Russian government will use the opportunity to increase spending ahead of presidential elections in 2018 instead of reducing its deficit. — AFP



ROTHERHAM: A new sign offering industrial units and land for sale is pictured on top of a crumbling sign showing a European flag and 'Financed by the European Union' signage in an industrial area in Rotherham, northern England on December 2, 2016. As a driving force behind Brexit, the rust belt of northern England helped trigger an anti-establishment earthquake whose aftershocks travelled across the Atlantic, and its people are in no mood to back down. —AFP

OIL RALLIES OVER \$50 DESPITE OPEC OUTPUT CUT DOUBTS

LONDON: Oil prices recovered above \$50 a barrel yesterday, bouncing back from the week's lows as the dollar weakened against major currencies. The US dollar index fell as Treasury bond yields eased and investors eyed next week's Federal Reserve meeting. A weak dollar makes dollar-denominated oil less expensive for importing countries.

"A slightly weaker US dollar is supportive of oil prices," said Michael McCarthy, chief market

strategist at CMC Markets. Brent crude was up 50 cents at \$53.50 a barrel by 1200 GMT. US light crude was up 50 cents at \$50.27 per barrel. Both benchmarks have fallen more than \$2 a barrel from highs reached on Monday when investors bought heavily in the wake of an agreement by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and Russia to cut production to reduce a supply glut. OPEC members and oil producers outside the group

will meet again this weekend in Vienna to discuss details of last week's deal, which aims at an overall reduction in output of around 1.5 million barrels a day.

Some analysts have suggested promised output cuts may be insufficient to dent global oversupply and rebalance markets. "Optimism over the OPEC cut decision has eroded a bit," said SEB Chief Commodities Analyst Bjarne Schieldrop in Oslo. "The devil will be in the

details." Stocks data on Wednesday provided little guidance on the state of the US oil market. US crude oil inventories dropped 2.4 million barrels in the week to Dec. 2, compared with analyst expectations for a draw of 1 million barrels. But stocks at the Cushing, Oklahoma delivery hub for US crude futures increased by 3.8 million barrels, the most since 2009, according to the US Energy Information Administration (EIA). — Reuters

GENERAL STRIKE IN GREECE OVER NEW BUDGET CUTS

ATHENS: Greece's leading unions launched yesterday a general strike that shut down several key sectors in protest over planned new pay cuts and taxes called for by international creditors.

Civil servants, bank staff, merchant seamen, railway workers and state-employed doctors were among professionals taking part in the 24-hour stoppage against the measures, which are scheduled to be approved by lawmakers at the weekend. "We are reacting to repressive austerity, poverty and destitution... once again we face absurd demands by Greece's EU-IMF creditors," leading union GSEE said.

Journalists had staged a one-day walkout on Wednesday. The country's international creditors-fellow EU states and the International Monetary Fund-want Greece to overhaul its labor legislation to make crippling strikes less likely while also facilitating layoffs.

Also yesterday, official data showed persistently high unemployment figures at 23.1 percent in September, with an increase of some 60,500 jobs compared to a year earlier.

Unions say hidden unemployment is far higher. A new budget containing around one billion euros (\$1.07 billion) from extra taxation on items including cars, fixed telephone service, pay TV, fuel, tobacco, coffee and beer is to be approved by parliament early Sunday.

Public spending on salaries and pensions will also be cut by 5.7 billion euros next year. Unions are also angry about plans to raise over 2.0 billion euros next year from privatizations, including 1.2 billion euros from the sale of regional airports. Separate union demonstrations are planned in Athens and major Greek cities later in the day.

Already huge, Greece's debt after three consecutive bailouts is on course to reach a mammoth 315 billion euros (\$334 billion), or around 180 percent of gross domestic output this year, according to the latest EU data. Greece on Tuesday rejected pressure to extend its painful austerity program beyond 2018 as part of a deal to bridge differences between the squabbling international creditors.



ATHENS: Hundreds of people gather before taking part in a protest march marking a 24-hour general strike in Athens yesterday. — AFP

CHINESE FIRM SCRAPS GERMAN TECH DEAL AFTER US BLOCK

BEIJING: A Chinese company yesterday said it had scrapped plans to purchase German semiconductor equipment maker Aixtron after US President Obama blocked the deal on security concerns.

The Chinese government-backed Grand Chip Investment said its offer could no longer be fulfilled after Washington rejected the inclusion of Aixtron's US unit over fears it could put sensitive technology with potential military applications in Chinese hands.

In a statement released on its website, the company said the block meant that the conditions of the deal "no longer can be fulfilled". "Any contracts based on the acceptance of the takeover offer will not become effective." The failure of the proposed 670-million-euro (\$714-million) takeover comes at a time of growing unease in the West about a recent slew of Chinese takeovers, often by state-backed companies. — AFP



BEIJING: People walk past a store in a shopping mall in Beijing yesterday. China imports rose a forecast-beating 6.7 percent year-on-year to \$152.2 billion in November, government data showed yesterday, in a positive sign for the world's second-largest economy. — AFP

CHINA NOV TRADE RISES IN SIGN OF GLOBAL PICK-UP

BUT TRUMP CLOUDS 2017 OUTLOOK

BEIJING: China's imports grew at the fastest pace in more than two years in November, fueled by its strong thirst for commodities from coal to iron ore, while exports also rose unexpectedly, reflecting a pick-up in both domestic and global demand. The upbeat data adds to signs of a modest industrial recovery in the world's largest economies, even as China and other Asian exporters brace for a potential trade war once protectionist US President-elect Donald Trump takes office.

"The improvement reflects a strengthening in global demand, with recent business surveys suggesting that developed economies are on track to end the year on a strong note," Julian Evans-Pritchard, China economist at Singapore-based Capital Economics, said in a note. "But while global demand has recovered somewhat recently, lower trend growth in many developed and emerging economies means that further upside is probably limited."

China's November imports expanded 6.7 percent on-year, confounding expectations for a drop of 1.3 percent and the strongest gain since September 2014, data showed yesterday. Exports rose 0.1 percent from a year earlier, defying predictions for a 5 percent slide. Demand from all of China's major trading partners improved significantly, especially Europe and the United States, though shipments to emerging economies remained weak. That left the country with a trade surplus of \$44.61 billion for the month, the General Administration of Customs said, versus forecasts of \$46.30 billion and October's \$49.06 billion.

Analysts polled by Reuters had expected a more modest drop in November exports after a 7.3 percent contraction in October, while imports had been seen falling at roughly the same pace.

Man of steel

China's imports of major commodities including iron ore, crude oil, coal, soybeans and copper all surged in November, despite a sharp weakening in its yuan currency. While some analysts have worried that sharp commodity price rises could be masking still sluggish demand, the data showed imports rose in both value and volume terms.

A government infrastructure building spree and housing rally have fueled a construction boom in China this year, spurring demand for building materials from steel bars to cement.

China imported 91.98 million tons of iron ore in November, the third highest monthly tally on record, while imports of copper, used in plumbing and wiring, surged 31 percent. China also imported its largest volume of coal in 18 months, as utilities rebuilt stocks to cope with higher winter demand. Its strong appetite has helped fuel a reflationary pulse in global commodities worldwide. Some market watchers, however, suspected the spike in metal imports may have been due to shipments being delayed from October during the country's long National Day holiday. — Reuters

CHINA STATISTICS CHIEF SAYS FALSE ECONOMIC DATA IS A PROBLEM

BEIJING: China's top statistician has accused local officials of "falsifying" economic figures and warned offenders would be severely punished, reflecting growing concern about the reliability of government data. "Currently, there have been occasional cases of local sectors falsifying statistics and practicing fraud, which violate statistical laws and regulations," Ning Jizhe, director of the National Bureau of Statistics, wrote in the Communist Party mouthpiece People's Daily yesterday.

He said Beijing had "zero tolerance" of fakers and violators would "pay a genuinely high cost" as authorities tried to "create an environment where they will not dare, not imagine, not think of breaking the law". "A number of cases that involved the falsification of statistics were investigated and dealt with," he said, adding that "administrative punishments have been carried out".

Officials and analysts in China and abroad have long questioned the

accuracy of Chinese economic figures, which many suspect are often manipulated to make the economy look more robust than it really is. One of the problems has been that local bureaucrats' promotions are tied to economic performance, giving them an incentive to falsify data in hopes of improving their chances of career advancement.

