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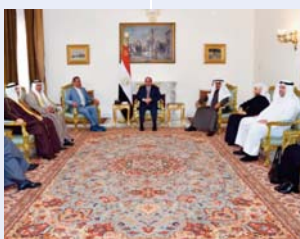
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NO: 16791- Friday, February 19, 2016

**Kuwait media
delegation
meets Sisi,
tours Egypt**

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**34 candidates
battle for one
seat in Kuwait
by-election**

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**Zidane keeps
cool as Real
Madrid
march on**

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KUWAIT SHIP 'GRAVEYARD'

See Pages 6 & 7



Local Spotlight

\$1M SPENT ON CHOCOLATE DAILY

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Nearly \$1 million is spent on chocolate in Kuwait every day! This is what recent statistics on the state's growing chocolate market have shown. I found this report published in the Kuwait Times recently very interesting. After all, who can say 'no' to a piece of chocolate, especially of famous brands. Sixty companies in Kuwait specialize in selling Swiss, Belgian, Italian and other kinds of chocolate.

Kuwaitis are known for their passion for chocolate and you can hardly enter a house or an office in the government or the private sector that is chocolate-free! I guess the high purchasing power of people and the selective taste of Kuwaitis makes this report not a complete surprise.

In 2015, chocolate worth KD 47 million was imported. Adding profits and the price of finished products, sales add up to more than KD 100 million, with a growth rate of 10 percent. Such figures show that even though Kuwait is a small market, it is very demanding. This figure is huge and says much about the consumers, their eating habits and possibly their perception of chocolate in their lives.

Kuwaitis' taste and love for cocoa compels companies to provide the best, and those who do not will be forced to leave the market and lose customers. So, major companies in Kuwait are trying to provide the best and meet the demands of consumers. Some might think that chocolate is a luxury, but in Kuwait it is an essential staple like rice and sugar. Receptions and weddings sometimes involve lengthy talks about taste, flavor and uniqueness of this or that kind of chocolate.

This obsession is not free of danger, because some people have started to manufacture chocolates and sweets in their houses and sell them through social media. This is dangerous because it is not guaranteed that they may follow health standards in the manufacturing process. Moreover, the sellers are unlicensed too. Some cases of food poisoning have been reported, and things are getting out of control.

This love of chocolate can also lead to health problems and obesity. Although some argue that dark chocolate is the best, consuming large amounts of any kind of chocolate is dangerous. We need awareness campaigns to warn people from eating too much chocolate, especially children and teenagers.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Photo shows a collection of old traditional Arabic coffee pots, called 'dallah'. — Kuna/Ghazi Qafaf

In my view

OUR POWER RESERVES

By Sarah Fahed Abushaar

news@kuwaittimes.net

As we focus our attention on plummeting oil prices and dwindling reserves, we overlook what is far more decisive to our region's success. The Middle East's greatest natural resource and power source, is not in its oil or its gas but in its predominantly young population. Home to one of the highest concentrations of young people in the world, with more than 60 percent of our population under the age of 25, the fuel of our future is in abundant supply.

But just as fuel powers, it inflames. And so too, within our youth is both our region's greatest promise and also

its greatest peril. It is when we channel these enormous trapped energies of our societies toward productive pursuits, when we "refine" and enrich, through quality education systems, not just our fuels but our young people's minds and engage them in our region's leadership.

It is when we empower young people, like this, that they ignite the propeller engines of our progress, rather than set our worlds ablaze. It is when we empower young people like this, that we feed lifeblood into the pipelines of our nations; feed dynamism into societal circulation, rather than have it spill wastefully at the behest of radicalization.

And so we transform our societies from exploding with dynamite to exploding with dynamism. And so we set our world alight rather than set it ablaze.

That we may tell those who tell us we are home to the highest reserves of fuel power in the world. 'Yes, that's right.. in our youth!'

DATES, FISH, RICE 'AL-MACHLA' - FOODSTUFF FOR PEARL DIVERS

KUWAIT: After leaving their loved ones behind, Kuwaiti pearl divers and sailors set on a brave voyage into the vast wide ocean, sustaining themselves mentally and physically with a courageous attitude and an essential ration of dates, fish, and rice or "Al-Machla" as it was usually referred to. Spending months in overseas, these brave sailors learned to ration their Machla to enable them to carry out their tough tasks "day in and day out" to sell those precious pearls for a living.

Speaking to KUNA, researcher Nawaf Al-Asfour said that each type of Al-Machla was used for a specific purpose, noting that dates and Arabic coffee were considered as breakfast for those tasked with diving duties, due to the meal being easy on the stomach. As for lunch, Al-Asfour said that this meal, usual-

ly consisting of grilled fish and rice, might be postponed till sunset which is basically the time the pearl divers, referred to as "Al-Ghasah", come out of the water.

While in the dead of night, the ones steering the ship usually keep awake by drinking coffee and have some sweets, said Al-Asfour. The researcher noted that the type of food material might slightly change with the season, adding that the ship's water resources were usually replenished when the sailors docked on land in various ports in the Gulf region and India. Al-Asfour also noted that sometimes the sailors make a celebratory meal called "Al-Shinyali", a dish mainly made out of dates, flour, and sugar, to signify that they have made it through the toughest part of their journey. — KUNA



A Kuwaiti pearl diver seen removing the pearls.

Canon



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- One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Bahrain – Kuwait

Sixth prize

- Canon Camera PowerShot G15.
- Free Camera Bag.
- One Economy class ticket Kuwait - Bahrain – Kuwait

All photos should be submitted at the Kuwait Times newspaper before 17th of March 2016.

Rules & Conditions:

- The competition is open to individuals of all ages.
 - The submitted photos should be taken by the participant.
 - Every participant is allowed to submit maximum five entries.
 - The photos can be black and white or colour size 40X30 cm.
 - All entries should be provided a hard copy and Soft Copy on a CD (in high resolution) with photo of the participant needs to be included in the CD.
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- The coupons are advertised at Kuwait Times and Al Anba newspapers during the period of competition.
- All submitted photos will become property of Kuwait Times newspaper and can be used for different purposes.
 - The winners will be chosen by a panel of judges.
 - All photos must be original and should not be doctored with any design program, such as Photoshop.

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From the **editor's desk**

UNITED WE STAND

By Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan
Editor-in-Chief

myopinion@kuwaittimes.net

This week I traveled with a delegation of Kuwait media to Cairo to meet with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi. The visit was an important moment in Egyptian-Kuwaiti ties. Cairo and Kuwait have enjoyed a long standing and positive relationship and in fact President Sisi recently reiterated his willingness to help protect Kuwait and other Arab Gulf states in the event of a direct threat: "The Egyptian Army belongs to all Arabs," he said.

The reality is that Egypt has played an important role in the region for decades. It stood with us during the Iraqi aggression and time and time again has stood up for Arab causes, battling the invading European Jews occupying Palestine before Israel was even created.

In recent times, Egypt has undergone a tremendous amount of instability and change brought on by the Arab Spring and the Gulf states including Kuwait stood with our friend to offer support during its moment of need. Gulf states offer millions of jobs to Egyptian expatriates, Kuwaiti and other Khaleeji students study by the tens of thousands in Egypt, every year hundreds of thousands of people from the Gulf travel to Egypt for tourism and our economies and societies are intricately linked.

One of the biggest challenges the Arab world faces today is maintaining unity in the face of external pressures and interference. It is only through the continued development of lasting relationships that we will be able, as a united Arab front, to weather the worst of the storms we are now experiencing and to emerge stronger, more unified and more stable. Our development, our youth, our economies and our futures are tied together.

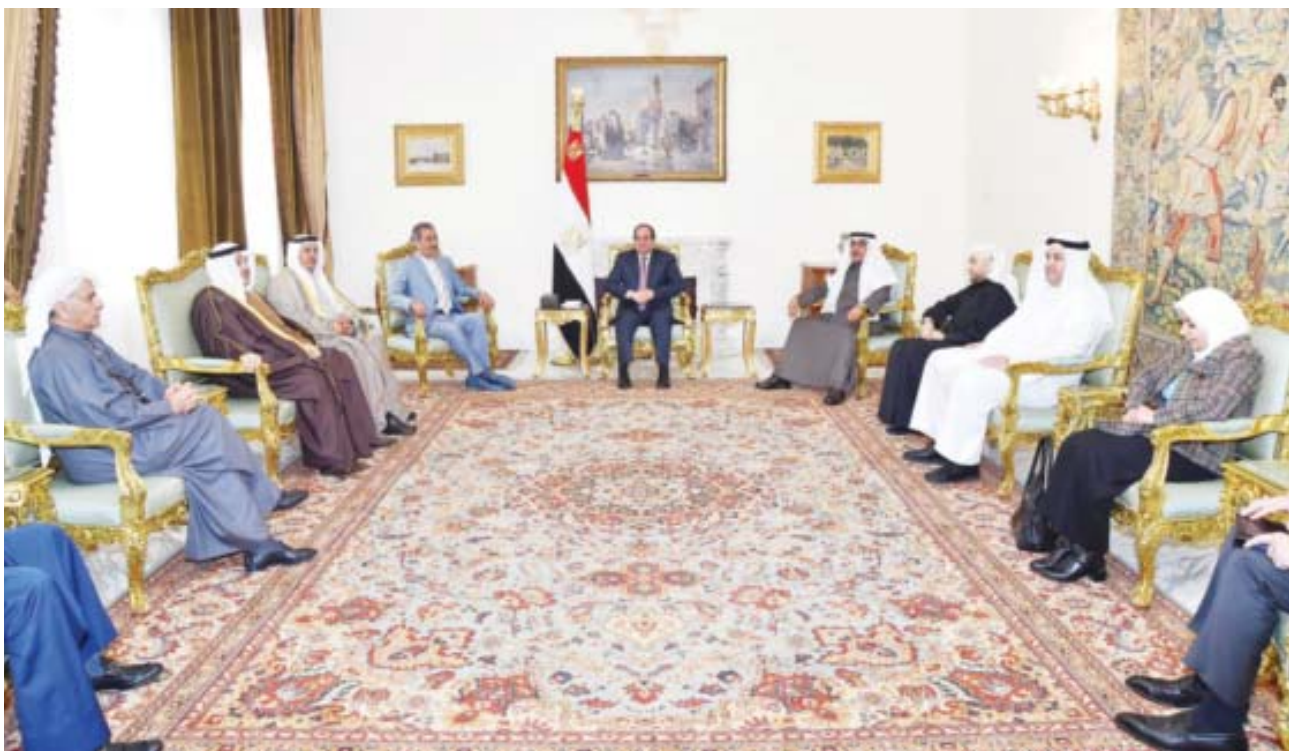
In Kuwait, we have a saying that goes 'qoumin taawano ma thallo' (People who cooperate will not lose). I think this is a good way of describing what we in the Arab world need to remember about our relationships with each other. It's time we reminded ourselves to stand up for each other and with each other.'



President Sisi with Al-Qabas Editor-in-Chief Waleed Al-Nesif



President Sisi with Al-Shahed Editor-in-Chief Sheikh Sabah Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi with Kuwait newspapers' Editors-in-Chief



President Sisi with Annahar Editor-in-Chief Emad Bukhamseen



President Sisi with Adnan Al-Rashid, Treasurer of the Kuwait Journalists Association and Al-Anaba Deputy Editor-in-Chief with .



President Sisi with KUNA Cairo office Director Muna Shishty



President Sisi with KUNA Editor-in-Chief Saad Al-Ali



President Sisi with Al-Rai Editor-in-Chief Majed Al-Ali



President Sisi with Al-Sabah Editor-in-Chief Dr. Barakat Al-Hudaiban

A visit to Kuwait's ship graveyard

Sailor shares story of his life • Abandoned ships in Kuwait Bay

Story and Photos by Athoob Al-Shuaibi

When the sea tides farewell the shore near Doha, a shocking secret is revealed. Tens of scuttled and abandoned ships, covered by the tide, lay stranded on the sandy seabed floor, exposed to the sun and surrounding landscape.

The ships are mostly rusted, covered in barnacles and stuck in the sticky sand, slanted to one side. As I delved more into the shore, I reached two ships resting against each other, one of them all rusty and covered by small corals. But the other was 'alive' or rather in working condition and simply stranded by the outgoing tide. Little did I know that it was also inhabited and after approaching and noticing hanging washing on a line, a man emerged and invited us aboard.

"My name is Sabri, I'm from Egypt and I'm a sailor," he said and began to tell the story of how he came to be living on a stranded ship on the edge of Kuwait's Bay. "I live here with a helper from Bangladesh and this is my second year on this ship."

The 44-year-old married man and a father of five came to Kuwait before the Iraqi invasion. He's been a sailor since childhood. "This ship and most of the ones you see aren't abandoned. They are owned by a dredging company and we park here, I don't know anything about the shipwrecks as they were parked here before us, except the one next to mine which sank last year due to a sea storm," he explained.

Dredging is cleaning out a harbor by scooping out mud and unwanted rubbish swept by the waves which hinder a ship's movement. "We get hired by seaports located in different areas of Kuwait, like Sharq, Fintas. Our job is to maintain appropriate depth so the ships don't get swamped", he explained.



While he was fixing a cup of tea to serve with biscuits, he mentioned that the company provides food and drink supplies using a small boat. He writes a list of his needs and he never runs out of water or food. "Thanks to mobile phones, we're connected to the other side of the world and entertained. But the television transmission is unclear," he added.





Back in the 1990s mobiles phones weren't as developed as today. When Iraq Invaded Kuwait, he and his colleagues didn't know the cause of all the smoke emissions they witnessed coming from the land meanwhile they were struggling with an angry sea. "We had seen the smoke since dawn but we only found out about the invasion in the afternoon after we managed to anchor by the shore. Iraqi soldiers came and questioned us about our nationalities and told us to go to our embassy if we want to leave this country. After few days they moved us to Iraq and we stayed for four days there before we reached the Egyptian border. It was like hell," Sabri recalled.

"Living in a ship makes you wiser and more patient. To me, life is nothing. Really, it's nothing. Life is all about working hard with dedication and worshipping God until we're all gone. My name is Sabri, Sabri means the man who has a lot of patience."



TRAFFIC VIOLATORS CAN PAY FINES - THROUGH WEBSITE

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: On the occasion of National Days, the Security Information Department has announced a 'grace period' for traffic violators. Traffic department will unlock the website to allow violators pay their fines online. All violators except - those driving without a license; reckless drivers; drivers racing without a permit can pay their fines through the Ministry's website. The Traffic Department urged citizens and expats to take this opportunity to settle their violations - wishing all motorists safe driving.

Crime

Report



WEAPONS SEIZED

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Weapons detectives carried out a campaign to collect unlicensed weapons, ammunition and explosives in Kabd area. The campaign was led by Director General Brig Abdelrahman Al-Suhail, his Assistant Colonel Walid Shihab, Acting Director of Detectives Department Lt Colonel Nasser Al-Wuhaib and Director of Environment Police Lt Colonel Hussein Al-Ajmi. Five unlicensed shotguns, AK-47, five pistols and a large quantity of live ammunition were seized and their owners were sent to concerned authorities.



Dangerous animals

Security operatives recently found several wild animals that pose danger to people's lives. They include; four large crocodiles along with several mummified crocodiles and a large snake. Environment police coordinated with PAAAFR to confiscate the animals. Meanwhile, the pet owners were arrested along with a veterinary doctor.

Asian commits suicide

An Asian hanged himself to death on the staircase of a Mahboula building. Also, an Egyptian attempted suicide by slashing his wrist in Jaber Al-Ali. He was rushed to the hospital. In another development, four Asians suffered burns and bruises following an explosion that took place in a restaurant they work in. Fire operations received a call about the explosion and rushed to the scene. The explosion was caused by gas leak. The victims were taken to the hospital for treatment.



Kuwait officials take a group photo with their Azerbaijan counterparts.

KUWAIT DONATES MEDICAL EQUIPMENT TO AZERBAIJAN

MOSCOW: Kuwait Ambassador to Azerbaijan Saud Al-Roumi announced yesterday that his country donated modern medical equipment to a central hospital in Azerbaijan for treatment of kidney disease patients. The equipment is dedicated to a hospital by Kuwait's Zakat House through the Asia Committee in Azerbaijan, affiliated with the International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO), the Kuwaiti diplomat said after patronizing the ceremony of handling and registering the equipment.

He expressed his satisfaction for taking part in the event, noting that the val-

ue of the medical equipment amounts to KD 46,000 in accordance with an agreement with Asia Committee on assisting in treating kidney patients without surgical intervention. The deal also requires the hospital's commitment to treat all kidney patients, including refugees and poor, for free, Al-Roumi said, urging the Azerbaijani state committee in charge of refugees and the displaced affairs to cooperate with Asia Committee in sending their patients to the hospital for free.

During the past two years, Kuwait has donated \$600,000 for philanthropic actions, the Kuwaiti diplomat noted,

adding that Kuwait's contributions inside Azerbaijan, since the formation of Asia Committee, has amounted to \$15 million, all of which were directed to philanthropic actions and activities that benefit the people.

