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LINKED BY DEATH: DEBBIE AND DAUGHTER CARRIE



This file photo taken on January 24, 2015 shows Debbie Reynolds (left), recipient of the Screen Actors Guild Life Achievement Award, and her daughter Carrie Fisher posing in the press room during the 21st Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at The Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

DISREGARD FALSE SOCIAL MEDIA REPORTS: BADER AL-KHARAFI

Many false news stories have been appearing on different media channels, most prominently Facebook where Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi, Vice Chairman of Zain Group has been the subject.

Some websites are even using his name and organizations for fraudulent purposes, luring people into get rich quick schemes that are nothing more than a scam.

As a reply to which he has publically responded on his personal social media accounts with the following statement; "To my dearest friends, colleagues and associates. Unfortunately there have been many rumors and news stories in circulation involving myself, which I am sure will not cease anytime soon.

"Whether it is an attempt at fraud, a scam or a story with a political agenda, I trust that you all disregard anything you hear or see unless it has come from my offi-



cial media channels or it is a newspaper source, press release, my LinkedIn page Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi or my personal Instagram account @BaderKharafi."

LOS ANGELES: Debbie Reynolds embodied the sunshine of postwar America on the screen as she matched steps with Gene Kelly in "Singin' in the Rain." Carrie Fisher brought the sarcasm and cynicism of the Baby Boomers to her movies, books and stage shows, even when she was playing a princess in "Star Wars." The mother and daughter, separated by so many differences both personal and generational, are likely drawn closer in the public memory after their deaths on successive days.

Reynolds died on Wednesday at age 84, just as she and the rest of the world were starting to mourn her daughter Fisher, who died on Tuesday at 60, days after falling ill on a flight.

Even after a year of shocking and constant celebrity deaths, the one-two punch of Fisher and Reynolds brought a staggering finale to 2016. Reynolds' son Todd Fisher said his sister's death was "just too much" for his mother. "She said, 'I want to be with Carrie,'" Fisher told The Associated

Press by phone from Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, where Reynolds had just died after being rushed there earlier in the day. "And then she was gone."

No cause of death has been revealed for either woman. Both mother and daughter enjoyed the heights of show business success and endured the depths of personal troubles. Their relationship for years ranged from strained to non-existent, a theme frequently explored in Fisher's writing, but late in life they became allies and close confidantes in their struggles.

Reynolds lost one husband to Elizabeth Taylor and two other husbands plundered her for millions. Fisher struggled from early in life with addiction and mental illness. "There have been a few times when I thought I was going to lose Carrie," Reynolds said when Oprah Winfrey interviewed both mother and daughter in 2011. "I've had to walk through a lot of my tears. But she's worth it." — AP (See Page 20)

PHOTO OF THE DAY



A tree-lined path forms a leafy canopy with lattice shadows. — KUNA

IN MY VIEW

SORRY, SYRIA (AND EXPATS)

By Nejouad Al-Yagout

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Last year, our neighborhood ice-cream man here in Kuwait was lamenting the destruction of his hometown in Syria. His family decided it was best to evacuate and move to Jordan. He tried everything he could to bring his wife here, because he knew his sons would be denied entry. But, much to his dismay, even his wife was not allowed. Now, with the money he saves selling ice-cream, he has the burden of paying the rent for his family in Amman.

Meanwhile, many people here are applauding Europeans and countries around the world for opening their borders to refugees. And I wonder: Do we see the irony? We are cheering, with the loftiest of intentions, from the sidelines, but making sure our borders are tightly closed. And though hearts are breaking for Syria, refugees are trekking dangerous territory to reach the shores of Europe.

Still, we have decided it is best to make sure they do not infiltrate our society. This decision was made much to the dismay of many. Wouldn't it be so much nobler for Syrians to be welcomed in this region? This is not about Arabs and Muslims helping each other, but about human beings lending each other a hand in times of need. How can we sleep at night while our brothers and sisters in Syria are horrified that we are rejecting them? Kuwaitis are very generous when it comes to donations, but donations are not enough at times. Syrian refugees would be able to live a much better life if they were allowed to enter our country. We would make them feel at home here. And I am sure our generosity would cover many costs.

During the invasion of Kuwait, there was not one country in the entire world that closed its borders to us. And the Arab and Gulf countries were very generous to Kuwaitis, so we know that hospitality is an inherent part of our collective nature. What happened to us? Is our fear so intense that we have given up humanity for a false sense of security?

A couple of years ago, I saw a car here with Syrian license plates. I was so excited, that I actually tried to get their attention. I wanted to stop the car and tell them how happy I was to have them here, but I did not want to drive recklessly and scare the living daylights out of them, so I never managed to hug them. In fact, they never saw me. Somehow, this family

managed to come here. How? I don't know. But, my heart jumped for joy.

And that moment will remain an indelible imprint on me. Because it was a moment that made me realize that regulations can be defied. It gave me hope that our streets could be filled with many cars with Syrian plates one day. Unfortunately, though, my hope was short-lived, as the rules became increasingly stringent, and we watched with horror as Syrian refugees died at sea while their boats capsized. Graphic images globally tugged at our heartstrings, but somehow, it was more and more difficult for Syrians to enter our country.

Perhaps the worst image was that of a toddler washed up on the shore, with his father embracing his corpse. The world let him down. We let him down. Still, with the noblest of inclinations, we pray for Syrians and continue to donate money, hoping that it will suffice. However, an expat friend of mine awakened me to how others, including herself, taunt our efforts. She expressed her anger, indicating that it may well smell of roses when we talk of love and oneness, but the fact is that our borders are closed.

And so I feebly, and humbly, apologize to Syrians for our rigidity. I find myself apologizing a lot lately. I also keep wishing that those of us who are lamenting such regulations are given more influence. Perhaps the tipping point is not a fallacy, after all. If more of us speak out, perhaps we can do something. How can laws be changed if the lawmakers assume that our passivity is a sign of compliance with the laws at hand? I know many members of parliament would draft a bill to allow refugees in, especially when they know that many of us would salute their decision.

As I ponder our homegrown Iron Curtain, I realize I should not just apologize to refugees, but to many others who cannot seem to enter our country. A couple of weeks ago, I received a comment on social media from a Pakistani man who complained that he could not get visas for his family members. In addition, an Indian colleague of mine was searching for a local to sponsor her daughter-in-law because her salary is too low. Her son's wife is not permitted to visit without the intervention of a Kuwaiti. We have resorted to sponsoring fellow human beings. Where are we?

I sincerely pray that our new parliament will address the issue of refugees and visa statuses for foreigners, for that matter. I don't want our country to be known for its restrictive laws. Nor can I remain silent about something that tugs at my heartstrings. Love is too grand for restrictions. Way too grand!

Nejouad Al Yagout - Photo by Djinane Alsuwayeh

Local Spotlight

A WISH FOR 2017



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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It seems like ages since we welcomed 2016, because so many things - mostly negative - happened this year. But another year is at our doorsteps. This article is dedicated to 2017, and of course, I don't want to spoil anyone's mood, so I made a list of all my pinky wishes and hopefully they would be the same as yours.

Money, money and more money - I still recall this old song by ABBA. I don't think this was just lyrics of a song, regardless of the typical talk that money is not important and is not everything in life. In our life today, money may not be everything, but it is 99 percent of everything, so this unknown 1 percent will do nothing in the face of the complexities of life. If you wish to make more money, take it from me - it is alright!

My second pinky wish includes a prayer for good health and happiness. We all want to have good health and live ever happily. Who doesn't? Let's remember that in order for anyone to have good health, it is important to exercise and eat well. Late night snacks and fast food are not the right stuff for good health. Good health is in your hands. It is an easy wish.

I have never been to China or the Caribbean islands. It would be nice to learn more about new cultures and meet new people.

My third pinky wish is to have the opportunity to travel more and see places that I have never seen except on TV. I have never been to China or the Caribbean islands. It would be nice to learn more about new cultures and meet new people. My fourth pinky wish is to get more sleep. The bad news of war and civil conflicts is not allowing us to sleep well, because we keep thinking about what is happening - and who's next!

My fifth wish is to see my country no longer make decisions on behalf of expats without taking their interests into consideration. No more increases in fees, rent and prices of goods! My sixth wish is to see more peace initiatives being presented to this disturbed world. I don't see all those UN goodwill ambassadors doing enough to promote the idea of peace as a world concept and culture. I see some of them making more movies and making more money out of the publicity they get, but what about doing more good for the world? So we need new faces, but no more models and actresses - we have enough of them!

My seventh wish is a tip - to maintain good friendship. If you have old friends, keep them. There are no longer good and decent friends anymore. My last wish, but not least, is to share hugs and kisses with children and family members. We need to love and express our true feelings and sentiments - kids watch their parents fight, but they don't see them in love, which is a shame.

Now I am ready for 2017 with hopes and wishes. Happy New Year! May all your wishes come true!

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If you haven't made plans yet, fret no more!

WHERE TO BRING IN THE NEW YEAR IN KUWAIT

By Nawara Fattahova

For those who are not travelling on New Year's Eve or haven't prepared a program, Kuwait Times has drawn up a list of places that people can visit to celebrate this occasion and welcome 2017.

Shopping malls

Kout Mall in Fahaheel seems to be the most attractive among the malls in Kuwait on New Year's Eve. The mall is organizing entertainment activities outside the mall. Events will start in the afternoon with a live painting session from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm. In the evening, two circus performances will be held - one from 9:00 pm to 9:45 pm and the other from 11:00 pm to 11:45 pm. At midnight, visitors will enjoy a fireworks show that will last for a few minutes. All events will be held near the fountain in the outdoor area. All events are free of charge.

Souq Sharq is holding its simple annual activity by the water clock located in the center of the mall. This event is

being held at the mall for the past few years, with visitors gathering near the clock, waiting for midnight to welcome the New Year.

Shows

Imagine Team, the popular Kuwaiti team of illusionists, is presenting a magic show at the Hmeli Theater in Jabriya. The show starts at 9:00 pm and ends at midnight. Entry is free of charge, on a first-come-first-served basis.

Hotels and resorts

Jahra Copthorne Hotel and Resort is offering a 50 percent discount on its dinner buffet on New Year's Eve, in addition to special discounts on rooms and chalets during this period. Special activities for kids will also be held during the day.

Hilton Kuwait Resort is holding New Year celebrations in two of its restaurants. Tiatro is offering a countdown with a decorated buffet and balloons, along with a piano performance. Naranje will have a live DJ and a traditional dabka dance with a set menu.

Marina Hotel is celebrating New Year's Eve at two of its restaurants - Six Palms and Atlantis, which will have a countdown along with dinner. Also, special room rates are offered during this occasion.

Holiday Inn Downtown Hotel is celebrating New Year's Eve with a special dinner buffet at its Downtown restaurant, including two welcome drinks, two live stations, a countdown and much more.

Restaurants

Palms Palace, one of the oldest restaurants in Salmiya, has an entertaining program lined up for New Year's Eve. Along with a set menu, there will be live music and lute performances, in addition to a prize raffle.

Burj Alhamam, the popular Lebanese restaurant on the seaside, has also prepared a program including a set menu and a New Year cake for each guest, along with live music and a countdown.



Al Kout Mall, Fahaheel





Good news! Online network only spreads positive stories

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

News networks and social media are flooded with depressing news. People are imbued with negativity, and it's affecting them psychologically. Even a make-up tutorial or a funny dancing parrot video can spark political or religious conflicts amongst viewers. "A study suggests that unnecessary long-lasting exposure to bad news can lead to mental illnesses such as stress, anxiety and depression. It can also spark disbelief or a lack of desire to live," said Jarrah Al-Jadai, founder of the Arabic-language AIEjabiya Network.

"Mentally stable people avoid socializing with those who deliberately remind them of global tragedies. On the other hand, people avoid sharing their happy moments on social networks because others hate to see them happy or successful," added Jadai.

With the barrage of extremism and villainy seen globally, people might lose hope in life and the existence of good in the universe. So a group of volunteers led by Jadai in 2004 decided to move out of the bad news zone and build a specialized positive online news network. Their goal is to spread the spirit of optimism and motivation, in addition to promoting the culture of volunteerism. "Our mission is to spread good news and positivity in every Arab home," he said.

AIEjabiya.net was first launched in Kuwait, and operates with a voluntary team from Egypt, Saudi Arabia and soon, the UAE. "In January 2012, we collaborated with the news and media department of the United Nations and the FAO headquarters in New York. They believed in the urgent need to spread positivity and good news in the region," stated Jadai. "The entire team has great faith and a deep grasp of the idea of the project and its objectives, which explains why our network has been doing well since 12 years, despite financial and administrative challenges," he explained.

On Dec 5, AIEjabiya was honored by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, for winning the 'Pioneers of Arab Social Media' award. Jadai hopes that the network will become a role model, as AIEjabiya believes that not everything is newsworthy. "Of course, all news is not fairly positive. We seek stories that lift spirits and emit tolerance and optimism."

So no news is indeed good news, while AIEjabiya resists the prevailing theory that says all news is negative. It's clear to many of us that 2016 wasn't the happiest year. But, let's unite with the AIEjabiya team and hope for the best in the next year.



Jarrah Al-Jadai, founder of AIEjabiya Network.



AIEjabiya is honored by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, for winning the 'Pioneers of Arab Social Media' award.

A day in the life

Street cleaners recycle to earn extra cash

By Ben Garcia

Babu is a Bangladeshi cleaner who works hard to keep Kuwait's streets clean. To supplement his meager salary, he collects recyclable trash to sell, and washes cars as well. Babu came to Kuwait two years ago, and claims to be happy.

"This is my life. I applied for a cleaner's job, and so I am doing this. I am assigned to clean the streets from Sheraton Hotel to the General Post Office (in Kuwait City). The area is busy - my day starts at 10pm and ends at 5am," Babu told Kuwait Times. When his service bus drops him off at his assigned place, he starts collecting the trash. "My supervisor monitors all of us while we work, and he is always on the go," he said.

Kuwait relies heavily on cleaners and menial labor from Bangladesh and other impoverished Asian countries. Thousands work the streets of Kuwait. But most take only a small salary and

work extra jobs on the side to supplement their income.

Babu separates plastic items, corrugated cardboard boxes, bottles and soft drink cans to sell them later. "By selling the recyclable material, I can earn a dinar or two by the end of the day. Cardboard boxes are bought for 30 fils per kilogram, and tin cans for 50 fils a kilo," he said.

Babu told Kuwait Times he is preparing for a family life before returning to Dhaka, and is planning to get married by 2018. With his savings, he thinks he will be able to start a family. "We are all here to earn money. I don't mind doing a lowly job as long as I earn enough from it," he reasoned.

"To survive here, you really have to work," Babu stressed. "My salary is KD 80 only, and if I don't clean cars (KD 50 monthly) and sell recyclable materials, I won't be able to survive. My friends are into selling things at the Friday Market; some of them

work as porters, while some sell whatever they can, like vegetables or fish, to add to their monthly income. We use part of the money to pay our bills, and the remaining is sent as savings back home," Babu concluded.



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Report

Man cheated of KD 6,000 over non-existent contract

KUWAIT: A Lebanese expat reportedly sold a non-existent tender to light up the Kuwait Towers to a Syrian for KD 6,000. He was arrested on fraud charges. The Syrian was told by the Lebanese that he was looking for a right partner to join him in a contract to light up the Kuwait Towers. The Syrian reportedly gave him KD 6,000 as his share to join the alleged contract. The Syrian waited in vain for profits for a long time. Then eventually he went to the authorities to enquire about the tender and found out that the Lebanese was cheating him and that the contract was non-existent. He called up the Lebanese but he did not respond. Detectives located the Lebanese and arrested him.

Doctor assaulted

A drunk man insulted and assaulted an Egyptian doctor and a receptionist at Rumaithiya Health Center. Police responded to a call and went to the scene. The doctor said the suspect attacked him and insulted him in front of patients.

Expat robbed

A Jordanian expat who works in a food company told police that KD 3,250 he kept in his drawer was stolen. He accused a Nepalese and a Bangladeshi of stealing the cash. A security source however said that there were no signs of breaking the doors suggesting that the thieves could be one of the workers. The Jordanian said the money belonged to him.

Driver robbed

An Indian driver was robbed by two unknown persons who stole the car of his sponsor leaving him out in the street. The Indian's complaint was referred to Hawally detectives who identified one suspect, a 19-year-old bedoon, an ex-convict and a notorious thief. He was also a known drug-addict and was arrested while driving a stolen car. An axe and Shabu (amph) were found in the car. Detectives are looking for his partner.

Smuggling bid foiled

Airport customs officers foiled an attempt by an Egyptian to smuggle in 3,500 illicit pills to Kuwait upon his arrival in the country. He said the pills are for personal use. He was sent to Drugs Control General Department.

Wife rescued

Farwaniya police rescued a Syrian from her husband who was beating her up in a Jleeb street. Police rushed to the scene on receiving a call about a man who was beating a woman in the street. They stopped him. The woman lodged a complaint against her husband who according to her used to beat and insult her.

Minor girl

Interior Ministry operations said a girl called them saying her father had locked her up at home. Police went to the house and the father answered the door. He told them that his daughter is a minor and he prevented her from going to her friends. He showed them her Civil ID to prove his claims. — Alanbaa/Alrai



160 VIOLATORS ARRESTED IN MEHBOULA CAMPAIGN

MOI CLARIFIES ON WRONG SOCIAL MEDIA REPORTS



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A massive security campaign led by interior ministry undersecretary was launched in Mehboula area that resulted in the arrests of 160 violators and many persons. The campaign started at 3 pm. Three wanted criminals, 28 absconders, 12 residency law violators, three drug-pushers, 37 persons with expired residences, 68 without documents were arrested. Six vehicles were impounded and 94 traffic citations were issued in the campaign.

Sheep market raided

Security authorities carried out a campaign at Al-Dhaher sheep market that resulted in the arrests of 35 marginal labor, 20 reported absconders, 31 without proper identification and 14 residency law violators.

Moi clarifies

Relations and Security Information at the Interior Ministry yesterday denied news reports on some social media that a citizen was beaten up by a policeman inside Al-Salam police station. It also

denied that it refused to document it.

The department said in a statement that a citizen was at the police station following an accident. But the citizen tried to interfere when a dispute arose between a citizen and a policeman though the former had nothing to do with the case. Both were sent for questioning, adding that the interior ministry will take all legal meas-

ures including verification of tapes to find out what happened.

Asian killed

An Asian was killed on Airport Road following a collision. Sabhan fire center responded to the accident. A female citizen suffered fractures in the accident who was extricated from the wreckage and handed over to paramedics.





GAZIANTEP, Turkey: Chairman of the board for Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Helal Al-Sayer performs surgery on a two-year-old Syrian child refugee at a Turkish hospital in Reyhanli town. — KUNA

CALIS, Turkey: KRCS Chairman Dr Helal Al-Sayer and Abdulsalam Al-Sherif, advisor at the Turkish Relief Foundation during the signature ceremony.—KUNA

DR AL-SAYER OPERATES ON SYRIAN CHILD IN TURKEY

KRCS SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH TURKISH ASSOCIATION

GAZIANTEP, Turkey: Chairman of the board for Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Helal Al-Sayer operated on a two-year old Syrian child refugee at a Turkish hospital in Reyhanli town near the borders with Syria. In a statement to KUNA, Dr Al-Sayer said that he had carried out the operation to show his solidarity with the Syrian refugees, adding that the operation was a success.

Al-Sayer said that KRCS will support the efforts by the Emel Turkish hospital where the operation was conducted, adding that the society will allocate a sum of \$250,000 to aid in the treatment of Syrian refugees and displaced especially the ones coming from Aleppo. Officials at Emel hospital thanked Al-Sayer and KRCS for the endless support to the Syrian refugees, saying that their efforts had made a positive impact on Syrians in Turkey.

Dr Al-Sayer and a KRCS team are in Gaziantep, southeast of Turkey, to supervise and inspect relief aid efforts carried out by the society.

KRCS announced yesterday that it will provide support to an orphanage taking care of Syrian child refugees in the Turkish southeast city of Gaziantep.

Dr Al-Sayer said that this particular gesture was a small step to lessen the suffering of those children who lost their country as well as parents and relatives. The KRCS will cover the needs of Al-Sham orphanage hosting the Syrian children by providing it with financial and medical assistance, said Al-Sayer. The Kuwaiti official thanked all bodies and organizations who continue to support the Syrian refugees, stressing that it was a paramount humanitarian duty to do so. Meanwhile, the orphanage's general coordinator Ekhlas Al-Masalmah said that she was grateful for the Kuwaiti assistance which came at a critical period. The orphanage, founded in 2013, provide a glimpse of hope for the unfortunate Syrian children and women suffering from the ongoing war in their country, said Al-Masalmah who commended the Kuwaiti people and leadership for their

generous assistance throughout the conflict raging since March of 2011.

Agreement

KRCS yesterday signed a cooperation agreement, worth \$ 390,000, with a Turkish relief association in southern Turkish city of Calis, to provide humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees. The accord was signed by the KRCS Chairman Dr Helal Al-Sayer and Abdulsalam Al-Sherif, advisor at the Turkish Relief Foundation. Dr. Al-Sayer said the Kuwaiti society has rapidly established cooperation with counterpart Turkish associations to secure relief support for the Syrian refugees. Al-Sayer added that three agreements had been signed; one aims at operating a bandages' factory for six months, another for securing 10,000 baskets containing materials for children and an equal number of parcels containing detergents. Al-Sayer and a field team inspected relief work for the Syrians at headquarters of the Turkish association. — KUNA

KUWAIT BOURSE CLOSES YEAR ON POSITIVE NOTE

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait concluded the year 2016 with divergent trades involving a large number of stocks, as a prelude to the annual closing, according to analysts. The analysts, interviewed by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), said yesterday's session was distinguished with well-calculated activity by some portfolios and investment funds, targeting small and stagnant chips. Arzaq Capital Co financial analyst Salah Al-Sultan said the session was positive with a purchasing wave, targeting many operational blue-chips, in addition to small chips of quick rebounding.

The bullish trend is forecast to persist in the beginning of the New Year, amid wait-and-see attitude by traders for annual earnings by the listed companies. Mohammad Al-Tarrah, financial analyst at "Motadaweloon" association, said yesterday's trading focused on profit generation from companies that performed in a bullish manner in the past week session.

He forecast correction turn by some of the shares in early 2017, following the soaring approach in December, noting continuity of speculations on the cheap chips (50-100 fils) particularly those of the financial services and consumption sectors. The session also witnessed the National Investment Company's revelation of compulsory acquisition of Americana's shares and disclosure by "Al-Anthema" Co of a programs' services accord, in addition to publicizing the monthly information of Burgan's Stocks' Fund for December 2016. Operations involved bullish stocks of 44 companies, bearish shares of 56 others, out of 146 active ones.

The trading at Kuwait bourse yesterday ended with mixed boards as the benchmark went down by 5.27 points to hit 5,748.09 points. The weighted and KSX 15 indices ended up with a different performances as the first index going up by 0.76 points while the latter going down by 1.25 points. Some 3,722 transactions took place yesterday with the value of trades reaching KD 18.2 million and the volume hitting 168 million shares. —KUNA

KUWAIT DISPATCHES AID TO FLOOD VICTIMS IN EGYPT

CAIRO: A Kuwaiti charity based in the Egyptian capital has delivered humanitarian aid for those affected by torrential rains in the eastern Egyptian province of Sohag. In a meeting with the Governor of Sohag province Major General Essam Al-Alqami yesterday, head of the Cairo-based Kuwaiti charity Ismail Al-Kandari underscored Kuwait's "cordial" ties with Egypt. "The aid is a token of love from the people of Kuwait to illustrate the brotherly ties between both nations," Al-Kandari said.

Moreover, on the aid worth 3 million Egyptian pounds, he said it comprised 7,000 food baskets and blankets. Al-Kandari also noted that other projects undertaken by the charity include construction of medical facilities, mosques and schools, in addition to orphan sponsorship programs.

He also thanked provincial officials for their efforts to facilitate the advent of aid provided by Kuwait's Zakat House. Heavy torrential rains have lashed Sohag province since November, inducing major floods that have claimed numerous lives and caused material damage.—KUNA

KUWAIT'S OIL EXPORTS TO JAPAN EDGE LOWER

TOKYO: Kuwait's crude oil exports to Japan fell 45.6 percent in November from a year earlier to 4.92 million barrels, or 164,000 barrels per day (bpd), marking the first decline in four months, government data showed. As Japan's sixth-biggest oil provider, Kuwait supplied 5.2 percent of the Asian nation's total crude imports, the Japanese Natural Resources and Energy Agency said in a preliminary report.

Japan's overall imports of crude oil slid 3.7 percent year-on-year to 3.14 million bpd for the fifth consecutive month of fall. Shipments from the Middle East accounted for 88.4 percent of the total, up 6.3 percentage points from the year before. Saudi Arabia remained Japan's No.1 oil supplier, with imports from the kingdom growing 3.8 percent from a year earlier to 1.2 million bpd, followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) with 770,000 bpd, up 10.1 percent. Iran ranked third with 238,000 bpd, up 41.2 percent. Japan is the world's-third biggest oil consumer after the US and China. — KUNA

PARLIAMMENTARY COMMITTEE DISCUSSES LIFTING SPORTS BAN

INTEGRATED SPORTS INDUSTRY THE LONG-TERM GOAL

KUWAIT: The parliamentary sports and youth committee discussed, at its first meeting yesterday, blueprints "on lifting suspension of the local sports activities," due to expire by January 11th.

The parliamentary sports and youth committee rapporteur, MP Ahmad Al-Fadhli, said in a statement after the meeting that part of the discussed plan "is related to building an integrated sports industry; however such an objective would warrant a long-time to be attained."

"This strategic plan has been drafted on the basis of communications with the associations that halted the Kuwaiti sports activities, with the intention of

lifting the ban in exchange for our commitment to forward a law that is compatible with Olympic charters and laws," said Al-Fadhli.

The examined blueprint envisages working out another legislation, stipulating privatization of the Kuwaiti sports, "with consideration to all the remarks that have been expressed by the international parties," he added. He opined that developing the "Kuwaiti sports movement is the basis; not lifting the ban," in addition to promoting "athletic awareness" in the Kuwaiti community.

The parliamentary commission has invited Minister of Information, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman

Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah to attend its next meeting due on Tuesday, in addition to another session that might be held yesterday, Al-Fadhli said.

He added that the meeting primarily aimed at examining the government proposals on lifting the suspension and combining them with those forwarded by the parliament, "with aim of reaching a consensus formula to be addressed to the international federations," however he explained that the message addressed by the government to these associations "is sufficient." The five-member committee elected MP Saadoun Hammad as chairman and Al-Fadhli as deputy. —KUNA

SHEIKH KHALED TO INSPECT KUWAITI FORCES IN SAUDI

RIYADH: Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who arrived in Riyadh on an official visit earlier yesterday, proceeded shortly later to South Saudi Arabia to inspect the Kuwaiti forces deployed under umbrella of the Arab coalition for restoring the legitimacy in Yemen.

Earlier and shortly after his arrival in the Kingdom, the minister held talks with Kingdom's Deputy Crown Prince, the Second Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Prince Mohammad Bin Salman Al-Saud, on defense ties and regional issues. Present at King Salman Air Base where the minister took off to the south was the Saudi Minister of Commerce, Majed Al-Gasabi, along with other officials. He was received at the airport by the Kingdom's Deputy Crown Prince, the Second Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Prince Mohammad Bin Salman Al-Saud, the State of Kuwait Ambassador Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and other senior officials. The Kuwaiti minister, accompanied by senior officers, is due to hold talks with the Deputy Crown Prince and other Saudi officials. —KUNA



IRAQI OFFICIAL'S VISIT HELPED BOOST TIES

KUWAIT: Iraqi Minister of Oil Jabbar Al-Luyabi's visit to the country was instrumental in the development of bilateral relations in the oil sector, Kuwait's Ministry of Oil said yesterday. In a statement, the ministry noted that the Iraqi official held talks with

his Kuwaiti counterpart Essam Al-Marzouq over a memorandum of understating (MoU) signed between both nations, dealing with joint oil fields and the export of gas from Iraq to Kuwait.

Moreover, Al-Luyabi underscored

his country's desire to lure Kuwaiti investment in what he described as a lucrative Iraqi oil market. The Iraqi minister of oil was on a visit to the country to discuss with his Kuwaiti counterpart a number of issues of mutual concern. —KUNA

'AL-TNEKA, AL-BURRMA' TOOLS TO PRESERVE WATER IN OLD KUWAIT

KUWAIT: To quench someone's thirst, a person would either buy a bottle of water from the nearest supermarket or simply open the tap. However, in the old days of Kuwait, the process of acquiring water and preserving it was not as simple, especially with the fact that pipelines and refrigerators did not exist.

So what did people need to do to get water back in the day? The answer is simple, yet somehow complicated. Individuals only needed to acquire or make tools such as "Al-Burrma", "Al-Tneka", or "Al-Zamzamiya" to transport

and preserve water, a task easier said than done. In their book "the old Kuwaiti household", authors Mohammad Al-Khers and Mariyam Al-Agroga said that people used to depend on themselves in bringing their own water supplies.

They also hired "Al-Kanderi", a person who is paid to carry water to houses all over the country. Delving further into the subject, the authors said that water supplies were usually brought from outside of Kuwait via "Al-Tneka" which is a huge metal container used in transporting heavy supplies of liquid materials.

As for preserving water, people used "Al-Burrma", a large pot made out of fired clay, said the authors. They also mentioned "Al-Zamzamiya", used for the long journey to the annual great pilgrimage of Al-Hajj.

Kuwaitis also used various other tools to transport and preserve water, said the authors who indicated that some of these utensils still exist in the modern era, but mostly as decorative objects reminding people how hard it was to acquire the most precious element of them all, water. —KUNA

News

in brief

Jailed suspects to be put behind 'glass barriers'

KUWAIT: Jailed suspects awaiting trial will now be put behind "glass barriers" instead of "steel bars", Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr. Faleh Al-Azab said yesterday. In a statement to the press, Al-Azab said that the measure is being taken on humanitarian grounds, noting that suspects "deserve to be treated with dignity." Moreover, he added that such actions fit into Kuwait's image as a bastion of humanity.

May sends messages to Amir, Premier

KUWAIT: British Prime Minister Theresa May has addressed messages to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The written letters were handed over, yesterday, to Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah by the United Kingdom Ambassador to the State of Kuwait, Matthew Lodge, during a meeting between them. Deputy Foreign Minister Al-Jarallah and the Ambassador discussed, during the session, the historic Kuwait-UK relationship.