Even Premier Li Keqiang has expressed doubts about the reliability of the country's statistics. Leaked US diplomatic cables show that as the top official in Liaoning province in 2007, Li told the then-US ambassador that such data was "man-made".

In March, Chinese customs officials said a single exporter in the northeastern city of Dalian had been found to have over-reported the value of their fake eyelash exports by five times.

Ning's predecessor Wang Baoan was expelled from the Communist Party in January on suspicion of disciplinary violations. — AFP



TOKYO: People walk on a pedestrian crossing in Tokyo yesterday. Japan's economy grew at a slower pace than earlier estimated in the July to September quarter, expanding at an annual pace of 1.3 percent. — AP

JAPAN ECONOMIC GROWTH IN JULY-SEPT REVISED TO 1.3%

TOKYO: Japan's economy grew 1.3 percent in July to September from a year earlier, according to revised data reflecting weaker business investment and exports. It was the third-straight quarter of expansion, but well below forecasts by most economists of an upward revision. The preliminary estimate put annual growth at 2.2 percent in the last quarter.

Quarterly growth for the world's third-largest economy was 0.3 percent, down from the earlier reported 0.5 percent. Japan has yet to attain the strong momentum Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has been promising since he took office four years ago, pledging to spur investment by rekindling inflation. So far, his strategy has rested heavily on massive asset purchases by the central bank. The country remains far from the 2 percent inflation target set in early 2013.

Yesterday's downgrade reflects a 0.4 percent drop in business investment from the previous quarter. Originally it was reported as flat. Exports grew 1.6 percent, below the 2.0 percent earlier figure. The latest data come amid mixed signals: on Thursday, China reported a rebound in trade that could auger well for Japan's exports, since it supplies many of the materials and components used by Chinese manufacturers. But the election of Donald Trump as president has raised uncertainty over the future course of the US economy and over Japan's trade outlook.

For now, economists say that the recent, sustained expansion and a weakening of the yen versus the dollar are good signs. That means the central bank is likely to keep its current lavish monetary easing policy intact at a policy meeting later this month, without pushing interest rates further into negative territory, said Marcel Thieliant of Capital Economics. "Firms' predictions for industrial production suggest that the economy continued to expand at a solid pace in the current quarter. Our forecast is that GDP will grow by 1 percent next year," he said.

Also yesterday, the government revised annual estimates of gross domestic product for 1994-2015, raising figures across the board based on a 2011 benchmark year. The revision put Japan's GDP in 2015 at 530.5 trillion yen (\$4.66 trillion), up from the earlier figure of 499.3 trillion yen.

The newest data reflect a new calculation method based on revised international standards. It includes research and development costs, patent royalties and purchases of defense equipment that previously were not part of the calculations. The US, Australia and many European countries have been using the new method for years.

The revised figures do not reflect any actual change in Japan's sluggish economic reality, since they boost the overall GDP figure they are a "substantial windfall" from a political point of view, Masamichi Adachi of JPMorgan said in a research note. The higher number pushes Japan closer toward Abe's goal of attaining a 600 trillion yen (\$5.3 trillion) nominal GDP. It also improves Japan's gross debt-to-GDP ratio, which at more than twice the size of the economy is the biggest among major industrial countries. — AP

ECB ADDS HALF A TRILLION EUROS TO STIMULUS PLAN

BANK SEEKS TO SUPPORT EUROZONE IN CRITICAL YEAR

FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank is adding half a trillion euros (\$579 billion) in stimulus to the eurozone economy as it hopes to support growth as Europe heads into what could be a tumultuous election year. The chief monetary authority for the 19 countries that use the euro said yesterday it would keep injecting money into the economy through its bond-buying program until at least December, past the previous end date of March.

It will reduce the amount of bonds it buys after March to 60 billion euros (\$64 billion) a month from 80 billion euros. That effectively adds at least 540 billion euros in stimulus to the existing 1.74 billion (\$1.87 trillion) effort. The reduced amount startled analysts, many of whom predicted an extension at the same pace. Still, the total amount of stimulus is slightly more than if the ECB had extended for only six months at the current rate.

The central bank also said it could increase the monthly purchases if needed and that there is still no firm end date for the stimulus program.

Economist Carsten Brzeski at ING-DiBa said the ECB risked getting a negative reaction in markets by sending the impression it was focused on reducing the rate of stimulus rather than increasing it. "It is the combination of extending and tapering that we thought would not yet happen as it could risk an unwarranted increase in bond yields." "Even without calling this tapering, the ECB just announced tapering." The purchases pump freshly printed money into the banking system in hopes of increasing weak inflation and boosting growth. The flood of cash also helps keep financial markets calmer as Europe faces elections in the Netherlands and France next year where anti-EU, populist candidates are expected to do well.

By extending stimulus, the ECB is moving in the opposite direction to that of the US Federal Reserve. The US central bank is contemplating another interest rate increase at its Dec 13-14 meeting. Markets have been betting that President-elect Trump will carry through on promises to spend more on infrastructure such as roads and bridges after he is inaugurated Jan. 20, boosting growth and inflation in the months and years ahead. That would give the Fed more reason to raise rates.

Beyond the stimulus program, the ECB's 25-member governing council kept its key interest rate benchmarks unchanged. It left at zero its refinancing rate, at which it lends money to commercial banks, and minus 0.4 percent on deposits it takes from banks. That negative rate aims to push banks to lend money and not hoard it at the ECB.

ECB President Mario Draghi had made clear in recent days that the bank was not seeing a convincing upturn in inflation. The bank aims for 2 percent annual inflation, considered best for growth and jobs, and right now inflation is only 0.6 percent annually. That's better than the falling prices seen earlier



FRANKFURT: The European Central Bank, (ECB) is pictured in Frankfurt/Main yesterday. ECB keeps record-low interest rates unchanged. — AFP

this year, but still well below target. Worse, core inflation, which includes volatile fuel and food, remained stuck at 0.8 percent in November - lower than the 0.9 percent reading from a year ago. Meanwhile, economic growth is only modest at 0.3 percent in the third quarter. On top of that, the shared euro currency could be facing serious political turbulence. The British vote to leave the European Union and the election of Donald Trump in the United States are considered to have boosted the prospects of anti-elite and anti-EU politicians. Next year could see a strong showing by anti-immigration politician Geert Wilders and his Party For Freedom in the Netherlands in March. In France, National Front leader Marine Le Pen is expected to make it past the first round of presidential voting in April, although she isn't the favorite to win in the second round in May.

Brexit woes

She wants France, a member of the euro, to follow Britain in leaving the European Union. There's more. Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi resigned after voters rejected his proposed constitutional changes in a referendum

Sunday. That means political uncertainty about who will be the next prime minister, just as the government faces troubles with the country's banks. The third largest, Monte dei Paschi di Siena, is struggling under the weight of bad loans and may need a government-funded rescue soon.

So far, markets have taken Renzi's downfall in stride. That hasn't eliminated fears, however, that Italy may again become a source of trouble for the eurozone. ECB bond purchases are aimed at raising inflation by adding to the supply of money in the financial system in hopes it will be used for loans and increase business activity.

But the purchases also have the side effect of tranquilizing bond markets because participants know there is a big buyer that can't run out of money due to its power as the legal issuer of the euro currency to print more cash if needed. That keeps bond prices up and holds down interest yields, which move opposite to prices. Bond market turbulence, in the form of rising borrowing costs for indebted governments like Italy seeking to roll over large debt burdens, raised fears in 2011 that the eurozone might break up. — AP

THYSSENKRUPP HIT BY HACKERS EYEING INDUSTRIAL SECRETS

BERLIN: German heavy industry giant ThyssenKrupp said yesterday it fell victim to a hacking attack in which the perpetrators sought to steal company secrets. Hackers believed to be from Southeast Asia were trying to obtain "technological know-how and research results" from the steel conglomerate, said a company spokesman, confirming a report in the *Wirtschaftswoche* weekly.

"The attack is over and had been repelled," he added. The "massive cyber-attack" had targeted divisions dealing with orders planning of industrial plants and steel works in Europe.