These actions included providing medical equipment, water wells drilling, printing moderate-religious books that call for tolerance and cooperation with the government, organizing Hajj trips for Azerbaijani intellectuals, journalists, writers, and poor, in addition to renovating historic mosques and building schools, Al-Roumi noted. — KUNA

PROFIT-TAKING OPERATIONS, DISCLOSURES DOMINATE KSE

KUWAIT: Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) closed yesterday's session with the main indices moving downward, amid an anticipation of disclosures of some companies, remarkable movements of investment shares and profit-taking operations. The market at the end of this week's trading witnessed continued speculations on many shares with operating performance which rose during yesterday's sessions due to an anticipation of many dealers for disclosures of some companies for the performance in the fourth quarter of last year. There were differences of some shares of the Kuwait-15 Index due to selling pressures.

Dealers interacted with news of some listed companies published on their websites, especially that is related to distributions, deals or contracts which help dealers take their future decisions. Trading of this week saw continued speculations on shares, whose value are above 50 fils, which rose in previous sessions of the week's trading. Price index read 5,140, losing 5.32 points, followed by weighted index, which lost 2.28 and Kuwait-15 which declined by 8.41. Value of traded shares reached some KD 11.3 million, share turnover approximately 150.7 million, done in 3,462 deals.

In another development, Kuwait's trade surplus with Japan narrowed 67.6 percent from a year earlier to JPY 21.2 billion (\$203 million) in January, shrinking for the eighth month as exports fell more than half, the Finance Ministry said yesterday. But Kuwait maintained monthly black ink with Japan for an unbroken eight years, the ministry said in a preliminary report. Kuwaiti overall exports to Japan tumbled 54.2 percent year-on-year to JPY 41.0 billion (\$360 million) for the

eighth straight monthly decline, and imports from Japan also shrank 1.4 percent to JPY 17.9 billion (\$157 million), down for the first time in eight months.

Middle East's trade surplus with Japan also shrank 527 percent to JPY 360.4 billion (\$3.2 billion) last month, with Japan-bound exports from the region falling 43.5 percent from a year earlier. Crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG) and other natural resources, which accounted for 94.1 percent of the region's total exports to Japan, slid 44.6 percent. The region's overall imports from Japan edged up 0.2 percent, chiefly due to weak shipments of steel and machinery. Japan's global trade balance returned to deficit in January, chiefly due to

sluggish exports to China and other Asian countries amid an economic slowdown.

The world's third-biggest economy posted the first trade red ink in two months at JPY 645.9 billion (\$5.7 billion) last month. Overall exports fell 12.9 percent from the year before, marking the steepest decline since October 2009.

The 17.5 percent plunge in exports to China, Japan's biggest trade partner, was also caused by the effects of the Lunar New Year holidays in early February, according to the ministry. Imports slid 18.0 percent, with shipments of crude oil falling nearly by half. The trade data are measured on a customs-cleared basis before adjustment for seasonal factors. — KUNA

TUNISIA LAUDS KRCS

KUWAIT: Tunisian Ambassador to Kuwait Ahmed bin Al-Sagheer said yesterday that the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) plays a great role in the various relief and humanitarian activities domains. He expressed in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after meeting KRCS' President Dr Hilal Al-Sayer his appreciation for the role of the KRCS in aiding people affected by natural or man-made disasters as well as its role in the alleviation of human suffering.

He explained that the designation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a "Humanitarian Leader" was in line with the significant role His Highness always

plays, in addition to his unlimited support for humanitarian action through several initiatives to relieve people of the world regardless of race, sex and religion which has contributed to enhancing the status of Kuwait internationally.

He added that Kuwait has earned the title of a "Humanitarian Center", thus, giving it a great prestige and respect in the international arena. For his part, Al-Sayer stressed the importance of the significant role of KRCS in relief and humanitarian work especially for Syria, Sudan, Gaza, Iraq and Yemen, pointing out that humanitarian work is facing great challenges and that all efforts must be harnessed for this purpose. — Agencies



KUWAIT: Media personalities and artists gathered at the Azayez Farm yesterday at the invitation of Sheikh Ali Jaber Al-Ahmad. The annual event brings together media executives and other top dignitaries as they share their experiences.



News

in Brief

Embassy in Germany warns Kuwait citizens

BERLIN: Kuwait Embassy in Germany yesterday warned Kuwaitis against robbery by people pretending to be German police officers or intelligence members. The embassy's statement came in accordance with a warning issued by the German police of robbers posing as policemen, stealing people's belongings after requesting to search wallets and bags. The police said that such incidents usually occur in areas crowded with tourists, calling on people to avoid carrying big amounts of cash. The embassy, meanwhile, called on Kuwaitis to call the German police on phone number 110 if they face this situation, adding that the embassy's emergency line will receive calls for 24 hours on phone number +4915733402397.

Kuwait condemns bombing in Turkey

KUWAIT: An official source at Kuwait Foreign Ministry has strongly condemned the terrorist bombing which hit the Turkish capital Ankara, leaving 28 people dead and over 60 people injured. The source said that Kuwait stands in support with the Turkish people and government, affirming that it refuses all acts of terrorism. The official source expressed Kuwaiti condolences over the tragic incident. Meanwhile, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) yesterday denounced the "terrorist explosion". OIC Secretary General Iyad Madani said in a statement that the bombing "is a shocking and horrific act that is not related to humanitarian values." He expressed condolences to the Turkish Government and people for this "painful incident," and wished the injured quick recovery. Madani called for tracking down, apprehending and penalizing the perpetrators and re-affirmed full support for the Turkish Government in its defense of the country's security, territorial sanctity and stability.

Information Ministry ready for by-election

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Information is ready to fully cover the third constituency by-election next Saturday, said an official yesterday. Undersecretary at the Ministry Tareq Al-Mezrem told KUNA that the media coverage, television and radio wise, will begin a day ahead of the elections, launching programs dedicated to the event. The ministry will work with state bodies to make sure that the coverage would be a success, said the official. The by-election for the third constituency is held to fill in the vacant seat left by the late MP Nabil Al-Fadhl who passed away in December 2015. Polling stations will open at 8:00 am local-time next Saturday and voting will proceed till evening.

Saudi STC takes majority control of Kuwait's Viva

DUBAI: Saudi Telecom Co (STC) has completed the purchase of a further 25.8 percent stake in Kuwait's Viva, Kuwait's stock market said yesterday. STC has "completed procedures to execute the deal to acquire shares in Viva," the bourse said. Kuwait's Capital Markets Authority had approved the acquisition of 128.86 million shares in Viva, the bourse said in a statement. The purchase price was equivalent to one dinar (\$3.34) per share, it said. The deal raises STC's stake in Viva to 51.8 percent.

34 CANDIDATES BATTLE FOR ONE SEAT IN BY-ELECTION

10 MPS SIGN MOTION TO DEBATE TREATMENT CUTS

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry has finalized preparations for the by-elections to take place tomorrow to elect one lawmaker to replace late MP Nabil Al-Fadhl who died during the Assembly session in December. Thirty-four hopefuls including two women are contesting the only seat in the Third Constituency which has over 81,000 voters. Results are expected to be announced within a few hours after ballots close at 8.00 p.m. Sixteen candidates pulled out of the race and two were disqualified by the ministry. Eligible voters must elect one candidate to fill the assembly's vacant seat.

Among the candidates is Fadhl's younger son, Ahmad and a number of candidates who contested the election before or were members of the dissolved Assembly. Fadhl died on his parliamentary

seat of a stroke minutes after speaking and calling on ministers to stop signing transactions for MPs during the session. Ten lawmakers in the meantime signed a motion yesterday demanding a two-hour debate over the government decision to cut financial allocations for Kuwaiti patients sent for medical treatment abroad. The decision was strongly criticized by a large number of lawmakers who blasted the government for attempting to implement economic reforms at the expense of citizen patients.

Some of them threatened to grill the health minister holding him responsible for the decision. They insisted that the government should not cut such allocations before upgrading health services to international level. The lawmakers who signed the motion said they were surprised by the governments decision to cut the overseas medical treatment alloca-

tions at a time when the government is still discussing with the assembly financial committee about ways for economic reforms and reducing subsidies. They called for according the motion an emergency status in a bid to be debated in the next session on March 1.

Meanwhile, deputy speaker Mubarak Al-Khraisej appealed to the prime minister to review the treatment cut decision saying that it has shocked patients who are currently under medical treatment abroad. MP Mohammad Tana in the meantime sent a series of questions to housing minister Yasser Abul regarding government housing loans offered to Kuwaiti women married to foreign husbands. He asked about the number of such Kuwaiti women who got the housing loan and inquired about the government plans to launch low-cost housing for Kuwaiti women married to foreigners.



KUWAIT: A food vendor displays fresh fruits at Al-Mubarakia market. — KUNA

GCC INFO MINISTERS MEET

RIYADH: The extraordinary meeting of the GCC information ministers which kicked off behind closed doors in Riyadh ended yesterday. Kuwait's Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah represented Kuwait in the meeting. The meeting tackled a host of issues such as developing cooperation between the GCC media sectors to face regional and international challenges, and a number of joint GCC

projects and topics in the field.

GCC states have identical perspectives regarding various issues of common concern, in translation of guidelines set by the top leaders and information ministers' recommendations, the Minister of Information said. Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, also the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, made the affirmation as he left for Riyadh.

The meeting aims to boost the Gulf media, enhance information cooperation

among the GCC countries with the aspiration to work out a "common media language that embodies the GCC solidarity," he said. The Kuwaiti delegation includes General Director and Chairman of Kuwait News Agency Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah, Information Undersecretary Tareq Al-Mezrem, Assistant Undersecretary for External Information Faisal Al-Mutallaqem and Director of the Minister's Bureau Saud Al-Khaldi. — Agencies

Friday Times International

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2016

**At least 38 killed
in US-led
strikes in Syria's
Hasaka**



**Dozens of Iraqi
migrants return
home from
Europe**



**Three-way feud
among
Republican
contenders**



BRUSSELS: Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron arrives for an EU summit meeting, at the European Union headquarters in Brussels yesterday. —AFP

CAMERON: UK WILL REJECT BAD 'BREXIT' DEAL BRITISH PM WANTS DEAL ON REFORMS BEFORE REFERENDUM

BRUSSELS: British Prime Minister David Cameron warned yesterday he will walk away from a "make or break" Brussels summit if he does not get the deal he wants to avoid his country becoming the first to crash out of the EU. Cameron wants a deal on reforms to the 28-nation European Union before holding a referendum as early as June, but faces opposition from member states hostile to Britain getting special treatment just to keep it in the bloc.

"I'll be battling for Britain. If we can get a good deal I'll take that deal but I will not take a deal that doesn't meet what we need," Cameron told reporters as he arrived for the meeting.

"It's much more important to get this right than to do anything in a rush," he said. Talks were going down to the wire on Cameron's four key demands—welfare restrictions to help curb immigration, safeguards for non-euro Britain, increasing EU competitiveness and an opt-out from closer EU integration. All of the demands are controversial, and EU president Donald Tusk, who will chair the two-day summit, warned that

the talks were crucial to the future of the crisis-hit union.

"We are in the middle of still very difficult and sensitive negotiations on the UK question. One thing is clear to me though: this is a make or break summit," Tusk told reporters.

'Quite confident'

Tusk, a former Polish premier, is due to meet Cameron for talks before the summit gets underway around 1600 GMT. European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker said he was "quite confident" of an agreement. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the EU, said that "we are pretty far, I do feel we can get to a deal", but warned that "we are not there yet." Cameron, under pressure from eurosceptics in his own centre-right Conservative Party and a hostile right-wing press, says he will back a 'Yes' vote in a referendum expected this June if he can cut a deal in Brussels.

Failing that, he has said all options are open,

refusing to rule out the possibility that Britain could become the first country to leave the EU in its more than 60-year history. A leaked draft of the summit conclusions seen Thursday still had a number of key passages in brackets, including on the "euro-outs" and on migrant benefits, meaning they have not been agreed despite weeks of tense negotiations.

Brussels has offered Cameron an "emergency brake" to limit benefits for new migrants for four years, which Britain could invoke if its welfare system is overwhelmed by the inflow of workers, as it believes it has been.

But Poland and other east European member states who have hundreds of thousands of citizens in Britain bitterly oppose such a change, saying it would discriminate against them and undercut the EU's core principle of freedom of movement. The right-wing British press was dismissive yesterday, plastering their front pages with reports the number of EU workers in Britain had grown to two million.

France meanwhile insists that non-euro

Britain, home to the free-wheeling London global financial centre, must "in no circumstances" have a veto over the what the eurozone wants to do.

EU, Britain's fault line

Cameron has staked his political survival on winning the referendum in the hope of ending a feud over Britain's place in the EU that has plagued his Conservative Party for decades. Britons voted overwhelmingly in favour of staying in the EU in a 1975 referendum, just two years after joining, when the then Labour government said the country would miss out on Europe's growing prosperity if it left.

That is the same case made now-but with Britain more prosperous and growing faster than most of its EU peers, eurosceptics say 'Brexit' should hold no fears. Cameron has won crucial backing, however, from German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Europe's power-broker who said Berlin had shared his EU concerns "for many years." — AFP

UN AIMS TO SEND AID TO ALL BESIEGED SYRIA AREAS

GENEVA: The United Nations should be able to deliver aid to all of Syria's 18 besieged areas within a week, a senior UN official said yesterday, after life-saving supplies reached five locations.

Jan Egeland, who is the special advisor to the UN's Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura, made the comments after a meeting of representatives from the 17-nation International Syria Support Group (ISSG). "We discussed the next phase which is to reach all of the remaining besieged areas of Syria. And

we should be able to do (so) before the next meeting which will be in a week," Egeland said.

Egeland said that there was plan to deliver aid to the eastern city Deir Ezzor, the majority of which is controlled by the Islamic State group (IS) and where an estimated 200,000 people still live.

The UN official said the World Food Program "has now a concrete plan" to conduct humanitarian air drops over the city and that this prospective operation has the support of both the United

States and Russia. Russian cargo planes reportedly delivered humanitarian aid to regime-held neighbourhoods in Deir Ezzor last week. Egeland said the just concluded mission to five besieged areas included 114 trucks and delivered supplies to an estimated 80,000 people.

The operation was made possible by a deal struck at an ISSG meet in Munich last week, where many of the key actors in the Syrian conflict, including Damascus ally Russia, agreed to increase humanitarian access. The ISSG

also reached a deal on a cessation of hostilities in Syria, but its prospects appear grim amid continued fighting.

The UN estimates that there are more than 480,000 Syrians living in areas besieged by the government, rebels and jihadist forces. More than four million others are living in what the UN defines as "hard-to-reach" areas. "The people of Syria ... have waited too long for relief," Egeland told reporters following the meeting in Geneva. —AFP

TURKEY BLAMES KURDISH REBELS, SYRIA FOR ATTACK

ANKARA: Turkey's leaders yesterday blamed top enemies, including Kurdish militant groups in Turkey and in Syria as well as the Syrian government, for the suicide bombing in Ankara and vowed strong retaliation against the perpetrators, threatening to further complicate the Syria conflict. The rush hour car-bomb attack on Wednesday evening targeting buses carrying military personnel killed 28 people and injured dozens of others as Turkey grapples with an array of issues, including renewed fighting with the Kurdish rebels, the threat from Islamic State militants and the Syria refugee crisis. The blast was the second deadly bombing in Ankara in four months.

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told reporters that a Syrian national with links to Syrian Kurdish militia carried out the attack in collaboration with Turkey's own outlawed Kurdish rebel group, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. Davutoglu also accused Syria's government of responsibility for allegedly backing the Syrian Kurdish militia. The attack came as Turkey had been pressing the U.S. to cut off support to the Kurdish Syrian militias, which Turkey regards as terrorists because of their affiliation with the PKK. The US already lists the PKK as a terror group.

But Washington relies heavily on the Syrian Democratic Union Party, or PYD, and its military wing, the People's Protection Units, or YPG, in the battle against the Islamic State group and has rejected Turkish pressure. Turkish artillery has been shelling PYD and YPG positions along its border in Syria, apparently concerned by a series of recent gains by the militias in the area. Any Turkish escalation against the PYD is likely to further strain ties with the US. "It has been determined with certainty that this attack was carried out by members of the separatist terror organization together with a member of the YPG who infiltrated from Syria," Davutoglu said, identifying the bomber as Syrian national Salih Neccar, born in 1992.

Neccar, whose name sounds Kurdish, was born in the mostly-Kurdish populated Syrian town of Amouda, near the Turkish border, according to Davutoglu. At least 14 people were arrested since Wednesday in connection with the attacks, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, adding that the numbers of suspects detained was likely to increase. The leader of the main Syrian Kurdish group, Salih Muslim, denied that his group was behind the Ankara attack in an interview with The Associated Press and warned Turkey against taking ground action in Syria.

Erdogan insisted evidence obtained by the Turkish authorities pointed to the group. "Despite the fact that their leader says they have nothing to do with this, the information and documents obtained by our Interior Ministry and all our intelligence organizations shows that (the attack) was theirs," Erdogan said. Erdogan said the attack would show the international community the strong links that exist between the PKK and the Syrian Kurdish militias. "Those who directly or indirectly back an organization that is the enemy of Turkey, risk losing the title of being a friend of Turkey," Davutoglu said in an apparent reference to Washington. "It is out of the question for us to excuse a terror organization that threatens the capital of our country."