Kuwait-Morocco forum witnesses cooperation

CASABLANCA: The third Kuwait-Morocco forum, being held in Casablanca on December 26-30, witnessed yesterday a distinctive participation from the Kuwaiti delegation represented by different government and private bodies. Head of media at Kuwait's Public Authority for Industry (PAI), Ali Abdullah Jassem said that PAI's participation came to show the latest efforts for sustainable development in Kuwait especially in the industrial field. Jassem said that PAI was eager to cooperate with Moroccan industrial bodies, exploring means to enhance cooperation within this field. On her part, head of the Information Ministry's Arab countries media department, Luluwa Abdullah Al-Salem said that media ties has been on the rise between Kuwait and Morocco, reflecting the progress of the comprehensive political, economic and strategic relations.

Oman joins Islamic military coalition

RIYADH: Saudi Deputy Crown Prince, Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Defense Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz received a letter from Omani Minister Responsible for Defense Affairs Bader bin Saeed Al-Busaidi on Wednesday. The message, handed over by Omani Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, includes an announcement of Oman's joining the Saudi-led Islamic coalition against terrorism, according to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA). Deputy Crown Prince expressed appreciation of the leadership of the Sultanate of Oman for supporting the efforts of Saudi Arabia in fighting terrorism.

Friday Times

International

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2016

**Turkey, Russia
plan Syria
ceasefire before
New Year**



**Baby boom
after China ends
one-child ruling**



**Trump takes
credit for
8,000 jobs**



ISRAEL: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivers a statement to the press at his Jerusalem office in response to a speech by the US Secretary of State.—AFP

OBAMA, NETANYAHU RELATIONS HIT ROCK BOTTOM

TWO GOVERNMENTS SEEMED FURTHER APART THAN EVER

HONOLULU: It took eight years of backbiting and pretending they got along for relations between President Barack Obama's administration and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to finally hit rock bottom. Though they've clashed bitterly before, mostly notably over Iran, the two governments seemed further apart than ever after a speech Wednesday by Secretary of State John Kerry and last week's United Nations resolution. The key question for the Obama administration, newly willing to air grievances with Israel on live television, is why now?

"We cannot, in good conscience, do nothing and say nothing when we see the hope of peace slipping away," Kerry said in a speech that ran more than an hour. Yet in just over three weeks, Obama will no longer be president, Kerry will no longer be secretary of state, and the US will have a new leader under no obligation to embrace any of what Kerry said. President-elect Donald Trump has assured Israel that things will be different

after Jan 20, when he's to be inaugurated, and lamented how the Jewish state was "being treated very, very unfairly."

Kerry took pains to voice America's staunch commitment to Israel's security and support for its future, and to detail US complaints about Palestinian leadership and its failure to sufficiently deter violence against Israelis. He laid out a six-point framework for a potential peace deal that it will be up to the next US government to try to enact, if it chooses to do so. The White House has portrayed Obama's decision to break with tradition by abstaining from rather than vetoing - a UN Security Council resolution declaring Israeli settlements illegal as a reaction forced by other countries that brought it up for a vote.

The White House has also acknowledged that Obama had long considered the possibility of taking some symbolic step before leaving office to leave his imprint on the debate. For much of the year, his staff pored over options that included a UN resolution outlin-

ing principles for a peace deal and a presidential speech much like the one Kerry gave Wednesday. Yet there was reluctance to act before the US election, given the way it would have thrust the Israeli-Palestinian issue into the campaign.

'Lip service'

Kerry acknowledged Trump appears to favor a different approach. Yet, frustrated by years of Israeli actions he deemed counterproductive for peace, Obama appeared to have decided it was better to make his administration's views known while still in office, even if it risked a blockbuster clash with America's closest ally. In his speech, Kerry tore into Israel for settlement-building, accusing Netanyahu of dragging Israel away from democracy. He defended the move to allow the UN vote, the spark that set off an extraordinary and deepening diplomatic spat between the US and its closest Mideast ally.

"If the choice is one state, Israel can either be Jewish or democratic, it cannot be both,

and it won't ever really be at peace," Kerry said. Shortly afterward, Netanyahu appeared on camera in Jerusalem and suggested he was done with the Obama administration and ready to deal with Trump. The Israeli leader faulted Kerry for obsessing over settlements while paying mere "lip service" to Palestinian attacks and incitement of violence. "Israelis do not need to be lectured about the importance of peace by foreign leaders," Netanyahu said. Trump wouldn't say whether settlements should be reined in. But he told reporters Israel was being "treated very, very unfairly by a lot of different people."

In a nod to Netanyahu's concerns that Obama would take more parting shots, Kerry seemed to rule out the possibility Obama would support more UN action or, even more controversially, recognize statehood. The US, the Palestinians and most of the world oppose Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, territories captured by Israel in 1967 and claimed by the Palestinians for an independent state.—AP

IRAQI TROOPS RESUME MOSUL FIGHT AFTER TWO-WEEK LULL

MOSUL, Iraq: Iraqi troops backed by US-led airstrikes pushed deeper into eastern Mosul yesterday in a multi-pronged assault after a two-week lull in the operation to retake the Islamic State-held city. Elite Special Forces pushed into the Karama and Quds neighborhoods, while army troops and federal police advanced into nearby Intisar, Salam and Sumor neighborhoods. Smoke rose across the city as explosions and machine gun fire echoed through the streets.

Stiff resistance by the militants, civilians trapped inside their houses and bad weather have slowed advances in the more than two-month-old offensive to recapture Iraq's second largest city, the extremist group's last urban bastion in the country. It is the biggest Iraqi military operation since the 2003 US-led invasion. In an interview with The Associated Press on Tuesday, Lt Gen Abdul-Wahab Al-Saadi, commander of the Special Forces in eastern Mosul, said his forces have been bolstered by reinforcements and are now less than 3 kilometers from the Tigris River, which slices the city in half.

A US-led coalition airstrike this week destroyed the last remaining bridge over the river. The special forces, officially known as the Counter Terrorism Service, have done most of the fighting, pushing in from the east. But regular army troops on the city's southeast and northern edges, as well as militarized federal police farther west, have not moved in weeks, unable to penetrate the city. The troops have faced grueling urban fighting, often house to house against IS militants who have had more than two years to dig in and prepare. Even in districts that have been recaptured, Iraqi troops have faced surprise attacks, shelling and car bombs.

The extremists have launched more than 900 car bombs against Iraqi troops in and around Mosul. Al-Saadi said 260 targeted his men. He said he expected Iraqi forces would drive IS from Mosul and the rest of Nineveh province within three months. Iraqi leaders had previously vowed to drive the extremists from Mosul by the end of the year. IS captured Mosul in the summer of 2014, when it swept across much of northern and central Iraq, and the group's leader declared the establishment of its self-styled caliphate from the pulpit of a Mosul mosque. —AP



SYRIA: Syrian men mourn over the body of a relative at a makeshift hospital in the rebel-held town of Douma, on the eastern outskirts of Damascus, following reported air strikes. —AFP

TURKEY, RUSSIA PLAN SYRIA CEASEFIRE BEFORE NEW YEAR

KEY PLAYERS IN THE CONFLICT OFFERED AN IMMEDIATE CONFIRMATION

ANKARA: Turkey and Russia are planning to implement a countrywide ceasefire in Syria before the start of the New Year, Turkey's foreign minister said yesterday, as Ankara and Moscow step up coordination to end the nearly six-year conflict. Although on opposing sides in the conflict, Turkey and Russia have been working intensively to find a ceasefire after the fall of Aleppo to the Syrian regime last week, in a process that conspicuously does not include the United States.

The ceasefire could be put in place "at any moment", Mevlut Cavusoglu told A Haber television after reports a day earlier that Turkey and Russia had agreed a deal. "We are planning to secure this before the beginning of the New Year," he said, adding it was the "will of the leaders" for this to happen. Turkish state-run news agency Anadolu said Wednesday that Turkey and Russia had agreed a nationwide truce plan for Syria but none of the key players in the conflict offered an immediate confirmation. Such a nationwide ceasefire would follow the deal brokered by Turkey and Russia for Aleppo which allowed the evacuation of tens of thousands of civilians.

'Complementary step'

Ankara and Moscow have been on opposing sides in the Syrian civil war, with Turkey seeking the ouster of President Bashar Al-Assad, who is backed by Russia and Iran. But the two countries have recently started to cooperate more closely on Syria, especially after a deal in the summer to normalize ties battered by Turkey's shooting down of a Russian warplane last

year. Cavusoglu said if the ceasefire was successful, political negotiations between Assad's regime and the opposition would take place in the Kazakh capital Astana.

But he insisted the Astana talks, overseen by Turkey and Russia, were not a rival to UN-backed talks that have been taking place on-and-off in Geneva in recent years. "This is not an alternative to Geneva. It is a complementary step," said Cavusoglu. "The talks in Astana will be under our supervision," he said, adding which groups will take part remains under discussion. The minister said it was necessary for foreign fighters to leave Syria, including those with the Tehran-backed Lebanese Shiite militant group Hezbollah. "Hezbollah needs to return to Lebanon," he said.

'Out of question'

Cavusoglu said Russia would act as the regime's "guarantor" in any deal while Turkey would also perform a similar role. But it was not clear whether Iran would sign as a guarantor, Cavusoglu said. With cooperation tightening with Moscow, Turkey stood conspicuously quiet as the regime, supported by Russia, took control last week of Aleppo, handing the rebels their biggest defeat in the civil war so far. The victory was also a boost for Russian President Vladimir Putin, who sent forces to Syria last year to bolster Assad in an unprecedented intervention.

But Cavusoglu said it was "out of the question" for Turkey to hold any talks with Assad. Syria's conflict began with a 2011 uprising against Assad but quickly morphed into a complicated civil war

that has now killed more than 310,000 people and forced millions more from their homes. The conflict continued to rage as civilians were killed in regime strikes yesterday, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights told AFP in Beirut. The observatory said fighting took place in the morning between rebels and regime forces near Damascus while some seven civilians including three children were killed in regime strikes in several areas of eastern Ghouta near the capital.

'Not acceptable'

Ankara's close cooperation with Moscow comes amid rapidly increasing strains between Turkey and the United States. Turkey launched an ambitious operation in northern Syria on August 24 in support of pro-Ankara Syrian rebels, with the aim of ousting jihadists as well as Kurdish militia from the border area. But Ankara says it has received no support from the US-led coalition as its forces battle to retake the Islamic State (IS) held town of Al Bab, taking increasing casualties.

Cavusoglu hit back at the lack of aerial support from the US-led coalition and repeated accusations Washington was arming the very Kurdish militia Ankara was fighting. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who this week accused Washington of backing IS jihadists, on Thursday again attacked Washington for its "support" for terror organizations. "If you give all kinds of weapons to terrorist organizations in this region and then put a case saying 'no we are not giving weapons, just giving ammunition', sorry we will not accept this," he said. —AFP

WHAT DO ISRAELIS, PALESTINIANS WANT?

JERUSALEM: The decades-old Israel-Palestinian conflict has returned to the spotlight after a UN resolution condemning Israeli settlements and a major speech by US Secretary of State John Kerry. On Wednesday, Kerry warned Israel's ongoing settlement growth is threatening the prospect of a final peace deal with the Palestinians—the so-called two-state solution.

What is the two-state solution?

The idea dates back to 1947, a year before the creation of Israel, when the United Nations voted for partition of the land then known as British Mandate Palestine into two states—one Jewish in nature and the other Arab. After a war in 1967 Israel seized control of much of the Arab land, the largest part being the West Bank. In the early 1990s peace talks led to the Oslo accords, which were meant to lead to an independent Palestinian state on the rough basis of the UN lines.

However the state has failed to materialize, with the two sides trading blame. In the meantime Israel has built dozens of settlements in the West Bank, with more than 400,000 Israelis now living in them, while around 2.6 million Palestinians live in the same territory. They are seen as a major obstacle to peace and last week a UN Security Council resolution condemning settlements passed 14-0 after the United States unusually decided not to use its veto.

Are both sides still committed?

Officially Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says he is still committed to the two-state solution but has also said his government, seen as the most right-wing in Israel's history, is the most pro-settlement ever. Education Minister Naftali Bennett, head of the far right Jewish Home party, has led the charge against the two state solution—calling for annexation of most of the West Bank, which would effectively render a Palestinian state impossible. —AFP

BOKO HARAM LEADER IN VIDEO SAYS GROUP SAFE

KANO, Nigeria: Boko Haram's elusive leader Abubakar Shekau appeared in a new video yesterday to dispute a claim that the jihadist group had been routed from its Sambisa Forest stronghold. "We are safe. We have not been flushed out of anywhere. And tactics and strategies cannot reveal our location except if Allah wills by his decree," Shekau said in the 25-minute video, flanked by masked armed fighters. "You should not be telling lies to the people," he said, referring to Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari, who said on Christmas Eve that the extremist group had been defeated and driven from the forest, its last known bastion.

"If you indeed crushed us, how can you see me like this? How many times have you killed us in your bogus death?" he asked. It was not immediately clear where the new video was shot, but Shekau, who spoke in both Hausa and Arabic, said it was filmed on Christmas Day. Shekau last appeared in a video in September where he disputed a claim by the Nigerian military that he had been wounded in battle. He vowed to continue fighting on until an Islamic state was imposed in northern Nigeria. "The war is not over yet. There is still more," he said, vowing no "respite" for Nigerians.

He urged followers around the world to "fight and kill infidels." "Our aim is to establish an Islamic Caliphate and we have our own Caliphate, we are not part of Nigeria." Boko Haram, which last year pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group, has been in the grip of a power struggle. The IS high command said in August that Shekau had been replaced as leader by Abu Musab Al-Barnawi, the 22-year-old son of Boko Haram's founder Mohammed Yusuf.

The fresh video came after Buhari announced that a months-long military campaign in the 1,300 square-kilometer forest in northeastern Borno state had led to the "final crushing of Boko Haram terrorists in their last enclave in Sambisa Forest". The government in Abuja and the military have frequently claimed victories against the jihadists but access to the epicenter of the conflict is strictly controlled, making independent verification virtually impossible. Attacks have meanwhile continued, casting doubt over claims that Boko Haram has been defeated, despite undoubted progress in pushing back the group. Boko Haram is waging a seven-year-old uprising against the Nigerian state that has claimed more than 20,000 lives, with the insurgency spilling over the West African nation's borders into neighboring states. The insurgency has left around 2.6 million people homeless, sparking a dire humanitarian crisis, with the United Nations warning the affected region faces the "largest crisis in Africa". The UN estimates that 14 million people will need external help next year because of the violence, particularly in Borno State, the jihadist heartland.—AFP



ISTANBUL: Main Opposition MP's of People's Republic Party (CHP) Baris Yurdas (5th L) and Sezgin Tanrikulu (4th L) speak during a press conference at Istanbul's courthouse.—AFP

TURK NOVELIST ON TRIAL AS TOP JOURNALIST HELD OVER TWEETS

INTERNATIONAL OUTCRY OVER FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

ISTANBUL: One of Turkey's most celebrated contemporary novelists appeared in court for the first time yesterday on charges of terror propaganda, as the authorities detained a leading investigative journalist over his tweets. Novelist Asli Erdogan has been held in jail for 132 days since her detention over her links to a pro-Kurdish newspaper, in a case that has caused an international outcry over freedom of expression in the country.

Also on trial in the same case is Necmiye Alpay, an internationally prominent linguist who has also made widely praised translations of Western novels into Turkish. She has been held behind bars for 120 days. They were taken into custody in August as part of a probe into the now shut-down pro-Kurdish newspaper Ozgur Gundem, which the authorities regard as a mouthpiece for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Meanwhile the authorities yesterday detained prize-winning journalist Ahmet Sik in a separate case over a succession of tweets and articles for an opposition daily.

Sik was detained on accusations of making "terror propaganda" and denigrating the Turkish Republic, the judicial authorities and police, according to the state-run Anadolu news agency. It said he had been detained over tweets about the PKK, as well as articles for the Cumhuriyet opposition daily that criticized the Turkish secret services. In a final tweet yesterday morning Sik wrote: "I am being taken

to prosecutors because of a tweet."

'I am a writer'

In her defense statement to a packed court in Istanbul, Asli Erdogan ridiculed the charges against her and asked for her release. "I will defend myself as if the laws existed," she said, quoted by the Hurriyet daily. "I am a writer and the purpose of my existence is to tell a story," she said. "I am accused of being a member of a terror group on the sole basis that my name is buried in the paper." Including Erdogan, 49, and Alpay, 70, a total of nine suspects linked to Ozgur Gundem have been charged in the case. Erdogan is no relation to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan—the name is common in Turkey.

She has published several well-received novels including "The City in Crimson Cloak", which has also been translated into English. "They are being prosecuted for writings and thoughts that are in no way reprehensible according to Turkish law," said Baris Yurdas, Istanbul MP for the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP). Dozens of people gathered outside the courthouse ahead of the hearing to support the defendants. "We are here not just to show solidarity with the accused but also to defend democracy," said Murat, 48. "It's now or never, otherwise it's too late and dictatorship is there."

'Imam's Army'

Activists worry about a drastically worsening climate for journalists in

Turkey, in particular since the state of emergency imposed in the wake of the July 15 coup. According to the P24 Platform for Independent Journalism, 118 journalists have been arrested during the state of emergency, 80 of them within the coup probe. The author of several books, Sik is one of the best-known journalists in the country and had already endured a lengthy spell in jail from 2011-2012. He was imprisoned for 375 days during the investigation into the so-called Ergenekon alleged coup plot against the government.

That case was strongly supported by Fethullah Gulen, the US-based cleric whom Ankara blames for the failed putsch against President Erdogan. But the convictions were quashed and suspects released amid accusations Gulen had perverted the process. He has won numerous awards, including the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize in 2014. Sik's books include notably one of the few full-scale investigations into the group of Gulen, the former ally of Erdogan and now his arch foe.

The book, called "The Imam's Army" examines how Gulen supporters infiltrated the Turkish bureaucracy and built up an alliance with the ruling party that has since collapsed. The book had not even been published when Sik was arrested in March 2011 and was eventually released in November 2011 under the title "000Kitap" ("000Book"), causing a sensation with its author still in jail.—AFP

TUNISIAN SUSPECT FREED IN GERMAN TRUCK ATTACK

BERLIN: A 40-year-old Tunisian man who was held on suspicion of being an accomplice of suspected jihadist Berlin truck attacker Anis Amri has been freed, German prosecutors said yesterday. Investigations had shown that the unnamed man detained Wednesday "is not the suspected contact of Anis Amri," said a spokeswoman for the federal prosecution service which handles terrorism cases. "He has therefore been released from detention," the spokeswoman, Frauke Koehler, told a press conference. She confirmed that shortly before Tunisian Amri steered a lorry through a Berlin Christmas market in an attack that killed 12 people, he had sent a mobile phone voice message and a picture to a contact—but said this was not the man who had been detained.

"The investigation into further accomplices or possible people who knew... will continue at full speed," Koehler said. She also said that a video message released four days after the December 19 rampage, in which Amri is seen swearing allegiance to the head of the Islamic State group, Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, had been judged authentic. And the pistol Amri used to fire at an Italian police officer before he was shot dead in Milan last Friday had the same. 22 caliber as a bullet that was fired inside the cabin of the lorry. Investigators were still checking whether it was fired from the same handgun.

The spokeswoman added that the exact cause or time of death of the truck's registered Polish driver, Lukasz Urban, still could not be determined, but that it was "shortly before" the market attack.—AFP

US SENATORS: RUSSIA SHOULD BE SANCTIONED ELECTION HACKS

WASHINGTON: US senators visiting eastern European allies to discuss security issues called for sanctions against Russia for interfering in the presidential election by hacking American political sites and email accounts. Their demands came amid ongoing discussions among US officials on an imminent response that would ensure the US takes action against Russia before President-elect Donald Trump takes office.

"We have to sanction Russia for these cyber attacks (and) send a clear message to the incoming administration that there is a lot of bipartisan support in Congress for going after this," Sen Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn, told The Associated Press by phone from Latvia. Klobuchar joined Sens John McCain, R-Ariz., and Lindsey Graham, R-SC, in their visits to some of Russia's neighbors - the Baltic states, Ukraine and Georgia - as well as Montenegro.

Russian officials have denied the Obama administration's accusation that the highest levels of the Russian government were involved in trying to influence the US presidential election. US intelligence agencies concluded that Russia's goal was to help Trump win - an assessment Trump has dismissed as ridiculous.

The Obama administration has said the US will respond at a time and with a means of its choosing, and that all responses may not be publicly known. The lawmakers on Wednesday reaffirmed the US commitment to the Baltics, saying the relationship with the three former Soviet states - Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania - "will not change" under the new administration.

'Bipartisan sanctions'

"I predict there will be bipartisan sanctions coming that will hit Russia hard, particularly (President Vladimir) Putin as an individual," Graham told reporters in Riga, the Latvian capital. He didn't elaborate on possible sanctions. The US has already sanctioned Russia over its annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Ukraine, but it could potentially use an April 2015 executive order allowing for the use of sanctions to combat cyber attacks. A year after the order was issued, Democratic Party officials learned their systems were attacked after discovering malicious software on their computers. But the executive order isn't well suited to the Russian activities, said Stewart Baker, a partner specializing in cyber security for Steptoe & Johnson LLP. Baker said that order was primarily aimed at cyber espionage, such as spying by the Chinese military for commercial advantage. The order covers a response to attacks on critical infrastructure, and Klobuchar called on the administration to amend it to include election systems. A presidential policy directive in 2013 identified 16 sectors that are considered critical infrastructure, including energy, financial services and health care. The US Homeland Security Department is mulling over adding election systems to that list.

The designation places responsibilities on the secretary of homeland security to conduct comprehensive assessments of vulnerabilities and track as well as provide information on emerging and imminent threats that may affect critical infrastructure. More



FLORIDA: President-elect Donald Trump speaks to reporters at Mar-a-Lago, in Palm Beach, Florida.—AP

important, in this case, it would allow for a response to a cyber attack against election systems.

'Tools to respond'

And while Trump could change back any amended or new order allowing for the US to impose sanctions on entities involved in a cyber attack on election systems, "he would have a lot of explaining to do," Klobuchar said. "The executive order gives tools to respond." Speaking to journalists at his Palm Beach, Florida, estate on Wednesday, Trump was not addressing the issue of sanctions, but said: "We don't have the kind of security

we need." He added: "Nobody knows what's going on."

Trump said he has not spoken with senators calling for sanctions, but believes "we have to get on with our lives." President Barack Obama has ordered intelligence officials to conduct a broad review of the election-season cyber attacks. Russia's neighbors have long suffered the wrath of its hackers, whose actions have frequently complemented Moscow's political and military aims. In 2014, Ukraine's Central Election Commission was targeted by a pro-Russian hacking group. The Russian Embassy did not respond to requests for comment on Wednesday.—AP

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BERLIN: A truck is let through a concrete barrier in front of Berlin landmark Brandenburger Gate. — AFP

POLICE TO SECURE BERLIN NYE FEST

BERLIN: German authorities are beefing up security for New Year's Eve celebrations in Berlin tomorrow after last week's truck attack, deploying police with machine guns and securing the festive zone around the Brandenburg Gate with concrete slabs. "This year, what's new is that we will place concrete blocks and position heavy armored vehicles at the entrances" of the celebration zone, a Berlin police spokesman said. While the number of police officers deployed will remain close to last year's figure of around 1,000, this year, "at least some of them will be standing there with machine guns," he added.

Germany had already put in place heightened security measures during last year's celebrations, following the November 13 attack in Paris. Revelers will once again not be allowed to bring in backpacks or large bags. All forms of

pyrotechnics and potentially dangerous objects such as glass bottles will also be banned at this year's event where hundreds of thousands of people are expected. Questions surrounding security are high on the agenda after the December 19 attack, when Tunisian national Anis Amri allegedly hijacked a truck and drove it into a Berlin Christmas market, killing 12 people.

Amri, 24, went on the run and was the focus of a four-day manhunt before being shot dead by police in Milan, northern Italy, after opening fire first. The Berlin rampage was claimed by the Islamic State group, which released a video last Friday in which Amri is shown pledging allegiance to IS chief Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. In the immediate aftermath of the attack, police officers armed with machine guns were seen patrolling the streets in downtown Berlin. — AFP

RUSSIAN CRASH PROBE RULES OUT EXPLOSION

MOSCOW: Flight recorders revealed no evidence of an explosion on board a Russian plane that crashed, killing all 92 on board, but investigators haven't ruled out a deliberate mechanical impact to down the plane, a military official said yesterday. Russian air force Lt Gen Sergei Babinetov, who heads the Defense Ministry commission conducting the crash probe, said that a cockpit conversation recorder contained the captain's words that indicated a "special situation" that began unfolding on board the plane. Babinetov wouldn't elaborate on what may have led to the crash, but noted that it likely had been caused by several factors.

The Tu-154 of the Russian Defense Ministry crashed into the sea early Sunday, moments after taking off in good weather from the city of Sochi. It was carrying members of the Alexandrov Ensemble, widely known as the Red Army Choir, to a New Year's concert at a Russian military base in Syria. Babinetov said that the plane crashed 70 seconds after takeoff from an altitude of 250 meters while it was traveling at a speed of 360-370 kilometers per hour. "After deciphering the first flight recorder we have made a conclusion that there was no explosion on board," Babinetov said at a news conference. But asked if that means that investigators have ruled out a terror attack, Babinetov said "we aren't ruling that version yet."

"A terror attack doesn't always involve an explosion," he said. "Along with an explosion on board, there could have been some mechanical impact." He wouldn't offer any details, saying that Russian law-enforcement agencies are working on the case. Babinetov's words appeared to contradict a previous statement from Russia's top domestic security and counterterrorism agency, the FSB, which has said it found "no indications or facts pointing at the possibility of a terror attack or an act of sabotage."

Crash site

It said investigators were looking into whether the crash might have been caused by bad fuel, pilot error, equipment failure or objects stuck in the engines. Investigators have taken samples from a fuel tank used to fill the plane, which flew from Moscow's Chkalovsky military airport and stopped in Sochi for refueling. In an apparent attempt to downplay Babinetov's statement, Russian Transport Minister Maxim Sokolov emphasized that "the version of a terror attack isn't being considered as the main version."

Sokolov said search teams have completed the bulk of efforts to recover bodies and debris from the crash site. He said 19 bodies and more than 230 body fragments have been recovered, adding that 13 big fragments of the plane and about 2,000 smaller fragments also have been pulled from the seabed. Babinetov said that flights of the military's Tu-154s have been suspended during the investigation but said they will likely resume after the investigation is over. The Tu-154 is a Soviet-built three-engine airliner designed in the late 1960s. Russian airlines decommissioned the noisy, fuel-guzzling aircraft years ago, but the military and other government agencies continue using the plane, which is still loved by crews for its maneuverability and sturdiness. —AP

EUROPE REMAINS NEW YEAR'S GOAL FOR MIGRANTS IN SERBIA

'I CAN SPEAK ENGLISH, AND LONDON IS GOOD FOR ME'

BELGRADE, Serbia: In a child care center in Belgrade, a drawing of a Christmas tree is dotted with colorful paper stickers where young migrants have written their New Year's wishes. Samir, a 16-year-old from Afghanistan, points to his wish, written in English on a red circle. "I want to go to London," the teenager said. "My parents are in Afghanistan, but I want to go. I can speak English, and London is good for me." Samir is part of a group of young migrants who were placed temporarily at the government-run center in the Serbian capital after they were spotted roaming the streets.

Minors make up about 40 percent of the thousands of migrants in Serbia seeking ways to cross the heavily guarded borders of neighboring European Union nations Croatia or Hungary, according to the United Nations Children's Fund. Authorities and aid groups try to find the youths' families, either in their home countries or along the routes taken by migrants hoping to reach Europe. One child currently at the government center, for example, has agreed to live with a foster family in Serbia because his parents can't be located.

Other youth traveling alone or in small groups try to avoid detection and offers of aid because they hope to earn money once they reach Europe, but instead find hardship and cold sleeping in makeshift shelters or parks. "It would be an understatement to say they are in bad condition," said Tatjana Ristic, who works with Save the Children in Serbia. Save the Children and other nonprofit

groups work with migrants outside government facilities in a small hub called "Miksaliste" in downtown Belgrade. One room is reserved for children to draw, read or play. A large drawing depicts police with dogs guarding a border behind barbed wire.

'Fighting and killing'

Noman, a 15-year-old from Afghanistan, said he has tried twice to cross into Croatia. Police stopped him at the border both times and sent him back. "I want to go forward to Croatia and Italy," said Noman, who left Afghanistan nine months ago because "people are fighting and killing each other." Some of the minors set off with their families but were separated either by chance, or by smugglers who often split up families as a way to control them, aid workers say. Teenage migrants also are sent away from home by parents who want them to reach western Europe so they eventually can bring the rest of the family over, or earn money to support relatives who stayed behind.

These children - usually from Afghanistan or Pakistan - face additional pressure to succeed at any price, said Michel Saint-Lot, a UNICEF representative in Serbia. Saint-Lot recalled a 16-year-old from Afghanistan who tried to kill himself after his parents refused to let him return home. "A kid is sent on a mission....He felt that he was failing, he failed his family, he failed himself," Saint-Lot said. "The burden on those kids is enormous....They are adult without having lived the youth." — AP



SERBIA: Migrants warm themselves by a fire in an abandoned warehouse, in Belgrade, Serbia. — AP

RUSSIA, IRAN TALEBAN TIES IGNITES ANXIETY IN AFGHAN

KABUL: Allegations over Russia and Iran's deepening ties with the Taliban have ignited concerns of a renewed "Great Game" of proxy warfare in Afghanistan that could undermine US-backed troops and push the country deeper into turmoil. Moscow and Tehran insist their contact with insurgents is aimed at promoting regional security, but local and US officials who are already frustrated with Pakistan's perceived double-dealing in Afghanistan have expressed bitter skepticism.

Washington's long-time nemesis Iran is accused of covertly aiding the Taliban, and Russia is back to what observers call Cold War shenanigans to derail US gains at a time when uncertainty reigns over President-elect Donald Trump's Afghanistan policy. "(Russia's) narrative goes something like this: that the Taliban are the ones fighting Islamic State," top US commander in Afghanistan John Nicholson said recently, denouncing the "malign influence" of external powers. "This public legitimacy that Russia lends to the Taliban is not based on fact, but it is used as a way to essentially undermine the Afghan government and the NATO effort and bolster the belligerents. "Shifting to Iran, you have a similar situation. There have been linkages between the Iranians and the Taliban." Russia has officially provided military helicopters for Afghan forces, but simultaneously propped up the Taliban with arms, official and insurgent sources say. "We are particularly concerned about loads of Russian-made weapons recently seized from areas on the border with Tajikistan," a senior Afghan security official told AFP. "Cross-border support for the Taliban will further complicate the security situation in Afghanistan's north."