Highly protected parts of the company such as ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems or the IT control systems of the

group's blast furnaces and power plants were not affected. ThyssenKrupp Marine builds warships including submarines for the German and Israeli navies. The cyber-attack was uncovered by the company's IT security office, which monitored and analyzed the hacking while it was ongoing, said the group. The company said it was unable to estimate if there had been any material losses arising from the attack, adding that only "data fragments" had been stolen. There was no sign of data manipulation or sabotage, it added. Germany has been the target of repeated cyberattacks in recent years. Internet services for a million households went down last month after Deutsche Telekom was hit by hackers. — AFP

STOCKS, EURO PUSH HIGHER AHEAD OF ECB STIMULUS PLAN

LONDON: World shares climbed to a three-month high yesterday as encouraging Chinese data and a record-high Wall Street kept traders upbeat before an expected extension of the European Central Bank's already generous stimulus program. Asia shares had risen to one-month highs after Wall Street rose to another record and European stocks made it four gains in a row, with the euro also near a month high on the prospect of ECB support. The bank might signal an eventual scaling down of the aid, but most economists expect it to extend its 80 billion euro-a-month bond buying until at least next September and add a few tweaks to keep it running smoothly.

"Post the US elections and Italian referendum, the market is overwhelmingly expecting unchanged monetary policy," said Aberdeen Asset Management Investment Manager Patrick O'Donnell. "The risk is we get a more hawkish interpretation of inflation dynamics ... and any whiff that they are not committed to the asset-purchase program will see the market react negatively." Bond markets drifted lower as traders retreated to the sidelines before the ECB meets. It will announce its decision at 1145 GMT and hold a news conference at 1230 GMT. Risk appetite got a boost earlier when China reported upbeat trade figures, with exports and imports both beating forecasts. Resource imports were strong, a major reason prices for bulk commodities have been rising. The resource-heavy and China-sensitive Australian market jumped 1.2 percent, as did MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan. A record peak for Samsung helped lift South Korea 2 percent and Tokyo's Nikkei gained 1.45 percent as it brushed off a disappointing downward revision to Japan's third-quarter growth. "The (China data) improvement reflects a strengthening in global demand, with recent business surveys suggesting that developed economies are on track to end the year on a strong note," said Capital Economics' Julian Evans-Pritchard.

Extension question

The bullish mood around the ECB outweighed news that Moody's had changed its outlook on Italy to negative, warning it may downgrade the credit rating if the country's deteriorating economic and debt trend was not reversed. The euro took the move with aplomb, edging up to \$1.0783 from an early trough of \$1.0750. European stock markets were up 0.3 to 0.7 percent and Italian bank shares hit their highest since June as Moody's cut was more than countered by reports Rome would step in to rescue troubled bank Monte dei Paschi. — Reuters

ARMENIA EYES ECONOMIC UPTICK ON BACK OF RUSSIA RECOVERY

YEREVAN: Armenia yesterday approved its 2017 budget that banks on an increase in much needed remittances from Russia as its major trade partner looks to edge out of recession. Russia's crisis sparked by low oil prices and Western sanctions over Ukraine has sent shock waves through its ex-Soviet neighbors which retain close economic ties to Moscow. Russia is expected to inch out of the longest recession of President Vladimir Putin's rule next year but growth is still likely to remain sluggish.

The tentative improvement "will lead to an increase in remittances from Russia, bigger trade turnover, and more Russian investments," Armenia's Finance Minister Vardan Aramyan said. "This allows us to expect a stronger growth in 2017 compared to this year," he added.

Officials predict the country's economy will grow 3.2 percent next year, up from just 1.9 percent expected in 2016. Opposition parties have criticised the budget for not addressing the needs of poor families as belt-tightening has hit the popularity of the authorities. Public discontent over widespread poverty forced President Serzh Sarkisian in September to replace his unpopular prime minister Hovik Abrahamian with technocrat Karen Karapetyan.

Karapetyan has admitted that the country's economy was "in an extremely grave condition" and promised structural reforms. A landlocked country of three million, Armenia is economically isolated because its borders with two neighbors Turkey and Azerbaijan have long been closed owing to political disputes. — AFP



French Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy minister Segolene Royal holds a press point during the inauguration of the new Mecafi plant yesterday at Chatellerault, western France. — AFP

TRUMP WIN HAS NOT ALTERED US ECONOMIC OUTLOOK MUCH

ECONOMISTS EXPECT THREE RATE RISES BY 2017-END

NEW YORK: Donald Trump's shock White House win has not altered US economic forecasts much, with economists in a Reuters poll expecting three rate rises by the end of next year based on little follow-through on most of the soon-to-be president's protectionist campaign promises.

The outlook for growth and inflation in a Reuters poll also remains muted despite a Wall Street surge, underscoring a wide gap between how the economy is expected to perform by analysts and what ebullient financial markets are currently pricing in. The dollar and 10-year Treasury yields have surged in the month since Trump's victory, on trader expectations of an inflationary boost from planned tax cuts and infrastructure spending, especially with the economy close to full employment.

"The (Federal Reserve) is within striking distance of its inflation and full employment mandate," said Dan Silver, economist at JPMorgan, who expects an imminent hike followed by two more in 2017, adding: "The risks of a faster normalization of policy, however, have increased."

"If the US administration enacts a substantial fiscal stimulus while avoiding the more protectionist measures that sometimes have been discussed, the increase in growth and inflation might push the Fed to consider more than two hikes in 2017."

Several Fed officials have said recently a more expansive fiscal policy would reinforce the case for quicker rate hikes, cautioning that the Trump administration's economic plans should not be cast as if the economy is in crisis.

The Reuters poll this week of over 120 economists, including all the 23 primary dealers—large banks that do business directly with the Fed—showed they unanimously expect the Fed to raise rates to 0.50-0.75 percent at its Dec 13-14 meeting. Fed funds futures are currently pricing in a 95 percent probability of a move next week, converging with the consensus in Reuters polls of a December hike that has held for half a year.

A follow-up increase is forecast for the second quarter of 2017, and then again in the final three months of the year, taking the Fed funds rate to a range of 1.00-1.25 percent, similar to Fed rate setters' forecasts.

This steady view on rates comes despite a 2 percent rally in the dollar since the election to a near 14-year high, which has tightened financial conditions along with a 50 basis point rise in 10-year Treasury yields. A little over a third of economists said there would be a significant or very significant risk to growth from a strong dollar next year.

Little more than threats?

For most of his campaign, Trump vowed to recast US trade and immigration policy along protectionist lines by imposing steep tariffs on Chinese imports, moving manufacturing jobs back to the country, while also promising hefty tax cuts.

But analysts aren't buying that he will actually put up significant barriers to trade. About two-thirds of the respondents who answered an extra question said it is unlikely Trump would follow through on most of the protectionist

policies he spoke of during the campaign, which may help explain why equity market analysts in a separate Reuters poll this week are so optimistic.

"Our baseline now assumes President-elect Donald Trump delivers a fiscal boost, but it does not come without a good dose of uncertainty surrounding his trade policies," wrote Ellen Zentner of Morgan Stanley in a recent note. "We are assuming that trade protectionism goes little further than threats, but it is enough to dampen business investment and tighten financial conditions, providing a prolonged current of uncertainty in 2017."

The expected burst of government spending has, however, not brightened prospects for growth, which is likely to meander between an annualized pace of 2.1 to 2.3 percent in each quarter next year, after notching 2.2 percent in the current quarter. Analysts such as those at FT Advisors, for example, who have historically held some of the most bullish views, expect growth to peak at only 3.0 percent in the second quarter.