Paul T. Levin, head of the Stockholm University Institute for Turkish Studies, told the AP: "it will be interesting to see how the United States reacts because they view the YPG as an ally ... Will they (the United States) shift their view on YPG?" Yesterday, the ambassadors of the five permanent UN Security Council member states were invited separately to Turkey's Foreign Ministry and were being briefed on the attack, a ministry official said. —AP

AT LEAST 38 KILLED IN US-LED STRIKES IN SYRIA'S HASAKA

SYRIAN REBELS CROSS FROM TURKEY TO JOIN ALEPPO BATTLES

BEIRUT: At least 38 people were killed in air strikes carried out by a US-led coalition in Hasaka province in north-east Syria in the past two days, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said yesterday. The toll included at least 15 people who were killed when strikes hit a bakery in the city of Al-Shadadi near the border with Iraq on Tuesday, the Britain-based Observatory said. Air raids in at least three other villages killed 15 others yesterday, including three children, it said. Reuters could not independently confirm the reports. Al-Shadadi is a logistics hub for the Islamic State group, located on a network of highways and whose capture would isolate Raqqa, the de-facto capital of the hardline group.

The US-led coalition has been hitting Islamic State targets in areas of Syria and Iraq which the group controls, including in Hasaka and Raqqa provinces. Washington also backs an alliance of Kurdish YPG fighters and other groups fighting against the jihadists on the ground. The YPG has been the most effective partner against IS in Syria for the US-led coalition, and took swathes from territory from the group last year. Russia is separately carrying out its own air campaign in Syria, hitting some Islamic State targets, but mostly focused on insurgents fighting Moscow ally President Bashar Al-Assad in the west of the war-torn country.

Rebels cross from Turkey

Hundreds of Syrian rebels prepared to head to frontlines in northern Aleppo province yesterday, after crossing from Turkey to reinforce fighters battling Kurdish militia. The group of 500 opposition fighters was in the border town of Azaz, after arriving from Turkey on Wednesday through the nearby Bab al-Salama crossing, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The fighters are expected to head to frontlines nearby with the Syrian Democratic Forces, which has in recent days seized several former rebel bastions in Aleppo province. The alliance is led by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), and its advances have alarmed Turkey, which considers the YPG a branch of the Kurdistan Workers'

Party that has waged a decades-long insurgency against Ankara.

The Observatory said the Syrian rebels were a mixture of Islamists and other fighters, with most from the Faylaq Al-Sham group. It said they had arrived with weapons, though it could not provide details. "They came from (neighboring) Idlib province and western Aleppo, entered Turkey through (Idlib's) Atme, and reentered Syria through Bab al-Salama," Observatory

from most of the positions they captured in recent days," he said. The SDF denies coordinating with Russian forces who began an air campaign in support of Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad in late September. But Russian warplanes have carried out strikes benefitting the alliance as it has advanced, and its successes have come as regime troops backed by Russia's air power have pressed their own major military operation further south in Aleppo province.



This file photo taken on August 22, 2015 shows a wounded Syrian girl looking on at a makeshift hospital in the rebel-held area of Douma, east of the capital Damascus, following shelling and air raids by Syrian government forces. —AFP

chief Rami Abdel Rahman said. The route allowed the rebels to avoid crossing Kurdish or regime-held territory to reach northern Aleppo, where the SDF and pro-government forces have recently advanced. Syria expert Thomas Pierret described Faylaq al-Sham as "the official military branch of the Muslim Brotherhood... a faction that is close to Turkey."

He said their arrival could help reinforce Azaz, but might be insufficient to roll back the SDF's gains. "These reinforcements could contribute to stopping the fall of Azaz, but considering the Russian aerial support the YPG benefits from, I doubt that they will be pushed

The Kurds have long sought to unite Kurdish-majority areas in north and northeast Syria, and their latest advances could help link the areas under their control. Turkey is fiercely opposed to that goal, and has been shelling SDF positions inside Syria for days in a bid to halt the group's advances. Elsewhere in the country, Syrian state media said regime forces had taken the village of Kinsaba in northern Latakia province, the last remaining rebel stronghold in the region. The Observatory said fighting was ongoing but confirmed that large parts of the village had been captured by regime forces. —Agencies



BAGHDAD: An Iraqi family returning from Europe waits for their luggage at Baghdad International Airport yesterday. —AP

DOZENS OF IRAQI MIGRANTS RETURN HOME FROM EUROPE

IRAQ TO SHRINK PARAMILITARY FORCES

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi government spokesman says dozens of Iraqis who sought refuge in Europe have returned to the country. The Foreign Affairs Ministry spokesman, Ahmed Jamal, says 103 migrants returned home yesterday amid emotional scenes at the Baghdad International Airport, where some of the returnees were kneeling and kissing the ground. Many were seen holding "yellow passports" - documents given by Iraqi embassies to those wishing to return home.

Since last year, many Iraqis have joined the tide of migrants trying to reach Europe and fleeing war and poverty across Africa, the Middle East and South Asia.

Jamal says yesterday's returnees all came from Finland and that more groups are to follow. He didn't elaborate. Turkey and Greece are the main gateways for migrants fleeing to Europe.

The Iraqi government has decided to cut the number of state-financed paramilitary forces due to a shortage of funds as the international oil price declines, a spokesman for a leading militia group said yesterday.

Karim al-Nouri, the spokesman for the Popular Mobilization Forces, an umbrella group made up predominantly of Shiite militias, told The Associated Press that around 30 per cent of paramilitary troops were expected to be laid off. Some 130,000 fighters in Iraq are affiliated with pro-government paramilitary forces.

Al-Nouri added that the decision would not affect the fight against Islamic State group, which controls areas in northern and western Iraq. He said the cuts will also cover non-combat troops providing administrative and logistical support. He did not give details on the how many combat troops

will be laid off.

In mid-2014, several Shiite militias along with volunteers joined the fight against IS after large divisions of Iraq's military fled rapidly in the face of the militant group's advance. A number of Sunni tribes later joined the fight. It is unlikely the cuts to paramilitary funding will lead to frontline defeats as Iraq's army is receiving support from the US-led coalition against IS. Iraq's oil-reliant economy has been severely hit by falling crude prices, and the war on terror is proving costly for the cash-strapped government. Iraq has the world's fourth largest oil reserves and oil revenues make up nearly 95 per cent of its budget. The government introduced a series of austerity measures in 2015, merging several ministries and cutting government posts, halting spending on infrastructure projects and raising taxes. —AP

IRAQ COURT SENTENCES 40 TO DEATH OVER 2014 TIKRIT MASSACRE

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi court yesterday sentenced 40 men to hang over the June 2014 massacre by Sunni jihadists and allied militants of hundreds of military recruits in Tikrit, the judiciary said.

The central criminal court in Baghdad found 40 of 47 defendants guilty of involvement in the "Speicher" massacre, named after the base near where the victims were captured before being executed. "The court ordered the execution of 40 (people) convicted of involvement in the incident, while seven were released for lack of evidence," Iraq's judiciary spokesman Abdel Sattar Bayraqdar said in the statement.

Bayraqdar said the sentences were handed down under Article Four of Iraq's anti-terrorism law, which states that anyone who perpetrates,

incites, plans, finances or assists acts of terrorism will be sentenced to death. A judicial source said all 47 were Iraqi citizens and present in court for their sentencing. "Some of them actually did the killing and others assisted them in this crime," the official, who could not give his name because he was not authorised to talk to the press, told AFP.

He said the 40 were sentenced to death by hanging. The court itself did not reveal the identities of the defendants nor any details of the circumstances of their arrest.

In a similar trial in July 2015, 24 men were sentenced to hang over the Speicher massacre, which was committed during the first days of the Islamic State group's sweeping offensive in Iraq. —AFP

GULF ARABS RACE TO RELEASE YOUTH POTENTIAL

DUBAI: Like the prototype drone of Emirati student Talib Alhinai, the ambitions of young people across the Gulf Arab states need to soar if they - and their economies - are to prosper in the age of cheap oil. The 23-year-old now researching for his Ph.D is just the kind of innovator that the region requires, along with youngsters who want the risky life of an entrepreneur rather than a safe but unproductive job working for the state.

Wearing a crisp white Arabian robe and headdress, Alhinai cranes his glasses upward as his drone climbs above an outdoor amphitheatre in downtown Dubai, and explains how it can swoop down and squirt 3D printed sealant onto damaged oil pipelines.

Petrodollars won Gulf Arab states decades of prosperity, when loyalty and stability could be bought by giving graduates with subpar education cushy government posts.

No more. The collapse in oil prices is forcing governments to make good on old promises to turn their growing youth populations into a workforce that can compete globally.

Showing off the prototype he built with classmates at Imperial College London, winning a state-sponsored "Drones for Good" competition at the amphitheatre, Alhinai said Gulf Arab youngsters were eager to make livelihoods from their ideas, not handouts.

"There's a realisation, an awakening, among my generation that the age of oil can't last forever and that we need to pick up the pace to give back to our societies, especially through innovation and technology, to shred this stereotype about us being idle," said Alhinai.

Over half of Gulf Arab nationals are employed in public sector jobs; in Kuwait the figure is nearly 80 percent. But now the International Monetary Fund predicts economic growth in six oil-exporting states of the Gulf Cooperation Council will slip to 2.8 percent in 2016 from 3.25 in 2014, and private sector growth has likewise fallen.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia have both launched initiatives this year to outsource services from the state to the private sector, rein in spending and invest in education and vocational training.

RECKONING

Nowhere is the problem so acute as in top oil exporter Saudi Arabia, which is running a \$100 billion budget deficit and has used up \$90 billion of its foreign assets in the past 18 months. At that rate they would be gone in just a few years.

Underlining the problem, the Standard & Poor's agency downgraded the credit ratings of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Oman this week in its second mass cut of large oil producers in almost a year.

Vast energy reserves and tiny populations in Qatar and Kuwait mean they have more time to get their nationals into more productive work, but Saudi Arabia can no longer buy off its 20 million citizens with public sector welfare. State-owned oil giant Aramco, the largest Saudi company and a paragon of efficiency in the kingdom's often hidebound economy, is trying to encourage innovation by giving entrepreneurs training and loans.

One such beneficiary is 28-year-old Loai Labani, who owns tech company Innosoft based in Dhahran Techno Valley in the country's east. He said risk-taking was still foreign to Saudi job culture and few of his peers understood why he would strive for his own success rather than take a plum official post. "My family and my friends were trying to tell me you shouldn't focus on this, just get a government job and the security that comes with it," Labani said.

"Of my 20 employees, half are Saudi and I need 10 more, but it's a struggle to get the quality developers, web-designers and programmers. We have to do 2-300 interviews to hire just one Saudi, because not just the knowledge but the personality for private enterprise is so hard to find."

According to a study by the Center for Strategic and International Studies, promoting those skills will be one of the greatest challenges for Gulf countries and will entail a rethinking of the "social contract" under which state generosity won stability in a turbulent region. "There is a clear tension between countries' wish to encourage economic creativity and risk-taking on the one hand and their desire to maintain relative social and political quiescence on the other," wrote author Carolyn Barnett. —Reuters



A Syrian Kurdish woman, Bahar, reacts as she waits at the port of the northern island of Lesbos after crossing the Aegean sea from Turkey, in Mytilene, yesterday. — AFP

HUNGARY CHARGES SYRIAN WITH 'TERRORISM' AFTER BORDER RIOT

FIRST CASE OF ITS KIND UNDER TOUGH NEW LAWS

BUDAPEST: Hungarian prosecutors charged yesterday a Syrian migrant with committing an "act of terror" during fierce clashes with border forces last year, in the first case of its kind under tough new laws.

The September 16 disturbances occurred when several dozen migrants demanded to be allowed to cross Hungary's southern border with Serbia at Roszke, a day after the frontier was sealed with razor wire.

Some threw stones, sticks and bottles while police fired tear gas and used water cannon to force the group, which had pushed its way across the border line, back onto Serbian territory.

The incident left around 15 police and 100-150 migrants injured. A spokesperson for prosecutors in Csongrad county told the MTI news agency yesterday that Ahmed H, 40, incited the crowd to violence, repeatedly threatened the security forces and then joined the subsequent disturbances.

"In order to cross the border illegally and coerce state bodies, the man committed a criminal act of violence against persons amounting to the crime of an act of terror," Ferenc Szanka said.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban was criticised over the treatment

last year of hundreds of thousands of migrants seeking to travel onwards to northern Europe before his government stopped the influx by closing its borders. Tough new laws passed in September made it a crime, rather than an infringement, to illegally cross the border and made damaging frontier fences punishable with several years in prison.

More than 1,000 migrants have been arrested and detained in custody since then, with the majority then expelled from the country.

Orban's government, long accused of eroding democratic norms in the ex-communist country, is now planning tough anti-terror measures including restrictions on the Internet and curfews, sparking a fierce debate. While the right-wing government says it currently faces no direct terrorist threat, it says the potential is high, and has proposed changing the constitution to bring in the measures. Critics including opposition parties and rights groups say a vaguely defined threat could allow the government to suddenly clamp down on civil liberties in the 10-million-strong EU member state. Orban says that all European governments should have the powers necessary to protect its citizens. — AFP

EU PATROL RESCUES 900 MIGRANTS AT SEA

WARSAW: The EU border agency Frontex said one of its maritime patrols rescued around 900 migrants yesterday near the Greek island of Lesbos as weather conditions have made the sea crossing more dangerous. "We're picking up all the migrants we encounter (at sea) because bad weather and cold make the risks much higher now than in the summer," Ewa Moncure told AFP.

The migrants were picked up by a Bulgarian ship working in Frontex patrols between the port of Mytilene on Lesbos and the Turkish coast, a distance of around eight kilometres (five miles).

During the summer months, up to 7,000 refugees and migrants arrived in EU member Greece every day after making the trip across the Aegean Sea from Turkey in makeshift or overcrowded boats, and many including children have drowned.

A photograph of three-year-old Syrian boy Aylan Kurdi, face down in the sand on a Turkish beach, shocked the world when it was published in September 2015 after his family decided to make the risky journey to Greece in an open boat. More than a million people, mostly refugees and migrants from war-torn Syria and Iraq, arrived in the European Union last year amid the worst crisis of its kind in Europe since World War II. — AFP

UKRAINE COALITION LOSES MAJORITY

KIEV: Ukraine's Samopomich party has quit the ruling coalition, one of its leaders Oleh Berezuk said yesterday, increasing pressure on Prime Minister Arseniy Yatseniuk to find new allies or risk the collapse of the government. The announcement came just a day after another party led by former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko quit the coalition. The loss of the Samopomich party's 26 lawmakers therefore leaves the alliance of Yatseniuk's party and the President's faction without a majority in parliament.

Samopomich considers it "impossible to remain further in a union of political powers that participated in an oligarch-led coup in parliament," Berezuk said in a briefing.

The government survived a no confidence motion in parliament on Tuesday, but some critics have said this is because lawmakers backed by Ukraine's powerful businessmen swung the vote by leaving the chamber without casting a ballot. — Reuters



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DOCUMENTS SHOW WALESA COLLABORATED WITH REGIME

WARSAW, Poland: Recently seized documents show that Poland's former president and Solidarity founder Lech Walesa was a paid informant for the communist-era secret security service from 1970-76, the head of Poland's history institute said yesterday.

Walesa, the icon of Poland's successful struggle to topple communism and the 1983 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, has previously acknowledged signing a commitment to be an informant, but has insisted he never acted on it. In 2000 he was cleared by a special court, which said it found no evidence of collaboration.

The head of the state National Remembrance Institute, Lukasz Kaminski, said that documents seized this week from the home of the last communist interior minister, the late Gen. Czeslaw Kiszczak, include a commitment to provide information that is signed with Walesa's name and codename, "Bolek." There are also pages of reports and receipts for money, signed "Bolek."

Walesa, 72, in a written message from Venezuela where he is traveling, suggested the papers are fake.

"There can exist no documents coming from me. I will prove that in court," he said. The 279 pages of documents seem to be authentic and will be made public in due course, Kaminski told a news conference. He said historians need time to analyze the content of the documents.

Antoni Dudek, the institute's leading historian who has studied Walesa, said the impact would not be that great unless some evidence emerged that Walesa continued to be an informant after he had founded the Solidarity freedom movement. "Lech Walesa is the symbol of Poland's struggle for freedom, he is the symbol of Solidarity and nothing can destroy that, unless we learn that he continued that collaboration," Dudek said.

It is of great interest what other documents will be found among the seized files, he said. According to Kaminski, five more packets of seized documents have not yet been opened. Prosecutors and police were also searching Kiszczak's summer house. Communism and Moscow's control were imposed on Poland and other countries in the region after World War II and were despised and opposed by most people. Secret security was the regime's harsh tool for keeping the people under control, using personal information to blackmail and discredit opponents and dissidents.