A Taliban commander told AFP the Russian support had helped the insurgents overrun the northern city of Kunduz in October for the second time in a year. Taliban representatives in recent months have also held several meetings with Russian officials in Tajikistan and Moscow, sources say. "No country should be in touch with destructive groups who are the enemies of Afghanistan. This shows disrespect towards the victims of war," interior ministry spokesman Sediq Siddiqi said. "We ask Russia and Iran to work with Afghans to defeat terrorism."

'Great fear'

Western diplomats in Kabul have privately voiced alarm that Russia is quietly filling its embassy ranks with Soviet era "old-timers" well versed in Cold War tactics, as relations with Washington turn sour over the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine. And this week Kabul vented fury over a summit between Russia, China and Pakistan in Moscow which agreed on a "flexible approach" to remove certain Taliban figures from sanctions lists. Alexander Mantytskiy, Russia's ambassador to Kabul, insists engagement with the insurgents is benign. "We have ties with the Taliban to ensure the security of our political offices, consulates and the security of central Asia," he told reporters this month. —AFP

SOUTH INDIA PARTY PICKS NEW LEADER

NEW DELHI: The party of Jayalalitha Jayaram, a powerful Indian politician who died earlier this month, picked one of the former leader's closest aides to succeed her yesterday, ending weeks of speculation. The death of Jayalalitha—a former film star popularly known as "Amma" or mother to her followers—aged 68 on December 5 sparked a massive outpouring of grief across southern Tamil Nadu state, with huge crowds lining the streets to pay tribute to her coffin. It also plunged the state into political uncertainty, leaving observers in doubt over whether potential successors to the leadership of the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party could command the mass loyalty she enjoyed.

Yesterday, the AIADMK announced on Twitter that it had elected her close friend, VK Sasikala, a 59-year-old former video cassette seller, as its new chief. Although Sasikala has never held any official position in the AIADMK or the state government before her election, she has long been known as "Chinnamma" (aunt) to the party because of her friendship with Jayalalitha. The two women met in the 1980s, kicking off a decades-long friendship dogged by corruption scandals and intermittent spells of bad blood. They fell out briefly after Jayalalitha lost power in 1996 when both were arrested on massive graft charges. —AFP



BEIJING: This photo shows nurses holding babies at the Xiyuege Centre in Beijing.—AFP

BABY BOOM AFTER CHINA ENDS ONE-CHILD RULING

'MORE CHILDREN BRING MORE BLESSINGS'

BEIJING: As soon as China abandoned its one-child policy a year ago, Zheng Xiaoyu and her husband started trying for a sibling for their nine-year-old son. Their efforts bore fruit with another boy—one of a million extra births this year. "The traditional Chinese thinking is that more children bring more blessings," Zheng said, recovering from the birth at a luxury convalescent home in Beijing. For years the couple dreamed of a second child to keep them company in their twilight years. "Neither me nor my husband is the only child in our families. We grew up in the company of our siblings," she said.

"Before the change, we questioned why we couldn't have a second child, why they had to limit everyone's desire to have children." Since the late 1970s, strict measures in the world's most populous country restricted most couples to only a single child, with fines for violators and even forced abortions. Zheng and her husband were employees of state-owned enterprises and faced losing their jobs if they violated the ban. Officials say it was a key contributor to China's economic boom.

But concerns over an ageing population, gender imbalances and a shrinking workforce pushed authorities to end the restriction and allow all couples a second child from January 1. Now China is undergoing a minor baby boom, with almost one million more newborns expected this year, National Health and Family Planning Commission deputy director Wang Pei'an said according to official media reports. More than 17.5 million births were expect-

ed in 2016, he told a conference in November—which would reverse a decline last year and be the highest figure since 2000. But while the end of the one-child policy swayed Zheng and her husband, it is unclear how much it contributed to this year's baby boom. Previous statistics show the increase was concentrated in the first half of the year, before the new policy could have an effect. And 2016 is the lunar year of the monkey—considered a particularly auspicious zodiac sign to be born under.

Bed of jade

In pajamas and slippers, Zheng was recovering at the gated Xiyuege Centre, or "Lucky Month Home", in Beijing, where Porsche and Lexus cars line the parking lot. It is a modern take on the 2,000-year-old practice of postpartum confinement or "zuoyezi"—literally "sitting the month"—in which new mothers stay in bed, keep warm and avoid certain foods. Traditionally they do not exercise, expose themselves to draughts of any kind, or bathe. There is no evidence for traditional claims that the practice will prevent diseases such as arthritis later in life.

But the 75-room Xiyuege Centre offers what nurses, managers and promotional materials all describe as "scientific" accompaniments to confinement: spa facilities where women can lie on a heated bed of jade, consume six specially calibrated meals a day to boost breast milk production while shedding pounds, and enjoy round-the-clock specialist care. Such insti-

tutions in recent years have turned the custom into a lucrative industry, now set to boom even further.

There were more than 760 such centers across the country generating revenues of approximately 4.2 billion Yuan (\$605 million) two years ago, according to website China Industry Information. It projected that sector turnover would more than double to 11 billion Yuan by 2019.

The Xiyuege Centre has seen clients recovering from their second pregnancies more than double this year, estimated Zheng Hui, the nurse managing infant care for VIP mothers, who pay more than \$1,000 a day for their stays. The oldest woman she had cared for was a 44-year-old, whose first child was already an undergraduate at college. "It's very clear that this year demand has gone up drastically. Customers are booking further and further in advance," said Hou Yanran, marketing manager of Xiyuege which plans to open a third branch in the capital. Women were calling to reserve spots a mere month into their pregnancies, she said.

The long-term impact of the new family planning rules remains unclear. Officials predicted a surge in births after a 2013 change that allowed couples a second child as long as one parent was without siblings. But it did not materialize. The Global Times newspaper this month cited family planning policy expert Yuan Xin as attributing the current uptick to the 2013 relaxation, with an increase from the two-child policy only coming in the next few years. —AFP

PHILIPPINE BOMBINGS LEAVE 39 WOUNDED

MANILA: At least 39 people have been injured in two separate bomb attacks in the Philippines, authorities said yesterday. In the first incident, two bombs exploded late Wednesday in the central island of Leyte, wounding 33 people who were watching a boxing match in Hilongos, government officials said. Another unexploded bomb was also found in the town, which is about 620 kilometers south of Manila, said the town's mayor Albert Villahermosa.

A bomb went off on a highway on the southern

island of Mindanao barely an hour later, wounding six people, the military said. "A lamppost was catapulted from the impact of the explosion," said Lieutenant Colonel Edgar Delos Reyes. The blast in Aleosan, hundreds of kilometers south of Hilongos, was close to the site of a Christmas Eve church bombing that injured 13. Police said it was too early to say if Wednesday's bombings were connected or what the perpetrators' motives might be.

Mindanao has been wracked by bombings and oth-

er forms of violence carried out by Muslim extremists who consider the region their ancestral homeland, waging a decades-long independence struggle that is believed to have claimed more than 120,000 lives. Muslim extremists have also been blamed for attacks outside Mindanao, such as the discovery of a bomb near the US embassy in Manila in November. In the deadliest such attack recently, 15 people were killed in an explosion in President Rodrigo Duterte's hometown of Davao in Mindanao in September. — AFP



TOKYO: A visitor leaves after praying at the Yasukuni Shrine. (Inset) Japan's Defense Minister Tomomi Inada visiting the Shrine. — AFP Photos

JAPAN DEFENSE MINISTER VISITS YASUKUNI SHRINE

'YASUKUNI SHRINE HONORS MILLIONS OF JAPANESE WAR DEAD'

TOKYO: Japan's hawkish defense minister prayed yesterday at a controversial war shrine in Tokyo the day after accompanying Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on a symbolic visit of reconciliation to Pearl Harbor, drawing condemnation from China and South Korea. Yasukuni Shrine honors millions of mostly Japanese war dead, but is contentious for also enshrining senior military and political figures convicted of war crimes by an international tribunal. The indigenous Shinto religious shrine has for decades been a flashpoint for criticism from countries such as South Korea and China, which suffered under Japan's colonialism and military aggression in the first half of the 20th century.

Tomomi Inada's visit was her first since taking the key defense portfolio in August, though she has frequently gone in the past. "By taking a future-oriented stance, I offered my prayers to build peace for Japan and the world," she told reporters. She noted that Barack Obama—"the president of a country that dropped atomic bombs"—had gone to Hiroshima earlier this year, while Abe "voiced words to console the spirits of the dead" at Pearl Harbor, though she did not mention that Japan attacked it. Inada made the pilgrimage the day after, in Japan time, Abe and Obama's joint visit to the site of the Japanese military's December 7, 1941 air assault on the navy base in Hawaii that drew the United States into World War II.

Inada is a close confidante of Abe, who said on a golf course that he had "no comment" on her action. The visit, which Jiji Press and Nippon TV reported appeared to be the first by a defense chief since 2002, drew the ire of China and South Korea. It is "deeply ironic after the so-called Pearl Harbor reconciliation tour", Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters in Beijing. "It will only make the people of the world more on-guard against Japan's actions and intentions." South Korea summoned a senior official from the Japanese embassy in Seoul to protest. "Our government cannot but deplore" the visit, foreign ministry spokesman Cho June-Hyuck said in a statement, while in separate comments the defense ministry expressed "grave concern and regret".

'Abe's blessing'

The move by Inada, who holds staunchly nationalist views, was an attempt to appease the government's conservative base after Abe's conciliatory gesture to the US, analysts said. "As Ms Inada was present at Prime Minister Abe's visit to Hawaii, she wiped off some-if not all-of her reputation as a revisionist," said Tetsuro Kato, emeritus professor of Japanese politics at Hitotsubashi University. "But she also had to address frustrations from right-wingers among her supporters," he told AFP. Koichi Nakano, professor of politics

at Sophia University and a vocal Abe critic, said Inada's decision to go to Yasukuni was not a rogue act.

"Yasukuni is not a normal Shinto shrine," he said. "Naturally, she went with Mr Abe's blessing." The conservatism of Inada, a member of parliament from western Japan's Fukui prefecture, is well known. She wrote in 2011 that Japan—the only country in the world to suffer atomic bomb attacks—should consider acquiring nuclear weapons. In August, after becoming defense minister, she said that Japan "should not consider arming itself with nuclear weapons at this moment". Inada argued yesterday that offering respect to war dead should be universally accepted, echoing the argument repeated by Japanese lawmakers who frequently visit Yasukuni.

Abe and Obama paid homage to the more than 2,400 Americans killed in Japan's surprise attack against the Pacific Fleet and stressed the power of reconciliation. The prime minister's Pearl Harbor visit followed Obama's May journey to Hiroshima, the scene of the world's first atomic attack days in August 1945. Abe has himself avoided Yasukuni after going there three years ago to commemorate his first anniversary as prime minister. That sparked fury in Beijing and Seoul and earned a rare diplomatic rebuke from close ally Washington. — AFP

RELIGION CONTROL IN TIBET WILL INCREASE

BEIJING: The Communist Party's control over religion in Tibet can only increase, the region's top official was quoted as saying yesterday, vowing to step up efforts to expose the "sinister intentions" of exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama. Chinese troops marched in and took control of Tibet in 1950 in what Beijing calls a "peaceful liberation". Rights groups say China tramples on Tibet's religious and cultural traditions, charges Beijing denies.

The Dalai Lama, denounced by Beijing as a dangerous separatist, fled to India in 1959 following a failed uprising against the Chinese. He says he simply wants genuine autonomy for his homeland. In excerpts of a speech on religious policy carried by the official Tibet Daily, Tibet's Communist Party chief Wu Yingjie said Tibetan Buddhism had a fine tradition of patriotism and had made important contributions to maintaining national unity.

But Tibetan Buddhism needs to march with the times, and at the same time as passing down and teaching its traditional precepts it needs to put more focus on teachings that "benefit social harmony and move with the times", Wu said. "The party's leadership work over religion can only strengthen and not weaken," he added. Wu, who took up his post in August, used one of his first public speeches the following month to denounce the Dalai Lama, signaling Beijing's hard line is unlikely to change under his leadership.

He continued with the theme in his latest comments. "Continue to deepen the exposure and criticism of the Dalai clique's reactionaries on politics, its falseness on religion, its deceptive methods," he said. "Educate and guide the broad mass of monks, nuns and believers to clearly recognize the reactionary nature and sinister intentions of the Dalai clique to split the motherland."

Believers need to draw a clear line in the sand between them and the Dalai Lama and understand that unity and stability are good and separatism and chaos bad, Wu added. China says its rule has brought prosperity and stability, rejecting claims from Tibetan exiles and rights groups of widespread repression. Representatives of the Dalai Lama, a Nobel Peace laureate, held rounds of talks with China until 2010, but formal dialogue has stalled amid leadership changes in Beijing and a crackdown in Tibet. — Reuters



FLORIDA: US President-elect Donald Trump shakes hands with Howard Kessler in December at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida. —AFP

TRUMP TAKES CREDIT FOR 8,000 JOBS, OBAMA TALKS

ANNOUNCEMENT UNLIKELY TO HAVE A MAJOR IMPACT

PALM BEACH: After weeks of giving only brief comments to the media, Donald Trump made a series of public statements Wednesday, applauding the return of 8,000 jobs to the US and hailing his discussions with President Barack Obama. In one of his cameos on the front steps of his Mar-a-Lago resort in Palm Beach, Florida, Trump touted plans by a Japanese mogul to bring those jobs to the United States. They could be the first of the 50,000 jobs tech billionaire Masayoshi Son promised to create after meeting with the president-elect earlier in December.

In the grand scheme of the economy, the jobs announcement is unlikely to have a major impact. Still, it's another example of how Trump is trying to stoke voters' belief that he is actively fighting for their well-being. Son is the founder and chief executive of SoftBank, one of Japan's largest technology outfits. He owns the US mobile carrier Sprint, which Trump said Wednesday would be moving 5,000 jobs "back" to the United States. Son also controls OneWeb, which Trump said would hire 3,000 workers.

It was unclear whether the president-elect was referencing the Dec. 6 commitment by Son to invest \$50 billion in the United States and create 50,000 jobs. Trump said the addition of 8,000 jobs was "because of what's happening and the spirit and the hope." Still, the US job market has been robust for much of 2016. Employers have added more than 2.2 million jobs over the past 12 months - a sign of economic health that pre-dates Trump's presidential victory. Sprint has struggled since its 2013 acquisition by SoftBank.

Excited to work

The carrier shed roughly 9,000 workers between 2012 and 2016, reducing its staff to 30,000, according to annual reports. Sprint's attempt to join with rival T-Mobile failed in 2014 after regulators objected to combining two of the four largest mobile telecom companies in the United States. Analysts say a Trump administration would be more likely to approve telecom mergers, including a deal between Sprint and T-Mobile. Sprint Chief Executive Marcelo Claure said in a statement that the company is "excited" to work with Trump.

"We believe it is critical for business and government to partner together to create more job opportunities in the US and ensure prosperity for all Americans," Claure said. The Sprint jobs announcement came after tensions rose and fell Wednesday between Trump and Obama. Trump has made it clear that it didn't sit well with him when Obama recently boasted that he would have won the election if he'd been running.

Trump appeared yet again Wednesday night on those steps, this time alongside legendary boxing entrepreneur Don King, who appeared to be one of several guests attending a dinner party. King carried about a dozen flags, including those of the US and Israel; wore two big diamond necklaces, one of the Star of David and one of the American flag; and sported a large pin featuring a picture of Trump. Trump addressed a range of questions, from tensions over Israeli settlements to accusations that Russia hacked the US election.

Total disdain

On Russia, Trump said computers have "complicated lives vary greatly." He did not address calls from some on Capitol Hill for sanctions against Russia, saying, "We don't have the kind of security we need." He added, "Nobody knows what's going on," and said he believes "we have to get on with our lives." With King by his side, Trump dismissed days of tense remarks by the outgoing and incoming presidents about who would win if they were to hypothetically run against each other, saying he and Obama had "a very, very good talk."

"We talked about it and smiled about it and nobody is ever going to know because we are never going to be going against each other," Trump said. Earlier, he had accused Obama of throwing up "inflammatory" roadblocks during the transition of power and said his administration was treating Israel with "total disdain." "Doing my best to disregard the many inflammatory President O statements and roadblocks," Trump tweeted Wednesday morning. "Thought it was going to be a smooth transition - NOT!" White House spokesman Eric Schultz said Obama phoned Trump.

"Today's call, like the others since the election, was positive and focused on continuing a smooth and effective transition," Schultz said. "The president and president-elect committed to staying in touch over the next several weeks." Trump also took direct issue with the Obama administration's decision to let a United Nations Security Council resolution critical of Israel pass. —AP

OBAMA EXPANDS ENVIRONMENTAL LEGACY WITH WESTERN MONUMENTS

SALT LAKE CITY: President Barack Obama expanded his environmental legacy in the final days of his presidency with national monument designations on lands in Utah and Nevada that have become flashpoints over use of public land in the US West. The Bears Ears National Monument in Utah will cover 1.35 million acres in the Four Corners region, the White House announced Wednesday. In a victory for Native American tribes and conservationists, the designation protects land that is considered sacred and is home to an estimated 100,000 archaeological sites, including ancient cliff dwellings.

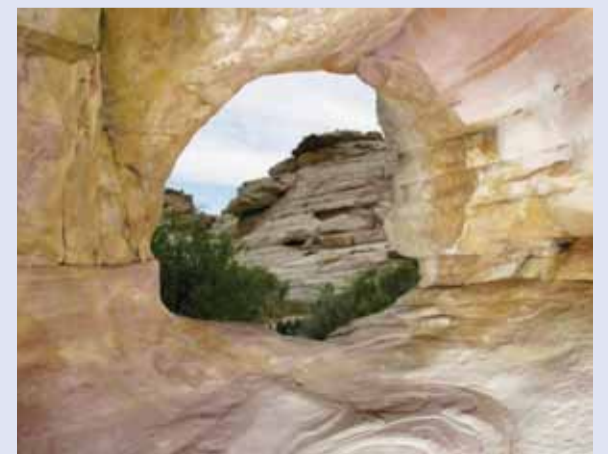
It's a blow for state Republican leaders and many rural residents who say it will add another layer of unnecessary federal control and close the area to new energy development, a common refrain in the battle over use of the American West's vast open spaces. Utah's attorney general vowed to sue. In Nevada, a 300,000-acre Gold Butte National Monument outside Las Vegas would protect a scenic and ecologically fragile area near where rancher Cliven Bundy led an armed standoff with government agents in 2014. It includes rock art, artifacts, rare fossils and recently discovered dinosaur tracks.

The White House and conservationists said both sites were at risk of looting and vandalism. "Today's actions will help protect this cultural legacy and will ensure that future generations are able to enjoy and appreciate these scenic and historic landscapes," Obama said in a statement. Obama's creation and expansion of monuments over the course of his eight years in office covers more acreage than any other president. His administration has rushed to safeguard vulnerable areas ahead of President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration. It has blocked new mining claims outside Yellowstone National Park and new oil drilling in the Arctic Ocean.

Obama's creation and expansion of monuments covers more acreage than any other president. But Trump's upcoming presidency has tempered the excitement of tribal leaders and conservationists, with some worrying he could try to reverse or reduce some of Obama's expansive land protections. Utah's Republican senators vowed to work toward just that. "This arrogant act by a lame duck president will not stand," US Sen. Mike Lee tweeted about Bears Ears, which is named for a set of rock formations. Sen. Orrin Hatch said Obama showed "an astonishing and egregious abuse of executive power" and that "far-left special interest groups matter more to him than the people who have lived on and cared for Utah's lands for generations."

A place of refuge

Christy Goldfuss, managing director of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, said the Antiquities Act that allows a president to create monuments does not give a president authority to undo a designation, a rule the courts have upheld. She acknowledged that Congress could take action, though. Opponents agreed the area is a natural treasure worth preserving but worried the designation would restrict oil and gas development as well as residents' ability to camp, bike, hike and gather wood. New mining or energy development will be banned, but existing operations won't be affected, federal officials said.



LAS VEGAS: This file photo shows rock formations in Gold Butte, located about 90 miles northeast of Las Vegas. —AP

US ACTING AS GLOBAL POLICEMAN FOR FINANCIAL CRIMES

WASHINGTON: Handing out multibillion-dollar fines right and left to domestic and foreign financial giants, the United States has taken on the role of the unforgiving global cop of the business world. In stark contrast to the relative inertia of white-collar law enforcement in Europe, Washington most recently brought the hammer down on Deutsche Bank and Credit Suisse, which sold junk-filled, mortgage-backed securities ahead of the 2008 financial meltdown.

Deutsche Bank has agreed to a payout of \$7.2 billion, while Credit Suisse settled for \$5.3 billion to resolve American authorities' allegations and avoid the lengthy headache of a trial. Instead of dragging financial firms to court, the US has taken them to the cashier. American giants have not been spared: JP Morgan Chase, Citigroup, Morgan Stanley and Bank of America collectively have shelled out \$40 billion to settle cases linked to toxic, crisis-era financial products. "There's a kind of fundamentalism to US law," said Nicolas Veron, a senior fellow at the Brussels-based think tank Bruegel and the Washington-based Peterson Institute. "If you break the law, punishment comes down."

Justice without borders

To be sure, British authorities have taken action over the Libor interest rate manipulation scandal but such retribution remains rare in the rest of Europe. "It isn't so much a difference in the rules as in the manner in which they are applied. Things are much more severe in the United States," Veron told AFP, adding that European countries "do not dare" punish their national flagship companies.

The American legal framework nevertheless offers the United States the means to extend the long arm of the law well beyond its borders. In the most recent cases, the United States imposed \$2.6 billion in criminal penalties on the Brazilian construction conglomerate Odebrecht—most of which will be paid to Brazil—and a half billion on the Israeli generic drugmaker Teva Pharmaceutical. Both matters involved corruption occurring outside the United States.

The United States pioneered the prosecution of such foreign bribery cases, adopting the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act in 1977 in the wake of the Watergate scandal, which allows US officials to hunt down corrupt payments abroad when the companies involved are traded on Wall Street or are otherwise exposed to US jurisdiction. In the decades since, member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development have adopted similar laws but do not enforce them with the same vigor or frequency. Given the means and opportunity to apply its laws "extraterritorially" with such regularity, the United States has become a kind of worldwide anticorruption police force, and buttressed its geopolitical influence. "There's a real nexus between economics and foreign affairs," said Aaron Klein, head of the center on regulation and markets at the Brookings Institution in Washington. "The next war is more likely to be fought with bonds than with bombs."

Making Apple pay

In a different kind of case, Volkswagen's sprawling emissions-cheating scandal also has shown the might of the US legal system and its ability to bring major companies to task. To compensate drivers and repair damage to the environment, the giant German automaker has agreed to pay out more than \$15 billion so far, and doubtless will have to pay more before putting the scandal behind it. But the company still could face criminal charges. In Europe, authorities have also opened investigations into Volkswagen but by their own admission, the results will be much less spectacular. "In the European Union, the way to damages is more complicated than in the United States," EU Justice Commissioner Vera Jourova said in September. — AFP



FLORIDA: President-elect Donald Trump gives a thumbs up after speaking to reporters at Mar-a-Lago, in Palm Beach, Florida. — AP

SADDAM STILL HAUNTS WASHINGTON, 10 YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH

WASHINGTON: Ten years after Saddam Hussein's execution, the ghost of the Iraqi strongman still haunts America, serving as a potent reminder of its broken ambitions to bring stability and democracy to the Middle East. When Saddam was hung in Baghdad on December 30, 2007, then president George W. Bush already knew that the invasion of Iraq, which had already left 3,000 US forces dead, had not yielded the progress Washington sought. "Many difficult choices and further sacrifices lie ahead. Yet the safety and security of the American people require that we not relent in ensuring that Iraq's young democracy continues to progress," Bush said at the time.

The democratic Iraq that Bush had envisioned turned out to be little more than a pipe dream, with the Americans failing to stop the deadly spiral of sectarian violence in the country. The Sunni minority that once ruled Iraq grew increasingly resentful toward a predominantly Shiite government—a resentment that helped fuel the rise of the ultra-radical Islamic State group that counts former Saddam military officials in its ranks. More than 5,000 US soldiers are still on the ground providing critical support to an Iraqi army still unable to alone man a war against the violent extremist fighters. The American public, which once gave strong support to the 2003 US-led invasion, is still recovering from the trauma of war.

The failures in Iraq heavily influenced US President Barack Obama's decision not to intervene militarily against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the country's bloody civil war that will soon stretch into its sixth year. Meanwhile, Obama's successor Donald Trump built his presidential campaign in part on pledges that the United States would never again engage in "regime change" or "nation building." Trump also said repeatedly that unlike his opponent Democrat Hillary Clinton, he was against the war in Iraq—despite telling radio personality Howard Stern in a 2002 interview that he would support an invasion.

'Clueless'

More than a decade later, some American policy-makers are still trying to understand the reasons for the failure. John

Nixon, the first CIA analyst to interrogate Saddam after his capture in December 2003, says in a new book that US intelligence and White House officials had mistaken views of the Iraqi leader. Far from being an all-powerful dictator, Saddam during his last years in power "seemed clueless about what had been happening inside Iraq," Nixon wrote in a recent newspaper column ahead of the yesterday release of "Debriefing the President: The Interrogation of Saddam Hussein." "He was inattentive to what his government was doing, had no real plan for the defense of Iraq and could not comprehend the immensity of the approaching storm," Nixon said. "Saddam was busy writing novels in 2003. He was no longer running the government."

Complex picture

But top US officials firmly believed that toppling Saddam's Baathist regime would lead to peace in Iraq, Nixon said. Nixon tells a story of briefing Bush in the Oval Office in 2007, an exchange that perhaps underscores why the US was doomed to fail in Iraq. Bush asked Nixon to describe Saddam's character. "I told him that he was disarming at first and used self-deprecating wit to put you at ease," he said. "The president looked as if he was going to lose his cool. I quickly explained that the real Saddam was sarcastic, arrogant and sadistic, which seemed to calm Bush down." Bush "blamed the agency (CIA) for everything that went wrong and called its analysis 'guesswork,' while hearing only what he wanted to hear," Nixon said.

The former analyst paints a complex picture of Saddam as a brutal dictator who through methods like murder, threats and intimidation was nevertheless able to achieve an equilibrium in ethnically diverse Iraq. "Although I found Saddam to be thoroughly unlikeable, I came away with a grudging respect for how he was able to maintain the Iraqi nation as a whole for as long as he did," according to an excerpt of Nixon's book published in Time. "It is improbable that a group like ISIS would have been able to enjoy the kind of success under his repressive regime." — AFP

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Debbie Reynolds, 'Singin' in the Rain' Star Dies at 84

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This undated file photo shows US actor Gene Kelly, who died 02 February at the age of 83 at his home in Beverly Hills, California, with actress Debbie Reynolds from the movie "Singin' in the Rain." — AFP





This file photo taken on January 25, 2015 shows actresses Debbie Reynolds (left), recipient of the Screen Actors Guild Life Achievement Award, and Carrie Fisher posing in the press room at the 21st Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at The Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, California. — AP/AFP photos



This file photo taken on April 01, 2010 shows US actress Debbie Reynolds posing for photographs during a press conference in London, on April 1, 2010.

DEBBIE REYNOLDS DIES DAY AFTER DAUGHTER CARRIE FISHER



In this March 8, 1983, file photo, actress Debbie Reynolds returns for a curtain call after a performance of "Woman of the Year" at New York's palace theatre.



This file photo taken on May 20, 1998 shows actress Debbie Reynolds walking with her son as they arrive for the funeral of the legendary entertainer Frank Sinatra at the Good Shepard Catholic Church in Beverly Hills.

Debbie Reynolds, the "Singin' in the Rain" actress who tap-danced her way into American hearts as a star of Hollywood's Golden Age, died Wednesday, grief-stricken over daughter Carrie Fisher's death a day earlier. The 84-year-old suffered a stroke at son Todd Fisher's Beverly Hills home after telling him "I miss her so much, I want to be with Carrie," he was quoted as telling celebrity news website TMZ.

Reynolds was the girl-next-door lead of a string of hit musicals in the 1950s after being discovered by MGM studio bosses at a beauty contest in southern California, going on to earn an Oscar nomination for playing the title role in 1964's "The Unsinkable Molly Brown." "We have lost a unique talent and a national treasure. Coming so close to the death of her daughter, Carrie Fisher, this is truly a double tragedy," Screen Actors Guild president Gabrielle Carteris said in a statement.

"Their imprint on our culture is profound, and they both will live on." Reynolds is best remembered as sweet but shy voice artist Kathy Selden in "Singin' in the Rain" (1952) and holding her own despite being cast opposite tap-dancing superstar Gene Kelly, who was more than twice her age. Off-screen, she was known as the wronged party in one of Hollywood's most notorious scandals, when her husband, singer Eddie Fisher, left her for her friend and fellow screen icon Elizabeth Taylor. Reynolds' daughter Carrie Fisher, who catapulted to worldwide stardom as rebel warrior Princess Leia in the original "Star Wars" trilogy, died in Los Angeles on Tuesday, four days after suffering a heart attack on a transatlantic flight. Media reports said Reynolds had been at her son's house to discuss funeral arrangements.

'Broken heart'

Fans and fellow celebrities struggled to come to terms with another devastating blow so soon after Fisher's death. "Debbie Reynolds was one of the last of Hollywood Royalty. It breaks my heart that she is gone," "Star Trek" actor William Shatner said on Twitter. He added, referencing the long string of celebrity deaths this year: "I'd hoped that my grieving was done for 2016." "There is nothing harder than having to bury a child. Debbie died of a broken heart, but she's with her daughter now," tweeted Shatner's "Star Trek" co-star turned social media personality George Takei. "Dear Debbie Reynolds, I totally get it. Hug her so tight for all of us," added "Charmed" and "Who's the Boss" actress Alyssa Milano.

"I can't remember a year ending with so many bold faced obituaries. Godspeed," morning chat show host Al Roker said, posting photos of Reynolds, Fisher, singer George Michael and 1980s sitcom actor Alan Thicke—all of whom died this month. Reynolds, who received a humanitarian award at the Academy's "Honorary Oscars" last year, was just 19 when she got her big break in "Singin' in the Rain," which celebrates Hollywood's transition from the silent era into "talkies." Her 2013 autobiography "Unsinkable: A Memoir" detailed the highs and lows of her rocky personal life and a career which was still going strong into her 80s as she performed her one-woman stage show.



In this Feb 15, 1984, file photo, actress Debbie Reynolds appears at Hollywood Walk of Fame ceremonies in Los Angeles.



In this Jan 25, 2015, file photo, Carrie Fisher, right, presents her mother Debbie Reynolds with the Screen Actors Guild life achievement award at the 21st annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles.