The highest forecast across the poll horizon was 3.8 percent, well short of the peak hit in the current cycle post the financial crisis of 5.6 percent in Oct-Dec 2009. Jim O'Sullivan of High Frequency Economics, the most accurate US forecaster in Reuters polls last year, predicts the best pace of growth over the next year to be lower, at just 2.7 percent. The Fed's preferred gauge of inflation, the Core PCE Price Index, is also expected to lag the central bank's 2 percent target through all of next year, averaging 1.8 percent in 2017, down from 1.9 percent in last month's poll. — Reuters



WASHINGTON DC: Nicklas Backstrom #19 of the Washington Capitals scores the game winning goal against the Boston Bruins in overtime to give the Capitals a 4-3 win at Verizon Center. — AFP

CAPITALS LOSE 3-GOAL LEAD, RECOVER TO BEAT BRUINS

WASHINGTON: Nicklas Backstrom scored 1:36 into overtime, helping the Washington Capitals beat the Boston Bruins 4-3 after blowing a three-goal lead Wednesday. Justin Williams scored twice and Daniel Winnik also had a goal to put Washington ahead 3-0 about six minutes into the second period. After Winnik's tally, Washington went over 26 minutes without a shot on goal. Boston dominated the final five minutes of the second period, when Dominic Moore and David Pastrnak beat goaltender Braden Holtby. Colin Miller's power-play

score 8:19 into third tied it at 3.

Boston arrived in Washington 4-0-1 over its last five games with three wins in a row, including a 4-3 overtime triumph against Florida on Monday night. Boston outshot Washington 34-20. The Capitals have won two straight following a three-game skid.

DUCKS 6, HURRICANES 5, SO

Corey Perry and Nick Ritchie scored late in the third period to tie it and rookie Ondrej Kase got the deciding goal in a shootout, lifting Anaheim over Carolina.

After Ritchie deflected in Cam Fowler's shot with 3:59 left in the third, Perry got his fifth goal of the season with 2:28 remaining to tie it at 5. Kase slickly deked to his backhand before lifting his shootout attempt over Cam Ward. It was the first non-regulation win for the Ducks this season. Stefan Noesen got his first NHL goal, and Andrew Coglian and Ryan Kesler also scored for Anaheim. John Gibson made 29 saves. Teuvo Teravainen scored twice for the Hurricanes, and Jay McClement, Sebastian Aho and Brett Pesce also had goals. Ward made 33 saves while Carolina matched a season high with five goals.

SENATORS 4, SHARKS 2

Chris Kelly scored with 1:06 remaining and Jean-Gabriel Pageau added an empty-net goal, giving Ottawa a victory over San Jose. Mark Stone and Erik Karlsson also scored for the Senators, who beat the Sharks for a fifth straight time. They've won three straight in San Jose for the first time ever. Logan Couture and Brent Burns scored for the Sharks, who had a three-game winning streak snapped. Mike Condon stopped 35 of 37 shots for the Sens. The Sharks outshot Ottawa 18-4 in the third period, and Martin Jones allowed three goals on 16 shots overall.

WILD 3, MAPLE LEAFS 2

Eric Staal scored yet another goal against Toronto, lifting Minnesota to victory. Staal has 47 points in 43 career games against Toronto, and three of his six goals this season have come against the Leafs. Jason Zucker and Chris Stewart also scored for the Wild, who wrapped a five-game trip 2-1-2. Ben Smith and Tyler Bozak had goals for the Maple Leafs, who dropped to 8-4-0 at Air Canada Centre. Devan Dubnyk made 35 saves for Minnesota and Frederik Andersen stopped 17 shots for Toronto. — AP

STARS CONFIRMED FOR AUSSIE OPEN

MELBOURNE: Every player in the world's top 99 bar pregnant Victoria Azarenka has confirmed for the Australian Open, including Roger Federer and Serena Williams as they return from injury, organizers said yesterday. The all-star field for the opening Grand Slam of 2017 at Melbourne Park will see Andy Murray and Angelique Kerber start as top seeds in a sign of the changing of the guard in world tennis.

It will also be notable for six-time tournament champion Williams, who is attempting to claim her 23rd major singles title to surpass Steffi Graf and set a new record for the Open Era. On the men's side, world number two Novak Djokovic will be aiming to hoist the trophy for a record seventh time. "We have an exceptionally strong field for Australian Open 2017, and it's exciting to welcome two new world number ones, and two new top seeds in Angie (Kerber) and Andy (Murray)," said tournament director Craig Tiley.

American powerhouse Williams has been out of action since September due to a shoulder injury that hindered her throughout the year. She has signed on for the Auckland Classic in early January, along with sister Venus, as a warm-up for the Australian Open later that month. Fellow former world number one Federer has also been sidelined for knee rehabilitation after undergoing the first operation of his career on a torn meniscus in February.

He is set to play the Hopman Cup in Perth ahead of the Australian Open and renew his rivalry in Melbourne with Rafael Nadal, who is also working to regain full fitness and is set to kick-off his year at the Brisbane International. "We have been in regular contact with Roger and Rafa and both are ready and excited for the Aussie summer, with Roger heading to Perth and Rafa to Brisbane for the first time," said Tiley. — AFP

COWBOYS PLAN TO KEEP ON DRIVING

FRISCO: Rookie sensations Dak Prescott and Ezekiel Elliott made the playoffs with four games to spare in Dallas. The Cowboys and their young stars could clinch everything else - topped by home-field advantage throughout the playoffs - with three games remaining if they beat the New York Giants on Sunday night and get some help. Coasting isn't part of the plan for the NFL's best first-year quarterback and the league's leading rusher.

"That's never been our mindset is to coast at any point," Prescott said Wednesday. "We get up in games, it's not, 'Let's coast this game out and finish this win.' It's, 'Keep the pedal on the metal and get things done.'" Dallas (11-1) has a shot at a 12-game winning streak, the longest in franchise history, against the only team to beat the Cowboys - the Giants (8-4) in the opener. A win will wrap up Dallas' second NFC East title in three years, and the Cowboys can clinch a first-round bye with either a Detroit loss or tie or a Seattle loss.

If both those things happen with the Lions and Seahawks, a Dallas win would mean the Cowboys don't play another meaningful game until the divisional round of the playoffs in five weeks. That's a lot of time for things to grow stagnant. "We don't know how to coast," linebacker Justin Durant said. "Check out our practices. You'll see that it's no coasting involved. We're always pushing each other at practice, trying to get the best out of each other. So I'm not worried about that at all."

TEAM MENTALITY

Durant was with the Cowboys two years ago when they had little chance to change their playoff positioning in the finale at Washington. Coach Jason Garrett chose to play quarterback Tony Romo and most of the regulars on the way to a four-game winning streak to end the regular season. The Cowboys beat Detroit in a wild-card game at home before falling to Green Bay in the divisional round on the road.

"I think it's just the mentality that we have as a team and what coach preaches," Durant said. "And that's, you get out of it what you put into it. We have to work in order to get good results. That's what we come in here every day and do." This time, the question figures to come up much earlier. But Garrett's answer isn't likely to change much. "Yeah, we're just focused on Wednesday," he said. "Locked in on our meetings this morning. And now we're getting ready for practice. That's the world we live in."

There will be an interesting twist if the Cowboys have the luxury of games they don't have to win. Romo is backing up Prescott after the rookie's sensational run put the 10-year starter on the bench when he was ready to return from a preseason back injury. As soon as the Cowboys clinch everything, Garrett will face a new round of Romo questions over whether the Cowboys should protect Prescott by playing the franchise leader in yards passing and touchdowns.

But that issue can wait. For now, the question is whether the Cowboys can keep their edge. "A mentality is something you've built up to get to this point," Elliott said. "It's something that is your character. If you're the type of guy who coasts, you're the type of guy who coasts. But we don't have those type of guys in this locker room. I don't have any worries about that." The Cowboys are likely to be tested, though. — AP

RESURGENT CAVS CRUSH KNICKS 126-94

NEW YORK: Kyrie Irving's Madison Square Garden mojo continued Wednesday as he scored 28 points in the Cleveland Cavaliers' 126-94 NBA rout of the New York Knicks. Irving's scoring average of 28.4 points in six games at the iconic Manhattan venue is his highest scoring average among all NBA arenas. Cavs superstar LeBron James added 25 points and Kevin Love contributed 21 points as the reigning NBA champions followed up their 116-112 win over the Raptors in Toronto with a second road triumph.

The victories confirmed that the Cavaliers have put a three-game skid behind them. It was the sixth time this season and the 16th time since the 2014-15 season that Irving, James and Love all scored at least 20 points in a game. Cleveland, who improved to 15-5, poured in 22 three-pointers, and center Tristan Thompson grabbed 20 rebounds for the second time in his career. The Cavaliers have won six straight at Madison Square Garden and eight in a row overall against the Knicks.