The secret service also used to fabricate information on people, a fact that calls for meticulous confirmation of the authenticity of any compromising documents that emerge. The fate of the files was a major concern after the communists lost power in 1989, with reports saying that they were fabricating new documents and burning or hiding others.



BARCELONA: Polish 1983 Nobel peace laureate Lech Walesa at the XV World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates in Barcelona. —AFP



Migrant children play in a camp after crossing the Macedonian-Greek border, near Gevgelija, yesterday. Macedonia has begun building a new razor-wire fence parallel to an existing one on the Greek border to make it harder for migrants to enter illegally. —AFP

AUSTRIA SETS ASYLUM LIMIT AS E EUROPE HIKES PRESSURE

MERKEL URGES COMMON STANCE ON MIGRANT ISSUE

VIENNA: On the eve of a European Union summit to debate Europe's migrant crisis, Austria announced Wednesday a daily limit in the number of asylum requests and eastern EU members set a mid-March deadline for a plan agreed with Turkey to bear fruit.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, under intense pressure at home, meanwhile urged a "common stance" in the 28-nation bloc, arguing that the Turkey plan "offers a good solution."

But a separate scheme to ease pressure on the migrant buildup on the EU's rim ran into problems after a planned mini-summit with Turkey was scrapped following a bomb attack in Ankara.

The Austrian government announced it would set a daily cap of 80 claims of asylum in the country. It also said it would grant entry to a daily maximum of 3,200 people who were transiting Austria to seek asylum in a neighbouring country, effective today. The move came a day after Austria said it would step up border controls and several weeks after saying it aimed to slash the number of asylum claims this year to 37,500 from 90,000 in 2015.

Interior Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner

said Austria had no choice but to act, as there was no European solution yet in place. "Austria is among the EU countries most under strain and is reaching breaking point. It stands to reason to want to secure your own borders when there is no European solution," she said.

In such a situation, she said it was important that every country through the Balkans—the main route for migrants bound for northern Europe—follow Austria's lead.

Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann said that nevertheless he still supported a deal proposed by Germany under which Turkey would seal its borders and then fly refugees to Europe.

Then they would be settled under a quota system. At present the vast majority of migrants enter the EU through Greece and Italy, but most are able to continue their journeys to northern Europe. However, most EU countries have shown little enthusiasm for the plan, with the so-called Visegrad Four (V4) — Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary—openly defying Merkel.

They have pledged to help Macedonia and Bulgaria close their bor-

ders with Greece, which would leave Athens with rapidly rising numbers of refugees while effectively excluding it from Europe's passport-free Schengen zone.

EU-Turkey talks cancelled

Speaking in Berlin earlier Wednesday, Merkel said "we will speak at the upcoming EU Council about how we can work together to protect our external border, and I want us to work together on the EU-Turkish agenda that 28 members have decided".

Ahead of Thursday's full gathering of the EU's 28 members in Brussels, Merkel and Faymann had been due to host talks with nine other EU leaders and Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu. The meeting was to flesh out an idea for easing pressure on the migrant buildup by focussing on ways in which the 11 countries—dubbed a "coalition of the willing" by the German media—would resettle Syrian refugees who had fled to Turkey.

But Davutoglu cancelled his trip following a bomb attack in Ankara on Wednesday that left more than two dozen dead, European diplomats and Council head Donald Tusk said.—AFP

HOSPITAL PAYS THOUSANDS TO END ATTACK KNOWN AS 'RANSOMWARE'

LOS ANGELES: A large Los Angeles hospital owned by a South Korean company chose to pay hackers who were holding its computer network hostage, a move its CEO said was in its best interest and the most efficient way to end the problem. Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center said Wednesday it paid the 40 bitcoins, or about \$17,000, demanded when it fell victim to what's commonly called "ransomware."

"Unfortunately, a lot of companies don't tell anybody if they had fallen victim to ransomware, and especially if they have paid the criminals," said Adam Kujawa, Head of Malware Intelligence for Malwarebytes, a San Jose-based company that recently released anti-ransomware software. Computer security experts normally recommend people not pay the ransom, though at times law enforcement agen-

cies suggest they do, Kujawa said. The FBI said it is investigating the ransomware attack, but have provided no details beyond that. The 434-bed hospital was sold to CHA Medical Center of South Korea in 2004.

During 2013, the number of attacks each month rose from 100,000 in January to 600,000 in December, according to a 2014 report by Symantec, the maker of antivirus software.

The infiltration at Hollywood Presbyterian was first noticed on Feb. 5, CEO Allen Stefanek said in a statement. Its system was fully functioning again by Monday, 10 days later.

The hospital did not say whether anyone in law enforcement or the technology business had recommended it pay off the hackers and quickly obtain the digital key used to be able to access its data again.—AP

JANE SANDERS IS CENTRAL IN HER HUSBAND'S SURGING CAMPAIGN

ROMULUS, Michigan: When Jane Sanders saw an early cut of the "America" ad for her husband's presidential campaign, she felt something wasn't quite right. The problem? Her husband was talking in it. The uplifting spot for Bernie Sanders features sunny images of his packed rallies while Simon and Garfunkel's song "America" plays. Jane Sanders found herself being carried away by the mood and the music, not by the clip of him speaking.

"So I just asked to cut Bernie out," she said. "He's talking all the time in other places." Nine months into his insurgent presidential campaign, that ad stands out as a symbol of Bernie Sanders' effort to spark a grassroots political movement competing with the more traditional campaign of Hillary Clinton. And Jane Sanders' hand in the final product shows her influence in the campaign - one that may increase as she headlines more events on her own.

She's a former community organizer who has worked alongside her husband for more than 30 years - as a city department head when he was mayor of Burlington, Vermont, a volunteer congressional aide, and a campaign adviser. "She is not afraid to be constructively critical," Bernie Sanders said. "She lets me have it if she thinks I make a mistake." And he joked that happens "every day, including 10 minutes ago."

Momentum seems to be on Bernie Sanders' side after his 22-point win in the New Hampshire primary and a close finish in Iowa. His campaign, propelled by promises of "political revolution" and small-dollar donations, has proven a surprisingly robust challenge to Clinton.

Along the way, Jane Sanders has done everything from buying the office furniture to helping prep for debates. She has tried to lighten up her policy-work husband, urging him to offer a "little less doom and gloom and a little more hope" in his speeches. She has also encouraged him to talk more about his congressional record, noting that "his opponent is trying to say that she's more effective than he is, so he needs to let people know how effective he's been."

Sanders has been deeply involved in her husband's political career practically from the moment they met, when he was running for mayor of Burlington in 1981. She was working as a community organizer for a youth center. They quickly began working together and dating. They married in 1988 and promptly took off on a diplomatic trip to Burlington's sister city in Russia.

"She's one of his most trusted advisers, if not the most trusted adviser," said Sanders' senior adviser, Tad Devine. Over the years, Jane Sanders has served as director of youth services for the city of Burlington, helped set up her husband's congressional office and advised his congressional and Senate campaigns. She also did stints outside of government, as provost of Goddard College and president of Burlington College. She resigned the latter job in 2011 amid apparent tension with the board of trustees.

"She is tough and has a very quiet sense of confidence," Sanders said, recalling some criticism when he made his then-girlfriend youth director in Burlington. "When she was attacked, she didn't blink an eye. She'd go on the radio and defend herself extraordinarily well."

Today the couple jets around the country on a Boeing 737 aircraft, accompanied by Secret Service protection and a robust political staff. Jane Sanders, 65, recently hugged nurses at an organizing event in Minneapolis. In Detroit, she joined her 74-year-old husband as he met families grappling with the Flint water crisis. —AP



CHARLESTON: Jane Sanders watches as her husband Democratic presidential candidate, Sen. Bernie Sanders waves during a town hall meeting at Burke High School in Charleston, SC. — AP



GREENVILLE, SC: Republican presidential candidate, Sen Ted Cruz (R-TX) participates in a CNN South Carolina Republican Presidential Town Hall with moderator Anderson Cooper (R) February in Greenville. —AFP

THREE-WAY FEUD AMONG REPUBLICAN CONTENDERS

SOUTH CAROLINA'S HIGH-STAKES PRIMARY TOMORROW

CHAPIN, South Carolina: A three-way feud among the Republicans' leading White House contenders has escalated, with Ted Cruz daring Donald Trump to sue him and dismissing Marco Rubio's charges of dishonesty just days before South Carolina's high-stakes primary tomorrow.

Rubio may have scored Wednesday's biggest win as he secured the coveted endorsement of South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley. "If we elect Marco Rubio, every day will be a great day in America," the popular governor said. While polls indicate that Trump has a large lead in South Carolina and other states, the Democratic race remains close. Hillary Clinton and Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders face off in the Nevada caucuses on Saturday, and the South Carolina primary for them is on Feb. 27.

Though the general election is in November and parties' nominating conventions are still months away, these early-voting states help pare down the field and focus momentum. Another win for

Trump, or Sanders, after their New Hampshire victories would indicate that they are contenders who can't be dismissed. Cruz has been trying to defend himself against charges of dishonesty from Trump and Rubio for weeks.

Trump threatened earlier in the week to bring a defamation lawsuit against Cruz over a television ad that attacks the Republican front-runner's conservative bona fides. The ad features footage of the billionaire businessman in a 1999 interview supporting abortion rights. Trump now says he opposes abortion. "You have been threatening frivolous lawsuits for your entire adult life," said Cruz, who served as Texas' top lawyer, speaking directly to Trump. "Even in the annals of frivolous lawsuits, this takes the cake."

Cruz said a lawsuit against the ad has no chance, and said he would like to take Trump's deposition himself. The prospective legal battle marks another extraordinary step in the turbulent primary season.

Polls suggest Trump continues to hold a big lead in South Carolina and in upcoming states, as Cruz works to rally the Republican Party's most conservative wing and Rubio tries to win over mainstream Republicans. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush and Ohio Gov. John Kasich continue to battle for a spot at the table, while retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson struggles for relevancy.

Rubio continued his assault against Cruz's campaign tactics. He accused Cruz supporters of creating a fake Facebook page wrongly claiming that South Carolina Rep. Trey Gowdy had switched his endorsement from the Florida senator to Cruz. Cruz denied being involved with anything untoward and called for anyone with evidence to come forward. — AP

BIDEN: OBAMA SEEKING COURT NOMINEE WHO ENJOYS GOP SUPPORT

WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama is looking to nominate a Supreme Court candidate who has enjoyed past Republican support, Vice President Joe Biden said, offering some of the first indications of the president's criteria in replacing the late Justice Antonin Scalia.

In a radio interview airing Thursday, Biden pushed back against Republicans who insist that Obama hand off the decision to the next president. Still, Biden acknowledged that the Senate gets to have a say in confirming the president's pick.

"In order to get this done, the president is not going to be able to go out - nor would it be his instinct, anyway - to pick the most liberal jurist in the nation and put them on the court," the vice president told Minnesota Public Radio. "There are plenty of judges (who) are on high courts already who have had unanimous support of the Republicans."

Biden's remarks came amid growing signs that some Republicans were softening their stance about considering Obama's nominee. Though Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has said Obama shouldn't even nominate a candidate, Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska said Wednesday that his nominee should get a hearing, and others have left the door

open.

Former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor became the latest voice arguing Scalia's seat should be filled expeditiously. O'Connor, a Ronald Reagan nominee who retired in 2006, told Fox 10 in Phoenix she disagreed with those calling to wait for the next president.

"I think we need somebody there now to do the job," she said, "and let's get on with it." Although the White House hasn't publicly disclosed any candidates Obama is considering, he's expected to look closely at a number of circuit court judges - including some that meet the benchmark that Biden laid out. Sri Srinivasan, who sits on the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, was confirmed 97-0 less than three years ago by the Senate, which also unanimously confirmed Jane Kelly in 2013 to the St. Louis-based Eighth Circuit.

Biden, who presided over Supreme Court confirmation hearings in the Senate, took issue with the notion that a Scalia replacement can't be confirmed during Obama's final year.

"To leave the seat vacant at this critical moment in American history is a little bit like saying, 'God forbid something happen to the president and the vice president, we're not going to fill the presidency for another year and a half,'" Biden said. — AP

PUBLISHERS BLAST HONG KONG OVER MISSING BOOKSELLERS

HONG KONG: Publishers from around the world have urged Hong Kong authorities to demand China release five of the city's booksellers, in a case that has fuelled growing fears over disappearing freedoms. Four of the men are under criminal investigation on the mainland and the fifth has said he is "assisting" authorities there. All five worked for Hong Kong's Mighty Current publishing house, known for often salacious titles critical of the Beijing government.

Publishing associations, booksellers and advocacy groups from the United States and Europe penned the joint letter to Hong Kong's leader Leung Chun-ying, saying the case sent a "terrifying message" to the semi-autonomous city's literary world. Signatories included the PEN American Center, which campaigns for freedom of expression in literature, the Association of American Publishers and the Federation of European Publishers. "This case has sent a terrifying message to writers, publishers, and booksellers in Hong Kong that tackling politically sensitive topics can imperil an individual's freedom and safety," the letter, dated February 17 and published in full on PEN American Center's website, said.

"These developments offer chilling confirmation of the steady erosion of freedom of expression in Hong Kong," it added.

The letter urged Hong Kong "to do everything in its power to investigate these cases and demand the release" of the men. Britain, the US and the EU have all expressed concern over the case. Last week the UK issued its strongest comments yet over the case of Lee Bo the only one of the five publishers to have disappeared from Hong Kong. Lee is a British passport holder and was last seen at a Hong Kong book warehouse in December. British foreign secretary Philip Hammond said Lee had been "involuntarily removed" from Hong Kong in a "serious breach" of the joint agreement to protect the city's freedoms, signed before the handover of the city from Britain to China in 1997.

That agreement promised Hong Kong's way of life would be protected for 50 years. The Chinese authorities have not said Lee is under investigation. In letters purportedly written by him, Lee has said he is on the mainland helping with investigations. Beijing hit back at Hammond, slamming London for making "groundless accusations against China" and meddling in



HONG KONG, CHINA: In this file picture a protestor holds up a missing person notice for Lee Bo, 65, the latest of five Hong Kong booksellers from the same Mighty Current publishing house to go missing, as they walk towards China's Liaison Office in Hong Kong.—AFP

Chinese domestic affairs. Mighty Current publisher Gui Minhai failed to return to Hong Kong from a holiday in

Thailand in October. The other three publishers disappeared while in southern mainland cities.—AFP

DISSIDENTS FEARFUL AS THAILAND, ONCE A HAVEN, FAVOURS BEIJING

AS TIES WORSENERD WITH WEST, JUNTA EDGES TOWARD CHINA

BANGKOK: One night last month, Liu Xuehong stood weeping outside the gates of the United Nations headquarters in Bangkok, begging the guards to let her in. The Chinese dissident had received a threatening call from an anonymous Chinese official, and feared that she, like other asylum seekers in Thailand, would be snatched away by agents of China or deported by a Thai junta increasingly allied to it. The UN guards refused her entry. "I felt so frustrated," she said, tears streaming down her face. "We still live in fear here." Liu is one of hundreds of Chinese who have fled for Thailand, say human rights groups. It was long considered a refuge, but not anymore.

Two Chinese dissidents recently disappeared from Thai soil, only to reappear a few weeks later in China in police custody. Thailand deported two others late last year despite a UN plan to resettle them in Canada. "Thailand is no longer a safe haven for Chinese dissidents," said a senior Western diplomatic source based in Beijing. Western governments have expressed concern over China's apparent extra-territorial reach, as President Xi Jinping intensifies a nationwide crackdown on human rights lawyers, journalists and labour activists. China considers many dissidents to be criminals, including those who flee abroad.

Hong Kong bookseller

Panitan Wattanayagorn, a top Thai government advisor, said police were "still checking" how the two Chinese dissidents had vanished from the country, and said it was possible one of them had "disappeared (by) himself." As for the two deportations of Chinese refugees in November, Panitan said

the Thai government would work more closely with the UNHCR "to prevent this kind of problem". He said China had not applied any pressure. "Thailand decides on its own," he said. Among those who disappeared in Thailand was Gui Minhai, one of five Hong Kong booksellers who have gone missing since late last year. China's Foreign Ministry declined to comment on the disappearances, but has said its law enforcement officials would never do anything illegal, especially overseas. It said the November deportations were handled "in accordance with the law".

The Thai junta's seizure of power in 2014 strained ties with the West. As the United States and other countries downgraded political and military ties, the generals forged closer ties with Beijing. China and Thailand held their first joint air force exercise in November. The following month, the two countries agreed to build a \$13 billion railway line from the Thai-Lao border to Bangkok. A record 7.9 million Chinese visited Thailand last year, or more than a quarter of the total number of tourists. Last July, Thailand's deported 109 Uighur Muslims to an uncertain fate in China in what the UN called "a flagrant violation of international law."