"'Singin' in the Rain' and childbirth were the hardest things I ever had to do in my life," she wrote in an earlier autobiography entitled "Debbie." Reynolds was known at one time as the foremost collector of Hollywood memorabilia. Taylor's "Cleopatra" headdress and Marilyn Monroe's billowing "Seven Year Itch" frock would become part of the 4,000-piece haul of costumes, props and furniture, most of which Reynolds eventually auctioned for more than \$25 million.



This file photo taken on January 19, 1997 shows actress Debbie Reynolds waving as she arrives for the 1997 Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills.



In this Sept 8, 1982, file photo, actress Debbie Reynolds poses on a grand piano at a New York restaurant, as she promotes the revival of the hit musical "The Unsinkable Molly Brown."

Wholesome heroine

Mary Frances Reynolds was born on April 1, 1932 in El Paso, Texas, the second child of railroad carpenter Raymond Francis Reynolds and his wife Maxine. Now synonymous with tap, Reynolds had never danced professionally, according to the Internet Movie Database, when picked to star in "Singin' in the Rain." Several more MGM musicals followed, with Reynolds typically cast as a wholesome young heroine, before she turned to more serious screen acting, as well as a career on Broadway. Married three times, Reynolds once said she had more luck selecting restaurants than men.

First, she had to overcome the humiliation of losing Fisher to Taylor, although the two women remained close until Taylor's death in 2011. In another turn of misfortune, Reynolds's second husband, shoe magnate Harry Karl, gambled away most of her savings. Her third marriage to real estate developer Richard Hamlett in 1985 wasn't much more successful, ending in divorce in 1996. To support the family, Reynolds performed at her casino in Las Vegas, where she housed her memorabilia collection until it shut in 1997.

Reynolds, admired for her versatility, starred in her own sitcom, "The Debbie Reynolds Show," in 1969-1970 and was also known for her Emmy-nominated role as Grace's quirky mother on NBC's "Will & Grace." Her career in cinema was largely over by the 1970s, though she continued to star in TV movies and series. She also acted on stage and portrayed Liberace's mother Frances opposite Michael Douglas in 2013's "Behind the Candelabra." "Bright Lights: Starring Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds," a documentary about Reynolds's at-times rocky relationship with her daughter, premiered at this year's Cannes Film Festival and is due to air on HBO in March. — AFP



In this May 22, 1955, file photo, actress Debbie Reynolds entertains at 8th Army headquarters in Seoul, South Korea.



In this April 19, 1955, file photo, singer Eddie Fisher and his fiancée, actress Debbie Reynolds, look at each other at Idlewild Airport in New York.



In this May 21, 2013 file photo, actress Debbie Reynolds poses for a portrait in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Reactions to the death of actress
Debbie Reynolds

Reaction to the death of actress Debbie Reynolds Wednesday at 84, a day after her daughter, Carrie Fisher, died:

- "Debbie Reynolds, a legend and my movie mom. I can't believe this happened one day after Carrie. My heart goes out to Billie." - Albert Brooks, on Twitter.
- "Debbie went to be with Carrie. She always worried about her. Carrie left too soon and now they are together again. My heart is literally broken.... An inspiration on every level. A Legend of course, the epitome of clean cut American optimism, dancing with Gene Kelly as an equal, a warrior woman who never stopped working." - Actress Debra Messing, from a lengthy statement on Instagram. Reynolds played Messing's mother on the TV show "Will and Grace."
- "She was beautiful and generous. It seems like only yesterday she was having lunch here at the house and we were discussing the possibility of working together in a new show." -Carol Channing.
- "I was blessed to work with this remarkable woman for 45 almost 50 years. That makes for a very rare bond and unique relationship. She was generous to a fault, never caring who got the laugh from the audience. I Will always love her." -Rip Torn, who worked with Reynolds for decades in her Las Vegas stage show.
- "Truly heartbroken to hear @DebbieReynolds1 has died. She was a wonderfully warm friend and colleague. Praying for Todd & Billie. #RIPDebbie" - Joan Collins on Twitter.
- "How shocked we were to learn that Debbie Reynolds passed away just a day after her daughter Carrie. I loved & worked both of these icons." - Carl Reiner on Twitter.
- "I can't imagine what Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds' family are going through this week. I send all of my love." - Ellen DeGeneres on Twitter.
- "Debbie Reynolds was one of the last of Hollywood Royalty. It breaks my heart that she is gone. I'd hoped that my grieving was done for 2016." - William Shatner on Twitter.
- "Debbie Reynolds cd sing, dance & gave dazzling performances. RIP doesn't sound right for her or Carrie-I hope they're somewhere having fun" - Mia Farrow, on Twitter.
- "The loss of #DebbieReynolds 1 day after #CarrieFisher is epic. 2016 has taken a piece of all of us" - Actress Ileana Douglas on Twitter.
- "A final curtain made of tears #DebbieReynolds #CarrieFisher" - Actress Rose McGowan on Twitter.
- "Today is officially a sad day. As a mother my heart goes out to Debbie Reynolds and her daughter Carrie Fisher. RIP DB and CF" - Actress Zoe Saldana on Twitter.
- "The unbearable loss of a child and now this. Rest In Peace Carrie and Debbie, sending our love and prayers to the Fisher, Lord family" - Actress Lisa Rinna on Twitter.
- "My thoughts and prayers are with the family during this time of unimaginable loss. Two generations in two days." - Chaz Bono on Twitter.
- "Deepest condolences to the family of Debbie Reynolds. I was just notified of her passing. Such a talented charming lady & a good mother" - Actress Barbara Eden on Twitter.
- "There is nothing harder than having to bury a child. Debbie died of a broken heart, but she's with her daughter now." - Actor George Takei on Twitter.
- "Dear Debbie Reynolds, I totally get it. Hug her so tight for all of us." - Actress Alyssa Milano on Twitter.
- "I can't imagine what kind of pain the family of Carrie Fisher and Debbie Reynolds are feeling right now. My prayers are with them." - Actress Gabourey Sidibe on Twitter. — AP

Mundane items ooze love, loss at failed-relationships museum

After her husband asked for a divorce, Amber Clisura gave back her engagement ring, kicked him out of the house and tossed everything that reminded her of the ruined marriage. Except for one item: a polished steel barbecue smoker that her future ex-husband had fashioned for her from an old oil drum.

"It sat there on the patio and rusted and rusted, and it became a sad symbol of the relationship," Clisura said. The four-legged smoker had been a treasured handmade gift, but eventually Clisura couldn't bear to look at it. She considered giving it to a neighbor or selling it for scrap but then read about a call for submissions at the new Los Angeles branch of the Museum of Broken Relationships.

The original museum opened in Zagreb, Croatia, in 2010 after growing out of a touring collection that crisscrossed Europe, Asia and the U.S. On display in Zagreb are artifacts from failed unions, most of them mundane under ordinary circumstances. A single stiletto heel. A wine opener. A worn old Snoopy doll. But when isolated in a glass case or hanging on a white wall and accompanied by a caption, the objects become imbued with heartache or regret. Or freedom.

In Los Angeles, there's a blue chiffon top a woman wore to a cafe where her husband told her he was leaving. An envelope of leaves mailed from Canada to San Diego so a long-distance paramour could experience changing seasons in Southern California. A jar of pickles purchased for a first love who, the donor explained, "stopped texting before I could give it to him." After some deliberation, Clisura, a textile artist and fashion designer from LA, decided to donate the smoker and drove it to the museum's warehouse.

"A woman met me downstairs, and as I was handing it over, I burst into tears," Clisura said, laughing now. "It felt like a weight was lifted." The museum representative offered to give her a hug. Employees have embraced their share of brokenhearted donors eager for closure, said director Alexis Hyde at the museum's location on Hollywood Boulevard, a thoroughfare that, she noted, has been called the "boulevard of broken dreams." Hyde has been known to brush away her own tears as she opens boxes containing donations.

"It's cathartic the way a good, sad movie is cathartic," she said. "On some level, you know this person's moving on, and they've survived." Hyde pointed out not all the fizzled unions represented in the 3,500-square-foot museum were romantic. One donor had an irreparable relationship with her father. Another split from a

church. A California woman who donated a Texas license plate said she separated from the Lone Star State. "My broken relationship was with myself," said Andree Vermeulen, whose donated items are the museum's most talked about. The actress sent in a pair of breast implants she had removed after ending a toxic relationship with a man who made disparaging comments about her body.

Vermeulen, who lives in Los Angeles, said the implants "never felt right," and since they've been out, she has "reached a place where I feel very grounded and confident." An outpouring of support on social media gave her further confidence to use the experience as fodder during storytelling performances in which she discusses body image and standards of beauty.

Vermeulen said the donation, now displayed in a glass case in the LA museum's main room, symbolized the final chapter of the relationship, and her scars "mark a story and a time in my life that taught me a lot about myself." More than 2,000 items comprise the museum's two brick-and-mortar collections and touring shows, which have made stops in San Francisco, Helsinki, Finland and Hamburg, Germany. A show in Seoul, South Korea, featured a donated Jeep that had to be taken apart and brought in by crane. Donations arrive so regularly that the LA site hopes to continually cycle in new items to keep the exhibit fresh.

Donors are anonymous or identified only by first name. They generally write just a few sentences as a backstory, but some items, including a simple green coffee mug at the LA site, come with explanations that go on for hundreds of words. The caption accompanying a group of old cassette tapes reads: "The music made me dream." Pieces are displayed across six exhibition rooms in the ground-floor location that lures tourists who stroll Hollywood Boulevard. Visitors pay \$18 admission and are encouraged to pop into a private "confessional," where they can write about their own breakups.

Olinka Vistica and Drazen Grubisic, the Croatian artists who conceived the original exhibition on a whim, are shocked by its staying power. Hyde isn't. "It's so resonant," she said. "The audience is so large for it." Clisura admitted she hadn't yet been to the museum to see the old rusted smoker. "I wasn't sure I was ready," she said. But she's since changed her mind and is planning a trip with her new boyfriend. — AP



This file photo shows a woman posing for pictures beside a painting entitled 'Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani' (The Lady with an Ermine) by Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci during a photocall at the National Gallery in London. — AFP

Poland to buy Da Vinci's 'Lady with an Ermine'

Poland's culture ministry is expected yesterday to buy a private art collection worth two billion euros that includes Leonardo da Vinci's "Lady with an Ermine". The 15th-century portrait of a young woman holding a white ermine, a kind of short-tailed weasel, is one of just four known paintings of women by the Renaissance master. Another is the Mona Lisa. After announcing it was in talks to buy the collection earlier this month, the ministry released a statement saying it would "sign an agreement regarding the final settlement of the status" of the works on Thursday.

Currently owned by the Princes Czartoryski Foundation and housed at the National Museum in the southern city of Krakow, the collection numbers thousands of items. In addition to the da Vinci, which is insured for about 350 million euros (\$365 million), its other big names include a Rembrandt and drawings by Renoir. Princess Izabela Czartoryska founded the collection in 1801 to preserve Polish and European works while her country was partitioned by neighbors Austria, Prussia and Russia. The culture ministry has said it wants to ensure the collection never leaves Poland, which is a possibility as long as it is owned by the foundation, whose 76-year-old president, Prince Adam Karol Czartoryski, lives abroad.

The small oil painting on wood is believed to depict Cecilia Gallerani, the teenage mistress of Ludovico Sforza, the Duke of Milan and one of da Vinci's patrons. Bought by the Czartoryski family in Italy in 1798 and taken to Poland, the portrait was looted by the invading Nazi Germans in 1939 but restituted after the war. — AFP



Amber Clisura poses for a picture next to the meat smoker she donated at the new Museum of Broken Relationships in Los Angeles. — AP photos



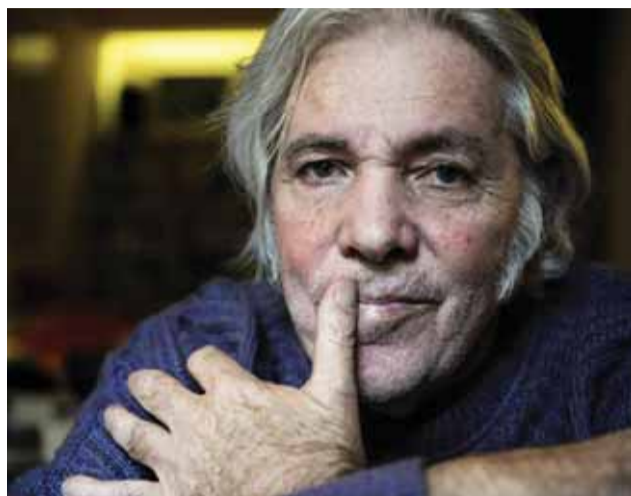
An envelope of leaves mailed from Canada to San Diego so a long-distance paramour could experience changing seasons in Southern California is displayed.



A jar of pickles purchased for a first love is displayed.



A visitor tours the new Museum of Broken Relationships.

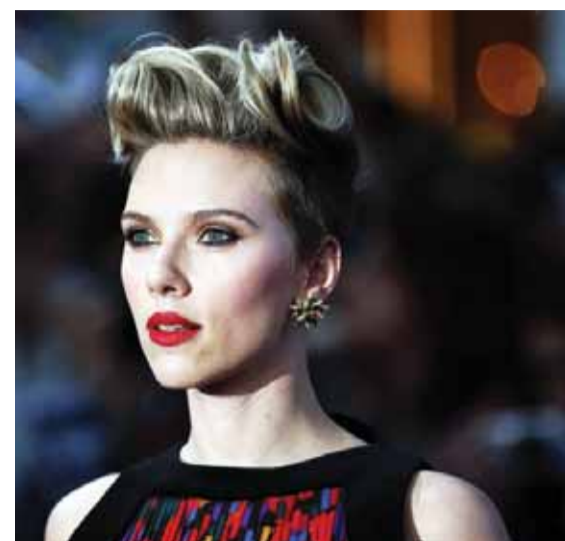


This file photo shows French singer and songwriter Pierre Barouh posing at his home in Paris. — AFP

'A MAN AND A WOMAN' SINGER PIERRE BAROUH DIES AT 82

French songwriter, composer and singer Pierre Barouh, who penned and sang the international hit "A Man And A Woman" from the eponymous 1966 film, died yesterday aged 82, his wife said. Barouh, who had been in hospital for five days, died following a heart attack, Atsuko Ushioda told AFP. Raised in the western Paris suburbs in a Jewish family, Barouh followed a chequered career, becoming a journalist after World War II and playing for the national volleyball team before going on to Brazil where he befriended the main singers and composers of bossa nova.

He returned to France and starred in films and turned to composing music. His biggest successes included the hit single "A Man And A Woman" from the Claude Lelouch film as well as "La Bicyclette." His songs were performed by French stars such as Yves Montand and Françoise Hardy. — AFP



This file photo shows US actress Scarlett Johansson poses on the red carpet for the European premiere of the film 'Avengers: Age of Ultron' in London. — AFP

Congo's sculptor with a mission

In DR Congo's war-infested Great Lakes region, carpenter-turned-sculptor Sauveur Mulwana has left a trail of monumental statues over the past decade as part of his self-styled mission to revive local history and boost peace. The 42-year-old moved back home to Butembo, a teeming city of more than a million near the borders of Uganda, Rwanda and Uganda, when his carpentry business was razed by the eruption of the Niyragongo volcano in the city of Goma. Butembo is home to the ethnic Nande people of Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda, so it follows that one of the most eye-catching works by Mulwana-himself a Nande-is an immense portrayal of the Nande king.

Set on a bright blue pedestal on a city roundabout, it shows mwami (king) Kighombwe II Lusengo Kirugho, who died in his 80s in 2010 after a lengthy reign, wearing a western-style suit as he stares into the distance. The mwamis still wield power, notably allocating land in this predominantly agricultural region that now must accommodate huge numbers of landless refugees after two decades of conflict. Mwami Kighombwe "helped keep the Nande together" and "is a symbol of tolerance", Mulwana told AFP. The mwamis old beliefs and customs were vital to Butembo's peaceful future, he said.

Remembering the old ways

When he and his wife moved to Butembo after losing their business in 2002, he was struck by the fact that the city "had absolutely no works of art". He said "I felt vulnerable" when he suddenly realized that the new modern way of life had led to an end of story-telling, to Africa's well-known traditions of oral trans-

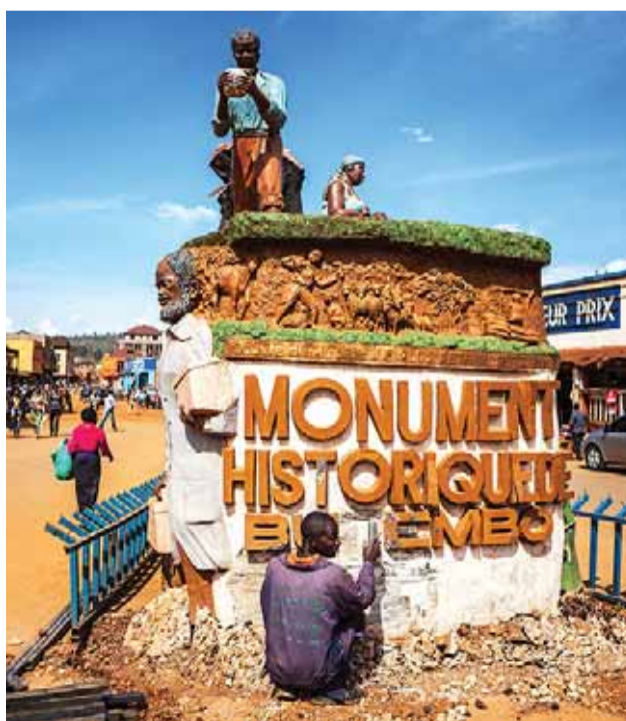
mission. So he decided he would step in single-handedly to help the people of Butembo to keep their history, culture and heritage. He spent the next three years reading books and interviewed elders. The result in 2007 was Butembo's Historical Monument, erected on a square in the heart of the city.

It highlights the Nande farming and hunting tradition as well as their evangelisation during the Belgian colonial era, as well as their modern-day traders. "I want the future generations to remember the work culture of the old people of Butembo," he said. Another Mulwana statue features Archbishop Emmanuel Kataliko, also born in Butembo, who died in 2000 after denouncing the presence of Rwanda- and Uganda-backed militia fighters in DR Congo during the Second Congo War from 1998 to 2003. Outside Butembo city hall sits Mulwana's bust of Laurent-Desire Kabila, the former leader and father of current President Joseph Kabila who was slain in 2001.

To fund his works and feed the family, Mulwana produces copies of the Lourdes grotto for Roman Catholic churches, decorative items for hotels, and creates furniture. He also finances a workshop in hopes of keeping unemployed youngsters at home instead of signing up for one of the many armed militias in the region. "This gentleman is wonderful," said Butembo deputy mayor Godefroid Kambere. "He's forever giving us great surprises." Mulwana said "I'm a Nande first and a Congolese second but I'm proud to contribute to the development of peace in DR Congo."—AFP



A monument created by Sauveur Mulwana is pictured in Butembo. — AFP photos



A worker repairs a monument created by Sauveur Mulwana, in Butembo.

Scarlett Johansson named biggest box office draw

Scarlett Johansson has been named the top grossing movie star of 2016 by Forbes magazine after appearing in films that amassed \$1.2 billion in global ticket sales. The Tony Award-winning American actress starred in the Marvel blockbuster "Captain America: Civil War" the year's biggest box office hit, which made \$1.15 billion worldwide. Johansson, 32, edged ahead of co-stars Chris Evans and Robert Downey Jr-who tied for second place-because she also appeared in the Coen brothers' "Hail, Caesar!," which raked in \$63.2 million.

It has been a lucrative year for Johansson, a perennial A-list darling who was named the world's third highest paid actress by Forbes in August, with annual earnings of \$25 million. Atop that list was Jennifer Lawrence, whose 2016 films "X-Men: Apocalypse" and "Passengers" nevertheless did not perform well enough to earn her a place among the top grossing stars. Britain's Felicity Jones appeared on the box office list for the first time, making ninth place with total takings for her films at \$805 million. With roles in "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story," mystery thriller "Inferno" and children's fantasy "A Monster Calls," she was the only star in the top 10 not to rely heavily on movies based on comics.

The annual Forbes list, released late Tuesday, is compiled using data from Box Office Mojo. Only top-billed performances are counted and Forbes does not take into account animated movies such as Disney's "The Jungle Book," the fourth biggest release of 2016, which grossed \$967 million and also starred Johansson. The top 10 highest grossing actors in the world in 2016:

- Scarlett Johansson - \$1.2 billion
- Chris Evans - \$1.15 billion
- Robert Downey Jr - \$1.15 billion
- Margot Robbie - \$1.1 billion
- Amy Adams - \$1.04 billion
- Ben Affleck - \$1.02 billion
- Henry Cavill - \$870 million
- Ryan Reynolds - \$820 million
- Felicity Jones - \$805 million
- Will Smith - \$775 million — AFP

BAKING WHOLE FISH IN FOIL IS EASIER AND TASTIER

By Sara Moulton

The Chinese like to feature whole steamed fish on the menu of their New Year's feasts. Said to signify togetherness, abundance and long life, it's a dish with symbolism that is as important as taste. Indeed, you're supposed to leave the bones, head and tail intact, a way to help ensure that the new year will be a winner from beginning to end.

When buying fish, many of us tend to opt for the ease of fillets. The prospect of buying, prepping and deboning a whole fish might seem not just novel, but also daunting. Ditto for the prospect of steaming a whole fish, a precarious project for even experienced cooks. So here I propose baking your whole fish rather than steaming it, and wrapping it in foil to keep it moist. It's much easier to cook it this way. It also has the added benefit of creating an instant sauce. But let's start at the beginning. You're at the store checking out the fish on display. How can you tell if a whole fish is fresh? Its eyes should be clear, not cloudy, and its gills should be brightly colored, red or pink.

Once you've picked your winner, ask the fishmonger to clean it for you. He'll clip off the gills, scrape off the scales and remove the guts. If you don't plan to head home right away, ask for a bag of ice to place next to the fish, which will keep it cold.

You begin prepping your fish by scoring it, slicing deeply into the flesh. This will allow the marinade to penetrate to the core and for the fish to cook evenly.

I've called for traditional Chinese flavorings here, but you're welcome to adjust them to your tastes. If, for example, you're not a fan of chilies, leave them out. If you hate cilantro, swap in another fresh herb. The soy sauce is key because it contributes salt as well as flavor, which helps to season the blandish fish. Then after just 20 minutes in the marinade, the fish is ready for the oven.

How will you know when it is done? Pull the pan out of the oven, open up the foil carefully (it will be steamy inside) and poke the fish with a small, sharp knife. If the knife slides in easily all the way to the bone, the fish is done. If there's some resistance, cook it a little longer. When the fish has indeed finished cooking, you'll be rewarded not only with beautifully fragrant flesh, but also with a store of savory liquid on the bottom of the pan.

Carving the fish isn't a big deal. Begin by gently scraping off the skin from the top of the fish with a knife and discard it. Then, using a spoon and starting at the backbone edge, lift the flesh off in chunks and transfer it to plates. After you have removed the top fillet, you can lift off the bone easily in one piece to expose the bottom fillet. Once cooked, the fillets will come off the bone without a struggle. After you have filleted the fish, ladle some of the cooking liquid over each portion and dig in. It's a treat any day of the year.



BAKED WHOLE FISH FOR CHINESE NEW YEAR

Ingredients

Start to finish: 1 hour (30 minutes active)

Servings: 4

Two 1- to 1 1/2-pound whole striped bass, branzino or trout, gutted, scaled and gills removed
 4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
 2-inch chunk fresh ginger
 3 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
 2 tablespoons unseasoned rice vinegar
 1 1/2 tablespoons sesame oil
 2 to 4 tablespoons serrano

4 scallions, white and green parts, cut into thin strips
 1 cup chopped fresh cilantro, leaves and stems

Preparation

Heat the oven to 400 F. Line a shallow baking dish large enough to hold both fish with foil. Lay both fish on the counter. Working in 1- to 2-inch intervals, use a sharp knife to slash both sides of each fish perpendicular to the backbone (a 20-degree angle down the rib cage). Transfer the fish to the prepared baking dish.

In a small bowl, combine the garlic, ginger, soy sauce, vinegar,

sesame oil, chilies, scallions and cilantro. Stuff some of the mixture into each slash on both fish, as well as into the cavity (most of the seasoning should go in the slashes). Cover the pan with foil and let the fish sit at room temperature for 20 minutes.

After 20 minutes, bake the fish on the oven's middle shelf for 20 to 24 minutes, or until the fish is just cooked through (you can pierce it easily with a knife). To serve, use a small knife to gently scrape off the skin, then use a spoon to lift off the fillets (they will come up in chunks), and transfer one to each of 4 serving plates. Pour some of the juices from the pan over each portion.

COOKING ON DEADLINE:

Chicken and Vegetable Stir-Fry

Katie Workman

After the holidays, our appetites can go in a couple of different directions. On the one hand, after a steady diet of stuffed birds and figgy puddings, we seek something lighter, something that feels clean and simple. On

the other hand, it's cold out there, and we want food that's satisfying to curl up with.

What to do, what to do.. What's that I see? (Insert upbeat superhero music here.) A stir-fry on the horizon? (Insert hoofbeats.) Why, that's just the thing. This is fast, simple and immensely flavorful without being heavy.



CHICKEN AND VEGETABLE STIR-FRY WITH GINGER AND OYSTER SAUCE

Ingredients

Serves 4
Start to finish: 35 minutes
1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into 3/4-inch dice
1 teaspoon salt, divided
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon cornstarch
2 tablespoons oyster sauce
1 teaspoon sesame oil
1/2 teaspoon sugar
2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
2 teaspoons minced garlic

1/2 pound sugar snap peas, trimmed and de-stringed
1 cup diced red bell pepper
8 ounces baby spinach
1/2 cup chicken broth
Hot cooked rice or quinoa to serve

Preparation

In a large bowl, toss the chicken with about half of the salt, the pepper and the cornstarch until the chicken is well coated. Set aside. In a small bowl, mix together the oyster sauce, sesame oil and sugar. Heat a large skillet or wok, preferably nonstick, over medium high heat. Heat 1 tablespoon of the vegetable oil in the pan, then add the ginger and garlic and give a brief stir. Add the

chicken and stir fry until it turns white, about 2 minutes. Transfer the partially cooked chicken to a plate with a slotted spoon.

Return the pan to medium high heat. Add the remaining tablespoon oil, then add the sugar snap peas and peppers and sauté for 1 minute. Then add the spinach by the handful and stir-fry until it wilts, adding more as the volume goes down, until all of the spinach is added and somewhat wilted. Add the chicken broth and bring to a simmer. Add the oyster sauce mixture, and return the partially cooked chicken to the pan. Simmer, stirring occasionally for another 2 minutes, until the chicken is cooked through. Serve over the hot rice or quinoa. - AP



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Friday Times

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2016

Kids



Winter Sports Word Search



t	d	e	l	s	b	o	b	c	i	d	r	o	n	k
g	m	i	g	s	h	v	q	c	c	a	o	q	v	r
m	l	c	z	n	c	r	y	g	r	e	r	s	t	e
m	a	e	u	i	l	m	w	n	o	e	b	a	o	h
h	d	h	u	g	v	d	l	i	s	f	a	w	b	k
o	i	o	h	n	u	w	r	t	s	u	n	z	o	g
w	b	c	c	n	n	r	f	a	c	n	d	m	g	m
n	d	k	p	h	x	v	g	k	o	v	y	a	g	o
y	z	e	b	s	p	n	s	s	u	b	t	f	a	l
q	r	y	q	o	i	k	n	d	n	j	w	u	n	a
e	i	g	p	l	i	f	y	e	t	r	m	o	i	l
y	m	x	r	i	g	o	t	e	r	e	x	l	n	s
t	s	u	n	k	b	z	g	p	y	j	h	m	g	s
j	c	g	e	g	u	l	n	s	a	l	p	i	n	e
f	i	g	u	r	e	s	k	a	t	i	n	g	v	b

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|----------------|
| alpine | bandy | bobsled |
| cross country | curling | figure skating |
| ice hockey | luge | nordic |
| skiing | slalom | snowboarding |
| speed skating | tobogganing | |

Cities Alphabet Challenge

Can you come up with city (or town) whose name begins with A, then one for B, and so on, right through to the letter Z?

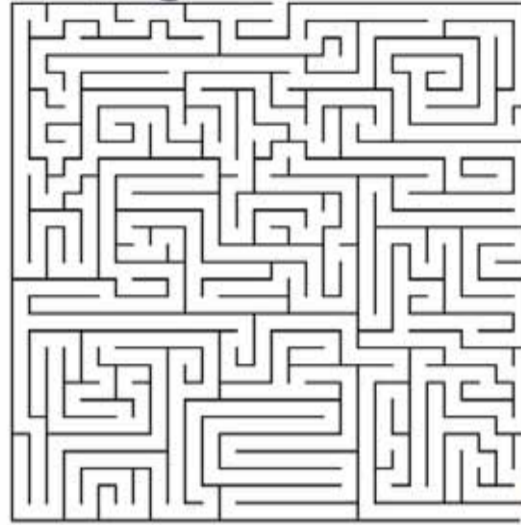


A	_____	N	_____
B	_____	O	_____
C	_____	P	_____
D	_____	Q	_____
E	_____	R	_____
F	_____	S	_____
G	_____	T	_____
H	_____	U	_____
I	_____	V	_____
J	_____	W	_____
K	_____	X	_____
L	_____	Y	_____
M	_____	Z	_____

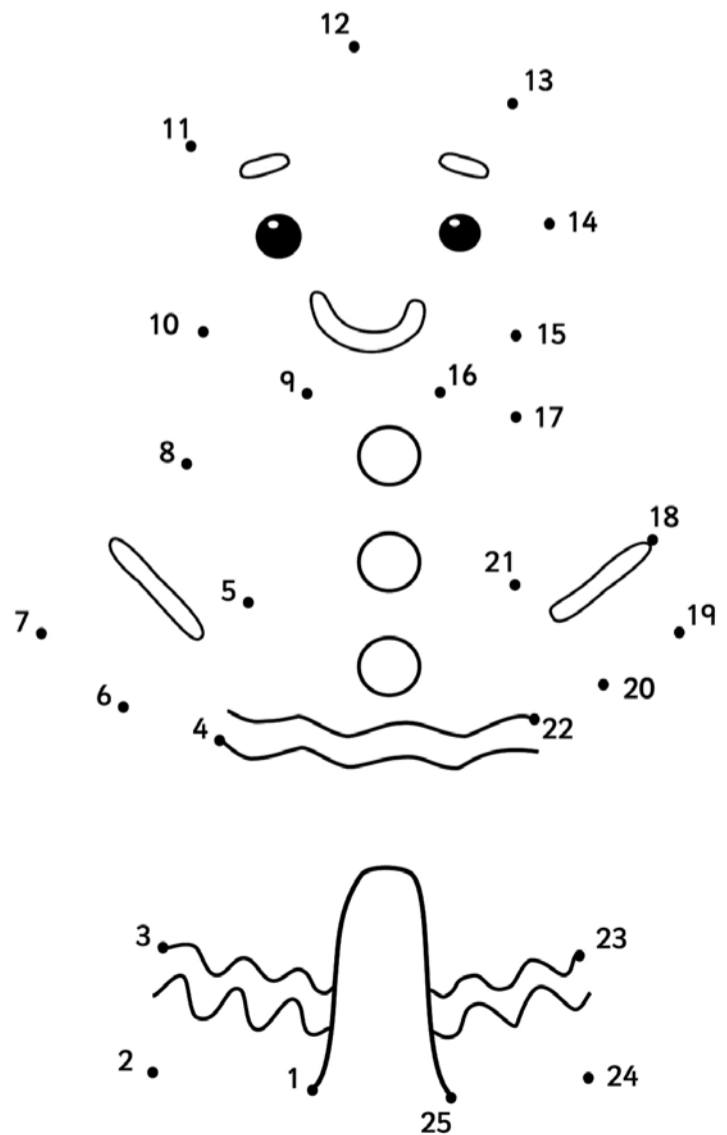


Happy New Year!