With their latest win, they cooled off the hottest team in the Eastern Conference. The Knicks had won nine of their previous 12 games, but showed their fatigue a night after a 114-103 victory over the Heat in Miami. With point guard Derrick Rose still sidelined after back spasms forced him out against the Heat, Brandon Jennings filled in and scored 16 points for the Knicks. Courtney Lee added 15 but veteran star Carmelo Anthony was limited to eight points in 23 min-



NEW YORK: Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James (23) drives to the basket with New York Knicks forward Carmelo Anthony (7) defending in the first quarter of an NBA basketball game at Madison Square Garden. — AP

NBA results/standings

Golden State 115, LA Clippers 98; Indiana 109, Phoenix 94; Sacramento 120, Dallas 89; Milwaukee 115, Portland 107; Houston 134, LA Lakers 95; Cleveland 126, NY Knicks 94; Brooklyn 116, Denver 111; Atlanta 103, Miami 95; Charlotte 87, Detroit 77; Boston 117, Orlando 87.

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Toronto	14	7	.667	-
Boston	13	9	.591	1.5
NY Knicks	12	10	.545	2.5
Brooklyn	6	15	.286	8
Philadelphia	4	18	.182	10.5

Central Division

Cleveland	15	5	.750	-
Milwaukee	11	9	.550	4
Chicago	11	10	.524	4.5
Detroit	12	12	.500	5
Indiana	11	11	.500	5

Southeast Division

Charlotte	13	9	.591	-
Atlanta	11	12	.478	2.5
Orlando	10	13	.435	3.5
Washington	7	13	.350	5
Miami	7	15	.318	6

Western Conference

Northwest Division

Oklahoma City	14	8	.636	-
Utah	14	9	.609	0.5
Portland	12	11	.522	2.5
Denver	8	14	.364	6
Minnesota	6	15	.286	7.5

Pacific Division

Golden State	19	3	.864	-
LA Clippers	16	7	.696	3.5
LA Lakers	10	14	.417	10
Sacramento	8	13	.381	10.5
Phoenix	6	16	.273	13

Southwest Division

San Antonio	18	4	.818	-
Houston	15	7	.682	3
Memphis	15	8	.652	3.5
New Orleans	7	15	.318	11
Dallas	4	17	.190	13.5

utes on the floor. James's 19 first-half points, which helped the Cavs to a 63-48 halftime lead, were his most in a half this season.

WARRIORS 115, CLIPPERS 98

Klay Thompson scored 24 points, Draymond Green added 22 points and the Warriors routed the Clippers for their seventh straight win over Los Angeles. Stephen Curry had 19 points for Golden State, and Kevin Durant, who came in averaging a team-best 27 points, was held to 16 on 5-of-17 shooting. Curry failed to make a 3-pointer for just the second time this season, going 0 of 8. The Warriors were 7 of 30 from long range. Jamal Crawford scored 21 points for the Clippers, who have lost five of seven. Four of their seven overall losses have come at home.

BUCKS 115, TRAIL BLAZERS 107

Giannis Antetokounmpo had his second triple-double of the season to lead Milwaukee past Portland. Antetokounmpo had 15 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists for his seventh career triple-double - second-most in franchise history - and is the only NBA player averaging at least 20 points, eight rebounds, five assists, two blocks and two steals this season. Jabari Parker added 27 points for Milwaukee. Damian Lillard had 30 points, seven rebounds and six assists for Portland.

ROCKETS 134, LAKERS 95

Eric Gordon made a career-high eight 3-pointers and scored 26 points to help Houston rout Los Angeles. James Harden added 25 points in three quarters for the Rockets. They scored a season high and extended their winning streak to a season-best four games. Lou Williams led the Lakers with 24 points. They have lost four in a row, their longest skid of the season.

HAWKS 103, HEAT 95

Dwight Howard had 23 points and 17 rebounds, Paul Millsap added 21 points and Atlanta beat Miami to snap a seven-game losing streak. The Hawks had lost 10 of 11 and had gone 14 days without a victory. Tyler Johnson scored a career-high 27 points for Miami, and Goran Dragic added 21.

The Heat have lost three straight.

HORNETS 87, PISTONS 77

Kemba Walker scored 14 of his 25 points in the fourth quarter, and Nic Batum had 14 points and 14 rebounds for Charlotte. The Hornets won for the third time in four games despite being held to 38 points in the first half on 27 percent shooting. Marvin Williams returned to Charlotte's starting lineup after missing the last six games with a hyperextended knee. He had 12 points and five rebounds. Andre Drummond had 26 points and 20 rebounds for the Pistons.

NETS 116, NUGGETS 111

Brook Lopez scored 24 points, Sean Kilpatrick had 22 and Brooklyn held off Denver. Brooklyn led by as many as 29 points midway through the third quarter, but Denver closed to 103-99 on Kenneth Faried's layup with 4:31 left. Bojan Bogdanovic and Kilpatrick each made two foul shots in the final 13 seconds to help secure the win for the Nets. Wilson Chandler led the Nuggets with 27 points and 15 rebounds.

CELTICS 117, MAGIC 87

Avery Bradley scored 23 points to help Boston rout Orlando. Terry Rozier added 16 points, Jae Crowder had 15 points and 10 rebounds, and Amir Johnson, Jaylen Brown and Marcus Smart each had 13 points. D.J. Augustin scored 15 points for Orlando.

PACERS 109, SUNS 94

Paul George had 25 points and 13 rebounds and Indiana pulled away to beat Phoenix. Myles Turner added 20 points, and Jeff Teague had 19 points and 11 assists. Indiana had a 9-0 run midway through the fourth quarter to open a 97-87 lead. Eric Bledsoe led Phoenix with 15 points. The Suns shot 40 percent from the field and made only 9 of 33 3-pointers. They have lost five of six.

KINGS 120, MAVERICKS 89

DeMarcus Cousins had 24 points and 14 rebounds, and Sacramento snapped a three-game losing streak with a victory over last-place Dallas. Rudy Gay added 19 for the Kings. Deron Williams led Dallas with 20 points. — AP



MUMBAI: England's batsman Keaton Jennings, right, raises his bat and helmet after scoring century as his teammate Moeen Ali looks on, on the first day of the fourth cricket test match between India and England. — AP

ASHWIN SPOILS JENNINGS DEBUT TON WITH THREE-WICKET BURST

MUMBAI: Ravichandran Ashwin poured cold water on Keaton Jennings' debut for England on Thursday, taking 3 wickets for 9 runs after tea to reduce the tourists to 288-5 on day one of the fourth test in Mumbai. At stumps, Ben Stokes was unbeaten on 25 runs, while Jos Buttler was batting on 18 not out, with Ashwin finishing the day with 4-75.

His persistent spin allowed India to claw its way back after being forced onto the back foot by a maiden test hundred from debutant opener Keaton Jennings. The South Africa-born Jennings scored 112 runs, facing 219 balls, including 13 fours. He put on 99 runs with skipper Alastair Cook (46) for the opening wicket and another 94 runs for the third wicket with Moeen Ali. These two partnerships defined England's innings before a late collapse. Before he had even scored, Jennings was dropped at gully off Umesh Yadav (0-36) in the fourth over, with Karun Nair failing to hold on to a tough chance to his left. He also survived an lbw appeal off Bhuvneshwar Kumar (0-38), with the DRS review going in the batsman's favor.

"It was a dream come true. It felt surreal that the hundred came on debut," said the Durham opener, who was top scorer in the English county championship last season. "I rode my luck a little bit, when the catch was dropped. Thankfully it went out of the fielder's hand. Then again the umpire's call went

in my favor. Sometimes you get some luck and you ride it," said Jennings, who played for South Africa Under 19s and is the son of former South Africa coach Ray Jennings.

LATE AGGRESSION

England scored quickly in the morning and post-tea sessions. Cook was out stumped - only the fourth time in his test career - off Ravindra Jadeja (1-60) just before lunch. After lunch, England lost Joe Root (21) who was caught at slip off Ashwin. Jennings then reached his maiden hundred off 186 balls, with a reverse sweep off Jayant Yadav (0-78) just before teatime. "He has a tendency to nick the ball to slips," said Ashwin about Root's dismissal. "I thought that dismissal out in my head."