Flushing out dissidents

Dissidents like Liu say the disappearances and deportations are part of a diplomatic and security squeeze by China to flush them out. Aiding them in Thailand, she believes, are Chinese agents posing as asylum-seekers. Liu, 55, was jailed for a month in Beijing in 2014 for "disturbing social order," a catch-all charge often used to suppress human rights activists. But she continued her work until

last June, just weeks before the Chinese authorities began arresting hundreds of lawyers, legal assistants and activists in a nationwide crackdown. "Almost all the people around me in China have been arrested," she said. Liu flew to Thailand, where she is now a UN-registered refugee awaiting resettlement. She can still be arrested and deported for illegally entering Thailand, which officially doesn't recognize refugee status. Men in cars often follow her through Bangkok, she says. "We have no protection here," said Liu. Liu arrived in Thailand by plane. But other Chinese, too fearful to use their passports, travel overland through ill-policed borders from neighbouring countries with the help of human smugglers.

Falun Gong

Song Zhiyu, 43, from Hebei Province, is a member of Falun Gong, a religious group banned as a cult in China. He left China on a smuggler's motorbike until reaching the Myanmar town of Mongla. In Mongla, Song telephoned a Thai man known only as "the tour leader" who, in return for 20,000 yuan (\$3,000), drove him towards the Thai border. Then Song was spirited across a river into Thailand and hidden in the luggage hold of a Bangkok-bound bus. He spent the next 10 hours bent double. "I thought I would die," he said. About 160 Falun Gong refugees and asylum-seekers are in Thailand, Song said, and in the past, authorities had rarely bothered them. But more than 29 practitioners have been arrested on immigration charges under the military junta, he said. "The Thai and Chinese governments now have a very close relationship," he said. "We are all afraid. Every day is dangerous for us." — Reuters

NEPAL PM TO MEND FENCES WITH INDIA

KATHMANDU: Nepali Prime Minister KP Oli begins a state visit to giant neighbor India today, looking to repair ties damaged by a row over the Himalayan republic's first democratic constitution. Nepal had accused India of imposing an economic blockade in support of a protest against the charter by ethnic minorities, many of whom share close ties with Indians across the border. The four-month blockade was lifted this month.

Oli will meet his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi, and President Pranab Mukherjee, among other officials. His trip will focus on mending fences, but he did not expect to sign any new long-term agreements, he told reporters in Kathmandu. "We all know that in the last few months there have been many misunderstandings between our two countries," Oli said in the Nepali capital. "We now want to get our relationship back on track."

Ties with India soured following the protests in Nepal's Tarai-Madhes lowlands after the region's ethnic Madhesi community said the charter, adopted in September, aimed to weaken its role in the power structure. Analysts say Oli will hope his meeting with Modi shows political rivals back home that he too commands India's support, considered crucial to keeping his administration in power, but a rapprochement with Delhi alone would not end his domestic woes. "The fire raging in Madhes will not end by merely keeping India happy," said Chandra Kishore, a Madhesi analyst. "The problem has to be addressed in Kathmandu seriously and not in New Delhi."

Nepal amended the constitution to boost participation of the Madhesi in parliament but community leaders said the changes failed to address their central fear over the redrawing of the provincial borders in a way that would divide them. The desperately poor country, home to Mount Everest, serves as a natural buffer between India and China, which jostle for influence with aid and investment. Nepal will press India for early completion of projects such as construction of feeder roads and cross-border electric transmission lines, Finance Minister Bishnu Paudel said. — Reuters

PAKISTAN'S WOMEN RISKING IT ALL TO FIGHT FOR THEIR RIGHTS

KARACHI: Kainat Soomro was 13 years old and on her way to buy a toy for her newborn niece when three men kidnapped her, held her for several days and repeatedly raped her. Eight years later, she is still battling for justice. She sits on a steel-framed bed in her parents' three-bedroom home, and holds her blue shawl tight around her body. When she describes the horror of her captivity her voice is barely a whisper, but it gains strength when she talks of the fight she has been waging: going to Pakistan's courts, holding protests, rejecting the rulings of the traditional Jirga council, taking on the powerful landlord and politician who she says are protecting her attackers. The Associated Press does not usually identify victims of sexual abuse, but Kainat has gone public with her case. Her battle for justice has inspired an award-winning 2014 movie, "Outlawed in Pakistan." Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistani teenage Nobel Peace Prize winner who was shot by the Taliban, invited Kainat to the Nobel award ceremony, and her fund has given Kainat financial help. Yet Kainat's family has paid a high price for her bravery. One sister remains unmarried and another was divorced because her in-laws were ashamed to be associated with Kainat.

Sexual violence

In 2010, her brother was killed over his sister's refusal to stay silent. Clutching a gold-framed picture of his son, Ghulam Nabi Soomro spat out words of condemnation. "They know about our troubles thousands of miles away but here in the next street no-one is helping us get justice," he said. In Pakistan, women are often too fearful to report sexual violence, yet the independent Human Rights Commission of Pakistan recorded 423 rapes and 304 gang rapes last year. It also said that last year at least one woman a day was killed in the name of honor - murdered for allegedly bringing shame on the family. "Each year a gamut of promises is made for the protection and development of women, but (they) remain unfulfilled by the year-end," the commission wrote in its 2014 annual report.

Attackers are rarely jailed. Human rights workers say the police often refuse to even register a case involving attacks against women, and the powerful and rich are immune. The groups trying to advance women's rights in Pakistan's deeply traditional patriarchal society suffered a painful blow last month when the national parliament refused to pass laws banning child marriage. The parliament buckled to the dictates of the Islamic Ideology Council, a religiously right-wing advisory group with no legal authority. The same body has also said that taking DNA tests to identify a suspected rapist is against Islam. "Women's groups have been demanding that the Islamic Ideology Council be disbanded," says Uzma Noorani, an activist who also operates a women's shelter in Pakistan's port city of Karachi. She says rights advocates are fighting a war for change and occasionally battles are won. Southern Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital, has passed legislation aimed at protecting women and banning underage marriages.

Restrictive view

But then the war begins again as they fight to convince police and judges to register cases and implement the laws, and to take authority away from the Islamic Ideology Council and other hard-line groups. "When you have a law it is like a weapon, when you need it you can use it," says one outspoken member of Sindh's legislature, Mahtab Akbar Rashdi. She says that the national government is pandering to those who adhere to a narrow and restrictive view of Islam, which mostly targets women. "It's as if women for them are the biggest problem in Islam," she says of the Islamic Ideology Council.

One women's shelter in Karachi, surrounded by two walls and protected by guards, is home to around 40 women. Some have fled abusive husbands, some have been raped, others are being hunted down by families for choosing love. When Azra was 18, her family sold her for \$5000 to an older man who passed her around to strangers. She ran away, and now she is fighting for a divorce and too afraid to leave the shelter's walls. The court have yet to decide on her case and mostly Azra - who is just 20 - wonders where she will go when the time comes to leave the shelter. Sidra Kanwal had left her abusive husband and moved back in with her mother when another man proposed to her. The man refused to take no for an answer. He pestered her and harassed her. And then one day he told her that if couldn't have her, no one could, and threw acid in her face. The months afterward were horrific. Her poverty meant doctors paid her little heed. One sent her home with only burn cream, but the pain and swelling were unbearable. Her nostrils had seared together. She returned to hospital and again, after three days, they sent her home. Her four-year-old son refused to come to her after her attack. "He didn't recognize me. My face scared him," she says, pulling her headscarf over her twisted mouth and nose. —AP



NEW DELHI: Indian students wave Indian flags and shout slogans during a protest at the Jawaharlal Nehru University against the arrest of a student union leader in New Delhi, India. —AP

PROTEST SPREADS ACROSS INDIA

'JUST BECAUSE I DON'T AGREE, DOESN'T MEAN I AM ANTI-NATIONAL'

NEW DELHI: A protest that rocked a New Delhi university this week spread across India yesterday, with students and teachers in at least 10 cities demanding the release of a student leader arrested on sedition charges and accused of being anti-Indian. The protesters were outraged by nationally televised scenes of Kanhaiya Kumar, the student union president at Jawaharlal Nehru University, being kicked and punched while he was escorted to a court hearing Wednesday, renewing allegations that the Hindu nationalist governing party is intolerant.

He was arrested last Friday over his participation in events where anti-India slogans were allegedly shouted. A New Delhi court has ordered him to stay in custody for two weeks. The court will hear his bail plea on today. The demands for the student's freedom in the Indian capital were met by mobs of Hindu nationalists, including many lawyers, attacking students and accusing them of being anti-Indian. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party and other Hindu groups accuse left-wing

student groups of anti-nationalism because of their criticism of the 2013 execution of a Kashmiri separatist convicted of an attack on Parliament.

Kumar's treatment and attacks on teachers who supported him have triggered allegations that the Modi government and the BJP are cracking down on political dissent in the name of patriotism. Soon after the protests began, India's Home Minister Rajnath Singh tweeted that anyone shouting anti-India slogans "will not be tolerated or spared." The violence by lawyers occurred despite the Supreme Court ordering the police to ensure security in the court and has drawn wide criticism of the lawyers and police. "Such a deliberate obstruction of justice amounts to constitutional contempt and cannot go unpunished," said Maja Daruwala of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative.

The Bar Council of India said it had appointed a three-member panel to investigate the violence by lawyers. "We are going to take a strong action against them," Council president Manan

Kumar Mishra said. "We are going to punish the lawyers if they are found guilty," he said before apologizing on behalf of the lawyer community. Yesterday, students in at least 10 Indian cities marched through the streets and denounced Kumar's arrest.

In New Delhi, thousands of students, professors and journalists gathered in the center of the city. They carried flowers as a sign of peace, Indian flags and placards saying, "Free Speech under attack" and "Just because I don't agree, doesn't mean I am an anti-national." Police said the rally was not authorized, but allowed the march to proceed to a central space used frequently for public protests. In the southern city of Chennai, 40 students were arrested after they clashed with police. In Kolkata, police were on alert as two groups of students held rival rallies in the Jadavpur University campus. Student groups affiliated with the BJP demanded strict action against Kumar and others who they accused of being anti-Indian. —AP

3 KILLED AS AFGHAN FORCES RAID CLINIC

GHAZNI: Two patients and a caretaker were killed during an overnight raid by Afghan forces on a health clinic in the central province of Wardak, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, the aid group which runs the facility, said yesterday. The aid group said the information it had received indicated the Afghan National Army had conducted the raid on the clinic in the Tangi Saidan area of Wardak late on Wednesday night and it called for those responsible to be held accountable.

"This attack constitutes a gross violation of humanitarian principles and the Geneva Convention that all actors of a conflict have to respect," Jorgen Holmstrom, Country Director of SCA, said in a statement. "Medical facilities and medical staff are to provide treatment to anyone in need and patients are to be granted safety according to humanitarian law," he said.

Provincial government spokesman Hemat, who like many Afghans goes by one name only, said a special forces unit conducted an operation in the Tangi Saidan area of Wardak and killed four insurgents.

He said he was unaware of a raid on a hospital, but a provincial official and some local residents said the facility had been hit. "There was a raid at the hospital by Afghan special forces where wounded Taliban fighters are usually treated," said Hasan Rasouli, a member of the provincial council in Wardak. He said four insurgents were killed and another was captured. A spokesman for the Afghan defense ministry said he had no information on any operation in the area. An interior ministry spokesman said an operation against Taliban members had been conducted in Wardak but had not targeted a hospital. —Reuters

RELIGIOUS 'RELICS' OF A MODERN-DAY MESSIAH IN S KOREA

GAPYEONG, South Korea: A vintage Coca-Cola can, a pair of socks made from human hair, and an extremely large stuffed salmon. As exhibits of religious relics go, it's an unusual collection, but then Sun Myung Moon, the late founder of the Unification Church was like him or loathe him—an unusual man. Revered by followers as a messiah but denounced by critics as a charlatan, Moon died of complications from pneumonia in 2012 at the age of 92, leaving behind a church noted for its mass weddings and diverse business interests. The teachings of the Unification Church are based on the Bible but with new interpretations, and Moon saw his role as completing the unfulfilled mission of Jesus to restore humanity to a state of "sinless" purity.

His life and work are currently the focus of an exhibition at the church's Cheon Jung Gung Museum—an imposing, neo-classical, domed building, with a startling resemblance to the US Capitol, that sits nestled in a hillside at the church's global headquarters in Gapyeong, South Korea. Normally closed to the general public, the museum offered a restricted press tour earlier this week on the shared lunar calendar birthday

of Moon and his widow, Hak Ja Han—known to church members as True Father and True Mother. The exhibition was a showcase of the couple's "lifetime achievements", and contained what were described as numerous personal "relics," that underlined the cult of personality built up around the church's founder over the years.

Vintage Coke

Exhibits included a vintage Coca-Cola can that Moon had drunk from, shortly after his "Holy Wedding" to Han in 1960. According to the exhibit label—printed in Korean, Japanese and English and reading like a Biblical parable—Moon had sipped from the can, then handed it to a follower, Kim Hwee-Ok, to finish off. "When True Father was giving out this can he said: 'This can must never be lost,' and added: 'If it gets lost you will be called to account,'" the label said.

"Accordingly, Kim Hwee-Ok kept it safely." A nearby display case showed two empty fun-sized Snicker bar wrappers, carefully pressed along with a hand tissue—the remnants of a snack Moon took during a lengthy prayer and study session in



GAPYEONG, Republic of Korea: This photo shows a general view of the Cheon Jung Gung Museum of the Unification Church, at their global headquarters in Gapyeong, northeast of Seoul. — AFP

October 2007. "The prayer meetings usually lasted five or six hours, but once he pushed on for 23 hours," explained exhibition team manager, Park In-Gyeong. The museum was formally opened in 2006 and, according to Park, manages around 30,000 visitors a year.

One section, titled "Suffering," charted

Moon's incarcerations in various prisons in North Korea, South Korea and, in 1984, a US federal penitentiary where he served nearly 12 months for tax evasion. Moon was born in what is now North Korea and, in 1948, was sentenced to five years hard labour in the Heungnam camp by the communist authorities for preaching in public. — AFP

NORTH KOREA IS 'PREPARING' TO LAUNCH TERROR ATTACKS

SEOUL, US TO DEPLOY SOPHISTICATED MISSILE SYSTEMS

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un recently ordered preparations for launching "terror" attacks on South Koreans, a top Seoul official said yesterday, as worries about the North grow after its recent nuclear test and rocket launch. In televised remarks, senior South Korean presidential official Kim Sung-woo said North Korea's spy agency has begun work to implement Kim Jong Un's order to "muster anti-South terror capabilities that can pose a direct threat to our lives and security." He said the possibility of North

Korean attacks "is increasing more than ever" and asked for quick passage of an anti-terror bill in parliament.

North Korea has a history of attacks on South Korea, such as the 2010 shelling on an island that killed four South Koreans and the 1987 bombing of a South Korean passenger plane that killed all 115 people on board. But it is impossible to independently confirm claims about any such attack preparations. The South Korean presidential official did not say where the latest information came from.

Earlier yesterday, Seoul's National Intelligence Service briefed ruling Saenuri Party members on a similar assessment on North Korea's attack preparations, according to one of the party officials who attended the private meeting. During the briefing, the NIS, citing studies on past North Korean provocations and other unspecified assessments, said the attacks could target anti-Pyongyang activists, defectors and government officials in South Korea, the party official said requesting anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to media publicly.

Attacks on subways, shopping malls and other public places could also happen, he said. The official quoted the NIS as saying North Korea could launch poisoning attacks on the activists and defectors, or lure them to China where they would be kidnapped. The Saenuri official refused to say whether the briefing discussed how the information was obtained. The NIS, which has a mixed record on predicting developments in North Korea, said it could not confirm its reported assessment. The standoff with North Korea is not expected to ease soon, as Seoul and Washington are discussing deploying a sophisticated US missile defense system in South Korea that Pyongyang warns would be a source of regional tension. The allies also say their annual springtime military drills will be the largest ever. South Korea's defense minister said Thursday that about 15,000 US troops will take part, double of the number Washington normally sends.

The North says the drills are preparation for a northward invasion. Seoul defense officials also said that they began preliminary talks on Feb. 7 with the United States on deploying the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, the same day North Korea conducted what it said was a satellite launch but is condemned by Seoul and Washington as a banned test of missile technology. — AP

CHINA CONFIRMS 'WEAPONS' ON DISPUTED ISLAND

BEIJING: China confirmed it has weapons on a disputed island in the South China Sea, state media said yesterday, as criticism grew over Beijing's increased "militarization" of the strategically vital region. The US and Taiwan both said China had placed missiles on Woody Island, part of the Paracels chain, after Fox News reported the surface-to-air weapons had arrived there in the past week. Beijing confirmed the presence of "weapons" on the island, reported the Global Times newspaper, which has close ties with the ruling Communist party, but stopped short of acknowledging there had been a new missile deployment, saying defense measures there were "nothing new".

Vice Admiral Alexander Lopez, the commander of Philippine military forces assigned to guard the country's interests in the South China Sea, outlined the potential regional consequences of the reported Chinese action. "The stability of the region is being threatened because of the deployment of those kinds of weapons," he said yesterday. "You don't deploy those types of weapons unless you intend to use them," he added. China claims all of the Paracels, though Hanoi and Taipei have overlapping claims. Beijing seized several islands there from South Vietnam in a brief, bloody battle in the 1970s. But tensions in the sea—through which a third of the world's oil passes—have mounted in recent months after China transformed contested reefs in the Spratly islands further south into artificial islands capable of supporting military facilities.