Can you help the children get together for their New Year party?



Gingerbread Man Dot to Dot



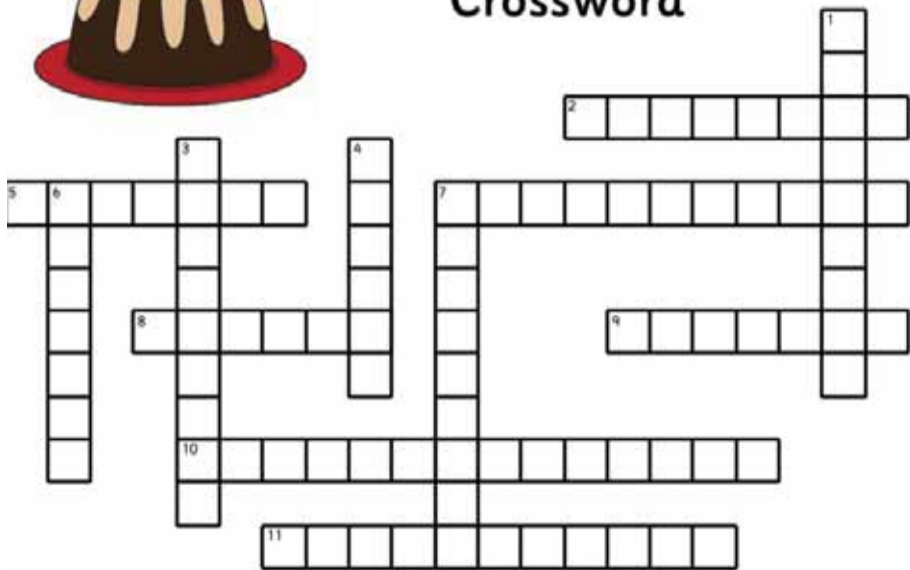


Can you spot the differences? There are 10 in total.



Christmas Food Crossword

Christmas Food Crossword



Across

2. Don't forget to put this inside your roast turkey.
5. Round green vegetables eaten as part of Christmas lunch.
7. Jewel red fruit often made into a sauce to have with roast turkey.
8. Layers of sponge, fruit, custard and cream.
9. German fruit bread often made with marzipan inside.
10. To remember St Nicholas dropping money down the chimney these are often put in stockings.
11. Spicy biscuits made in to a house or man.

Down

1. Despite their name they don't contain meat.
3. Sweet rodents.
4. Bird often roasted at Christmas.
6. Traditionally made on Stir Up Sunday, this follows Christmas lun
7. A stripy, sweet, curved stick.





Friday Times Travel



Nine travel resolutions and how to keep them

New year, new you, right? Well, maybe. If experience has taught us anything, it's that bad habits are hard to break and most diets don't last past January... but our wanderlust is here to stay. These resolutions are not only achievable - they're a joy to keep. So take your pick and make 2017 your best year of travel yet.

Pack lighter

Next time you're stuffing a pair of impractical shoes and a bumper-size shampoo into your bag, stop to consider the feelings of future you: the one sporting a sweaty back patch and a face riddled with regret. The 'I'll manage' attitude dissipates in a flurry of expletives as you drag your luggage up a broken escalator, straining your bicep and stubbing a toe in the process. Worth it? Not so much.

Stick to it: Downsize: restricting suitcase volume soon hinders overpackers. Prioritise: it's OK to take three paperbacks if you're willing to forgo the laptop. Enlist a ruthless packing buddy who won't give in to the words 'but I needeed it!'.



Take better pictures

Sick of returning home from a trip with thousands of hastily snapped images that you'll never have the time to sift through and edit, let alone share? Whether you're shooting for social media, an online portfolio or the family album, investing a little time and effort can take your creations from amateur to incredible.

Stick to it: Read up on how to take a decent smartphone snap; enrol on a photography course; join a photographer's meetup while you're on the road; or take a tour that combines travel and tuition.

Stop putting it off

Family, finances, your career... even fear. There are plenty of factors that prevent people from travelling - but when valid reasons become comfortable alternatives to taking a risk, it's time for a reality check. You have one life on this planet. Stop making excuses and start making plans.

Stick to it: Whether you long for a round-the-world extravaganza or simply a weekend away, it's not going to land on your lap. Identify your true barriers to travel and tackle them head on. Strapped for cash? Start saving. Option paralysis? Consult the experts. Worried what your boss will think? Propose a trip that will boost your rĕsumĕ.

Learn to unplug

See it, share it. Try it, tweet it. The impulse to reach for your smartphone can be near impossible to resist, even on the road - but just as technology seems to have rewired our brains to crave constant connection, travel can be the ultimate antidote.

Stick to it: Can't go cold turkey? Minimise distractions by deleting email apps and disabling social media notifications. Rediscover the joy of writing postcards. Keep a travel journal. Go for a walk without the safety net of Google Maps... and see where you end up.



Travel responsibly

As global tourist numbers continue to increase (1.2 billion international arrivals recorded in 2015 and counting, according to the UN), understanding the impact our travel choices have on the planet has never been more important. Luckily, there are plenty of ways to go green.

Stick to it: You know the drill: steer clear of plastic bottles; take public and overland transport where possible; choose ethical tour operators who respect wildlife and give back to local communities; reduce or offset your carbon emissions (calculate your footprint at carbonindependent.org).





Use your time off wisely

It's easy to fritter away precious paid leave on family events and close-to-home happenings, leaving little time for escapism. But this makes it tough to return to work feeling refreshed - and worse still, you're no closer to seeing the world than you were last year.

Stick to it: Make no mistake: you earned your days off, so take them - every last one. Plan in advance; if you prefer regular short trips, get them booked in early. Capitalise on national holidays, adding a day or two either side for extra-long breaks. Alternatively, have that chat with your manager about using your leave in bulk for that three-week trip to Southeast Asia...

Engage with the locals

The dream: gaining true insight into 'real' local culture. The reality: befriending an international crew of fellow travellers on Facebook and coming home with an 'authentic' souvenir made in China.

Stick to it: Let's face it: it can take years to unravel the complexities of foreign cultures. But there are ways to increase your chances of having a meaningful encounter. Brush up on your language skills; you'd be surprised how far 'hello', 'please' and 'thank you' can take you. With the sharing economy showing no signs of slowing down, it's easier than ever to find homestays, cooking classes and local tour guides.

Get out of your comfort zone

Travel is a simple yet effective way to shake up your status quo - but even seasoned adventurers can get stuck in a rut.

Stick to it: Make this year the year you mix up your travel style. Too shy to go solo? Dare to go it alone, or join a group tour for ready-made companions. Over planner? Tear up the



itinerary and see what happens when you wing it. Stick to the mantra: 'say yes more'.

Explore your own backyard

More confident sharing tips on the best restaurants in Bangkok or Bilbao than your nearest city? So often seduced by the lure of faraway places, we travel addicts often lose sight of

the gems right under our noses.

Stick to it: Buy a guidebook to your local area to see your 'hood from a visitor's perspective, including the touristy attractions you've never made time for. Try out that new cafe or bar that you often overlook in favor of reliable old haunts. Heck, you could even start a blog about your area. (www.loneplanet.com)





Aries (March 21-April 19)

Watch out, as an independent streak seems to be surfacing at this time. Others will admire your unique and rather unusual way of perceiving things. Your sense of humor simply shines just now. You give incentive and encouragement to others and you have a good attitude. You should find the benefit of new insights in your living situation or life conditions. Your friends or associates may come to you for help, or you may find that circumstances call for you to reorganize and be more conservative. This should all go rather smoothly. Your more reserved qualities make others wonder what has kept you so busy lately; you are not always so quiet. Whistle while you work! Tonight you might dive into some cooking experiment: a candy recipe!



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may soon find a physical move or some other type of change pending. There may be an opportunity for you to be in on the research that it takes to find new land for development. Consider the water systems and how your company will take care to maintain the nearby water system. Putting yourself in a position to gather and share information seems more important to you at this time. You understand hypothetical ideas and you know how to present them to those around you. You may feel that your life is very exciting. You make a big effort not to get your personal life too organized. Your idea is along the line of free flow. You may discover some new talent or aptitude as you help a young person with his or her creative ideas tonight.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

If for any reason you have been procrastinating or having a conversation with an authority figure concerning anything, now would be an ideal time to communicate honestly. The ethers of the universe are working with you in whatever changes you desire. Now is a time you can put your practical insights into understandable words. Taking care of business is a major theme where your emotional orientation is concerned. You crave organization and practicality and you want to get things accomplished. You aim to have a place for everything and everything in its place and anything that gets in the way gets on your nerves. Health and work goals take on greater importance this afternoon. You understand and are sensitive to others' needs tonight.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may be feeling very good about yourself just now and appreciating your own abilities to solve problems. You love cars and driving and you may find yourself on one of many teams that survey the population to find the best mapping abilities or cameras to gain a better view. Your group may be in charge of one thing and another group is doing something else. Your company may be top of the class when other companies need to know how to make things better, what is in demand the most and what is not necessary, so as to move the expense costs down a bit. A particular job this afternoon may be just right for someone with your credentials. You certainly know how to direct others. Your group may come up with some exceptionally good ideas.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You just simply feel like giving all you can give when a most exciting challenge comes to your attention. Someone or some company will match your money, up to a certain amount, for your favorite worthy cause. You may gather more information in order to gain support from your office mates. Work may be time-consuming this afternoon but you move forward at just the right pace so . . . Do not stress yourself. Growth comes from allowing your own self to make changes and to challenge your thinking, and perhaps your physical strength as well. Weather is changing and you are thankful, even though you may be more comfortable in one environment, you and your transportation are ready for a different type of evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Expect some challenges coming to your attention today. You are prudent and you see the path ahead well enough to take the right precautions. You work a problem as one would work a crossword puzzle. Emotion is the instigator or the key that helps one recognize a problem exists. Cognitive thinking will find the truth of a matter and open up any fears or needless worries that can be released. You are pretty much on target when it comes to creating positive results. You may even discover the solution to a long-standing blockage or problem this day. Your mental attitude is very positive. The universal energies today are inviting you to write. Perhaps this would be a good time to see a pattern to your recent dreams. Begin a dream journal.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may take on the job of orienting a newcomer to your work area. Your humor may be overshadowed only by your rather eccentric behavior just now. Those around you appreciate your independence and unique qualities. This should give you some new ways of looking at things or discover the changes you want for your living situation. Feel free to allow yourself to be creative. Since you will not find these days coming too often, you should not ignore the opportunity to let your imagination loose. Maybe a proposal or new advertising idea is in the making. Your ability to risk something may take you into an enchanting place. If you are inclined to enjoy murder mysteries, this place might just set the scene for a good mystery.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Sometimes we all take turns at being unaware of what or how we really feel about some person, place or thing. This may not be the most appropriate time for you to make vocational or career decisions or to give practical advice to those around you. However, you are one to bounce back rather quickly from any difficult quandary or experience and you will suddenly gain insights that other people long to see. Today you will have a new understanding. The point of all this chatter is for you to give yourself time and patience before making any final decisions about anything important, particularly with regard to work. You can impress an admirer with a kind word or note this evening. Tonight is indeed a great time to spend with loved ones and family.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You should find yourself in top condition when it comes to any kind of mental activity. You are full of wit and sharp ideas. This could be a time when you find some real discoveries in the idea department. Having a clear-cut idea of what the public wants and needs at this time is beneficial to you in making practical decisions with regard to group issues. Expect to make some crystal-clear decisions that affect others. You may find yourself wading cautiously through some difficulties; blocks or hot spots and not everyone will share your point of view. This will all work out just fine however, so relax-disputes and doubt come with the territory of whatever it is you are trying to do just now. This afternoon is a time of celebration. Your success is obvious.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This may be a time when you find yourself creative in the arts. You are magnetic as your positive attitude captures the imagination. You have ideas that benefit humanitarian or charitable interests and you present these ideas to others. Being held in high esteem is a desire you have had for a long time and occasionally you forget that it is one of your goals. A group of your peers in the workplace are ready to work with you on one of your projects. If you are not the boss, you have a boss that is behind your quest. You might put together a talent show or sell some product in order to get the money together to give to the city shelter, homeless shelter, student rehabilitation, etc. Later this evening you enjoy your friends in a celebration.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Openings at work and changes in status give you new options. Follow rules as you work in areas that are new to you. Work ethics are very important and should you choose to take time off work, you will probably do so by calling the time away, a vacation. You may find yourself very pleased at the choices you made recently regarding home and property development. The undercover action of the law enforcement in your area lowers the likelihood of being disturbed by difficult people. You might even look for ways to help with school social development programs. News about a health update or miracle vitamins and alternative therapies are subjects of conversation. Stress levels can build now, so take what you need and leave the rest. Enjoy the little things.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

When some kind of recognition or extra support comes along for you, you can see that your efforts are worthwhile. You may have the feeling that you are very much in-touch with those around you today. All of the support that you need in order to lead or complete some difficult task will be there for you. Wow, what a fantastic natural high this can create for you! If you have a team that consistently backs you in your efforts, now would be a good time to consider a little bonus for them. Your taste in art and gratefulness in general are heightened. Your sense of value is to the fore and investment decisions can be beneficial. This evening is a great time to be around friends. You may be passing around pictures of each other's families this evening.

COUNTRY CODES

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



00:20 Wheeler Dealers
 01:10 Salvage Hunters
 02:00 Marooned With Ed Stafford
 02:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
 03:40 Street Outlaws: New Orleans
 04:30 The Liquidator
 05:00 How Do They Do It?
 05:30 How Do They Do It?
 06:00 Blue Collar Backers
 06:50 Bear's Wild Weekend With Stephen Fry
 07:40 Sydney Harbour
 08:30 Catching Monsters
 09:20 Deadliest Catch
 10:10 Kings Of The Wild
 11:00 Venom Hunters
 11:50 Mega Trains
 12:40 Toucan Nation
 13:30 Fast N' Loud (Season 4 Specials)
 14:20 Sacred Steel Bikes
 15:10 Street Outlaws
 16:00 Sacred Steel Bikes
 16:50 Sacred Steel Bikes
 17:40 Sacred Steel Bikes
 18:30 Sacred Steel Bikes
 19:20 Sacred Steel Bikes
 20:10 Sacred Steel Bikes
 21:00 Fast N' Loud
 21:50 Biketacular
 22:40 Street Outlaws
 23:30 Toucan Nation



00:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
 01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
 02:00 Killer Kids
 03:00 Homicide Hunter
 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 Frenemies
 11:30 Frenemies
 12:00 Frenemies
 15:00 The First 48
 16:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
 17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
 18:00 I Love You But I Lied
 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 Storm Chasers
 01:20 Secret Space Escapes
 02:10 How The Universe Works
 03:00 Destroyed In Seconds
 03:25 Destroyed In Seconds
 03:50 Beyond Survival With Les Stroud
 04:40 How It's Made
 05:05 How It's Made
 05:30 Storm Chasers
 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 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
 10:20 Mythbusters
 11:10 Destroyed In Seconds
 11:35 Destroyed In Seconds
 12:00 Destroyed In Seconds
 16:10 Kenny The Shark
 16:35 Awesome Adventures
 17:00 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
 17:50 Now That's Funny
 18:40 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
 19:30 How It's Made
 19:55 How It's Made
 20:20 Mythbusters
 21:10 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
 22:00 Now That's Funny
 22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
 23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
 23:40 Beyond Survival With Les Stroud



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
 02:40 Hank Zipzer
 03:05 Binny And The Ghost
 03:30 Violetta
 04:15 The Hive
 04:20 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
 10:30 Zapped
 12:10 Shake It Up
 12:35 Bunk'd
 13:00 Good Luck Charlie
 13:25 Wizards Of Waverly Place
 13:50 Gravity Falls
 14:15 Liv And Maddie
 14:40 Hannah Montana Forever
 15:05 Girl Meets World
 15:30 Austin & Ally
 15:55 Jessie
 16:20 Girl Meets World
 17:10 Elena Of Avalor

17:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
 18:00 The Next Step
 18:25 Descendants Wicked World
 18:30 Liv And Maddie
 18:55 Star Darlings
 19:00 Austin & Ally
 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
 21:45 Jessie
 22:10 Jessie
 22:35 H2O: Just Add Water
 23:00 Binny And The Ghost
 23:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch



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
 08:55 Goldie & Bear
 09:25 Minnie's Bow-Toons
 09:30 Miles From Tomorrow
 10:25 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
 10:55 Sofia The First
 11:20 The Lion Guard
 11:50 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital
 12:15 Little Mermaid
 12:45 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
 13:00 Sofia The First
 13:25 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
 13:50 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
 14:20 Doc McStuffins
 14:45 The Lion Guard
 15:15 Sofia The First
 15:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
 16:10 Doc McStuffins
 16:35 The Lion Guard
 17:05 PJ Masks
 17:30 Sofia The First
 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 A Goofy Fairy Tale
 22:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
 22:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates



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
 08:35 Danger Mouse
 09:00 K.C. Undercover: Runaway Robot
 09:50 Kirby Buckets
 10:20 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: Bionic Island
 14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
 14:15 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
 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 K.C. Undercover
 17:40 K.C. Undercover
 18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
 18:10 Becoming
 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

15:10 Cash Trapped
 16:00 Broadchurch
 16:55 Broadchurch
 17:50 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
 18:50 Emmerdale
 19:15 Emmerdale
 19:45 Coronation Street
 20:10 Cash Trapped
 21:00 Broadchurch
 21:55 Broadchurch
 22:50 Emmerdale
 23:15 Emmerdale



00:10 What's For Sale?
 01:00 Hook, Line And Sisters
 01:25 A Is For Apple
 01:50 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
 02:15 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
 02:40 The Food Files
 03:30 Hook It, Cook It
 03:55 Fish Of The Day
 04:45 Places We Go
 05:10 Sara's New Nordic Kitchen
 06:25 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
 06:50 Hook, Line And Sisters
 07:15 A Is For Apple
 07:40 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
 08:05 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
 08:30 The Food Files
 09:20 Hook It, Cook It
 09:45 Fish Of The Day
 10:35 Places We Go
 11:00 Sara's New Nordic Kitchen
 12:15 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
 12:40 Hook, Line And Sisters
 13:05 A Is For Apple
 13:35 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
 14:00 The Food Files
 14:55 The Game Chef
 15:20 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
 15:50 Miguel's Feasts
 16:20 Places We Go
 17:15 Sara's New Nordic Kitchen
 18:35 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
 19:05 The Game Chef
 19:30 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
 20:00 Miguel's Feasts
 20:25 Places We Go



00:50 Botched By Nature
 01:50 E! News
 02:50 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
 05:30 Celebrity Style Story
 06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 07:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 08:00 E! News
 09:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 09:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 10:50 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 11:45 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 17:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 18:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 19:00 E! News
 20:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 22:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 23:00 Catching Kelce



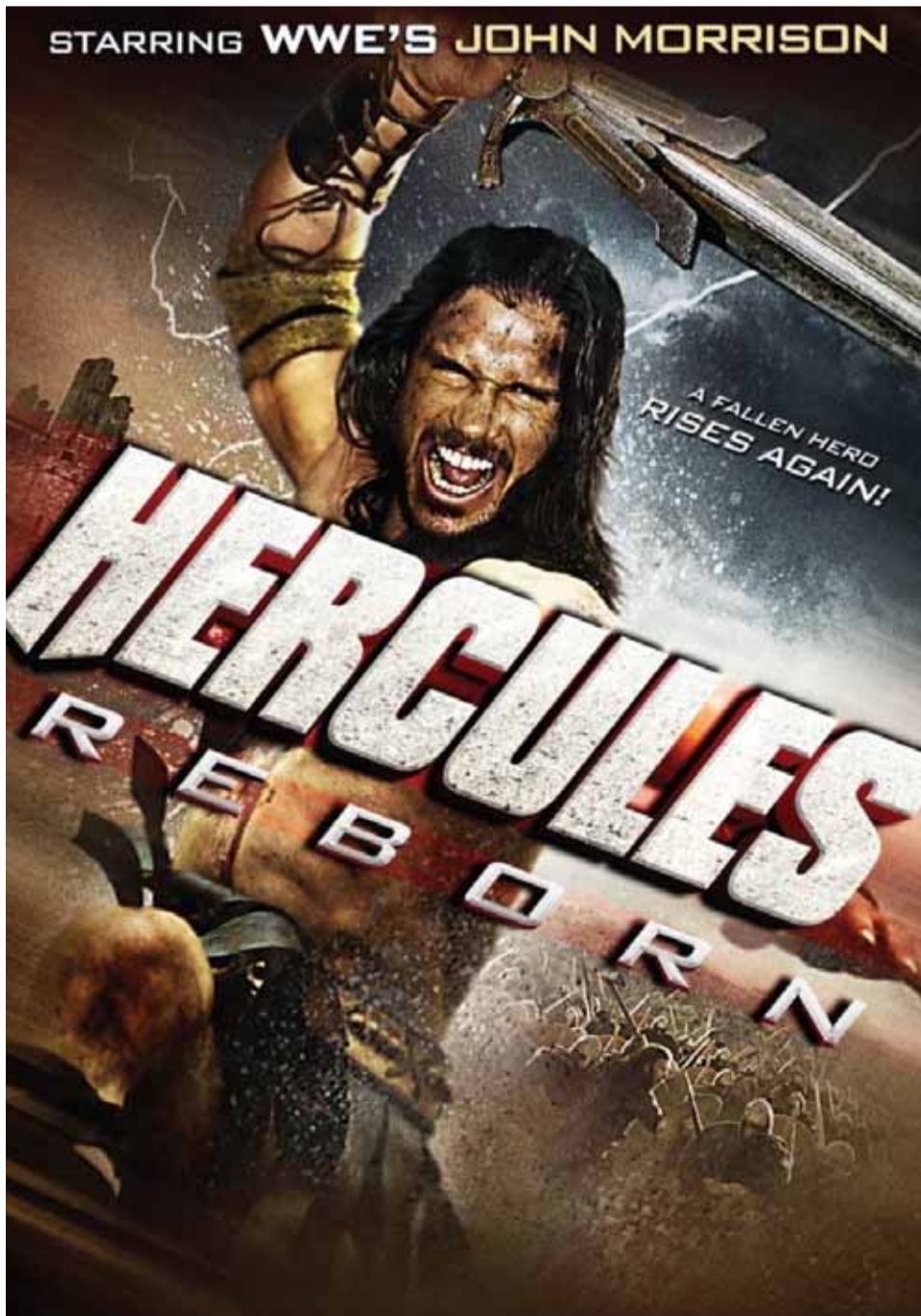
00:20 Searching For The Snow Leopard
 01:10 Wild Yellowstone
 02:00 Tiger's Revenge
 02:50 World's Deadliest
 03:45 Swamp Men
 04:40 Shane Untamed
 05:35 Tiger's Revenge
 06:30 World's Deadliest
 07:25 Swamp Men
 08:20 Shane Untamed
 09:15 Animal Fight Club
 10:10 Wild Middle East
 11:05 America's National Parks
 12:00 Monster Jellyfish
 12:55 Man-Eater Of The Congo
 13:50 World's Deadliest
 14:45 Swamp Men
 15:40 Shane Untamed
 16:35 Animal Fight Club
 17:30 Wild Indochina
 18:25 Europe's Great Wilderness
 19:20 Swamp Men
 20:10 Shane Untamed
 21:00 Animal Fight Club
 21:50 Wild Indochina
 22:40 Europe's Great Wilderness
 23:30 Monster Jellyfish



00:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
 01:00 Emmerdale
 01:30 Coronation Street
 02:30 Cash Trapped
 03:25 Big Star's Little Star
 04:20 The Jonathan Ross Show
 05:15 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
 06:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
 07:05 Cash Trapped
 08:00 Big Star's Little Star
 09:00 The Jonathan Ross Show
 10:00 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
 11:00 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
 11:50 Cash Trapped
 12:45 Emmerdale
 13:15 Emmerdale
 13:45 Coronation Street
 14:40 Royal Stories



00:10 Hitler's Secret Attack On America
 01:00 WW2 Hell Under The Sea
 02:00 Locked Up Abroad
 02:55 Air Crash Investigation
 03:50 Hitler's Secret Attack On America
 04:45 Desperate Hours
 05:10 Desperate Hours
 05:40 Car SOS
 06:35 Inside Cocaine Wars
 07:30 WW2 Hell Under The Sea
 08:25 Lords Of War



HERCULES REBORN ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

- 08:50 Lords Of War
- 09:20 Desperate Hours
- 10:15 Locked Up Abroad
- 11:10 The Border
- 12:05 Inside
- 13:00 Lords Of War
- 13:30 Lords Of War
- 14:00 WW2 Hell Under The Sea
- 15:00 Inside Cocaine Wars
- 16:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 17:00 The Border
- 18:00 Taboo USA
- 19:00 Inside Cocaine Wars
- 20:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 20:50 The Border
- 21:40 Taboo USA



- 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
- 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: Into The City!
- 08:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 09:10 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
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- 19:00 Paw Patrol
- 19:13 Paw Patrol
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- 20:11 Zack & Quack
- 20:22 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 20:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 21:10 Paw Patrol
- 21:35 Shimmer And Shine
- 21:58 Dora The Explorer
- 22:21 Paw Patrol



From The Best-Selling Author of
The Notebook and Dear John

THE LONGEST RIDE

THE LONGEST RIDE ON OSN MOVIES HD

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 00:15 Dangerous Lessons
- 02:15 Comedown
- 04:00 Mutant World
- 05:45 Divergent
- 08:15 Metro
- 10:00 War Of The Worlds
- 12:00 Hercules Reborn
- 13:45 Divergent
- 16:15 Zack & Quack
- 18:00 War Of The Worlds
- 20:00 The Taking Of Pelham 123
- 22:00 No Tears For The Dead

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

- 01:00 Mostly Ghostly: Have You Met My Ghoulfriend
- 03:00 Dunston Checks In
- 05:00 Cinderella
- 07:00 Hey Arnold! The Movie
- 09:00 The Good Dinosaur
- 11:00 Cinderella
- 13:00 Inside Out
- 15:00 Dr. Seuss' The Lorax
- 17:00 Frozen
- 19:00 Harriet The Spy
- 21:00 Jem And The Holograms
- 23:00 Dr. Seuss' The Lorax

OSN MOVIES HD

- 01:00 Paper Towns
- 02:45 Fathers And Daughters
- 04:45 The Longest Ride
- 07:00 The Best Of Me
- 09:00 The Benefactor
- 10:30 The Duff
- 12:30 Fantastic Four
- 14:30 Concussion
- 16:45 Big Game
- 18:30 Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation
- 21:00 Kindergarten Cop 2
- 23:00 Get Hard

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Norbit
- 01:45 It's Complicated
- 04:00 A Madea Christmas
- 05:45 How Do You Know
- 08:00 All About Steve
- 10:00 Big Ass Spider!
- 12:00 Norbit
- 14:00 Superfast
- 16:00 All About Steve

OSN MOVIES HD

FESTIVAL

- 00:00 Enemy
- 01:30 A Perfect Day
- 03:30 Testament Of Youth
- 05:45 Breathe In
- 07:30 Late Bloomers
- 09:00 Foreverland
- 10:45 A Perfect Day
- 12:45 Testament Of Youth
- 15:00 Romeo & Juliet
- 17:00 Foreverland
- 19:00 Nightcrawler
- 21:00 Seabiscuit
- 23:30 Hustle And Flow

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

- 01:00 Columbus In The Last Journey
- 02:45 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 04:30 Bamse And The City Of Thieves
- 06:00 Space Warriors
- 07:45 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
- 09:15 Worms
- 11:00 Egon And Donci
- 12:45 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 14:30 Moomins And The Comet Chase
- 16:00 Earth To Echo
- 18:00 Worms
- 20:00 Looney Tunes: Rabbit's Run
- 22:00 Moomins And The Comet Chase
- 23:30 Earth To Echo



- 00:40 The Big Brain Theory
- 01:30 Mythbusters
- 02:20 The Quick And The Curious
- 02:45 Sci-Fi Science: Physics Of The Impossible
- 03:10 How Do They Do It?
- 03:35 Food Factory
- 04:00 Race To Escape
- 04:48 The Big Brain Theory
- 05:36 The Quick And The Curious
- 06:00 Sci-Fi Science: Physics Of The Impossible
- 06:24 Mythbusters
- 07:12 How Do They Do It?
- 07:36 Food Factory

OSN MOVIES HD

- 08:00 How Do They Do It?
- 08:26 The Big Brain Theory
- 09:14 Mythbusters
- 10:02 Race To Escape
- 10:50 How Do They Do It?
- 11:14 Food Factory
- 11:38 The Quick And The Curious
- 12:02 Sci-Fi Science: Physics Of The Impossible
- 12:26 The Big Brain Theory
- 13:14 Mythbusters
- 14:02 How Do They Do It?
- 14:26 Food Factory
- 14:50 Race To Escape
- 15:38 The Quick And The Curious
- 16:02 Sci-Fi Science: Physics Of The Impossible
- 16:26 The Big Brain Theory
- 17:14 Mythbusters
- 18:02 Race To Escape
- 18:50 The Big Brain Theory
- 19:40 Mythbusters
- 20:30 Mythbusters
- 21:20 How Do They Do It?
- 21:45 Food Factory
- 22:10 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
- 22:35 Outrageous Acts Of Psych