"The last time we played England here, pitch eased out on days two and three. I am seeing similar signs here again. We would have been happier with one more wicket tonight. Tomorrow we will look to get couple quick wickets and stall their innings," he added. Post tea, Ali was aggressive on the bowling and cut loose to reach his ninth test half-century off 102 balls. In all, he hit four fours and a six as well. But then, in the 71st over, he was out to an impulsive sweep shot off Ashwin, and was caught at midwicket.

Ashwin inflicted a double blow on England as Jennings was caught at gully

two balls later, with Cheteshwar Pujara taking a sharp low catch to dismiss the debutant centurion. The off-spinner was near unplayable in his eight-over spell early in the last session. Stokes survived somehow, but Jonny Bairstow (14) was caught sweeping to square leg as he tried to break the shackles.

"It started turning a bit more after lunch. Then it started turning quite nicely in the last session. It was disappointing losing back-to-back wickets. It makes our first innings more critical. Hopefully these two batsmen can go out tomorrow, bat for the next two sessions, and make a really strong position for us. Then we can think of putting India under pressure," said Jennings. England collapsed from 230-2 to 249-5. Stokes and Buttler then added 39 runs for the sixth wicket to stem the flow of wickets.

An odd incident happened during the post lunch session, as a throw from the outfield hit umpire Paul Reffel on the head. He was standing at square leg at that time, and went off the field. Marais Erasmus came on as a substitute, while C Shamsuddin took on tv umpiring duties. Reffel, a former Australia pace bowler, later underwent a scan which didn't reveal anything worrisome. The former Australian cricketer then spent the day resting and is expected to take the field on day two. — AP

PAK HAS POOR 1ST DAY ON AUST TOUR

CAIRNS: Pakistan's cricket tour of Australia got off to a shaky start yesterday when the visitors were all out for 208 on the first day of a three-day tour match against a Cricket Australia XI. Playing with a near full-strength lineup and with a pink ball in the day-night match in preparation for the first test on Dec. 15 in Brisbane - also a day-night encounter - Pakistan lost six wickets in the final session under lights. Cricket Australia XI bowler Cameron Valente claimed four wickets, including three of Pakistan's top six.

After winning the toss and electing to bat, the visitors fell to 50-3 midway through the opening session, and wickets went down steadily from there. Only veteran Younis Khan offered sustained resistance, facing 138 balls before he inside-edged a ball from Ryan Lees that swung back slightly under lights to be caught behind for 54. He was the only Pakistan batsman to reach 50.

Earlier yesterday, Pakistan officials said uncapped 17-year-old left-arm spinner Mohammad Asghar would join the team as a backup for injured legspinner Yasir Shah. Shah is doubtful for the first test following a back injury which also ruled him out of the Cairns match. Asghar has taken 68 wickets in 17 first-class matches since making his debut in 2014.

Shah had been pivotal to Pakistan's success in test matches for the last two years, taking 116 wickets in only 20 tests. Pakistan has never won a test series in Australia, winning just four of 32 test matches since its first visit in 1964. Australia has won just one of its past five tests. The home side is coming off consecutive one-day international wins over New Zealand to clinch that three-match series ahead of the final match Friday in Melbourne. — AP

B'DESH SUFFER INJURY BLOW FOR NZ TOUR

DHAKA: Bangladesh's injury-plagued squad suffered a fresh blow ahead of their forthcoming New Zealand tour after fast bowler Shafiqul Islam was ruled out with a hamstring injury, an official said yesterday. "Shafiqul hurt his left hamstring during a recent Bangladesh Premier League match, which would sideline him for at least three weeks," said chief selector Minhajul Abedin.

Kamrul Islam was included in the team as a replacement for the tour, where Bangladesh are due to play three one-day internationals, three Twenty20 internationals and two Tests from December 26 to January 24. Shafiqul's injury came as a blow considering his form in the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), the Twenty-20 tournament, where he had taken 18 wickets in 13 matches.

Earlier, another in-form pacer Mohammad Shahid was ruled out of the tour with a knee injury and was replaced by Rubel Hossain. There are also question marks over star pace bowler Mustafizur Rahman for the early part of the tour as he is still recovering from a shoulder surgery he suffered in England in August. Mustafizur has been included in the 22-member squad, with the selectors hoping he will regain full fitness at some stage of the tour.

Bangladesh, who will hold a conditioning camp in Sydney before the tour, will leave home in two phases. The first group of players will leave for Sydney later yesterday while the second group, consisting mainly of squad members who will be involved in Friday's BPL final, will leave Dhaka on December 10. — AFP

ASIA BACKS 48-TEAM WORLD CUP: FIFA

SINGAPORE: FIFA chief Gianni Infantino yesterday said Asian countries backed his plan to expand the World Cup to 48 teams—and added that up to three countries should be allowed to co-host the tournament. Infantino, speaking after a three-day FIFA summit in Singapore, said Asian football associations “unanimously” supported a larger World Cup, with a “big majority” favoring 48 teams.

Infantino’s proposal for a 48-team World Cup in 2026, featuring 16 groups of three, will be submitted to the FIFA Council next month. A 40-team World Cup is also on the table. “They are very supportive on expanding it. Everyone, unanimously,” Infantino told reporters. “All of them were in favor of an increase and a big, big, big majority were in favor of the 48 teams with the 16 groups of three,” he added.

The FIFA Council will vote in Zurich on January 9–10 whether to maintain the current World Cup format

of 32 teams, or extend it to 40 or 48. Under the 16-group format, every qualified team would play at least two games and the top two in each group would then go through to the last 32. “I like 40 (and) I like 48 with the play-offs because it brings excitement before the group stage,” Infantino said. “But the 16 groups of three means that every game is important. There is no dead rubber. Every game is meaningful, is important.” Asia currently has four designated World Cup berths, with a fifth available via a play-off. The Asian confederation is the world’s second biggest with 46 full members.

‘Upside for football’

Infantino also said he supported allowing up to three countries to co-host the World Cup, instead of expecting one bidder to provide a dozen stadiums. Japan and South Korea co-hosted the tournament in

2002 but a World Cup spread across three countries would be unprecedented. “If a country does need to have 12 stadiums of more than 50,000 spectators but only (has) four, then why shouldn’t we allow three countries to join forces, each country four stadiums and have 12 stadiums?” Infantino said. “That would then fit more in football development strategy... and more countries could participate in the dream of hosting at least one part of the World Cup, so I’m very open to it.”

He added that club football would not be affected by an expanded World Cup, and stressed that countries around the globe would reap the benefits of being able to participate. “There’s no downside for the clubs because the calendar is not impacted,” he said. “But there’s an upside for football because it allows eight or 16 more teams and more countries and more regions in the world to participate in the competition, which is the World Cup.” —AFP

BARCELONA PLEDGES TO REVAMP CHAPECOENSE

MADRID: Spanish giants Barcelona said yesterday they had pledged to aid the reconstruction of Brazilian side Chapecoense, decimated by an air crash last month in Colombia. The Catalan club said they had invited Chapecoense to participate in the pre-season Joan Gamper tournament next August at the Nou Camp.

“Barcelona has agreed to invite the Brazilian team Chapecoense, victim of a tragic air accident as they headed for the final of the Copa Sudamericana, to the next edition of the Joan Gamper trophy,” a club statement read. Barca said they wanted to pay homage to the 71 people who were killed in the November 28 crash — many of them players and officials of the Brazilian club—and their loved ones.

“With the invitation to Chapecoense to the 2017 Joan Gamper trophy FC Barcelona wishes to help with the institutional and sporting reconstruction of the club,” the Catalan club said. It added it hoped the initiative would help the Brazilians “regain the level of competition it previously had.” Barca said the Nou Camp date would constitute a “great homage from the world of football” in memory of the victims of the tragedy which shook the sporting world and revived memories of the 1958 Munich air disaster, in which eight Manchester United players died.

Current Manchester United goalkeeper, Spaniard David de Gea, tweeted after the accident in Medellin that he was deeply affected, not least as he previously played alongside Cleber Santana, one of the victims, at Atletico Madrid. Barca’s invitation is designed to be one of a series of initiatives to help Chapecoense, from the southern city of Chapeco, get back on their feet.