"There is every evidence, every day, that there has been an increase of militarization of one kind or another. It's of a serious concern," US Secretary of State John Kerry told reporters on Wednesday. A US official told AFP that China has deployed surface-to-air missiles on the island. The official said they appeared to be HQ-9s, which have a range of about 200 kilometers (125 miles). Experts say they could be used to target enemy aircraft. The Fox News report was based on pictures from ImageSat International, which earlier this week released images said to show reclamation work in the Paracels.

'No militarization'

Washington says China's actions in the South China Sea threaten free passage in a strategically vital area and has sent warships to sail close to the disputed islands to assert freedom of navigation, raising fears of escalation. "We have said repeatedly with respect to China that the standard that should be applied to all countries with respect to the South China Sea is no militarization," Kerry said. During a state visit to Washington last year, Chinese President Xi Jinping vowed not to militarize the disputed Spratly island chain.

"We had these conversations with the Chinese and I'm confident that over the next days, we will have further very serious conversations on this," Kerry added. The top US diplomat expressed hope that Beijing would work to resolve the maritime disputes "not through unilateral action, not through force, not through militarization but through diplomacy and by working with other countries and claimants". — AFP

N KOREA IMPLORES COUNTRYMEN TO BUILD CARS AND GROW FOOD

PYONGYANG: Produce more new-generation electric locomotives and passenger cars! Send more satellites into space! Make the whole country seethe with a high-pitched campaign for producing green-house vegetables! Become iron shields and red warriors who defend the party, system and people to the death! Even as North Korea is being threatened with new sanctions and more isolation for conducting a nuclear test and rocket launch, its ruling party announced new slogans to guide and inspire the nation ahead of a once-in-a-generation party congress scheduled for May. The number of exclamation marks would suggest North Koreans have a lot of work to do.

The slogans, issued Thursday by the Central Committee and the Central Military Commission of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea, reflect what the party sees as the nation's priorities in the months and years ahead. The topics range from boosting the economy to becoming an international sports power and, of course, building more edifices in honor of

the leaders and toeing the party line. The nuclear bomb test conducted in January was mentioned just once, but it was a mouthful: "Let's dynamically wage this year's general advance in the same spirit as shown in succeeding in the H-bomb test!" Some of the other slogans, as translated by the North's official Korean Central News Agency:

On the economy

"Achieve a great victory on the front of agriculture this year!" "Make the whole country seethe with a high-pitched campaign for producing green-house vegetables!" "Build modern mushroom production bases like the Pyongyang City Mushroom Farm across the country!" "Let's turn the country into the one of orchards!" "Let's give a decisive solution to the problem of consumer goods!" "Decisively improve the fishing industry of the country by making a revolution in it!" "Make the foreign trade multilateral and diverse!" "Let the people enjoy the highest quality of civilization on the highest level!" — AP

'She's so unusual': Cyndi Lauper goes country

Cyndi Lauper, one of the flamboyant stars of the pop wave of the 1980s, plans to take a "detour" to country music. The singer on Wednesday announced her first solo album in six years, entitled "Detour," on which the 62-year-old will perform country classics. Lauper will team up with country greats including Willie Nelson, in a collaborative cover of his song "Night Life," as well as Emmylou Harris and Alison Krauss.

Lauper grew up in New York City and maintains a thick local accent but said that as a child she listened to country music, a genre historically identified with the US South. "When I was a really young kid, country music was pop music, so this is what we grew up listening to," she said in a statement. "These songs are part of some of my earliest memories, so it has been an absolute thrill to revisit them," she said. Lauper said she was especially inspired by Patsy Cline, who was among the pioneering women in country and among the first in the genre to enjoy crossover success on the pop charts.

"Her voice was like one of my girlfriends. That's how close I felt to her," Lauper said. Lauper covers two of Cline's most famous songs—"Walkin' After Midnight" and "I Fall to Pieces"—on "Detour," which will come out on May 6. Lauper became a global sensation

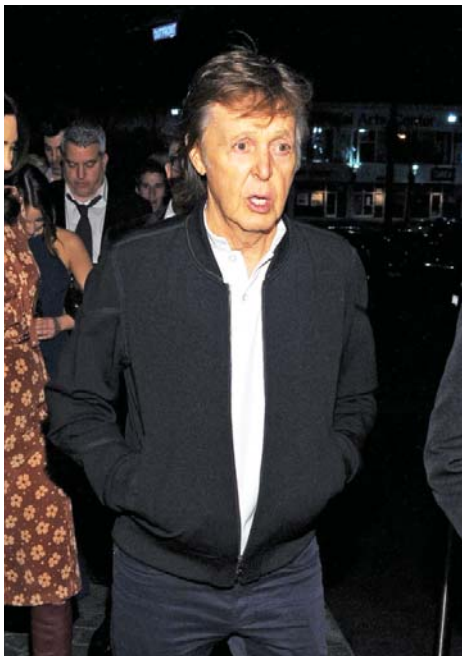
with her 1983 debut album "She's So Unusual," gaining attention for her glam, multicolored costumes and her distinctive "hiccup" in which her voice momentarily jumps higher. The album produced a series of hits, most memorably "Girls Just Want to Have Fun." Lauper has sold more than 50 million albums in her career.

While country is new for Lauper, she has branched out widely in style in her later career. Her last album, 2010's "Memphis Blues," went in a blues direction with collaborations from legends B.B. King and Allen Toussaint, who both died last year. She previously went full-out into electronica in 2008's "Bring Ya to the Brink." Lauper also wrote the music to the Broadway production "Kinky Boots," the story of a struggling shoemaker who teams up with a drag queen. "Kinky Boots" won Lauper a Tony Award for Best Original Score, the first ever for a woman by herself, as well as her second Grammy Award after being named Best New Artist in 1985. Her latest album comes amid a growing following in the United States for country music, which has become one of the biggest radio formats thanks to growth outside the South, even though sales for pop albums remain significantly higher. — AFP

Cyndi Lauper



This file photo shows rapper Tyga attends Kanye West Yeezy Season 3 on February 11, 2016 in New York City.



This file shows recording artist Sir Paul McCartney attends the Republic Records Grammy Celebration presented by Chromecast Audio at Hyde Sunset Kitchen & Cocktail. — AFP photos

Tyga offers to escort Paul McCartney after party snub

The rapper Tyga has offered to personally escort Paul McCartney to an upcoming show after the Beatles legend was stunned to be turned away from the hip-hop star's post-Grammy party. McCartney, one of two surviving members of the best-selling musical act of all time, was trying to enter Tyga's party in Los Angeles after the Grammy Awards on Monday night when a bouncer insisted he was not on the guest list. Clearly unaccustomed to such indignities, McCartney sounded dumbfounded. He was accompanied by alternative rock icon Beck, who won last year's Grammy for Album of the Year, and Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins.

"How VIP do we got to get?" McCartney told the doorman in an exchange caught on video released by the celebrity news website TMZ. "We need another hit, guys. Work on it," he said. Beck replied, "Next year, next year," before the three

rockers returned to their limousine to try their luck at another party. Tyga-the California rapper whose biggest hit, "Rack City," went to number seven on the Billboard chart-later voiced regret, saying he was not in charge of the guest list. "I had no knowledge; I was inside performing," he told late-night comedian Jimmy Kimmel during an interview posted online Wednesday.

He invited McCartney to his show in Los Angeles on February 26. "Paul, if you're watching this, I would love for you to come," he said. "I'll personally walk you in." Kimmel voiced doubt McCartney would attend, quipping: "Oh yeah, he's not going to fall for that again." — AFP

Met to stage opera by woman for first time in century

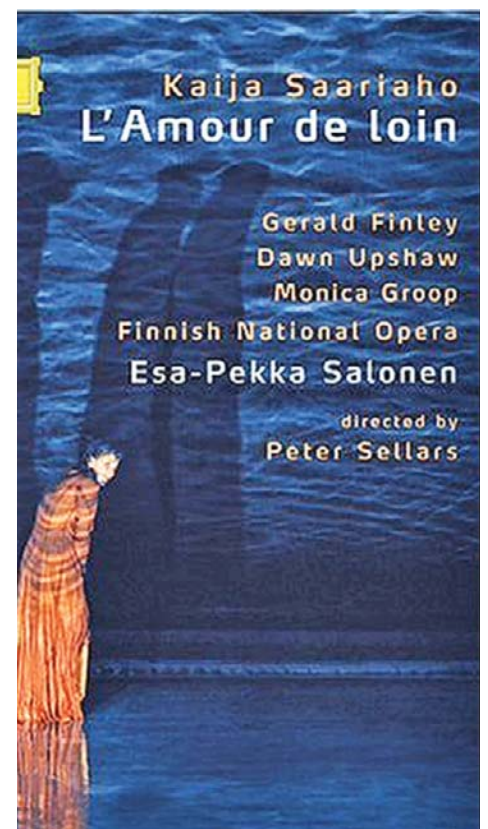
The Metropolitan Opera said Wednesday it will stage "L'Amour de Loin," a medieval love story set in Lebanon, marking the first time in a century the company performs a work composed by a woman. Announcing its 2016-17 season, the New York opera house said it will put on 26 operas including six new productions led by the Met premiere of "L'Amour de Loin." Written by Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho with a libretto by the leading Lebanese writer Amin Maalouf, "L'Amour de Loin," which means "Love from Afar," tells the story of Jaufre Rudel, the celebrated 12th century French troubadour. The opera, which is in French, revolves around his passion for the countess of the Lebanese city of Tripoli even though he had never met her in person. The opera more broadly has been seen as reflecting the experience of expatriation, a theme that is personal for Saariaho and Maalouf who have both lived in France for a long time.

It is only the second time the leading US opera house has staged a work by a woman. The Met performed "Der Wald" by English composer and suffragist Ethel Smyth in 1903. "L'Amour de Loin," which opens at the Met on December 1, won wide acclaim at its 2000 world premiere at the Salzburg Festival and has quickly traveled. Other highlights in the Met's upcoming season include Verdi's biblical epic "Nabucco," which will star Placido Domingo, arguably the world's most famous opera singer. The title role of "Nabucco" continues the 75-year-old Spaniard's increasing preference to take baritone roles after winning fame as a tenor.

Domingo and other leading figures in the opera world will also take part in a gala in May 2017 to mark 50 years since the Met moved to its location at the Lincoln Center complex. Other leading opera figures who will appear in the Met's upcoming season include Renee Fleming, Anna Netrebko and Nina Stemme. The season will open on September 26 with a new production of Wagner's "Tristan and Isolde" starring Stemme and under the baton of Simon Rattle, one of the world's leading

conductors who next year takes charge of the London Symphony Orchestra.

The season will be the 40th for the Met's music director James Levine, who will conduct major performances despite expectations that the 72-year-old, who has had repeated health scares, will soon retire. The Met will for the 11th season telecast performances to cinemas around the world in its "Live in HD" program, which has emerged as a key source of revenue and exposure for the opera house whose in-person capacity is 3,800 seats. — AFP





NY Fashion Week

The Michael Kors Fall 2016 collection is modeled during Fashion Week in New York, Wednesday.
—AP/AFP photos

Kors, DKNY, Marchesa

The Associated Press is all over New York Fashion Week, from the runway designs to the celebrity-filled front rows. Here are some recent highlights:

Marchesa, inspired by Sargent's portraits

Many designers get inspiration for their fashion collections from the art world. This season, Marchesa designers Georgina Chapman and



Keren Craig chose the art of famed American portrait painter John Singer Sargent, who died in 1925, to inspire their always sumptuous, red-carpet ready designs. "Each girl is going to feel like her own portrait ... so we have different characters weaving through the collection," Chapman said in a backstage interview. "But they all tie together, they



are all glamorous, ethereal, a Marchesa woman." Specifically, the designers were aiming at capturing "the ultra-feminine strength" of the

women that Sargent painted, and as always, the dresses and gowns were nothing if not ultra-feminine.

There were sleek, fitted silhouettes as well as princess-style gowns. There was lots of lace and intricate beading, of course, and brocades and silk flowers. There were, as the designers described them, "pops of color," for example a dramatic red-to-black ombre tulle ballgown with a tiered skirt and laser-cut organza flowers. There were more casual cocktail dresses too, such as an amethyst-to-lilac ombre fringe dress with floral beading. On the more fairy-tale side of things, there were a few dresses in filmy pastel tulle, such as a duck egg tulle Grecian gown with billowing sleeves. Besides the ornate beading, the designers made use of feathers, too, as in a dusty blue ostrich feather cocktail dress with an organza



sash. With the Oscars coming up soon, the designers have yet to find out if their designs will make their way to the red carpet. "We hope!" they both said in unison.

A feather fest at Michael Kors

If you had to pick one adjective to sum up Michael Kors' latest collection, a good bet might be "feathery." The designer was going for "the flirty freedom of things that



move," to quote his production notes, and there were flirty feathers on at least 10 of the looks he sent down the runway - starting with feathers adorning a pair of jeans, and moving to feathers on a houndstooth tweed coat, on a denim or tweed skirt, and on black silk for ultimate evening effect.

There were also plenty of sequins, adding a very bright sheen to some of the fashions, especially a

silver sequin embroidered "streamer" dress, with the hem cut into strips that indeed looked like streamers, and also a pair of seriously glistening silver metallic stretch tulle pants. Kors always has a healthy celebrity contingent at his fashion shows, and Wednesday's event was no exception: Blake Lively and Jennifer Hudson were among the front-row guests. They were there to witness an anniversary of sorts for Kors. "I'm not one for anniversaries and I'm really not a big kind of looking-over-my-shoulder kind of guy," Kors said in a backstage interview. "But when I started designing this I realized, oh my God, this is my 35th fall collection. That's crazy!"

Kors added that as he reflected on the milestone, he realized the most important thing was to keep his fashion fun. "I wanted this to be full of fun and charm," he said. "So it's very flirty, short, leggy, not a gown in sight. All the rules are broken because stylish people break the rules ... The seasons are crazy anyway. So when the weather's terrible, don't you want to put on a fabulous apple green coat to change your spirits? Don't you want to wear tweed with flowers? Don't you want to put feathers on flannel? Wear flats at night? Wear metallic for a day?"

Lively had brought her mom along, a former model who, the actress said, used to make clothes for her kids when they were growing up. "It's so nice," she said of attending a Kors show as a fan. "You sort of like high-five everyone when a great piece comes out, which is often. I'm excited to go hug him backstage afterward."

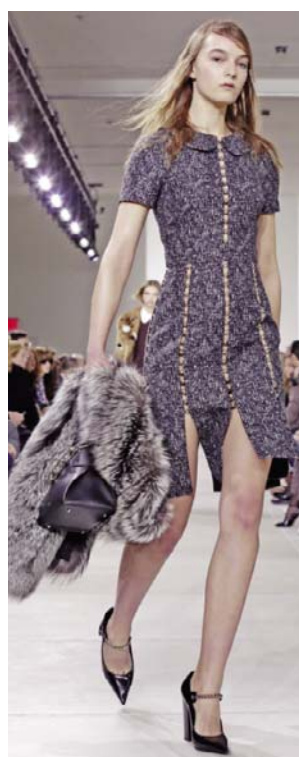


Sophomore season for DKNY's designers

Dao-Yi Chow and Maxwell Osborne are two pretty happy guys. The Public School founders unveiled their sophomore season as creative directors of DKNY after two fashion-week rounds for their own brand. And they had some fun. The two used bright red shoe laces for lace-up detailing worthy of a '90s club on red and black satin skirts and dresses. They rocked out a nice red plaid for dresses, coats and jackets, and they warned the world: "Don't Knock New York" on a black sweatshirt as they played with messaging like their predecessor and mentor Donna Karan did years before them. One of their outfits included: "Insert Logo Here."

So how does it feel to have all that behind them? "Yeah the pressure's a bit off," Osborne said in a post-show interview of their second DKNY collection. "We had to get the first show out of the way for us to feel comfortable, get situated, feel everything out." As they did the first time, they turned men's suiting into something else, cropping pin-stripes for jackets, jumpsuits, shorts and trousers. They hung some oversized looks on straps with tails that fluttered down the runway. And they took "puffer" to a new level in jumpsuits and monstrous scarves some models wrangled as they walked. The two felt loose, figuratively and literally, having in their minds the sexy tomboy bands of the '90s, along with their own New York City childhoods of the same era, especially in the heavy rubber-soled boots in black and brown that likely made their models just as happy as the designers.

"We wanted to play with those ideas of reappropriation that we had back in the 90s, of taking things that didn't necessarily belong to us or maybe fit in a city landscape. We wanted to inject that back into the collection," Chow said. So about that one sweatshirt: Are people knocking New York? "All the time," Osborne said. "They do it all the time," Chow agreed. — AP





NY Fashion Week



The Marchesa Fall 2016 collection is modeled during New York Fashion Week, Wednesday.



Fashion from DKNY Fall-Winter 2016 collection is modeled.