- 00:20 Belief
- 01:10 What If We Get Married?
- 02:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 02:25 Say Yes To The Dress
- 02:50 Love, Lust Or Run
- 03:15 Cake Boss
- 03:35 Belief
- 04:20 Little People, Big World
- 04:45 Little People, Big World
- 05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 06:00 Little People, Big World
- 08:30 Outdaughtered: Busby Quints
- 09:20 Sister Wives
- 10:10 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 11:00 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 11:50 Love, Lust Or Run
- 12:15 Love, Lust Or Run
- 12:40 Love, Lust Or Run
- 13:05 Love, Lust Or Run
- 13:30 Love, Lust Or Run
- 13:55 Oprah's Master Class
- 14:45 Belief
- 15:35 Cake Boss
- 16:00 Cake Boss
- 16:25 Cake Boss
- 16:50 Cake Boss
- 17:15 Cake Boss
- 17:40 Buddy's Family Vacation
- 18:05 Buddy's Family Vacation
- 18:30 Suddenly Rich
- 19:20 Outdaughtered: Busby Quints
- 20:10 Sister Wives
- 21:00 Kate Plus 8
- 21:50 Sister Wives
- 22:40 Coach Charming
- 23:05 Coach Charming
- 23:30 Breaking Amish

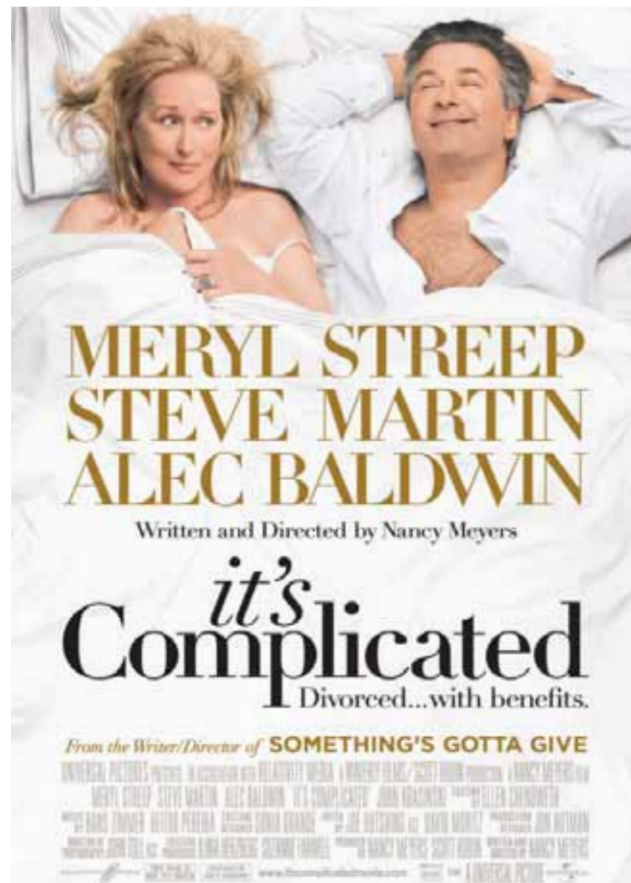
- 18:00 Engineering Disasters
- 19:00 Ancient Aliens
- 20:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 21:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 22:00 Warriors
- 23:00 Serial Killer Earth



- 00:20 The Rise And Fall Of El Chapo
- 02:00 Inside Alcatraz: Legends Of The Rock
- 02:50 Big Rig Bounty Hunters
- 04:30 Pawn Stars
- 05:00 Time Team
- 07:40 Alone
- 18:30 Mountain Men - Closest Calls
- 19:20 Big Rig Bounty Hunters
- 19:45 Big Rig Bounty Hunters
- 20:10 Mountain Men
- 21:00 Pawn Stars
- 21:25 Pawn Stars South Africa
- 21:50 Alcatraz: The Search For The Truth
- 23:30 Forged In Fire



- 00:00 Private Chef
- 00:30 Private Chef
- 01:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 01:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 02:00 Man Fire Food
- 02:30 Man Fire Food
- 03:00 Chopped
- 04:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 05:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 05:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 06:00 Chopped
- 07:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 07:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 08:00 The Kitchen
- 09:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 09:30 Anna Olson: Bake
- 10:00 Chopped
- 11:00 Guy's Big Bite
- 11:30 Guy's Big Bite
- 12:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 12:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 13:00 Man Fire Food
- 13:30 Man Fire Food
- 14:00 Chopped
- 15:00 The Kitchen
- 16:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 16:30 Anna Olson: Bake
- 17:00 Chopped
- 18:00 Iron Chef America
- 19:00 Cutthroat Kitchen
- 20:00 All Star Academy
- 21:00 Bite This With Nadia G
- 21:30 Bite This With Nadia G
- 22:00 Iron Chef America



MERYL STREEP
STEVE MARTIN
ALEC BALDWIN

Written and Directed by Nancy Meyers

it's Complicated

Divorced...with benefits.

From the Writer/Director of SOMETHING'S GOTTA GIVE

IT'S COMPLICATED ON OSN MOVIES COMEDY HD

WORD SEARCH

Breakfast

Find and circle all of the breakfast items that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a popular breakfast drink.

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

- | | | | |
|------------|---------------|-----------|----------|
| BACON | EGGS | JELLY | ROLLS |
| BAGELS | FRUIT | MARMALADE | SAUSAGES |
| BISCUITS | GRANOLA | MILK | TEA |
| BREAD | HAM | MUFFINS | TOAST |
| CEREAL | HASH BROWNS | OATMEAL | WAFFLES |
| COFFEE | HONEY | OMELETS | YOGURT |
| CROISSANTS | HOT CHOCOLATE | PANCAKES | |
| DOUGHNUTS | JAM | PORRIDGE | |

Yesterday's Solution

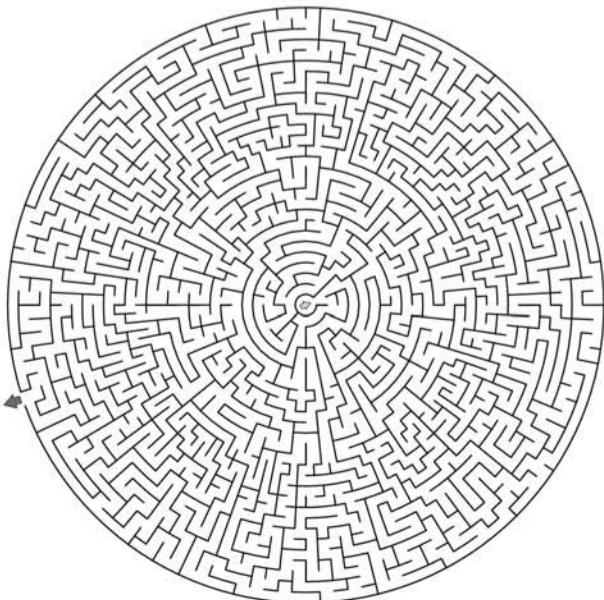
Birds

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

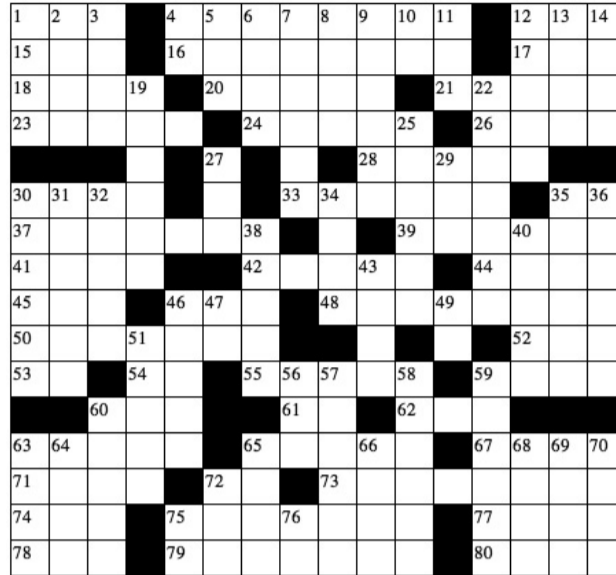
- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|-------------|------------|
| BLACKBIRD | EAGLE | MARTIN | ROBIN |
| BUDGIE | EMU | MOCKINGBIRD | SEAGULL |
| CANARY | FALCON | MYNA | SPARROW |
| CARDINAL | FINCH | OSTRICH | SWAN |
| CHICKEN | FLAMINGO | OWL | TURKEY |
| CRANE | GOOSE | PARAKEET | VULTURE |
| CROW | HAWK | PARROT | WOODPECKER |
| DODO | HERON | PELICAN | WREN |
| DOVE | JAY | PIGEON | |
| DUCK | MAGPIE | RAVEN | |

The hidden message is: HUMMINGBIRD

CHALLENGING MAZE



CROSSWORD 1476



ACROSS

- An associate degree in applied science.
- (anatomy) Far from the center.
- 3 to 30 gigahertz.
- (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
- A large ax with a broad cutting blade.
- Goddess of the dead and queen of the underworld.
- Toward the mouth or oral region.
- Any of various thermoplastic resins used to make things.
- Jordan's port.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- A genus of Ploceidae.
- Genus of Eurasian spiny shrubs.
- Strike with disgust or revulsion.
- Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
- (zoology) Pertaining to alulae.
- Gradually decreasing in tempo and volume.
- Any isomeric saturated hydrocarbon found in petroleum and used as a fuel and solvent.
- Lacking excess flesh.
- A domain in which something is dominant.
- A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
- Electronic warfare undertaken to prevent or reduce an enemy's effective use of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- A large family of trees, shrubs, vines, and herbs bearing bean pods.
- Genus of low-growing mat-forming New Zealand plants.
- A nucleic acid that transmits genetic information from DNA to the cytoplasm.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
- The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
- A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
- A master's degree in fine arts.
- At right angles to the length of a ship or airplane.
- Wrap us in a cerecloth, as of a corpse.
- Of a temperature scale that registers the freezing point of water as 32 degrees F and the boiling point as 212 degrees F at one atmosphere of pressure.
- Affected by blight—anything that mars or events growth or prosperity.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- A town in north central Oklahoma.
- A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
- A river that rises in the Pyrenees and flows northwest to the Bay of Biscay.
- A quantity of no importance.

DOWN

- In a murderous frenzy as if possessed by a demon.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.

- The bureau of the Treasury Department responsible for tax collections.
- A cleansing agent made from the salts of vegetable or animal fats.
- National capital of Kiribati.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- Soviet physicist who worked on low temperature physics (1908-1968).
- Being ten more than fifty.
- An affirmative.
- Be going to.
- (Greek mythology) The goddess of youth and spring.
- Fiber of the flax plant that is made into thread and woven into linen fabric.
- A native of ancient Troy.
- An algebraic equation of the fourth degree.
- Great coolness and composure under strain.
- A digital display that uses liquid crystal cells that change reflectivity in an applied electric field.
- Committee formed by a special-interest group to raise money for their favorite political candidates.
- Of or like a cecum.
- The mission in San Antonio where in 1836 Mexican forces under Santa Anna besieged and massacred American rebels who were fighting to make Texas independent of Mexico.
- A shaped mass of baked bread.
- Afflicted with or characteristic of mental derangement.
- Heat again.
- (Greek mythology) One of the mountain nymphs.
- Sour or bitter in taste.
- Concerning those not members of the clergy.
- Fear resulting from the awareness of danger.
- Being one more than one hundred.
- A public promotion of some product or service.
- Relating to or near the ulna.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- An abundant nonmetallic tetravalent element occurring in three allotropic forms.
- A complex inorganic compound that contains ammonia molecules.
- A city in western Germany near the Dutch and Belgian borders.
- A holy war by Muslims against unbelievers.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- Perceive sound.
- A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
- An inactive volcano in Sicily.
- Scottish philosopher of common sense who opposed the ideas of David Hume (1710-1796).
- Tropical starchy tuberous root.
- A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
- A class of proteins produced in lymph tissue in vertebrates and that function as antibodies in the immune response.
- A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

CELLS DRIPPED INTO BRAIN HELPS FIGHT CANCER

TREATMENT HELPS MAN'S IMMUNE SYSTEM ATTACK DISEASE

DUARTE: A man with deadly brain cancer that had spread to his spine saw his tumors shrink and, for a time, completely vanish after a novel treatment to help his immune system attack his disease - another first in this promising field. The type of immunotherapy that 50-year-old Richard Grady received already has helped some people with blood cancers such as leukemia. But the way he was given it is new, and may allow its use not just for brain tumors but also other cancers that can spread, such as breast and lung.

Grady was the first person to get the treatment dripped through a tube into a space in the brain where spinal fluid is made, sending it down the path the cancer traveled to his spine. He had "a remarkable response" that opens the door to wider testing, said Dr Behnam Badie, neurosurgery chief at City of Hope, a cancer center in Duarte, California, where Grady was treated. The case is reported in this week's New England Journal of Medicine.

Each year in the United States, about 20,000 people are diagnosed with a type of brain tumor called glioblastoma. Grady, who lives in Seattle, had the usual surgery, radiation and chemotherapy, but the cancer came back. He enrolled in a clinical trial at City of Hope and had some of his own blood cells, called T cells, removed and genetically modified in the lab to turn them into specialized soldiers to seek and destroy cancer.

Drastic steps

The treatment, called CAR-T cell therapy,

has been used for blood cancers, but its value for solid tumors is unknown. City of Hope has been testing injecting the cells directly into the brain. First, Grady had more surgery to remove three of his largest tumors. Then he got six weekly infusions of the cells through a tube into his brain, where the biggest one had been. No cancer recurred there, but the remaining tumors continued to grow, new ones appeared, and cancer spread to his spine.

Doctors decided on a bold step: placing a second tube in his brain, into a cavity where spinal fluid is made, and putting the cells there. "The idea was to have the flow of the spinal fluid carry the T cells to different locations," along the route the cancer had taken, Badie said.

After three treatments, all tumors had shrunk dramatically. After the 10th treatment, "we saw all the tumors disappear," and Grady was able to cut back on other medicines and return to work, Badie said. New tumors, though, have now emerged in different spots in his brain and spine, and he is getting radiation treatment. But his response to immunotherapy lasted more than seven months, and "for him to live more than a year and half" after starting it is amazing for a situation where survival often is measured in weeks, Badie said.

Side effects

Side effects of the treatment were manageable, including headaches, fatigue and muscle aches, and some may have been due to other medicines Grady needed, doctors reported. It's early research, but it's an



DUARTE: This March 2016 photo provided by the City of Hope hospital shows patient Richard Grady in Duarte, Calif. Suffering from a deadly brain cancer that had spread to his spine, a novel therapy, which helped his immune system attack his disease, shrank his tumors. — AP

advance for the field "that they showed this is safe, at least in this patient," said Dr Donald O'Rourke, a neurosurgeon heading a similar study at the University of Pennsylvania.

O'Rourke treated 10 brain tumor patients with CAR-T cells but used a single IV dose. A paper detailing results is in the works, but "it's pretty striking what we've found," he said. At City of Hope, nine patients have been treated so far, but only

three with infusions into the spinal fluid brain cavity. Two of the nine have not responded to treatment, Badie said.

His study is supported by the nonprofit Gateway for Cancer Research, the Food and Drug Administration, the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine and the National Institutes of Health. Some authors get royalties from pending patents or money from Mustang Bio, Inc., which has licensed some of the technology. — AP

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Kuwait Times

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**KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY
(29/12/2016 TO 04/01/2017)**

SHARQIA-1
LA LA LAND 12:15 PM
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AJIAL.2
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Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2016



Venezuelans get new coins, still waiting on bills

EMIRATES RECEIVES FIRST ROLLS-ROYCE POWERED A380

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MANILA: Traders celebrate during the last day of trading in front of a giant electronic board at the Philippine Stock Exchange in Manila yesterday. — AFP

MIDEAST FUNDS SEE STOCKS RISING IN 2017 FUNDS POSITIVE ON SAUDI BUDGET, CAUTIOUS ON EGYPT

DUBAI: Middle East fund managers have become more positive toward equities in the region as the new year begins because of higher oil prices and efforts by Gulf governments to cut their budget deficits, a monthly Reuters poll found. The poll of 13 leading fund managers, conducted over the last week, found 62 percent expect to raise their allocations to regional equities in the next three months and none to reduce them, the most bullish view of equities since February 2014, before oil prices began to plunge.

In last month's poll, 43 percent expected to increase their allocations to Middle East equities and 7 percent to cut them. One factor behind the change is the rebound of oil prices to about \$55 a barrel in the last several weeks from this year's average of about \$45, in the wake of an OPEC output agreement.

Fund managers also see Egypt's long-term economic outlook as stronger after the Egyptian pound was floated in November. "We are entering 2017 with a much more positive outlook for oil than we had in 2016," said Kuwait's Global Investment House head of regional asset management, Bader Al-Ghanim.

"Regional governments have moved towards more prudent fiscal measures. We are witnessing capital market reforms, such as Saudi aiming at inclusion in the MSCI emerging markets index in coming years. All this should bode well

for equities." Saudi Arabia said in its 2017 state budget, released last week, that it had made considerable progress this year cutting a huge deficit. It predicted further progress next year and pledged to raise spending moderately to support economic growth.

Saudi exposure

Forty-six percent of fund managers now expect to raise their exposure to Saudi Arabia within a regional equities portfolio and 23 percent to reduce them, compared with ratios of 29 percent and 21 percent last month. However, after a strong rally by the Saudi market in the past two months, some managers believe valuations are no longer attractive, and they point out that austerity policies mean the Saudi economy is likely to stay sluggish next year.

Waha Capital's managing director of capital markets in Abu Dhabi, Mohamed Eljamal, said valuations looked expensive and stock prices already reflected positive news related to the OPEC agreement and the budget. "It is difficult to sustain current valuations as fundamentals continue to deteriorate," said Dubai's Almal Capital fund manager, Vijay Harpalani.

Despite long-term optimism towards Egypt, valuations there are also keeping funds cautious for now after a 74 percent leap by the index this year.

Twenty-three percent now expect to reduce their equity

allocations to Egypt and 8 percent to increase them, compared with 29 percent and 21 percent respectively last month.

Funds are extremely bearish towards Turkish equities because of militant attacks there, its involvement in the Syrian conflict, currency weakness and other economic problems. Thirty-eight percent anticipate reducing their equity allocations there and none foresee raising them.

Stocks move sideways

Gulf stocks moved sideways yesterday with few fresh incentives, after global bourses and oil prices lacked direction overnight. Saudi Arabia's stock index edged down 0.1 percent in the first 20 minutes after profit taking in some second-tier petrochemical stocks which had surged on Wednesday. Petrochem continued climbing, however, adding 3.0 percent.

The banking sector index outperformed slightly, rising 0.2 percent after money supply data released late on Wednesday showed commercial bank deposits rose to their highest level this year in November - a fresh sign that a liquidity crunch due to low oil prices is easing. Dubai's stock index slipped 0.3 percent as Emaar Properties sagged 1.5 percent. Abu Dhabi climbed 0.4 percent on the back of a 1.4 percent surge in National Bank of Abu Dhabi. Qatar First Bank jumped 1.6 percent and was the most heavily traded stock in the Qatari market, where the index edged up 0.1 percent. — Reuters

News

In Brief

**US dollar stable
against KD at 0.306**

KUWAIT: The US dollar's exchange rate against the Kuwaiti dinar was stable at 0.306, the same case with the euro which stood at KD 0.320, said the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. The rate of the pound sterling was down to KD 0.374 while the Swiss Franc went up to KD 0.298, said the CBK, adding that the Japanese yen stood still at KD 0.002.

**CBQ to launch rights
issue on January 8**

DUBAI: Commercial Bank of Qatar (CBQ) will open subscriptions for a 1.5 billion riyals (\$412 million) rights issue on Jan. 8, the Gulf state's third-largest lender by assets said yesterday. The subscription period for shareholders and holders of subscription rights will run until 1 p.m. Doha time (1000 GMT) on Jan 22, the bank said in a statement. CBQ got approval from shareholders at an extraordinary general assembly on Nov. 16 to increase its capital by 18 percent through an offering of 58.8 million new shares at 25.5 riyals each. CBQ shares closed 7.6 percent higher at 32.5 riyals on Thursday. The share offer will boost the bank's share capital to 3.85 billion riyals from 3.27 billion riyals, CBQ said. The bank said last month that shareholders would be allowed to buy one new share for every 5.5 held.

**Kuwait oil price up
\$1.04 to \$51.90 pb**

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwait oil went up Wednesday by \$1.04 to reach \$51.90 per barrel as oppose to \$50.86 pb the day before, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. At the global level, the price of oil continued to soar as the date for executing the agreement to lower production between OPEC and other major oil producers nears. The price of the Brent crude went up by 13 cents to reach \$56.22 per barrel. The West Texas Intermediate also went up by 16 cents to reach \$54.06 pb.

**Oman sets 2017 telecom
royalty ratio at 12%**

DUBAI: Oman's telecommunications companies will pay a royalty to the government of 12 percent in 2017, the country's Capital Market Authority said in a bourse statement yesterday, citing a letter from the Telecommunication Regulatory Authority.

**National Bank of Oman
gets offer to buy stake**

DUBAI: National Bank of Oman (NBO) said yesterday it had received a letter from Treasure Fleet International proposing to buy a stake in Oman's third biggest lender. NBO will review the proposal; no legally binding commitments have been made and any deal would be subject to approval by shareholders and regulators, it said in a bourse statement. The bank did not provide any further details about the proposed acquisition. NBO is Oman's third largest lender by assets after BankMuscat and Bank Dhofar. Treasure Fleet International is a Singapore-based firm, according to the company's website, which is incomplete and gives no details of the company's business. SGPBusiness.com, a Singapore business directory, says Treasure Fleet International was incorporated as a limited exempt private company in August this year.



A model of the Airbus A380. Emirates received the first Rolls-Royce engine-powered Airbus A380.

UAE'S EMIRATES RECEIVES FIRST ROLLS-ROYCE POWERED A380

AIRLINE RESOLVES ISSUES WITH ENGINE MAKER

DUBAI: Emirates, the world's biggest long-haul airline, has taken delivery of its first Rolls-Royce engine-powered Airbus A380 superjumbo and has resolved its dispute with the engine maker over a technical issue. The A380 jet arrived in Dubai yesterday morning, two days after Airbus said it would delay the delivery of 12 A380s to the airline over the next two years.

An Emirates spokeswoman told Reuters the Rolls-Royce engine jet had arrived, but declined to say when it would be deployed for passenger services. The three-class configured jet was

originally scheduled for delivery on Dec. 2. Emirates also operates two-class, business and economy A380s.

The airline "has come to an agreement with Rolls-Royce on the technical issue relating to engines for our A380s," a different spokeswoman told Reuters, adding two more Rolls-Royce powered A380s would be delivered before the end of 2016. Planemaker Airbus said on Tuesday it had delayed deliveries to Emirates of six A380s in 2017 and six in 2018 following agreements between Emirates and Rolls-Royce as well as

Emirates and Airbus. Emirates President Tim Clark said on Nov. 18 the airline had some technical issues with the Rolls-Royce engines. Rolls-Royce is to supply engines for 50 Emirates A380 jets. The \$9.2 billion deal, announced in April 2015, was the largest order in the history of the British company.

Emirates is the biggest operator of the A380 having ordered 142 of the superjumbo jets. The rest of its A380 fleet uses Engine Alliance, a joint venture of General Electric and Pratt & Whitney. — Reuters

WEEKLY APPLICATIONS FOR US JOBLESS AID FALL

WASHINGTON: Fewer Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week, continuing a nearly two-year trend that suggests a solid job market.

THE NUMBERS: Weekly requests for jobless aid fell 10,000 to a seasonally adjusted 265,000, the Labor Department said yesterday. The less volatile four-week moving average for claims was 263,000. Over the past year, the number of people collecting benefits has fallen almost 5 percent to 2.1 million.

THE TAKEAWAY: The historically low number of people seeking jobless aid is a positive sign for the economy.

Weekly jobless claims below 300,000 often point to healthy hiring levels. The low level of applications indicates that employers are holding onto workers and possibly looking to expand. Claims have stayed below 300,000 for 95 straight weeks, the longest streak since 1970.

KEY DRIVERS: Consumer spending has been strong enough to sustain job growth, even though global pressures appear to have stunted overall economic gains during the 2016. US employers have added 2.25 million jobs over the past 12 months. And in November, the unemployment rate fell to a nine-year low of 4.6 percent. — AP



MIAMI LAKES: In this July 19, 2016, file photo, people fill out job applications at a job fair in Miami Lakes, Florida. — AP

TURKISH ECONOMIC CONFIDENCE INDEX HITS RECORD LOW IN DEC

ANKARA: Turkey's economic confidence index tumbled more than 18 percent to a record low in December, data showed yesterday, pointing to an even more pessimistic outlook after the economy shrank 1.8 percent in the third quarter. The index, a broad measure of sentiment about the economy, dropped to 70.52 points in the final month of the year from 86.55 a month earlier, the Turkish Statistics Institute said. It was the lowest

level since the institute began compiling the data in January 2012. The index indicates an optimistic economic outlook when above 100 and a pessimistic one when below 100. In November, the index had risen 7.4 percent to 86.55.

Negative sentiment towards Turkey has been reflected in sharp declines in the lira's value this year, with the currency dropping as much as 19 percent against the dollar.

It was at 3.5345 at 0910 GMT yesterday compared with 2.9185 at the end of 2015. The Tourism Ministry said yesterday that the number of foreign visitors arriving in Turkey dropped 21.35 percent to 1.35 million in November. Tourism, which adds about \$30 billion to gross domestic product each year, has been hammered by a spate of bombings blamed on Islamic State and Kurdish militants and by a diplomatic standoff with

Russia which erupted more than a year ago. Moscow and Ankara agreed in August to normalize ties.

Separately, the labor minister told reporters that Turkey will increase the minimum wage by about 8 percent next year to a monthly net minimum wage of 1,404 lira (\$397). Consumer price inflation is forecast to be just over 8 percent at the end of next year, according to a central bank survey. — Reuters

DOLLAR SLIPS TO 2-WEEK LOW VS YEN

LONDON: The dollar slipped to a two-week low against the yen yesterday, mirroring a fall in US bond yields as weaker-than-expected economic data weighed on the greenback and waning risk appetite boosted Japan's safe-haven currency. Japan's Nikkei stock index - which tends to move in the opposite direction to the yen - shed 1.3 percent as Toshiba Corp dived 16 percent after news of potential massive writedowns led to a downgrade of its credit ratings. The dollar dipped 0.8 percent to 116.30 yen.

Against a basket of major currencies, the greenback fell 0.6 percent to a one-week low, extending falls late on Wednesday after data showed contracts to buy previously owned US homes falling to their lowest level in nearly a year. Yields on 10-year US Treasury yields - which have in recent months been closely correlated with the dollar/yen exchange rate - also fell to their lowest in two weeks, having soared to a more-than-two-year high above 2.6 percent earlier in the month.

"We had a huge sell-off in the US bond market since the US election...so perhaps we've seen the crescendo of selling, at least initially," said MUFG currency economist Lee Hardman, in London. "If that's the case and US yields stabilize or come back lower in the near term, there's some scope there for dollar/yen to drift lower in the near term as well. Hardman added that the break below 117 yen, which had provided a floor during the Christmas period in which volumes have been thin, had accelerated the move lower.

Sterling climbed back up from two-month lows to \$1.2270, but was on track for a more than 16 percent fall against the greenback in 2016 - its worst showing since 2008. — Reuters



NEW YORK: In this Wednesday, Oct 8, 2014, file photo, American flags fly in front of the New York Stock Exchange. Global shares mostly fell in thin trading yesterday taking their cues from a slide on Wall Street. A stronger yen helped send Japanese stocks lower.—AP

OPENING OF NEW BERLIN AIRPORT IN 2017 UNLIKELY: CEO

FRANKFURT: Berlin's long-delayed new airport is unlikely to open as planned next year, the chief executive told a German newspaper yesterday, following a report that said completion of the project had been pushed back to 2018.

The international airport, which was originally due to open in 2012, has been under construction since 2006. Despite Germany's reputation for engineering and organisational prowess, red tape and technical problems have repeatedly delayed its inauguration.

German daily Bild had reported on Wednesday that the opening had been pushed back a fifth time due to problems with electrical systems, citing sources close to the airport and its owners.

It had said the fresh delay would be announced in the second half of January. Chief Executive Karsten Muehlenfeld told daily Der Tagesspiegel that no decision had been made to postpone the opening now set for late 2017 but that the airport still needed regulatory approval for an amendment to its building permit and had to finish construction of the passenger terminal.

"I don't want to hide the fact that the risks prevail by now. The chance (of opening in 2017) is only very small now," Tagesspiegel quoted Muehlenfeld as saying. Any official opening next year would have to happen by October or November, he said, as an overnight move from Berlin's Tegel airport in west Berlin in the winter, when there might be snow and ice, would be too risky. "Then it would happen at the earliest when the flight schedules change, so in late March," he said.

The new airport, named after the late politician Willy Brandt, is jointly owned by the federal government as well as the state governments of Berlin and Brandenburg. Companies involved in the construction include German engineering groups Siemens and Bosch. — Reuters

DOW'S 20,000 BARRIER, WEAK EUROPEAN BANKS DENT STOCKS

TRADERS USE HOLIDAY TRADING TO BOOK PROFIT

LONDON: European shares, the dollar and bond yields fell yesterday, with traders using the quiet holiday period to book some profit on the rise that had lifted all three to multi-year and in some cases record highs recently. Weakness in European financial stocks helped push broader indices into the red, extending the slippage after soft US housing data the previous day.

The yield on 10-year US Treasury notes slipped to a two-week low, pulling the dollar to a two-week low against the yen. "The dollar fall was mostly due to renewed doubts about the US recovery after pending home sales dropped in November. This is where the risk-off reversal started," said Ipek Ozkardeskaya, senior market analyst at London Capital Group.

"This pushed the exhausted US bulls to the sidelines and triggered a sell-off in both the dollar and US stocks. We're seeing a bit of follow through in Europe today," she said. The Dow Jones has reached record peaks in December and has come within 100 points of the 20,000 mark on the last 11 consecutive trading sessions, seven of them within 50 points. The yen's strength, along with a 16 percent slump in Toshiba Corp's shares after news of potential massive writedowns led to a downgrade of its credit ratings, saw the Nikkei shed 1.3 percent. Europe's index of leading 300 shares fell 0.3 percent to 1,425 points, with bank stocks down 0.8 percent.