The previously unheralded side had qualified for the Copa Sudamericana, the equivalent of the Europa League, for the first time and had been due to face Colombian giants Atletico Nacional in the first leg. South American football confederation CONMEBOL agreed earlier this week to award the trophy to the Brazilian club. Their squad was all but wiped out when their Bolivian airline Lamia plane went down in a mountainous region. Just three players, two crew members and a journalist survived the crash. Some Brazilian sides have said they will loan players to the club for the coming season to help them fulfill their fixtures. —AFP



BUENOS AIRES: In this file photo taken on April 24, 2016 shows supporters of Boca Juniors cheer their team during the Argentina First Division football match against River Plate at La Bombonera stadium. —AFP

RIVER-BOCA CLASH, THE MOTHER OF ALL DERBIES

BUENOS AIRES: It is ranked as the top match to see before you die: The ferocious tie between Boca Juniors and River Plate, who meet on Sunday in the Argentine league. In a country where football is power, and even a matter of life and death, the Buenos Aires derby is the ultimate battle. British football magazine Four Four Two this year ranked it as the best “clasico” in the world, above Barcelona-Real Madrid. It is the mother of all derbies—and the rival club’s mothers are among the first sacred entities to be profaned once the fans start chanting.

“When they’re not winning, the stands are empty,” sing the Boca faithful of their rivals, dubbed the “Millionaires.” “Come on you millionaires and win, to make the dung-shovelers cry,” retort the River crowd, using their rivals’ historical nickname. “This country lives and breathes football. The passion for it is astonishing and charming,” said Ariel Scher, a specialist in sport and politics at the Deporthea sports journalism school. “It is in the derbies that the sense of identifying with the team is strongest.”

AWAY FANS BANNED

Sunday’s match sees former Manchester City striker Carlos Tevez, 32, lead his boyhood club Boca away against River and their veteran midfielder Andres D’Alessandro, 35. “The clasico is the most beautiful experience for a player,” Tevez has said. “It is one of the few matches where I find it difficult to switch my frame of mind from being a fan to being a player.” The two teams’ former stars include Diego Maradona of Boca and the late Alfredo Di Stefano who played for River Plate and later Real Madrid. The 62,500 seats in River’s Monumental stadium in the north of the city will be a sea of red and white, with not a yellow and blue Boca short in sight. Away supporters have been banned from most Argentine league matches since 2013, when a Lanus fan was killed at a game against Estudiantes. So Boca fans will have to watch it on television—among them Argentina’s current president, the millionaire businessman Mauricio Macri, who was president of Boca Juniors from 1995 to 2007.

‘CHICKENS’ VS. ‘DUNG-SHOVELERS’

River, generally seen as playing a more attractive game, have more Argentina league titles — 35 to Boca’s 25. But Boca, considered the more gutsy side, have won more derbies against River — 268 to their rivals’ 252. Both clubs were born over a century ago in the Italian immigrant district of Boca, in the south of the capital near a tributary of the Rio de la Plata. River Plate later moved away north to a new stadium in the upmarket Nunez neighborhood, where they opened the Monumental stadium in 1938. Boca stayed in the old neighborhood at their stadium, known as “la Bombonera,” or “the candy box.” Nowadays neither team is particularly richer than the other, but the stereotype persists, notably in their nicknames.

A flood in the working class Boca district was thought to have given the local fans their own moniker: bosteros, or “dung-shovelers.” River Plate have been dubbed the “millionaires” ever since they got rich and signed an expensive player in the 1930s. —AFP



TURIN: Juventus' forward Gonzalo Higuain from Argentina celebrates after scoring during the UEFA Champions League football match Juventus Vs GNK Dinamo Zagreb on December 7, 2016 at the 'Juventus Stadium'. —AFP

ALLEGRI EASES PRESSURE ON HIGUAIN AS DROUGHT ENDS

TURIN: Juventus don't care who scores, as long as they win, coach Massimiliano Allegri insisted after Gonzalo Higuain ended his five-week goal drought to help secure a precious 2-0 Champions League win over Dinamo Zagreb. Juventus, beaten finalists in 2015, will head into the draw for the last 16 seeded as Group H winners after finishing three points ahead of Sevilla.

A slice of luck could be required if they are to avoid meeting the likes of Real Madrid, Bayern Munich or any other competition favourite in February. And Allegri will be hoping Higuain, who had not scored since November 2, has finally found the scoring boots that helped him to a Serie A record of 36 goals for Napoli last season. Until then, the Juventus coach called for less scrutiny on the under-pressure Argentine: "We needed to score goals tonight... sometimes it happens that a striker doesn't score for a few games.

"Maybe he was just too used to scoring goals before, but at Juventus it's important we win, not who scores." It was probably the best news Higuain has heard in a while. After his record move to Juve last summer in a bid to "win titles and trophies", Higuain has endured a

testing first five months in Turin. He had hit seven goals in Serie A before suffering an injury knock last month that has curtailed his bid to claim the league's 'Capocannoniere' award for the second successive season.

Higuain's form for Argentina also prompted fans to boo him at a recent World Cup qualifier and on his return to Italy the striker was forced to deny reports he had been given an armed escort by Juventus after receiving death threats. Despite making his full league return in a 3-1 win over Atalanta last weekend, Higuain failed to get his name on the scoresheet. His 52nd minute opener on Wednesday was his first goal since hitting a penalty in a 1-1 Champions League draw with Lyon on November 2.

Although happy at ending his famine, Higuain admitted being played in a slightly different position at Juventus has not helped. "All strikers want to score goals. You can't always score when you want, so I'm happy I did," Higuain told Mediaset Premium. "In the past months I've been playing a little outside of the zone that I'm used to playing in. "But we're on the right road and we have to continue. Now, we can rest a little and think about the derby."

Return of Dybala

Juventus make the short trip across town to league rivals Torino on Sunday looking to protect their four-point Serie A lead on Roma and AC Milan. Although a crucial fixture for both sets of fans, Allegri underlined how important it is for the Bianconeri when he rested goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon.

His replacement, Norbert Neto, had little to do as a young and relatively inexperienced Zagreb side spent most of the night defending. Coach Ivaylo Petev said: "Hats-off to Juventus, they're a very strong side. We conceded two goals but we have a very young side that doesn't have a lot of experience at this level."

Juve fans were also given a timely boost with the return of Argentine playmaker Paulo Dybala. Dybala has arguably been Juve's key attacking player for the last two seasons and made his return from a six-week injury lay-off when he replaced Miralem Pjanic for the last 11 minutes, and went on to have three shots on goal. While Allegri awaits the outcome of the last 16 draw, Dybala said he can't wait to get his teeth into the opposition. "I don't care who we get in the next round," said Dybala. "With the kind of players we have, we shouldn't be afraid of anyone." —AFP

ZIDANE KEEN TO AVOID JUVENTUS

MADRID: Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane is hoping to avoid a return to Juventus in the Champions League last 16 after the holders blew a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 against Borussia Dortmund and qualify second from Group F. A double from Karim Benzema had Real well on course to leapfrog the Germans into top spot, but Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang halved Dortmund's deficit before teeing up Marco Reus for the equaliser two minutes from time.

However, that late goal could well benefit Real as they now can't face the likes of Bayern Munich, Manchester City or Paris Saint-Germain in Monday's draw. Instead, one of Leicester City, Arsenal, Monaco, Juventus or Napoli will stand in Real's way come the new year.

"Juventus for two reasons," said Zidane, who joined Real from the Italian giants for a world record fee in 2001, when asked who he wants to avoid. "I am very proud of the players and how they played against a great team with good players. "We needed to be a bit more attentive in the final 10 minutes. "We have to forget about it and move on. Given what we had done (in the group) until now it was logical that they finished top and us second." A draw was enough, though, to extend Real's unbeaten run in all competitions since April to 34 games—matching a club record.

However, the Frenchman refused to take credit despite inspiring a huge turnaround in fortunes for the Spanish giants since taking his first senior managerial role in January. "You have to congratulate the players. They are the ones that are on the pitch, that have to fight and run," he added. "The fans too because they are always behind the team, they are always cheering. "And everyone around the club. The idea is to continue what we are doing but there is still a long way to go."