BEEFY, BEANY STEW IS WARM, SIMPLE MEAL WITH SLOW COOKER EASE

By Melissa D'Arabian

There are two kinds of people - fans of slow cookers and those who haven't tried them. I'm definitely the former. I just love my slow cooker. I make everything in it, from summertime ribs to baked potatoes to spaghetti squash. But in the winter, there is nothing quite as satisfying as a thick stew or hearty soup that bubbles away gently all day, slowly filling the house with welcoming aromas while I'm off at work, running errands or spending the day at my daughters' school.

My kids' slow-cooker favorite? Probably Southwestern stew. It has all the flavors they love, plus they are allowed to have (baked) corn chips at dinner, which is exciting stuff around the d'Arabian house.

I make a version that is trimmed down and healthier, full of fiber and protein thanks to the combination of black beans and chickpeas. But the star of this soup is the ground beef. I love ground turkey, and I certainly have made this soup with it, but lean ground beef is, calorie-wise, a close peer of most ground turkey.

In fact, many of the ground turkey packages offered will have higher fat and calorie count than 95 percent lean ground beef. For a 4-ounce serving, lean ground beef boasts 24 grams of protein and just 160 calories and 4 grams of fat! And, ground beef just feels more like comfort food (since I grew up in an era before we regularly ground up our Thanksgiving bird to eat it year-round).



Slow Cooker Southwestern Stew

Ingredients

1 teaspoon olive oil
1 1/2 pounds lean ground beef (93 percent or leaner)
1 large yellow onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced or pressed
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon smoked or sweet paprika
28-ounce can diced tomatoes
12-ounce bottle light beer
1 cup prepared tomato salsa (mild or hot)
15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed

15-ounce can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 cup frozen corn (do not thaw)
1 cup frozen chopped spinach (do not thaw)
Juice of 1/2 lime
Salt and ground black pepper
To serve:
Crushed baked tortilla chips
Cubed avocado
Low-fat plain Greek yogurt
Chopped fresh cilantro
Chopped tomatoes
Shredded reduced-fat cheddar cheese

Preparation

To make this dish even easier, you can prep it up to the step of layering all of the ingredients in the slow cooker, then refrigerate it overnight. In the morning, just pop the slow cooker insert into the cooker and walk away.

In a large saute pan over medium-high, heat the oil. Add the beef and cook until browned, 6 to 8 minutes. Spoon the beef into a slow cooker, then layer the remaining ingredients (except the lime juice, salt and pepper) over it. Cook on high for 4 hours or 7 to 8 hours on low. Stir in the lime juice, then season with salt and pepper. Serve with optional toppings.

MASTERING HOMEMADE TERIYAKI SAUCE

By JM Hirsch

If you're still using teriyaki sauce from a bottle, you're doing it all wrong. And you're depriving yourself of the awesomeness that is homemade teriyaki.

I didn't set out to master DIY teriyaki sauce, but my 11-year-old suddenly started craving the stuff. Not even sure where he ate it that it was so good to inspire almost nightly requests for it. But knowing how simple this potent sweet-savory sauce is to make, I refused to buy it. It took a few attempts, but eventually I nailed an incredibly versatile and delicious version.

And by versatile, I mean I slather it on whatever protein I have on hand - chicken, steak, pork or salmon. I've included the basic recipe for the sauce, as well as instructions for using it on each of those dishes. Then, just for fun, I added a slow cooker version of the chicken. Because the only thing better

than a delicious chicken teriyaki is a delicious chicken teriyaki that practically cooks itself. Here are three examples. The recipe for chicken teriyaki is at the bottom.

CHICKEN: Slice boneless, skinless chicken breasts into thin strips. Add them to the sauce, then refrigerate up to 24 hours. When ready to cook, set a wire rack over a rimmed baking sheet. Coat the rack with cooking spray. Arrange the chicken strips in an even layer on the rack, then set under the broiler on the oven's middle shelf for 3 to 5 minutes, or until just starting to brown. Flip the chicken pieces, then cook for another 3 to 5 minutes.

STEAK: Cut a 1 1/2-pound flank steak against the grain into thin strips. Add to the teriyaki sauce and refrigerate for up to 24 hours. When ready to cook, heat a large skillet over medi-

um-high. Add a couple tablespoons of canola, vegetable or sesame oil. When the oil is hot, use tongs or a fork to remove the steak from the marinade and add to the skillet. Cook for 2 to 4 minutes. You want it barely cooked. Add the marinade to the pan and bring to a simmer. Cook for another 1 to 2 minutes. Serve the steak and sauce over rice or noodles.

SALMON: Arrange 4 salmon fillets on a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet. Brush each liberally with teriyaki sauce. Broil on the oven's middle shelf for 1 to 2 minutes, then brush with additional teriyaki. Repeat this process 3 to 4 times, or until the salmon is just cooked and well glazed, a total of about 6 to 8 minutes under the broiler. Garnish with chopped scallions, sesame seeds or both.

TERIYAKI SAUCE

Ingredients

1/4 cup water
1/4 cup low-sodium soy sauce
1/4 cup seasoned rice vinegar
1/4 cup sugar
1 tablespoon sesame oil
2 teaspoons Sriracha (or other hot sauce)
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon ground ginger
In a medium bowl, combine all ingredients and whisk until the sugar is dissolved.

SLOW COOKER CHICKEN TERIYAKI WITH CARROTS

Ingredients

3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken breasts
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons canola oil
1 tablespoon butter
1 pound carrots, trimmed and cut into 2-inch chunks
1 large yellow onion, roughly chopped
1/4 cup water
1/4 cup low-sodium soy sauce
1/4 cup seasoned rice vinegar
1/4 cup sugar

1 tablespoon sesame oil
2 teaspoons Sriracha (or other hot sauce)
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon ground ginger
Cooked white or brown rice

Preparation

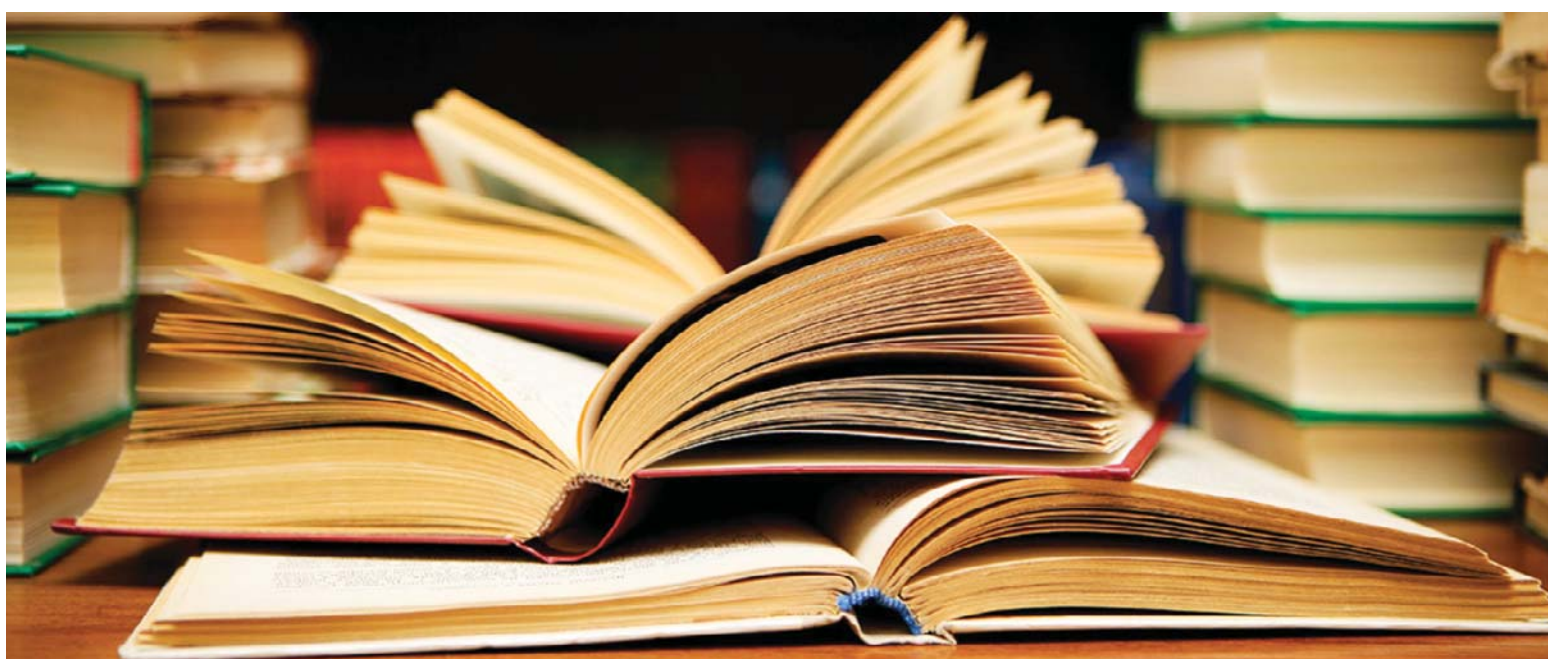
One at a time, dredge the chicken breasts through the flour to lightly coat. Shake off any excess. In a large skillet over medium-high, heat the oil and butter until hot. Working in batches, briefly sear the chicken breasts on both sides just until lightly browned, about 2 minutes per side. Transfer the chicken to a 4-quart or larger slow cooker. Add the carrots and onion. In a small bowl, mix together the water, soy sauce, vinegar, sugar, sesame oil, Sriracha, garlic powder and ginger. Pour over the chicken and carrots, then stir to coat. Cook on high for 4 hours or low for 6 hours. Serve the chicken and carrots over rice. — AP



Books



A guide to reading and enjoying classic literature



The classics. Literature's Greatest Hits. You've been hearing about these supposedly elite, magnificent books for forever, yet you've never really picked one up and cracked open its cover. Or clicked, in this digital age. Still, it's likely you've wanted to read a classic novel at least at some point in your life. That time is now: whether you want to get through a single novel just to say you did, or find yourself ready to plunge into a year-long literary exploration, we have some pointers for you.

Make a list-or a few lists

What makes a classic book, anyway? There's no strict definition, which can make it almost impossible to get started. Authoritative lists are here to help. The Guardian has a compilation of 100 best English-language novels, which comes with obliging, one-sentence explanations for why each work deserves a place in the sacred canon. Le Monde, Time Magazine, and The Telegraph offer similar lists.

You'll notice certain books cropping up again and again: J.D. Salinger's angsty faux-memoir *The Catcher in the Rye*, Kurt Vonnegut's biting war satire *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Vladimir Nabokov's troubled *Lolita*, and, hopefully, Tolstoy's unrelenting epic *War and Peace*. These are some works you could start with, should their summaries pique your interest. But keep in mind that "the classics" span a broad range. "'Classic' doesn't necessarily mean 'old,'" Gwen Glazer, a librarian at the New York Public Library, tells Quartz. "A classic [can just be] an important book making a contribution, or a really good representation of a particular genre." Instead of making one massive, overwhelming bucket list, break it up. Draw up a list of Victorian classics. Or theatre classics. Or science fiction classics. You can also find or make lists by theme: Here's a col-

lection of heart-pumping classics that won't put you to sleep, for example.

Figure out what you already love

All contemporary work is "imbued with the

classical work," Brooklyn Public Library librarian Ben Gocker points out. So if you like reading essays by Ta-Nahesi Coates, you might find yourself enjoying older authors who wrote about similar topics—think James Baldwin,

think W.E.B. DuBois.

If you're a devotee of Suzanne Collins's *Hunger Games* books, there's a chance you'll get obsessed with George Orwell's 1984 or Philip K. Dick's intriguing dystopias. Like big, meaty stories? Try George Eliot's Victorian classic *Middlemarch*. Can't get enough of Gillian Flynn's *Gone Girl*? Invest in a copy of Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*, known to many as the Western world's original mystery novel.

"Think of it as monkey bars," Gocker suggests. "If you're interested in classics, you're interested in reading. So is there something you can grab onto [from which] you can start moving into the classics?" Many, many contemporary books and films nowadays are also based on classic literature. And we're not just talking about modern adaptations; there are probably more contemporary twists on old tales out there than you realize, and those links can serve as excellent bridge between the very ancient and the very new.

Did you know: *Clueless* is really the tale of Jane Austen's *Emma*; *Easy A* is a modern high school retelling of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*; HBO's *The Wire* draws its inspiration from Balzac and Greek tragedy; The Coen Brothers' *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* is an update of the *The Odyssey*.





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Friday Times

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2016



Draw up a schedule

You can aim to read a book a week or one a year—it doesn't matter. Stig Abell, the new editor of the Times Literary Supplement, read all of the Shakespeare canon while commuting to work. He assumed an hour of commuting time a day, which was roughly a play a week. That's all of the Bard-38 plays in total—in less than a year. Whatever your schedule is, just make sure to stick to it, lest you fall into the easy "I'm sure I'll pick this back up at some point" trap and end up with a tome just gathering dust in your living room.

Be social about it

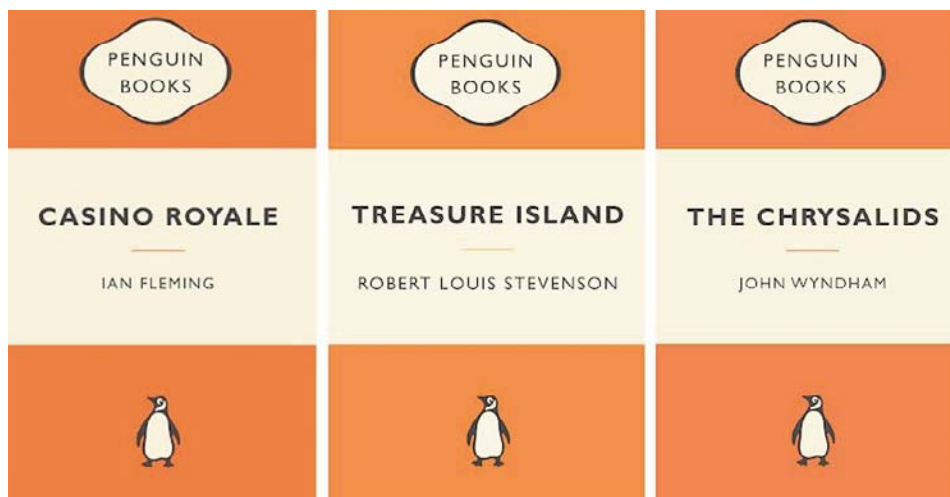
In spite of the stereotype, reading doesn't have to be a solitary act. Reaching out to friends about books or signing up for a site like Goodreads, which offers personalized book recommendations from friends across your social networks, can be an excellent way to get hooked on certain types of literature.

Even just posting a query on Facebook—perhaps a quick, "Hey, does anyone have recommendations for good classic books?"—can yield inspiration. You can also put down the internet and try joining a real-life book club, which comes the added benefit of meeting interesting new people.

Work your way up to the greats

Just as you wouldn't start playing a video game on the most difficult level, don't start your venture into classic literature with the likes of Homer and Shakespeare, whose works are full of obscure language and unfamiliar references. Ruth Yeazell, a professor specializing in Victorian literature in Yale University's English department, personally recommends starting with classics in the Victorian era because the social and historical context of that time may be most similar to that of our own. Novels like *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are "not that linguistically or culturally far away" compared to many others, she says.

They were also written specifically for a popular audience—not a particularly elite, intellectual class. That means they could be easiest to get into. And make sure to add some historical and social context into those storylines nonetheless. "Read books in the Oxford and Penguin editions, which have a good introduction and some notes to things you don't



know that might stump you," Yeazell said.

When you're ready, tackle the greatest of the greats slowly and surely.

Try reading a page at a time, consulting Wikipedia entries and dictionary definitions if you need. And it might prove beneficial to start with a short, fast work like *The Tempest*,

which is more plot-driven than Shakespeare's hefty kings plays. Abell, who read all of Shakespeare on the Tube, recommends Arden editions for their "explanatory footnotes [and] great introductions." You'll quickly get the hang of it—after which you can move your way through trickier works.

If you don't like it, give it up for something else

Bottom line: there are classic books out there worth your time, and ones that aren't. But it's all personal. "Leaving a book halfway done, a quarter of the way done—that's okay," Gocker says. "You don't need to read the whole book to get a sense of the presence of the writer, which is what you're really getting from literature. If you don't want to spend another second with them, don't."

What makes a classic good, anyway? According to Yeazell, "the greatest novels have a kind of richness of psychological complexity." Gocker says good classics of literature tend to have "a real obdurate heart." To Glazer, "any book you're excited about is a great book for you, because there shouldn't be value judgment in reading."