Germany's DAX was off 0.3 percent too, while Britain's FTSE 100 eased 0.2 percent from Tuesday's record closing high of 7,106 points. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan was last up 0.3 percent, helping to

keep global stocks in positive territory by the most slender margin of 0.1 percent. The pullback on Wall Street Tuesday came amid light volumes. Wednesday was the first session when trades settle in January. The Dow fell 0.56 percent, while the S&P 500 lost 0.84 percent and the Nasdaq 0.89 percent. Weak home sales data were blamed for some of the selling.

US bonds made a rare rally as the soft home sales report combined with surprisingly strong demand for a sale of new five-year Treasury notes. Yields on 10-year paper fell 3 basis points to their lowest in two weeks at 2.48 percent. Eurozone yields were also falling on concerns about the strength of a rescue plan for Italian banks and normal year-end caution. Germany's 10-year yields hit their lowest in seven weeks at 0.164 percent, while their discount to Treasury yields reached the widest on record. The widening yield gap kept the euro restrained around \$1.0450 even in the face of broad dollar weakness, after touching an eight-session trough of \$1.0372 overnight. The euro was still up around 0.5 percent on the day.

The dollar eased 0.6 percent on the yen to 116.50, while sterling recovered from a two-month low to trade 0.3 percent higher at \$1.2263.

London stocks drifted 0.1 percent lower, one day after striking an all-time closing pinnacle at 7,106.08 in volatile low-volume deals. Frankfurt and Paris retrenched with losses of 0.3 percent and 0.2 percent respectively, following losses elsewhere. Asian equities mostly sank yesterday, with Tokyo suffering the heaviest drop in more than a month, after Wall Street had tumbled

Wednesday in a sleepy session. "The 'Santa Rally' has been somewhat dented after icy winds hit the US markets yesterday," said Ipek Ozkardeskaya, analyst at London Capital Group. "Then Asian stocks slid ... and the FTSE is suffering from a combination of profit taking and risk-off trading," she added.

'Santa favours gold diggers'

However, shares in gold mining companies like Fresnillo and Randgold forged higher in London on the back of firmer prices for the glamorous precious metal. "Santa seems to favour gold diggers today," noted Ozkardeskaya. Fresnillo gained 2.0 percent and Randgold won 1.3 percent in value.

"Both the FTSE 100 and the (European) indices are pulling back ... although the UK leaderboard is still topped by the silver and gold miners Fresnillo and Randgold, a sector where European markets offer little by way of exposure," added AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould.

On Friday-New Year's Eve-London will shut up shop at lunchtime but Frankfurt and Paris will remain open as normal. Back in Asia, Tokyo slumped Thursday as the yen strengthened against the dollar while Toshiba's stock plunged for the third straight day.

The troubled conglomerate's shares ended another torrid day 17 percent down, following the company's warning of a possible one-time loss of several billion dollars over its US nuclear business. Its stock has now lost more than 40 percent since Tuesday, meaning the loss could take out a huge portion of its equity capital and force the company to seek funds from investors.—Agencies



SEOUL: Staff members of the Korea Exchange applaud as they throw confetti for the media during the year's market closing ceremony near a screen showing the Korea Composite Stock Price Index (KOSPI) at the Korea Exchange in Seoul yesterday. — AP

SOUTH KOREA SLASHES 2017 GROWTH FORECAST TO 2.6%

RISE IN UNCERTAINTIES IN US BLAMED

SEOUL: South Korea revised down its 2017 growth outlook yesterday, citing increased uncertainties in the United States and a sagging recovery in domestic consumption. The Finance Ministry said Asia's fourth-largest economy will likely expand 2.6 percent next year, down from its earlier forecast of 3.0 percent. It also downgraded its projected growth for this year to 2.6 percent from 2.8 percent.

The pace of interest rate increases in the US is one cause for concern, while President-elect Donald Trump's still-to-be-decided trade policies are another, the ministry said. Those uncertainties in the US, a major trading partner for South Korea, could hurt domestic consumption and export growth next year. The country also recently has been embroiled in political turmoil, as a scandal over alleged collusion and abuse of power resulted in the impeachment of President Park Geun-hye and investigations involving many of South Korea's biggest companies. The political uncertainty and a presidential election likely to be held next year have made companies reluctant to make investments.

South Korea faces many other challenges, including a high youth unemployment rate, record-high household debts, and corporate restructuring in shipping and shipyard industries that have shed tens of thousands of jobs. South Korea likely will add fewer jobs next year than in 2016.

The country is struggling to increase its stubbornly low birth rate to slow the rapid aging of its population: South Korea's population of 15-64 year-olds will start to fall next year. The government plans a 20 trillion won (\$16.5 billion) stimulus package to counter slowing growth. It also has pledged to increase public sector hiring, pressure state companies to spend more and to give newlyweds tax benefits to encourage more marriages. — AP

CHINA PLANS 30,000-KM HIGH SPEED RAIL NETWORK BY 2020

BEIJING: The Chinese government plans to expand the country's high-speed rail network to 30,000 kilometers (18,600 miles) by 2020, part of public infrastructure spending aimed at shoring up economic growth. The network would connect more than 80 percent of China's major cities, Vice Transport Minister Yang Yudong said. Last year, China's high-speed railway totaled 19,000 kilometers (11,800 miles). Overall, China plans to invest 3.5 trillion yuan (\$504 billion) in railway construction between this year and 2020, Yang said. He was speaking at a briefing introducing plans to improve the country's transportation services.

The plans call for the renovation of expressways and faster construction of railways to serve less-developed regions in central and western China. Economic growth has steadily slowed over the past six years as communist leaders seek to wean the economy off manufacturing and exports in favor of more self-sustaining growth based on consumer spending. In the last two years, officials have responded with ramped up spending on construction of highways and other public works. On Wednesday, China began operating a new high-speed rail line linking the financial hub of Shanghai in the east with Kunming, the capital of southwestern Yunnan province, a poorer region. — AP

RIO'S UNPAID GOVERNMENT WORKERS LINE UP FOR FOOD

GOVT BLAMED FOR LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY

RIO DE JANEIRO: At the foot of a tall building in downtown Rio de Janeiro, government workers line up for donated groceries, unable to buy their own because their salaries have not been paid.

Inside, on the 13th floor, a food bank set up by a labor union is handing out plastic bags of groceries to help state employees as Brazil struggles through its worst recession in a century. The state of Rio, which is fighting off bankruptcy, has stopped paying salaries and pensions amid the crisis-leaving nearly half a million people and their families to depend on private charity.

Celia Moitas Pinto and her sister donated two large bags of food in "solidarity." Pinto's sister works for the government herself. But she is still getting paid thanks to a court injunction requiring the state to keep paying salaries of employees in the justice system. She is luckier than her colleagues in public health and education, who have not been paid since November. "There are recessions all over the world, but here it's been caused by theft and corruption," Pinto said bitterly.

"I'm ashamed to be Brazilian," the 71-year-old added. Sergio Cabral, the former governor who led Rio during an economic boom that has now gone bust, was jailed in November on corruption, money laundering and racketeering charges.

A judge has frozen part of his assets,

ruling he "contributed to the financial crisis devastating the state" by granting undue tax breaks to favored companies during his administration (2007-2014). Cabral's wife is now behind bars on the same charges.

'Humiliating situation'

The food bank was set up by the justice system workers' union Sindijustica. Inside its headquarters, some 30 people sorted donated food into piles. Many wore black t-shirts that read: "The people will not pay for the crisis." "We put rice, coffee, beans, etc.... hygiene products to lessen our colleagues' anguish and suffering," said volunteer Silvana Soares, a 57-year-old court official. "They all passed civil service exams to get where they are, and now they find themselves in this humiliating situation." Rio, which played host to both the 2014 World Cup and 2016 Olympics, has been the state hit hardest by the crisis gripping Brazil, Latin America's largest economy.

Its hospitals are short of supplies, its streets are regularly flooded by government workers demanding their paychecks, and its police force sometimes has no paper or fuel.

Rio's payroll is one of the biggest drains on its troubled finances. The Rio state government has more than 220,000 employees, plus 247,000 retired government workers. Its monthly wage and pension

bill-when it pays up-comes to two billion reais (\$610 million).

Paradox city

The food bank has collected more than 20 tons of donated groceries and distributed 1,500 baskets since it was set up just before Christmas, said fire captain Marcelo Mata, another volunteer.

He too is still getting paid as an employee deemed vital for public security. "I consider myself lucky," the 43-year-old said. "But for how long? We are living a paradox in this city. We spend money for New Year's Eve fireworks on Copacabana Beach, but behind the scenes state employees have nothing."

Still, those helped by the food bank are touched by the donations. "We're going through an unprecedented crisis. I give thanks to everyone who's helping us," said Yara da Silva, a 50-year-old nurse's aide. She is still waiting for her November salary of \$320, which the government now says will be deposited in five payments starting January 5. "But what about December, and my Christmas bonus? It's hard. Very hard," da Silva said. Outside the building, the long line crept along. "This is humiliating," said septuagenarian pensioner Mauricio Lucas. "I got up at 4:00 am to come get food handouts, after 38 years of work. "All because of the government's lack of responsibility." — AFP



CARACAS: A man shows new 50-Bolivar-coins at a kiosk in Caracas yesterday. Venezuela took delivery on December 27 of its third load of new, bigger denomination banknotes, its central bank said, but there was no sign of them in circulation yet despite official promises and mounting public anxiety. — AFP

VENEZUELANAS GET NEW COINS, STILL WAITING ON BILLS

CARACAS: New Venezuelan coins began circulating Wednesday in the capital Caracas, but long-awaited new bills had yet to arrive, prolonging the chaos unleashed by a botched currency reform.

President Nicolas Maduro is introducing new coins and bills in larger denominations as he grapples with the world's highest inflation rate. But the leftist leader triggered riots and looting two weeks ago when he tried to pull the 100-bolivar bill from circulation before its replacement had arrived-leaving Venezuelans desperately short of cash for food and Christmas presents. Ten days after the new currency was supposed to be launched, the first coins were avail-

able at certain street vendors' stalls. The 50-bolivar coins feature the bust of Simon Bolivar, a hero of Latin America's independence struggles who is idolized by Maduro and his late predecessor Hugo Chavez.

They are worth around 7.5 US cents at the highest official exchange rate. Vendors said they had yet to see the first of the new bank notes, worth 500 bolivars, even though the central bank says several shipments have arrived. The government plans to eventually roll out bank notes in denominations of up to 20,000 bolivars-easing the pain of Venezuelans stuck carting around huge piles of 100-bolivar bills. Venezuela's inflation rate, which will hit 475 percent this

year, according to an IMF forecast, has gutted the value of the bolivar. The 100-bolivar note, formerly the highest denomination, is now worth just 15 US cents at the highest official exchange rate, and a fraction of that on the black market. Maduro alleged international "mafias" were hoarding 100-bolivar bills abroad in a US-backed conspiracy. But after his move to pull it from circulation triggered unrest, he extended its life until January 2.

Venezuela has been rocked by low prices for its key export, oil. Now in its third year of a deep recession, it is facing severe shortages of food, medicine and basic household goods. — AFP

WHAT IT MEANS IF TRUMP NAMES CHINA A CURRENCY MANIPULATOR

WASHINGTON: President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to name China a currency manipulator on his first day in the White House. There's only one problem - it's not true anymore. China, the world's second-biggest economy behind the United States, hasn't been pushing down its currency to benefit Chinese exporters in years.

And even if it were, the law targeting manipulators requires the US spend a year negotiating a solution before it can retaliate. Trump spent much of the campaign blaming China's for America's economic woes. And it's true that the US-China trade relationship is lopsided. China sells a lot more to the United States than it buys. The resulting trade deficit in goods amounted to a staggering \$289 billion through the first 10 months of 2016. But in fact, for the past couple of years China has been intervening in markets to prop up its currency, the yuan, not push it lower.

What does currency have to do with the trade gap?

When China's yuan falls against the US dollar, Chinese products become cheaper in the US market and American products become more costly in China.

So the US Treasury Department monitors China for signs it is manipulating the yuan lower. Treasury has guidelines for putting countries on its currency blacklist. They must, for example, have spent the equivalent of 2 percent of their economic output over a year buying foreign currencies in an attempt to drive those currencies up and their own currencies down. Treasury hasn't declared China a currency manipulator since 1994.

What would happen if the us declared china a currency manipulator?

Probably not much, at least initially. If Treasury designates China a currency manipulator under a 2015 law, it is supposed to spend a year trying to resolve the problem through negotiations.

Should those talks fail, the US can take a number of small steps in retaliation, including stopping the US Overseas Private Investment Corp., a government development agency, from financing any programs in China. Trouble is, the United States already suspended OPIC operations in China years ago - to punish Beijing in the aftermath of the bloody 1989 crackdown in Tiananmen Square. So naming China a currency manipulator is mostly "just a jaw-boning exercise," said Amanda DeBusk, chair of the international trade department at the law firm of Hughes Hubbard & Reed and a former Commerce Department official. "There's no immediate consequence."

Is china guilty of using currency to help its exporters?

For years, China pretty clearly manipulated its currency to gain an advantage over global competitors. It bought foreign currencies, the U.S. dollar in particular, to push them higher against the yuan. As it did, it accumulated vast foreign currency reserves - nearly \$4 trillion worth by mid-2014.

But now the Chinese economy is slowing, and Chinese companies and individuals have begun to invest more heavily outside the country. As their money leaves China, it puts downward pressure on the yuan. The yuan has dropped nearly 7 percent against the dollar so far this year. The Chinese government has responded by draining its foreign exchange reserves to buy yuan, hoping to slow the currency's fall. China's reserves have dropped by \$279 billion this year to \$3.05 trillion. If Beijing stepped back and let market forces determine the yuan's level, it likely would fall even faster, giving Chinese exporters even more of a competitive edge.

So Beijing is doing the opposite of what Trump says it's doing. Cornell University economist Eswar Prasad earlier this month called Trump's plans to name China a currency manipulator "unmoored from reality." — AP



TOKYO: The logo of Japanese conglomerate Toshiba is seen on a wall of a building in Kawasaki, suburban Tokyo, yesterday. Toshiba shares dived more than 25 percent yesterday, their third straight double-digit plunge, following the company's warning of a possible one-time loss of several billion dollars over its US nuclear business. — AFP

BATTERED TOSHIBA OUT OF EASY OPTIONS TO PLUG NUCLEAR HOLE

ASSET SALES SEEN A PRIORITY, BUT TOUGH TO CARRY OUT

TOKYO: Faced with the prospect of a multi-billion-dollar writedown that could wipe out its shareholders' equity, Japan's Toshiba is running out of fixes: it is burning cash, cannot issue shares and has few easy assets left to sell.

The Tokyo-based conglomerate, which is still recovering from a \$1.3 billion accounting scandal in 2015, dismayed investors and lenders again this week by announcing that cost overruns at a US nuclear business bought only last year meant it could now face a crippling charge against profit.

Toshiba says it will be weeks before it can give a final number, but a writedown of the scale expected - as much as 500 billion yen (\$4.3 billion), according to one source close to Toshiba - would leave the group scrambling to plug the financial hole and keep up hefty investments in the competitive memory chip industry, which generates the bulk of its operating profit. Shareholder equity, which represents its accumulated reserves, stood at 363.2 billion yen at the end of September, already just 7.5 percent of total assets. Toshiba cannot raise cash by issuing shares because of restrictions imposed by the stock exchange after last

year's scandal. One source close to the matter said Toshiba had been considering a share issue of around 300 billion yen, but the imminent lifting of those restrictions are now unlikely.

Private equity funding could be an option, but financial sources and investors said Toshiba would likely be forced to sell off more assets and stakes, months after having sold its two most easily marketable businesses: white goods and medical devices. "Toshiba's immediate problem is that it is burning cash at an alarming rate, and this will be more than challenging," said Ken Courtis, chairman of Starfort Investment Holdings. "I see little option but to sell a slew of non-core assets." Its loss-making PC and TV businesses would be poor candidates for sale, while its many cross-shareholdings are unlikely to fetch enough. "Toshiba doesn't have many saleable assets in hand," Standard & Poor's analyst Hiroki Shibata said after the ratings agency downgraded Toshiba. "It has mostly sold assets which have big price tags or that could easily find buyers already. It would be difficult to secure big funds through asset sales."

One source in the semiconductor industry said Toshiba could revive plans to list a slice of the memory chip business, which though highly profitable burns through cash for reinvestment.

"Toshiba will probably need to sell 30-40 percent of the NAND business in an IPO to secure enough cash," the source said, adding China's aggressive drive into NAND flash memory chips could make the timing reasonable.

The group has already said it could reconsider the "positioning" of its nuclear business, deemed core last year, and has signalled it could trim an 87 percent stake. Toshiba has said it will consider a capital strategy, but has given no details.

For now, creditor banks are expected to step into the liquidity breach, betting on Toshiba's growing chips business - though they were blindsided by the news and expressed concerns over continued governance and disclosure issues. Some bankers had been on a factory tour with Toshiba on the day before the announcement, two of the banking sources said. They were told about the writedown that night. — Reuters

TWITTER UNVEILS 360-DEGREE LIVE VIDEO

WASHINGTON: Twitter on Wednesday began streaming 360-degree video, allowing users to interact and get behind the scenes of live broadcasts.

"Starting today, you can check out live, interactive 360 videos from interesting broadcasters and explore what's happening with them," Twitter's Alessandro Sabatelli said in a blog post. "You'll be able to get an inside look with well-known personalities and go behind the scenes at

exclusive events." The first such video was delivered over Twitter's live Periscope application from broadcaster Alex Pettitt, showing a Florida sunset, while allowing users to see it from different angles by clicking on the stream.

"With 360 video on Periscope, you can experience moments with the broadcaster and take a look around — it's one step closer to actually being there," the Periscope team said in a blog post.

"Starting today, you'll be able to join live 360 videos on Periscope and Twitter from some incredible broadcasters — getting front-row access at exclusive events, traveling to places across the globe, and getting up close with well-known personalities."

Earlier this year Facebook began streaming 360-degree videos, which require a special set of cameras to capture surroundings. Twitter said it was testing 360 broadcasts "with a small group of part-

ners," and will be rolling out the feature "more broadly during the coming weeks."

"Live 360 video isn't just about taking you to places you've never been; it's about connecting you with people and letting you experience something new with them," the Periscope team said. "With these videos, the broadcaster anchors the experience so you can be present with them from whatever environment they're sharing from." — AFP



ARLINGTON: In a Sunday, Dec 18, 2016 file photo, Dallas Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott (4) prepares to throw a pass as Tyron Smith (77) provides protection in the first half of an NFL football game against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. — AP

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY OF NFL 2016

DALLAS: The Houston Texans' decision to break the bank for Brock Osweiler was among the worst calls of 2016, aside from Jacksonville's color rush mustard yellow jerseys, of course. The Texans soon realized that just because you pay a quarterback \$18 million a year on average doesn't mean you have an \$18 million quarterback, but maybe just an average one. Osweiler is a backup heading into the playoffs, just like last year, when he was supplanted by Peyton Manning in Denver. This time, he's behind Tom Savage, who's making \$600,000.

"Unfortunately I've been down this road before," Osweiler said. "I understand what it's like to get benched in the middle of a football game. And ultimately having a big picture view on the deal, it's all about the next man up and being a good teammate." The other team from Texas also has an expensive backup, and Cowboys owner Jerry Jones made one of the best calls of 2016 when he kept his \$18 million QB on the sideline in light of rookie Dak Prescott's success.

Prescott (\$450,000) has capitalized on the NFL's best offensive line and the league's top rusher, fellow rookie Ezekiel Elliott, to guide Dallas (13-2) back to elite status after Tony Romo broke a bone in his back in a preseason game. To think, Prescott was Jones' consolation prize after John Elway outmaneuvered him on draft day to select Paxton Lynch, who's 1-1 as Trevor Siemian's backup in Denver.

Other front office moves that paid off handsomely included: Oakland signing Kelechi Osemele, the capstone of the AFC's best O-line; New England bringing back O-line coach Dante Scarnecchia; and Atlanta signing Alex Mack, who transformed the Falcons' O-line into one of the league's best. The Browns were ridiculed early on for their trade with the Eagles and missing out on Carson Wentz. But they could have two top-10 picks in

April, allowing them to get Myles Garrett AND a quarterback, setting up a potential franchise-transforming draft.

Jack Del Rio shed his conservative credentials and went for 2 at New Orleans in Week 1, setting the tone for the Raiders' return to the playoff party for the first time since 2002, even if Derek Carr (broken leg) won't lead the way. Among the moves that backfired: Carolina not re-signing Josh Norman; the Rams' decision to retain Jeff Fisher during the move to L.A., which means Jared Goff has to learn a new scheme in his second season; and the Jets dithering at quarterback, then re-signing Ryan Fitzpatrick late for \$12 million, leading to another lost season.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell found his office embroiled in another controversy over player discipline and domestic violence. After mishandling the Ray Rice case two years ago, Goodell vowed not to make the same mistake again. But the league's handling of Josh Brown (one-game suspension) raised doubts that the NFL learned its lesson after police released journal entries and emails in which the Giants kicker acknowledged repeatedly abusing his former wife. Other notable calls in 2016:

THE GOOD

CALICO CLEATS: Some of the league's most colorful characters are fined just about every week for wearing kaleidoscopic cleats during games. The league's one-week reprieve was called "My Cause, My Cleats," and allowed players to wear custom cleats in Week 13 and then auction them for charity.

JUMP FOR JOY: Will Parks' white cleats and Justin Simmons' 40-inch vertical leap both came in handy when the Broncos visited New Orleans. Simmons leapt the long snapper and blocked the potential go-ahead extra point with 1:22 left and Parks scooped up the football and raced 84 yards. Officials upheld the

first game-winning 2-point play in league history when they couldn't determine whether Parks stepped out of bounds because his white cleats blended in with the sideline.

HARLAN'S CALL: Radio announcer Kevin Harlan offered spirited play-by-play commentary as security chased down a fan on the field in the fourth quarter of San Francisco's 28-0 win over the Rams on opening weekend. He called out the movements of the "goofball in a hat and a red shirt" like he would a long touchdown run, capping his call by saying, "That was the most exciting thing to happen tonight."

BLAME EVERYBODY: Referee Walt Anderson didn't bother collecting the jersey numbers when Tennessee's offense messed up one play so spectacularly in the game at Indianapolis. He just called false start on "everyone but the center."

THE BAD

BLAME EVERYBODY II: Anderson's crew botched the final seconds of the first half of a Bills-Seahawks game when Richard Sherman was flagged for being offside (the league said it should have been unnecessary roughness) when he crashed into Dan Carpenter trying to block a 48-yard field goal. Carpenter had to leave for a play after trainers ran onto the field to check on him, forcing Buffalo to spike the ball with 1 second left. Officials forgot to reset the game clock and called delay of game before Carpenter missed from 54 yards.

MINNESOTA MUTINY: After the Vikings' 38-25 loss to Green Bay in Week 16, cornerback Xavier Rhodes said the DBs ignored coach Mike Zimmer's game plan to have Rhodes shadow Jordy Nelson. After Nelson caught seven passes for 145 yards and two TDs in the first half, Rhodes went back to the game plan and held Nelson to two catches for 9 yards after halftime. — AP

PACKERS' PROLIFIC DUO ARE ON A ROLL

GREEN BAY: Aaron Rodgers and Jordy Nelson have worked with each other so long that it often seems they can create plays just by making eye contact. Nelson points to where he thinks he can make a catch. Rodgers buys precious seconds and delivers a pinpoint pass. Another big play for the Green Bay Packers. The prolific duo is on a roll headed into the Packers' winner-take-all showdown on Sunday against the Lions in Detroit for the NFC North title.

"You can see the trust," coach Mike McCarthy said. "He releases the ball much earlier to Jordy and that in itself speaks volumes of their relationship as far as the number of reps, the trust, the timing and so forth. They're a unique combination." Nelson came in to the league as a second-round draft choice out of Kansas State in 2008, which was Rodgers' first year taking over as the starting quarterback.

Since then, they have combined to become the most productive quarterback-receiver touchdown combination in Packers history, breaking the mark of 57 held by Brett Favre and Antonio Freeman. Two more touchdown passes last week against Minnesota gave the Rodgers-to-Nelson combination 59. Nelson has five scoring catches alone over the last four weeks, a period during which Rodgers has been dealing with leg muscle injuries.

"I mean, he does everything that you could possibly want a quarterback to do," Lions coach Jim Caldwell said about Rodgers. "There's not anything he's not doing well. And I think he's always played well." Packers offensive coordinator Edgar Bennett has taken to giving Rodgers the nickname "Yellow Jacket," after the color of the sport coat that retired players wear when inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

"I'm just looking for new ways to compliment him," McCarthy said. "I think if you just have a chance to be around him every day, he competes with everything. It can be overwhelming sometimes as far as whether it's pre-practice drill or finishing his test before the other guys." With a league leading 14 touchdown catches, Nelson has bounced back quite nicely this season after missing 2015 with a torn ACL. He has 91 catches for 1,191 yards headed into the regular season finale.

McCarthy said he loves the "little things" that Nelson does, like how the receiver's work ethic in practice rubs off on his teammates. "He's very into the drill work, clearly understands the importance of not only practicing but how important it is for him to practice with the other receivers and get the time clock, the spacing, and he's a great example for young players," McCarthy said. — AP

BUCS' MARTIN SUSPENDED FOUR GAMES FOR DOPING

ORLANDO: Tampa Bay Buccaneers running back Doug Martin has been suspended four games for violating the NFL's performance-enhancing drug policy and said on Wednesday he was entering a treatment facility. The NFL Network reported that two-time Pro Bowler Martin, who was held out of last week's loss against the New Orleans Saints, was suspended for using the stimulant Adderall.

"I was notified last week of a four-game suspension for violating the league's drug policy. My initial instinct was to appeal the suspension and finish the season with my teammates," Martin, 27, said in a statement. "However, after numerous discussions with people close to me including Coach (Dirk) Koetter-I am starting the suspension immediately so I can enter a treatment facility and receive the help I truly need."

Martin signed a five-year, \$35.75 million contract, with \$15 million guaranteed, last offseason after finishing second in the National Football League in rushing in 2015 with 1,402 yards. Tampa Bay (8-7) play the Carolina Panthers, last season's NFC champions, on Sunday in their regular season finale needing a victory and a slew of other outcomes in a longshot bid to reach the playoffs.

"On the field, I must be strong and determined to push through both pain and injuries to become an elite NFL running back. Off the field, I have tried that same approach in my personal life," Martin said. "My shortcomings in this area have taught me both that I cannot win these personal battles alone and that there is no shame in asking for help." Tampa Bay Buccaneers general manager Jason Licht said Martin needed to address his problems. — Reuters



OAKLAND: Toronto Raptors guard DeMar DeRozan, center, shoots against Golden State Warriors guard Klay Thompson (11) during the second half of an NBA basketball game. — AP

WARRIORS BOUNCE BACK FROM CHRISTMAS DEFEAT

OAKLAND: Kevin Durant scored 22 points and matched his season best with 17 rebounds as Golden State held off Toronto. Stephen Curry had 28 points, seven assists and seven rebounds, and Klay Thompson scored 21 for the Warriors. Durant also had seven assists and five blocks. Upset with themselves for blowing a 14-point lead in the fourth quarter to lose 109-108 at Cleveland in an NBA Finals rematch on Christmas, the Warriors took it out on Toronto three days later.

DeMar DeRozan scored 29 points and became Toronto's career scoring leader (10,290), passing Chris Bosh's 10,275 points. But the Raptors had their franchise-record, seven-game road winning streak snapped. Golden State has gone 119 straight regular-season games without losing back-to-back contests since April 2015 and has won 15 in a row after a defeat, going 5-0 this season.

BULLS 101, NETS 99

Jimmy Butler matched his season high with 40 points and hit a 20-footer at the buzzer roughly five minutes after being helped off the court with an apparent injury Wednesday night to give the Chicago Bulls a 101-99 comeback victory over the Brooklyn Nets. Butler scored nine points in the final 2 1/2 minutes to rally Chicago. He finished 11 for 11 from the free throw line and grabbed 11 rebounds as the Bulls overcame a seven-point deficit in the final three minutes for their second consecutive win. With just more than five minutes left, Butler came down on the foot of Brooklyn guard Randy Foye and had to be helped off the court. Dwyane Wade had 16 points before leaving early in the fourth quarter with a migraine. Brook Lopez had 33 points - including a career-high five 3-pointers - as the Nets

dropped their 12th straight road game.

SPURS 119, SUNS 98

LaMarcus Aldridge scored 27 points and San Antonio defeated Phoenix without leading scorer Kawhi Leonard. After trailing by as many as 10 points, San Antonio forced seven turnovers while outscoring Phoenix 30-16 in the final quarter to capture its sixth straight win at home. Tony Parker added 20 points and Pau Gasol had 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Spurs, who played without Leonard for the first time this season. The 6-foot-7 forward, who had a stomach virus, was replaced in the lineup by Kyle Anderson. T.J. Warren led the Suns with 23 points.

PELICANS 102, CLIPPERS 98

Anthony Davis highlighted a 20-point performance with a soaring, one-handed, alley-oop dunk during a pivotal fourth-quarter spurt, and the suddenly surging New Orleans Pelicans beat Los Angeles. Buddy Hield scored 17 points for the Pelicans, who have won three straight. Reserve guard Tyreke Evans added a season-high 12 in his sixth game back from a right knee injury. Chris Paul returned from a three-game absence and scored 21 points against his old team, but couldn't quite lift the Clippers out of their funk. Los Angeles has lost four straight. Austin Rivers had 22 points for Los Angeles, and DeAndre Jordan pulled down 25 rebounds.

HAWKS 102, KNICKS 98, OT

Dennis Schroder scored 27 points, Dwight Howard added 16 points and 22 rebounds, and Atlanta took advantage of Carmelo Anthony's second-quarter ejection to beat New York in overtime. Derrick Rose finished with 26 points

for New York, but the star point guard fell as he was dribbling near the Knicks' basket and lost his footing with 6 seconds left in overtime and Atlanta leading by one. Schroder followed with a pair of free throws to make it 100-97. Kristaps Porzingis, who scored 24 points, was fouled as he shot a 3-pointer on the ensuing possession, but made just one of three free throws to end the suspense. The Hawks had lost three straight and six of seven at home. They are 7-14 since beginning the season 9-2. Atlanta didn't trail again in overtime after Thabo Sefolosha hit a 3 to make it 89-88 with 3:54 left.

HORNETS 120, MAGIC 101

Kemba Walker scored 21 points, Nicolas Batum had 20 and Charlotte used a huge third quarter to rout Orlando. Jeremy Lamb added 14 points and Ramon Sessions scored 13 off the bench as the Hornets won for the fourth time in five games. Charlotte shot 54.8 percent, including 10 of 24 on 3-pointers. Nikola Vucevic led the Magic with 21 points and Serge Ibaka had 20, all in the first half. Batum nearly had a triple-double with nine rebounds and eight assists, but wasn't needed in the fourth quarter when both teams emptied their benches. Charlotte outscored Orlando 35-13 in the third to break open a close game.