No calculation

Reus's late strike was a huge boost to Dortmund's chances of progression as they can now face PSG, Benfica, Man City, Sevilla or Porto in the last 16. And Dortmund boss Thomas Tuchel insisted the dramatic nature of the game showed there had been no pact to settle for a mutually beneficial draw. "We didn't do some tactical calculation," said Tuchel.

"We can have no influence in the draw, but against any opponents we will play to our limit to reach the next stage." Dortmund looked set to pay for their profligacy in front of goal as they missed a host of clear chances in between Benzema's two goals with American wonder kid Christian Pulisic and Gonzalo Castro especially culpable. However, Aubameyang was far more deadly as he slotted home his 18th goal in as many games this season before teeing up substitute Reus, who only missed out on starting due to a cold. "I wasn't feeling great the last few days, I wanted to start, but the risk was too high," said Reus. "Real had some big chances in the second half, but we hoped for a lucky punch and we got it. "Auba was world-class with his pass and I was happy to get on the end of it the goal was 99 percent him and one from me." —AFP



MADRID: Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo gestures during the Champions League, Group F, soccer match between Real Madrid and Borussia Dortmund at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium. —AP

POCHETTINO SEES SWAGGER RETURN AT TOTTENHAM

LONDON: Mauricio Pochettino insists Tottenham's 3-1 win over CSKA Moscow was more than an upbeat farewell to the Champions League because the stylish success showed his team have got their swagger back. Pochettino's side were already eliminated from the Champions League before their last Group E fixture on Wednesday, but they rounded off a frustrating campaign with a dominant display against the Russian champions. After a difficult period in which Tottenham suffered injuries to key players and lost their momentum as a result, Pochettino believes his men are back in the groove at a critical point of the season. "We struggled in the last month and a half. We had some problems, but now we have nearly all the squad fit and we recovered that feeling we lost," Pochettino said. "It's true it was a struggle to compete for a while. We crossed that period that was difficult for us. The team has full confidence and trust again. It's lucky that moment arrived in a very busy moment for us. Now we have an important period and we are arriving in good form."

Pochettino conceded it was frustrating to be the only English club knocked out of the Champions League in the group stage, but he took heart from Tottenham booking a place in the Europa League knockout stages by finishing third in their group. Dele Alli got their equalizer after Alan Dzagoev's opener and Harry Kane put Tottenham ahead before an own goal by goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev sealed just their second European win this term.

GOOD FEELING

Despite the potential for problems arising from the Europa League's grueling itinerary and far-flung destinations, Pochettino is adamant Tottenham will treat the competition seriously because the winners qualify for the Champions League. "The Europa League is not a consolation, it is an important competition. It is a trophy that is important in Europe," he said. "You can qualify for the Champions League if you win it. The Europa league is a very good competition and why not believe we can win it."

Pochettino was also relieved Tottenham got their first win at Wembley since February 2008, ending a run of six games without a victory at the stadium that has been their temporary European home and is likely to be their home for the whole of next season while White Hart Lane is redeveloped. "It's important to get a good feeling at Wembley. Now we need to look ahead. We have the opportunity to play more games here," he said. "Yes we are disappointed we didn't get through in the Champions League but we were in a similar situation at this stage last season and finished strongly. In the Premier League we fight to go to the top and we are in a good position. The gap is not too much."

CSKA's failure to wrestle the Europa League spot from Tottenham was a downbeat end to the seven-year reign of boss Leonid Slutsky, who announced earlier in the week that he would resign after Wednesday's match. Slutsky, who led CSKA to the Russian title last season, wasn't in a nostalgic mood and he said: "The only thing I can say is I feel disappointment. I can't talk about general things, just this game tonight. It was very hard. We had lots of missing players. I would say the result is fair against a very tough opponent." —AFP



BASEL: Basel's Taulant Xhaka, right, fights for the ball against Arsenal's Alexis Sanchez during their Champions League Group stage Group A soccer match between Switzerland's FC Basel 1893 and England's Arsenal FC in the St Jakob-Park stadium. —AP

ARSENAL WON'T LOSE OZIL, SANCHEZ EARLY: WENGER

LONDON: Arsenal lynchpins Alexis Sanchez and Mesut Ozil will not be allowed to leave the club before their contracts expire in 18 months' time, manager Arsene Wenger said yesterday. British media reports this week suggested Chilean forward Sanchez and German playmaker Ozil want new deals that will put them on a par with the Premier League's highest earners. But while Wenger cannot guarantee the pair will stay at Arsenal beyond the terms of their current contracts, he vowed neither player would be sold during the next year and a half.

"These players will stay here for at least 18 months. I cannot repeat always the same things," Wenger told his weekly press conference at Arsenal's London Colney training base. "I think at some stage you have to accept that negotiations are private and secret and we do not always have to come out every day to explain what we do in football negotiations. We are professional people. We work until the last day of our contracts with full commitment. These players

have 18 months on their contracts and, no matter what happens, they will stay for 18 months. Hopefully they'll stay for longer than that."

Sanchez, 27, and Ozil, 28, have been in sparkling form of late as Arsenal have climbed to second place in the league table and secured a place in the Champions League last 16 as group winners. In the past, Arsenal have cashed in on players unwilling to sign new deals, such as when they sold former captain Robin van Persie to Manchester United in 2012. But Wenger suggested he would sooner let Sanchez and Ozil leave for free in 2018 than sanction moves for them. He was, however, unable to offer fans any guarantees the duo will sign new contracts with the club.

'WHY GO TO CHINA?'

Asked what assurances he could give supporters, the Frenchman replied: "None. They have 18 months left on their contract and they are completely committed to do well as long as they are here. Beyond that, we'll try to extend

their contracts, but I cannot make that the subject in every press conference because it's a normal part of every renewal when you renegotiate. The less you talk about it, the better it is."

Wenger played down reports former Barcelona former star Sanchez could be tempted by a mega-money move to the Chinese Super League. "I believe it (that there has been interest). Yes, why not?" he said. "But why should you go to China when you're playing in England today? We live in a world where great players like Alexis and Ozil earn a lot of money and they have the privilege of choosing where they really want to play." Arsenal can go top of the table for 24 hours at least if they beat Stoke City by two goals or more at the Emirates Stadium tomorrow.

Right-back Hector Bellerin could feature after returning to training following an ankle injury. But Arsenal remain without Per Mertesacker (knee), Mathieu Debuchy (hamstring), Santi Cazorla (ankle) and Danny Welbeck (knee). —AFP

'ZERO TOLERANCE' FOR SEX ABUSE: INFANTINO

SINGAPORE: FIFA president Gianni Infantino yesterday vowed "zero tolerance" for child sex abuse in football following an escalating scandal involving coaches and former players in England. The world football chief said anyone found to have committed abuse should be banned from the sport "without question" and face criminal charges.

"There are few things in life, not just football life, worse than child (sex) abuse, so it has to be taken seriously," he told reporters after a three-day FIFA summit in Singapore. "There must be zero tolerance from a football perspective, but also a criminal perspective as well," Infantino added. "We probably have to look into that with more care and

more attention in order to prevent any potential child abuse in the future," he said.

Asked if he was worried the scandal would grow into a much bigger issue beyond just the English Football Association, Infantino said: "Certainly what we have to do is to have it taken very seriously, and that's what we're doing now... looking at it very, very seriously." Over the past three weeks, English football has been reeling from a series of allegations of sexual abuse of youth players at the hands of their coaches, mostly in the 1970s and 1980s.

About 20 former players have spoken out so far over allegations and the English FA has promised to investigate the claims.

According to reports, 55 clubs have been named to police and 18 different police forces across the country are investigating claims. The scandal blew up as former Crewe Alexandra youth scout Barry Bennell, a convicted pedophile, was charged with abusing players last week.

The FA chairman has said the scandal is the biggest crisis in the association that he can remember, according to media reports. English Premier League club Chelsea have apologised to former player Gary Johnson for abuse he suffered in the 1970s, while QPR have said they are taking allegations made against former employee Chris Gieler "very seriously", the reports said. —AFP

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2016

Friday Times

Sports

www.kuwaittimes.net

Ashwin spoils Jennings debut ton on first day

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MUMBAI: England's Keaton Jennings plays a shot on the first day of the fourth Test cricket match between India and England at the Wankhede stadium in Mumbai yesterday —AFP