WIZARDS 111, PACERS 105

John Wall had 36 points and 11 rebounds, and Washington held off Indiana despite playing the second half without Bradley Beal. Otto Porter Jr added 22 points for the Wizards, and Wall finished one assist shy of his first triple-double this season. Beal, who sprained his right ankle in the first quarter, had 12 points in 18 minutes. Paul George scored 34 and Jeff Teague added 19 points and 11 assists for the

Pacers, who trailed by 11 after three quarters and cut the deficit to two late in the fourth. Marcin Gortat had 13 points and 16 rebounds for Washington. The Wizards are 8-3 in their last 11 games, and have won seven straight at home. They're within a game of .500 for the first time since losing their opener en route to a 2-8 start. Indiana has lost four straight since beating Washington on Dec. 19.

BUCKS 119, PISTONS 94

Jabari Parker scored 31 points and Giannis Antetokounmpo had 23 points and eight rebounds as Milwaukee beat Detroit. Greg Monroe added 14 points, six assists and five rebounds against his former team to help the Bucks win for the second time in five games. Tobias Harris had 23 points and 12 rebounds off the bench for Detroit, which has dropped six of seven. The Pistons ended a five-game losing streak Monday with a win over the Cleveland Cavaliers, who rested LeBron James, but weren't competitive against visiting Milwaukee.

NUGGETS 105, TIMBERWOLVES 103

Wilson Chandler scored 17 points and delivered a key block in the final seconds, helping Denver hang on to beat Minnesota. The Nuggets overcame a triple-double by Karl-Anthony Towns, who had 15 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for the Timberwolves. Danilo Gallinari scored 18 points, including the go-ahead basket with 27 seconds left, and Nikola Jokic was two rebounds shy of a triple-double for the Nuggets. He finished with 16 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds. Andrew Wiggins had 25 points for the Timberwolves, and Gorgui Dieng added 20. Zach LaVine just missed a 3-pointer at the buzzer. — AP

BROOM SETS UP NZ SERIES WIN

NELSON: Neil Broom's maiden century and the self-belief of Kane Williamson gave New Zealand a 67-run victory over Bangladesh to take the second one-day international and the series in Nelson yesterday. Bangladesh suffered a dramatic meltdown when they were cruising towards what should have been a comfortable victory after Broom's unbeaten 109 was the only significant score in New Zealand's 251.

The tourists reached 104 for one in the 23rd over and were all out for 184 by the 43rd, losing their last nine wickets for 80 runs. The win, following New Zealand's 77-run victory in the first match, gives the home side an unbeatable 2-0 lead with one match remaining, also in Nelson, on Saturday. With New Zealand's frontline bowlers struggled for consistency at the start of the Bangladesh innings, skipper and part-time spinner Williamson put himself into the attack as the seventh bowler and claimed three for 22 with his looping off-breaks. Williamson described it as a "satisfying" outcome given the pressure New Zealand were under.

"They bowled outstandingly on that surface and gave us nothing for a long period of time. We certainly had to suck it up and Broomy did that and played the match-winning knock." Williamson added his bowling effort was "a little bit fortunate. I was encouraged to bring myself on and it was nice that it came off." For Bangladesh Captain Mashrafe Mortaza there was no escaping that he had been let down by his batsmen who he said should have chased down their target. "The bowlers did a very good job. But I'm very disappointed with the batters. One for 100 and then collapsing is obviously disappointing," he said.

Bizarre run-out

Williamson's triple strike was the breakthrough New Zealand needed after Imrul Kayes, Tamim Iqbal and Sabbir Rahman had given Bangladesh a solid start to their chase. Tamim produced a quick 16 and Imrul (59) and Sabbir (38) kept the scoreboard ticking over at a constant rate. But after Imrul brought the 100 up with a huge six off Jimmy Neesham, Sabbir was run out in bizarre fashion as he turned back going for a single and both batsmen raced for the non-striker's end.

Imrul believed he lost the race and headed for the dressing room only to be recalled when television replays showed Sabbir had grounded his bat second. It was the start of the Bangladesh downfall with Lockie Ferguson, who dropped a sitter from Imrul on 45, bowling new batsman Mahmudullah for one with a yorker. Williamson then entered the attack to remove Shakib Al Hasan (7), Mosaddek Hossain (3) and Tanveer Haider (2). Debutant Nurul Hasan, standing in for injured wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim, dragged the innings out with 24 before being the last wicket to fall. Bangladesh, in an unorthodox reaction to losing the first ODI, injected three debutants into their side.

Along with Nurul, who capped his game with the smart stumping of Neesham and two sharp catches, speedster Subashis Roy took the wicket of Mitchell Santner and Tanveer took a catch to remove New Zealand's Luke Ronchi for 35. Ronchi (35) was the second best performing New Zealand batsman and featured in a 64-run stand with Broom for the sixth wicket. New Zealand were sent into bat after Mashrafe won the toss and decided to make early use of heavily overcast conditions. — AFP



NELSON: Bangladesh's Taskin Ahmed (L) is stumped by New Zealand wicketkeeper Luke Ronchi (R) during the second one-day international cricket match between New Zealand and Bangladesh at Saxton Oval. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Australia's batsmen Steve Smith (R) cuts a ball away as Pakistan wicketkeeper Sarfraz Ahmed (L) reacts on the fourth day of the second cricket Test match. — AFP

SMITH CENTURY GIVES AUSTRALIA SLIM LEAD

MELBOURNE: Skipper Steve Smith scored his 17th Test century to give Australia a 22-run lead over Pakistan as rain again disrupted play in the second Test in Melbourne yesterday. Smith reached his fourth Test hundred of the year before a storm lashed the Melbourne Cricket Ground just before tea and forced the rest of the fourth day's play to be abandoned.

Smith was unbeaten on 100 with Mitchell Starc not out seven in Australia's 465 for six. It is unlikely there will be a result in the Test with just Friday's final day to play. The Australians were hoping to build a 100-plus run lead to try and put the tourists under pressure on the final day in the weather-disrupted Test.

"We were planning to play a little more positively this afternoon and try and get as many runs as we could, but the rain hasn't helped us," Smith said. "So now it's about summing it up in the morning and seeing where we can go. "It's obviously going to be difficult to get a result, the wicket hasn't broken up much and it's playing well."

Smith passed 1,000 runs in a calendar year for the third time in a row during his knock, taking his 2016 total to 1,040 at 67.60 with his patient 100 not out coming off 168 balls with nine boundaries. Usman Khawaja was dismissed three runs short of his century early in the day, the second time this season that the Pakistan-born batsman has been dismissed on 97.

Khawaja had added just two runs to his overnight 95 off 12 balls when he edged Wahab Riaz to wicketkeeper Sarfraz Ahmed in the day's fifth over.

Khawaja left the ground with his head bowed. Khawaja also missed out on a century against South Africa in the second innings of last month's first Test in Perth. The Australians lost the wickets of under-pressure pair Nic Maddinson and Matthew

Wade in the middle session.

Handy Handscomb

Maddinson, fighting to nail down his Test spot, failed again, deceived by wrist-spinner Yasir Shah's flight and was bowled off-stump for 22 off 55 balls. Under pressure after scores of 0, 1 and 4 in his three Test innings, Maddinson advanced down the wicket but failed to get to the pitch of the ball and left the wicket shaking his head. Wicketkeeper Wade again missed out this time he was caught in the slips for just nine after a slash outside off-stump at Sohail Khan.

Wade, like Maddinson, has struggled for runs since his recall for last month's third Test against South Africa and has scores of 4, 7, 1 not out and now 9 in his four innings since. In contrast, Peter Handscomb claimed his third half-century in three Tests to push along the Australian

scoring. He was dropped off a sharp caught-and-bowled chance by Mohammad Amir on 51, but three runs later he found Sami Aslam at point off Sohail.

Handscomb, playing on his home pitch, added 92 runs with Smith off 141 balls. Starc slammed Shah for a mighty six-measured at 103 metres-high into the stands to get off the mark and will resume on Friday with Smith. Azhar Ali, who scored an unbeaten 205 in Pakistan's 443 for nine in the first innings declaration, was fielding at short leg when he received a fearsome blow on the helmet off Wade's full-blooded pull shot and was taken from the field for observation for concussion. Paceman Riaz continued to have problems bowling no-balls. He overstepped 12 times in his 27 overs. "We need to cut down these no-balls, it's not acceptable," Pakistan bowling Coach Azhar Mahmood said. — AFP

GILLESPIE TAKES UP T20 COACHING ROLE

MELBOURNE: Former test bowler Jason Gillespie will work as assistant to head coach Justin Langer for Australia's three Twenty20 internationals against Sri Lanka in February, Cricket Australia said yesterday. Gillespie and Langer will step in for regular head coach Darren Lehmann and his assistant David Saker, who will be in India preparing the test squad for the four-match series.

Former paceman Gillespie, who took 259 wickets in 71 tests and 142 wickets in 97 one-day internationals, is

currently coaching Adelaide Strikers in Australia's Big Bash League after spending five years coaching English county side Yorkshire. "I'm just buzzing to get this role-it really is an exciting opportunity-and I'm humbled to be thought of by Cricket Australia in this regard," Gillespie said in a media release from the board. "The chance to be working with Justin Langer is terrific. Of course he's a friend and a former team mate, but he's also someone who's had success in this form of the game." — Reuters

FORMER NO 1 IVANOVIC RETIRES FROM TENNIS

LONDON: Ana Ivanovic retired from tennis at age 29 Wednesday, ending a career in which she was ranked No. 1 in 2008 but can no longer play at the highest level because of injuries. In a live broadcast on Facebook, Ivanovic said "it was a difficult decision, but there is so much to celebrate." The Serb won 15 tour titles, including the 2008 French Open, and is now ranked No 63.

"It's been well-known that I've been hampered by injuries. ... I can only play if I can perform up to my own high standards and I can no longer do that," she said. "So it's time to move on." Ivanovic became a

UNICEF national ambassador for Serbia in 2007 and says that position will figure in her plans. "I will become an ambassador of sport and healthy life. I will also explore opportunities in business, beauty and fashion among other endeavors," she said on her Facebook page. "I will also have more time for my philanthropic activities with my work with UNICEF. I've lived my dreams and I really hope to help others do so as well."

A finalist at Roland Garros in 2007 and the Australian Open in 2008, Ivanovic lost in the first round of this year's US Open to 89th-ranked Denisa

Allertova of the Czech Republic. It was her second consecutive exit in the first round at Flushing Meadows. Ivanovic announced a week later she would take the rest of the season off because of wrist and toe injuries, saying she had a recurring wrist injury and would also have surgery on a toe she broke at the Australian Open in January 2015. "Ana is a true champion and a great ambassador for the sport of women's tennis," WTA CEO Steve Simon said in a statement on the tour's website. "She has contributed greatly to the entire sport, both in her home country of Serbia and across the globe." — AP

KOSOVO USES SPORT IN DIPLOMATIC JOUST

PRISTINA: Belgrade rejects its claim to independence and Russia blocks it from joining the United Nations, but Kosovo is fighting back for its place on the international stage through sport. "Great news!", Kosovo President Hashim Thaci tweeted on May 13 when world football's governing body FIFA, following UEFA's example, accepted Kosovo into the fold much to Serbia's displeasure.

Rather than addressing Kosovo's 1.8 million people in their native Albanian, Thaci tweeted in English in a message designed for international consumption. The president followed up with another tweet in English on September 5 when Kosovo scored their first international goal against Finland in a 1-1 2018 World Cup qualifier draw.

"Generations of players feel so proud after decades of isolation! Best of our country is yet to come!" he said. Thaci also hit the tweet button to promote Kosovo's Olympic debut. "Majlinda brings home Kosovo's first Olympic Golden Medal," he wrote after Majlinda Kelmendi won judo gold at Kosovo's first Olympic Games in August in Rio.

Unbowed by Russia's block on joining the United Nations, Thaci said in 2014 that his country's membership of the Olympic movement was already "a form of UN membership." As is the case whenever a new country joins the 111 Kosovo says have officially recognized its independence unilaterally declared in 2008, Belgrade reacts angrily when a sports federation approves Pristina as a new member. Serbia obstinately refuses to recognize Kosovo's independence and its claim to sovereignty over its former province is enshrined in the country's constitution.

Vilified

Serbian tennis star Novak Djokovic expressed Belgrade's official position with clarity when he said, "Kosovo is Serbia and must remain so for ever." The former head of Serbia's volleyball federation Nenad Golijanin was vilified in the tabloid media and paid with his job for failing to uphold that position when he abstained in a vote allowing Kosovo to join volleyball's international federation. "It would have been extremely hypocritical to vote against, given that two months previously I sent a team of youngsters to Bulgaria to play in a competition in which children from Kosovo were taking part," Golijanin told AFP. He believes Belgrade is on the losing side in its sports diplomacy joust with Pristina, pointing out that in 2013 Serbia signed a European Union-backed normalization accord stipulating no Serbian interference in Kosovo's relations with international sports organizations. — AFP



PRISTINA: This file photo taken on August 14, 2016 shows Kosovo's judoka Majlinda Kelmendi showing her gold medal to the supporters during a welcoming ceremony. —AFP



PITTSBURGH: Teuvo Teravainen #86 of the Carolina Hurricanes blocks a shot against Evgeni Malkin #71 of the Pittsburgh Penguins at PPG PAINTS Arena. — AFP

FABBRI NETS HAT TRICK AS BLUES COME BACK TO BEAT FLYERS 6-3

ST LOUIS: Robby Fabbri got a hat trick, David Perron and Scottie Upshall scored during St Louis' four-goal third period and the Blues rallied to beat the Philadelphia Flyers 6-3 on Wednesday night. Kevin Shattenkirk also scored and Carter Hutton made 17 saves as the Blues improved to 12-1-4 at home.

Wayne Simmonds, Nick Cousins and Brayden Schenn scored for the Flyers, who dropped their fourth game in their last five. Steve Mason made 19 saves. Perron deflected Colton Parayko's shot to tie it 5:53 into the third, less than two minutes after Schenn had given the Flyers a 3-2 lead. Perron ran his goal-scoring streak to three games. Upshall put the Blues ahead 80 seconds later with a deflection of Joel Edmundson's shot. It was his first goal in 18 games.

PENGUINS 3, HURRICANES 2

Carl Hagelin scored with 4:15 remaining and Pittsburgh rallied to beat Carolina. Hagelin got his fifth of the season and second in two games off a feed from Patric Hornqvist. That followed a tying goal from Chris Kunitz early in the period. Sidney Crosby scored his league-leading 26th goal in his 31st game and moved into a tie with Edmonton's Connor McDavid for the league scoring lead at 42 points. Crosby, who missed six

games with a concussion at the start of the season, trailed McDavid by nine points when he made his first start Oct. 25 against Florida.

The Penguins have won three straight and four of five. They have points in 10 consecutive home games and are 11-1-2 in December. Matt Murray started for Pittsburgh and stopped 25 of 27 shots before Marc-Andre Fleury replaced him for the start of the third period. Fleury made 19 saves for his 11th win. Lee Stempniak scored his seventh goal and Elias Lindholm his third for the Hurricanes, who ended a three-game winning streak. Cam Ward stopped 23 shots for Carolina.

MAPLE LEAFS 3, PANTHERS 2

Mitchell Marner scored in the third round of the shootout to lift Toronto over Florida. Rookie Auston Matthews got his team-leading 17th goal and an assist and William Nylander also scored for the Maple Leafs. Frederik Andersen made 45 saves and blanked Florida in the shootout. Vincent Trocheck and Jonathan Marchessault each had a goal and an assist for the Panthers. Roberto Luongo stopped 38 shots. The Maple Leafs won their fourth straight on the road and improved to 3-0 against the Panthers this season.

LIGHTNING 4, CANADIENS 3, OT

Tyler Johnson scored his second goal of the game 1:36 into overtime and Tampa Bay came back from a two-goal deficit in the third period to beat Montreal. Johnson's winner from the right circle appeared to go off a Montreal stick and past goalie Carey Price. Tampa Bay also got goals from Victor Hedman and Ondrej Palat, who combined to tie it at 3 in the third. Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 19 shots. Shea Weber, Alexander Radulov and Chris Terry scored for the Canadiens, who have lost three in a row. Price had 26 saves.

CANUCKS 2, KINGS 1

Ryan Miller made 36 saves to lift Vancouver over Los Angeles. Miller was nearly unbeatable even as the Kings outshot the Canucks 37-20, including 31-8 over the final 40 minutes. Returning from the NHL's Christmas break, the Canucks earned only their second win in the past five games. The Kings got their fourth loss in five games. Loui Eriksson and Henrik Sedin scored for the Canucks, who converted one of three power-play opportunities while denying the Kings on two. Tanner Pearson scored late in the third period for Los Angeles, and Peter Budaj stopped 18 shots. — AP

CHELSEA OUT TO STOKE TITLE DREAMS

LONDON: Chelsea can take another step towards English football history when they host Stoke City tomorrow, as the Premier League's jam-packed festive schedule rumbles into 2017. Chelsea's 3-0 win over Bournemouth on Boxing Day was their 12th in succession, leaving them two wins short of Arsenal's overall top-flight record of 14, set over two seasons in 2002. With each win, Antonio Conte's side have looked more and more like champions-in-waiting, but with half the season still to go, Chelsea's players are desperately trying to ignore the hype.

"It's unbelievable because it's very difficult to do that in the Premier League, but the team are very compact on the pitch and that's the right way," Spanish forward Pedro Rodriguez told the club website. "Bournemouth are a good team and it was very difficult. Stoke are also a very good team, but we

must take it game by game."

Scorer of two goals against Bournemouth, Pedro will be suspended for the visit of Stoke, which should see top scorer Diego Costa-banned on Boxing Day — return to the starting XI. Midfield lynchpin N'Golo Kante is also available again after suspension. Stoke fell to a 4-1 defeat at Liverpool on Tuesday, having gone ahead through Jonathan Walters, and left-back Erik Pieters has urged his team-mates to show more belief against the leading sides.

"Sometimes we have a good 20 minutes, sometimes we have a good second half, but in patches we have been bad—we need to learn to control the game," said the Dutchman, whose side are 13th in the table. "It's difficult because it has to come as a group. It's a team sport. But I think we have shown we can do it in spells and we don't have to be afraid

of big teams." Liverpool's victory took them back to second place, six points below Chelsea, and they will stage the biggest game of the New Year weekend when third-place Manchester City visit Anfield tomorrow. City trail Liverpool by a point, having won their last three matches, and manager Pep Guardiola was in attendance to watch Jurgen Klopp's team overcome Stoke.

Cech in the chase

"It's a difficult game for both teams, but exciting and the best thing is it's at Anfield," said Klopp, who sparred with Guardiola's Bayern Munich during his successful spell as Borussia Dortmund coach. "I am really looking forward to it. They are an outstandingly good side and we are not too bad, so it will be a nice game." — AP



SOUTHAMPTON: Tottenham Hotspur's English midfielder Dele Alli (L) turns to celebrate scoring an equalising goal for 1-1 as Southampton's Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk (2R) reacts during the English Premier League football match between Southampton and Tottenham Hotspur at St Mary's Stadium. — AFP

ALLI DOUBLE HELPS SPURS EASE PAST SOUTHAMPTON

SOUTHAMPTON: Dele Alli scored twice as Tottenham came back from behind to win emphatically, 4-1, at Southampton on Wednesday. Harry Kane, who missed a penalty, and substitute Son Heung-min were also on the score-sheet in a game that saw Virgil van Dijk give Southampton an early lead.

Nathan Redmond was sent off soon after Kane had made it 2-1 and although the England striker failed to convert the resulting penalty Southampton tried in vain to prevent a hefty defeat that moved Tottenham to within a point of fourth-place Arsenal in the Premier League table. It took Southampton all of 69 seconds to take the lead, through van Dijk.

The Netherlands defender, coveted by a number of Premier League rivals and valued in the £30million bracket, rose to meet James Ward-Prowse's free-kick to send a downward header

beyond Hugo Lloris in the Tottenham goal. The home side were full of energy and aggression - the brand of football Pochettino brought with him to the St Mary's Stadium before leaving for Tottenham in May 2014.

The Argentinian could not have enjoyed the way his players were being put under constant pressure and there were a number of nervy moments as they attempted to stem the tide of Saints attacks. Former Southampton midfielder Victor Wanyama had given away the free-kick for the goal on his first return to his old club and Mousa Dembele was booked for chopping Nathan Redmond down to end another attack.

Fraser Forster had little to do in the Southampton goal but found himself picking the ball out of the net in the 19th minute when Moussa Sissoko saw his cross from the left deflected upwards

off Redmond. That allowed Alli to out-jump van Dijk and plant a header past Forster that went in off a post. Parity perhaps flattered Tottenham but they made good use of their good fortune to fashion a number of chances.

Useful extra man

Christian Eriksen twice failed to hit the target after getting himself into promising shooting positions before Wanyama, having burst into the box and got the better of van Dijk, saw his shot blocked by Saints skipper Jose Fonte. Tottenham made a much better start to the second half and took the lead in the 52nd minute through the previously-dormant Kane from a corner won by Kyle Walker and delivered by Eriksen. Southampton's marking was poor to say the least as the England striker rose unchallenged to head into the top corner. — AFP

POCHETTINO HOPES WIN WILL BE A SPRINGBOARD

SOUTHAMPTON: Mauricio Pochettino is hoping his latest victorious return to Southampton will have a similar effect on Tottenham's season to the previous one. Spurs came back from behind on Wednesday to win 4-1 at St Mary's and move to within a point of Arsenal in fourth place. Pochettino, who left Saints to take over at Spurs in May 2014, saw his side beat his former employers 2-0 in December last year.

That was the start of a sequence of results that saw Tottenham win eight of their next 10 Premier League games and lose just once, to eventual champions Leicester City. Could this victory act as a springboard for another surge up the table?

Pochettino was hopeful that would prove to be the case. "Why not?" he said. "It has been a very good year for us, we have got 71 points over it and we are still fighting for the big things. "It was an important three points for us. All the big sides above us all won their games and it was important to get the three points to keep our position in the table and have the possibility to move on."

Southampton took the lead after just 69 seconds through defender Virgil van Dijk but Dele Alli equalized in the 19th minute against the run of play. Harry Kane made it 2-1 from a corner seven minutes into the second half and Saints were reduced to 10 men soon after when Nathan Redmond was sent off for impeding Alli in the box. Kane missed the resulting penalty but late goals from substitute Son Heung-min and Alli added up to an emphatic victory.

Character and personality

"In the first 10 minutes we struggled to manage the game but we started to show our character and in the second half we were much, much, much better," Pochettino said. "The win says a lot about our character and personality. I am very pleased, not only because we won but the character we showed coming back from 1-0 down so early. "I don't know if the sending off was a key action that changed the game because at that moment we were dominating the game and creating a lot of chances. It was difficult to see if it was a penalty or not but it was a very fair result."

Pochettino was also in charitable enough a mood to forgive Kane for ballooning his penalty over the bar, with the England striker claiming the turf had subsided beneath his footing. "Harry Kane's penalty was an accident, he put his left foot close to the ball and it went up, it was unbelievable," Pochettino said. The result left Southampton in eighth and manager Claude Puel was not happy with referee Mike Dean for reaching for the red card to punish Redmond.

"For me from the bench it was just two players fighting for the ball and the red card changed the game," he said. "We started with a very good opening 25 minutes. We could have scored another goal but after we had difficulties recovering the ball. "We tried at the start of the second half to win the ball and have more opportunities but we conceded the second goal and after the red card it was not possible to come back for us. "The red card was difficult to accept. It was a little hard." — AFP

TEVEZ JOINS CHINA CLUB

SHANGHAI: Argentina's former Manchester United and Manchester City striker Carlos Tevez has signed for Shanghai Shenhua in the latest big-money Chinese deal, the club said yesterday, reportedly making him the world's best-salaried footballer. The acquisition of the 32-year-old from Buenos Aires side Boca Juniors will "greatly enhance" the team's front line, Shenhua said on a verified social media account.

"The club looks forward to Tevez helping Greenland Shenhua attack cities and strike stockades in Asian and domestic matches and contribute to more exciting games for fans," it said, calling him "the most outstanding striker in Argentina's history". It did not put a value on the transaction, but Argentine media previously reported Tevez would make \$84 million over two years under the contract — 20 times his previous earnings.

In a statement Boca thanked Tevez, who was on his second spell with the club, scoring 25 goals in 56 matches, including a double in a 4-2 Clasico victory over their bitter rivals River Plate earlier this month. Boca wished him good luck, saying he had left fans with "unforgettable memories" and telling him they would be "dreaming of your return". "We'll work on bringing you back," it added. "No effort is too great to have you wearing our shirt again."

After passing a medical Tevez will join the rest of the squad on the Japanese island of Okinawa, where they are holding pre-season training until late January, according to Shenhua. The side are coached by former Uruguay international Gus Poyet, who was installed last month after the club parted ways with his Spanish predecessor Gregorio Manzano despite finishing fourth in the Chinese Super League.

Eye-watering sums

If reports are correct, Tevez's \$42 million annual salary would make him the world's best-paid footballer in terms of earnings from his club, catapulting him past the previous top three: Cristiano Ronaldo, said to take home \$23 million a year after tax from Real Madrid, his teammate Gareth Bale, and FC Barcelona's Lionel Messi. All top footballers pad their salaries with lucrative sponsorships, which can send their incomes even further into the stratosphere.

Tevez is the latest international name, many of them South American, lured to Chinese football for eye-watering sums of money. Crosstown rivals Shanghai SIPG, coached by former Tottenham Hotspur manager Andre Villas-Boas, last week agreed a reported £60 million deal (\$73 million, 70.5 million euros) for Chelsea's 25-year-old Brazilian midfielder Oscar.

Before the Oscar deal Chinese Super League clubs had already splashed out more than \$400 million on players this year, after President Xi Jinping laid out a vision of turning the country into a football power. Chinese teams broke the Asian record three times in just 10 days in the January-February transfer window, and moved it still higher when Brazil's Hulk joined SIPG for 55.8 million euros in July.

Significantly, Chinese clubs are now competing with European rivals for world-class players, who are opting for astronomical pay packets over the chance of a career in football's top leagues. Fans welcomed the latest deal. "Shanghai's football has had its spring," said one poster on China's Twitter-like Weibo. "Aren't you looking forward to next season's Shanghai derby?" Tevez, who has also played for Italian side Juventus during his career, has more than 70 caps for Argentina. He married the mother of his three children, Vanesa Mansilla, last week in Uruguay only to discover that his home had been burgled when he returned after the ceremony. — AFP



GLASGOW: A Celtic fan stands in front of a stall at Celtic Park in Glasgow on December 17, 2016 before the Scottish Premiership football match between Celtic and Dundee United. —AFP

GALATASARAY PARTS WITH 'INVISIBLE' SIGTHORSSON

ISTANBUL: Turkish Super Lig club Galatasaray are set to annul a loan deal for the Icelandic international striker Kolbeinn Sigthorsson after the player failed to play a single match for the Istanbul giants due to injury, reports said yesterday. Sigthorsson, one of the stars of Iceland's advance to the quarter finals in Euro 2016, arrived in Istanbul on August on loan from French club Nantes. But a knee injury picked up on international duty means

he has not even played a minute for the Turkish side, earning derision from fans and press.

Turkish press earlier this month published a picture of him training, saying it was the first time Sigthorsson had even been sighted in action since the loan. The club and player have now agreed terms on his departure, the Hurriyet daily and Anadolu news agency said. The player has agreed to receive 400,000 euros (\$419,000)

instead of 1.215 million euros (\$1.27 million) for the one year loan deal, Hurriyet said. It said that the final terms would be signed in the next days. The one year loan deal had envisaged Sigthorsson would become a permanent Galatasaray player in April next year. Sigthorsson scored the winning goal in Iceland's famous 2-1 victory against England in Euro 2016 that sent his team to the quarter finals. —AFP

OLD FIRM DERBY: SOUND, FURY AND SECTARIANISM

GLASGOW: Underpinned by ferocious passion, century-old mistrust and Sectarian conflict, the sound and fury of the Old Firm derby between Glasgow rivals Celtic and Rangers is unique in modern football. "The noise and the passion, there's nothing like it," said late Rangers star Sandy Jardine. "I've been fortunate to see derby games all over the world and there is nothing that comes close. "When you go out of the tunnel, you get hit by this level of noise which far outweighs normal games or even cup finals."

Over 50,000 supporters will cram inside Ibrox to see Rangers and Celtic clash for the 404th time tomorrow, when the winners of 101 of the 120 Scottish league titles go head-to-head. The reason that millions of people around the world will also tune in goes far beyond the battle for supremacy in the Scottish Premiership, with political, cultural and religious differences all playing a part. But things were not

always as intense. When Celtic was founded in 1888, relations between the two clubs were cordial, with Rangers supplying the opposition for their neighbors' first game.

"When the league started, there was a very good relationship between Celtic and Rangers," Celtic historian and author David Potter told AFP. "It was only really in the 1920s that a religious element crept in." Celtic was founded by a Marist (Catholic) Brother from Ireland and the club's origins were firmly embedded in Irish Catholicism. Andrew Kerins, known as Brother Walfrid, established Celtic with the intention of feeding the impoverished children of Glasgow's east end, where Irish immigrants flocked during the Great Famine of the 1840s.

Rangers became the team of the Scottish Protestant working class almost by accident. "Within Scottish society there was a feeling there was a need for a club of the traditional Scottish estab-

lishment to rival Celtic and it took off from there," explains Rangers historian Robert McElroy. "It was more a question of timing than anything else."

The opening of a massive shipyard in Govan, just a short walk from Rangers' Ibrox home, by industrial firm Harland and Wolff saw an influx of workers arrive from Belfast in the 1910s. The company's infamous 'Catholics need not apply' policy soon spread to the club their workforce adopted. "That changed the character of Rangers," says Paul Brennan, editor of the Celtic Quick News website. "They specifically stopped employing Catholic footballers at that stage, which made the rivalry become very bitter and ethnic in origin." It is not just in religion that the clubs' identities have been built in opposition to each other. In political terms the clubs are at polar opposites as well: Celtic are associated with socialism and Irish Republicanism, Rangers with conservatism and Northern Irish unionism. —AFP

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Sports

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OAKLAND: Toronto Raptors guard Kyle Lowry (7) shoots against Golden State Warriors forward Draymond Green (23) during the first half of an NBA basketball game. — AP



Warriors bounce back