Italian author Italo Calvino famously has 14 whole reasons to read the classics, the best of which may be this simple definition: "A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say." So, go out, and hit up your local library or bookstore. You actually can't go wrong. - (www.qz.com)



Movies

10 groundbreaking **BIOPICS** on iconic African-Americans

*The remarkable life and brilliant career of Olympic gold medalist Jesse Owens gets the biopic treatment with this weekend's **Race**, starring Stephan James as one of the premier athletes - and most inspiring figures - in American history. While it remains to be seen how critics receive **Race**, Owens' story is definitely one that deserves the big-screen treatment, and in honor of its arrival.*



MALCOLM X (1992)

A lightning rod in life and death, activist Malcolm X was a natural fit for the biopic treatment - but it isn't hard to understand why producer Marvin Worth had to labor through 25 years of turnarounds, screenplay revisions, changing leading men (including Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy), and multiple directors before Malcolm X finally made its way to theaters in November of 1992. And even with Denzel Washington signed on to play the slain activist, and Spike Lee in the director's chair, Malcolm didn't see release without multiple controversies, a creative tug of war between Lee

and Warner Bros., and a last-minute influx of cash from a group of donors that included Bill Cosby, Oprah Winfrey, and Michael Jordan. Somewhat predictably, given Malcolm X's thorny reputation - not to mention the movie's three-and-a-half-hour length - this wasn't a biopic for everyone, but most of those who did see it agreed that, for all its struggle in getting to the screen, Malcolm X was a tribute worthy of its subject. It is, wrote Vincent Canby of the New York Times, "An ambitious, tough, seriously considered biographical film that, with honor, eludes easy characterization."



WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT? (1993)

Ike Turner justifiably gets credit for his work as a rock 'n' roll pioneer, but his story might have been very different if he hadn't discovered a young singer by the name of Anna Mae Bullock, christened her Tina Turner, and - at first begrudgingly - ridden her remarkable voice to worldwide stardom. As fans were later dismayed to discover, Ike had a mean streak commensurate with his musical gift, and Tina endured years of physical and emotional abuse before escaping with little more than her

name - and finally being vindicated with a multi-platinum, Grammy-winning solo career. That tale of triumph was ably (albeit loosely) dramatized with this 1993 biopic starring Angela Bassett and Laurence Fishburne as Ike and Tina, with both stars earning Oscar nominations for their work. "It's a story of pain and courage, uncommonly honest and unflinching," wrote Roger Ebert. "The next time I hear Tina Turner singing I will listen to the song in a whole new way."

THE HURRICANE (1999)

There probably really isn't much that could make you feel better about serving almost 20 years of prison time for a triple homicide you didn't commit, but on the list of things that might come sort of close, having your life turned into a movie starring Denzel Washington must rank near the top. Washington toplined 1999's *The Hurricane* as Rubin "Hurricane" Carter, the real-life boxer whose long incarceration for

three 1966 murders inspired public protests from a number of activists (including Bob Dylan, who wrote the 1975 song "Hurricane" about Rubin). Of course, this being Hollywood, a few liberties were taken with the details of Rubin's life, which understandably angered some of the people depicted in the film (such as boxer Joey Giardello, who sued *The Hurricane*'s producers for libel) as well as a noticeable number of critics

(among them the New Yorker's David Denby, who called it "False, evasive, and factually thin - a liberal fairytale"). No matter how they felt about the film, though, pretty much everyone agreed that Washington was terrific in it - a position exemplified by the Cincinnati Enquirer's Margaret A. McGurk, who said, "As the center of the drama, Mr. Washington more than fills the screen; he very nearly sets it on fire."





RAY (2004)

Long before he assured a generation of Pepsi drinkers that they were chugging the right one, baby, Ray Charles carved out one of the most brilliantly groundbreaking musical careers of the modern era, fusing rock, soul, country, and anything else he felt like playing into one inimitable sound. Charles' refusal to be defined by his blindness made him an inspiration for the physically impaired, but Taylor Hackford's 2004 biopic *Ray* is no mere hagiography - this is

the warts-and-all story of an artist whose once-in-a-generation talent was part of a package that included some fairly significant personal foibles, led by an outstanding, Oscar-winning performance from Jamie Foxx. Calling it "A very good film, regardless of whether or not you love Ray Charles' music," the *Apollo Guide's* Brian Webster argued, "Even if it was a lesser film, Jamie Foxx's performance would have made it worth watching."



TALK TO ME (2007)

In 2007's *Talk to Me*, Don Cheadle starred in a dramatization of the life and career of radio host and Emmy-winning television personality Petey Greene. Though his fame was mostly restricted to the Washington, D.C. area, Greene was an influential figure for many years, using his gift of gab and inspirational journey from prison to the airwaves as the building blocks for a career that earned him acclaim, a visit to the White House (where he famously joked he stole a spoon), and the

admiration of followers such as Howard Stern. It wasn't a huge hit, and members of Greene's family criticized its historical inaccuracies, but as far as most critics were concerned, *Talk to Me* was well worth watching. As Neil Smith wrote for *Total Film*, "If the picture doesn't ultimately live up to the raw vitality of Cheadle's performance, it remains an uplifting snapshot that broadcasts its message with zero distortion. Tune in and you won't be turned off."



12 YEARS A SLAVE (2013)

Solomon Northup was a free citizen of New York when, while traveling through Washington, D.C. in 1841, he was kidnapped and sold into slavery. His ensuing ordeal was shared by countless freemen and freed slaves who were forcibly remanded into servitude during the years surrounding the Civil War, but what makes Northup's story unique is that after finally winning his freedom, he penned a bestselling memoir about his experiences that, along with Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, helped fuel the

burgeoning abolitionist movement. More than 150 years later, director Steve McQueen dramatized Northup's wrenching odyssey in *12 Years a Slave* - and despite the passage of time, the tale lost little of its impact, earning nearly \$200 million and a stack of accolades that included a Best Picture Oscar. "If *12 Years a Slave* sounds like a brutal viewing experience then you'd be right," wrote Gail Tolley for the *List*. "But in eschewing sentimentality and striving for honesty in the storytelling it is also a powerful, essential drama."



42 (2013)

If you've seen one inspirational sports drama, you've seen 'em all - with the notable exception of *42*, which dramatizes baseball great Jackie Robinson's color barrier-shattering first season with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Chadwick Boseman (who'd later go on to play James Brown in *Get On Up* the following year) brings Robinson to life, capably shouldering the burden of playing a man who faced down thousands of detractors one stadium at a time, while writer-director Brian Helgeland nimbly splits the difference between holding

Robinson up as a hero and reminding viewers he was, in some ways, an ordinary man thrust into extraordinary circumstances. "For all the hate and hostility it depicts, *42* is a film about decent-hearted people," wrote David Germain for the *Associated Press*. "Hate can be infectious, but so can decency. It's the decency you'll take away from *42*."



SELMA (2015)

Director Ava DuVernay set a pretty tall order for herself when she agreed to bring a pivotal chapter from Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life to the big screen - and that job didn't get any easier when the King estate licensed his speeches to another film project. But even deprived of its subject's eloquent oratory, Selma man-

ages to distill the essence of King's struggle to effect lasting change in American race relations while facing widespread hostility or indifference across the ideological divide, thanks in no small part to David Oyelowo's electrifying work in the central role. A historically based biopic that was also uniquely - and unfortunately - of the

moment, Selma earned a Best Picture Oscar nomination and nearly universal critical acclaim from writers like Moira MacDonald of the Seattle Times, who argued, "History becomes breathtaking drama in Selma; there's an urgent realism in the storytelling, as if we're seeing this just in time. And indeed we are."

STRAIGHT OUTTA COMPTON (2015)



How quickly things can change. To kids of the '80s who witnessed N.W.A.'s rise to national prominence, the idea that Hollywood could ever dream of releasing a biopic about MC Ren, DJ Yella, Ice Cube, and Eazy-E would have sounded nothing short of

ridiculous - yet fast-forward a couple of decades, and the confrontational quartet are recognized as one of modern hip-hop's most important and influential acts. They received their big-screen due with 2015's Straight Outta Compton, which traces N.W.A.'s rise and fall while injecting that

by-now familiar arc with a fresh layer of sociopolitical context (and a killer soundtrack). A number of people involved with the group's real-life story were less than pleased with the result, but as far as most critics were concerned, it still added up to an entertaining - and thought-pro-

voking - film. Calling it "as enlightening as it is entertaining, as sobering as it is exhilarating," the Washington Post's Ann Hornaday wrote, "Straight Outta Compton reminds viewers not only who N.W.A. were and what they meant, but also why they mattered - and still do."



BESSIE (2015)

Incredibly popular in life and massively influential in death, Bessie Smith proved to a skeptical (and still quite young) record industry that there was a huge untapped market for releases by black artists, ultimately rising to her exalted status as the Empress of the Blues (and the highest-paid black entertainer of her era). While she broke boundaries as a recording artist, her personal life was often every bit as tumultuous as her music - right up until her tragic death, the details of which were long clouded by rumor, and burial in an unmarked grave. Bessie, aired by HBO in 2015, dramatized a portion of Smith's amazing life with Queen Latifah in the title role - and Latifah, surrounded by an excellent ensemble cast that included Michael K. Williams, Khandi Alexander, and Mike Epps, made the most of a too-rare opportunity to showcase her range. As Dorothy Rabinowitz argued for the Wall Street Journal, "It takes just the first few raunchy and emotionally searing minutes of Bessie to grasp why Queen Latifah - its star and one of its producers - viewed this story of Bessie Smith's life and career as a labor of love, or more precisely, passion." (www.rottentomatoes.com)

WORD SEARCH

Marine Life

Find and circle all of the listed words that are hidden in the grid.
The remaining letters spell the name of a sea animal.

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

- ANCHOVY
BARRACUDA
CLAM
CLOWNFISH
COD
CRAB
DOLPHIN
HALIBUT
JELLYFISH
LAMPREY
LOBSTER
- MANATEE
MARLIN
OCTOPUS
OYSTER
PENGUIN
PORPOISE
PRAWN
SARDINE
SCALLOP
SEA LION
SEA OTTER
- SEA TURTLE
SEALS
SHELLFISH
SHRIMP
SPONGE
SQUID
STARFISH
STINGRAY
TUNA
WALRUS
WHALE

Yesterday's Solution

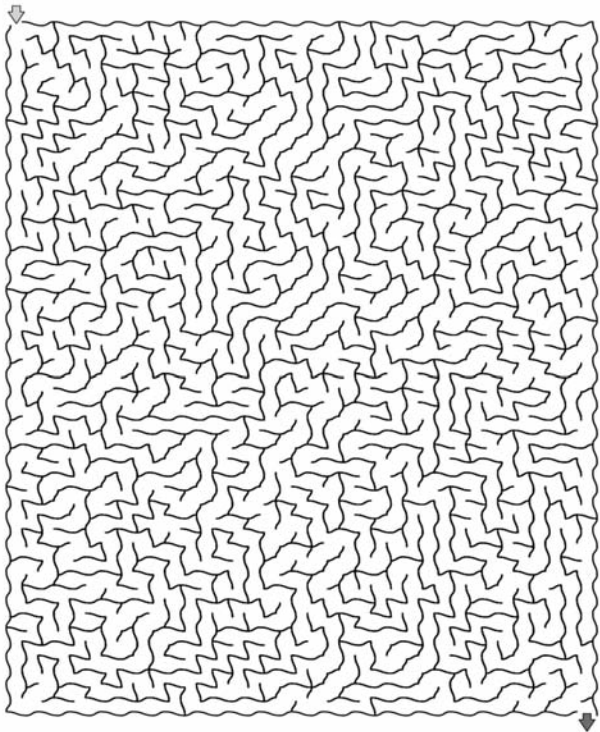
Dogs

This is the solution to the puzzle located [here](#).

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

- BASSET HOUND
BEAGLE
BLOODHOUND
BOXER
BULLDOG
CHIHUAHUA
CHOW CHOW
COCKER SPANIEL
COLLIE
CORGI
- DACHSHUND
DALMATIAN
DEERHOUND
DINGO
GERMAN SHEPHERD
GREAT DANE
GREYHOUND
HUSKY
LHASA APSO
MALAMUTE
- MASTIFF
PEKINGESE
PINSCHER
POINTER
POMERANIAN
POODLE
PUG
RETRIEVER
ROTTWEILER
SAINT BERNARD
- SAMOYED
SCHNAUZER
SETTER
SHAR PEI
SHEEPDOG
SPITZ
TERRIER
WHIPPET

CHALLENGING MAZE



CROSSWORD 1173

1	2	3		4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		12	13	14
15				16										17	
18			19				20							21	
22						23		24				25			
		26					27		28						
29	30		31				32	33					34	35	
36		37				38		39			40		41		
42						43	44				45				
46			47		48					49					
50				51					52				53		
			54				55	56		57		58			
59	60	61					62	63							
64						65		66					67	68	69
70															
75				71		72	73			74					
79				80								81			

ACROSS

1. A woolen cap of Scottish origin.
4. An abnormal tufted growth of small branches on a tree or shrub caused by fungi or insects or other physiological disturbance.
12. An enclosed space.
15. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
16. Small East Indian shrubby mint.
17. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
18. Any seed plant yielding balsam.
20. Sacred writings of Islam revealed by God to the prophet Mohammed during his life at Mecca and Medina.
21. A sign of assent or salutation or command.
22. Drug (trade name Isuprel) used to treat bronchial asthma and to stimulate the heart.
24. Take something away by force or without the consent of the owner.
26. (of the more skilled contestants) Selectively arranged in the draw for position a tournament so that they meet each other in later rounds.
28. A civil or military authority in Turkey or Egypt.
29. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
31. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
32. Injure or wound seriously and leave permanent disfiguration or mutilation.
36. (Babylonian) Earth goddess.
39. American black bears.
42. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
43. Take by theft.
45. Fear resulting from the awareness of danger.
46. Little known Kamarupan languages.
50. An antibiotic (trade name Azactam) used against severe infections.
52. A nurse who has enough training to be licensed by a state to provide routine care for the sick.
53. Primitive predaceous North American fish covered with hard scales and having long jaws with needle-like teeth.
54. A hard blow with a flat object.
57. An industrial city in central Japan on southern Honshu.
59. A city is east central Sweden north northwest of Stockholm.
62. A linear unit of the size of type slightly larger than an em.
64. Recite in elocution.
66. Genus of low-growing mat-forming New Zealand plants.
70. A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
71. North American bluebirds.
74. The sound of knocking (as on a door or in an engine or bearing).
75. An inflammatory complication of leprosy that results in painful skin lesions on the arms and legs and face.
76. A second-rate prize fighter.
78. A member of the Siouan people inhabiting the valleys of the Platte and Missouri rivers in Nebraska.
79. (usually followed by 'of') Released from something onerous (especially an obligation or duty).
80. Uttered in a monotonous cadence or rhythm as in chanting.
81. A native or inhabitant of Denmark.

DOWN

1. A sock with a separation for the big toe.
2. By bad luck.
3. Apple trees.
4. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
5. Brought from wildness into a domesticated state.
6. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
7. Military headquarters from which a military commander controls and organizes the forces.
8. A period of time equal to 1/24th of a day.
9. A bivalent and trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
10. A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
11. A loud harsh or strident noise.
12. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
13. Little known Kamarupan languages.
14. (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
19. Express in speech.
23. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
25. Gum-like substance from the saposilla.
27. Diabetes caused by a relative or absolute deficiency of insulin and characterized by polyuria.
30. Marine bivalve common in Philippine coastal waters characterized by a large thin flat translucent shell.
33. (in Gnosticism) A divine power or nature emanating from the Supreme Being and playing various roles in the operation of the universe.
34. French revolutionary heroine (a Girondist) who assassinated Marat (1768-1793).
35. The capital of Eritrea.
37. God of death.
38. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
40. Myth about the ultimate destruction of the gods in a battle with evil.
41. A ballroom dance of Latin-American origin.
44. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
47. Of or relating to a seizure or convulsion.
48. Of or relating to or characteristic of the state or island of Hawaii or to the people or culture or language.
49. Transient cessation of respiration.
51. Herbs of temperate regions.
55. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
56. (Sumerian) Goddess personifying earth.
58. French composer (1818-1893).
60. 100 penni equal 1 marka.
61. A burn cause by hot liquid or steam.
63. Any of several short-billed Old World rails.
65. A milkshake made with malt powder.
67. A globular water bottle used in Asia.
68. (computer science) A graphic symbol (usually a simple picture) that denotes a program or a command or a data file or a concept in a graphical user interface.
69. Widely cultivated in tropical and subtropical regions for its fragrant flowers and colorful fruits.
72. A toilet in England.
73. An electrically charged particle.
77. A public promotion of some product or service.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

00:05 Idle Hands
01:40 Suspect Zero
03:20 Separate Tables
05:00 Eight Men Out
07:00 Duplex
08:30 The Beautiful Country
10:30 Groundhog Day
12:15 The Tender
13:45 Waking Up In Reno
15:20 Grayeagle
17:05 Les Miserables (1998)
19:15 George Washington
20:45 Big Screen
21:00 Idle Hands
22:35 Suspect Zero

00:50 River Monsters
01:45 Swamp Brothers
02:15 Swamp Brothers
02:40 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
03:35 Tanked
04:25 Cheetah: Race To Rule
05:15 Gator Boys
06:02 Treehouse Masters
06:49 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
07:36 Swamp Brothers
08:00 Swamp Brothers
08:25 Bad Dog
09:15 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
10:10 Treehouse Masters
11:05 Tanked
12:00 Bad Dog
12:55 Bondi Vet
13:50 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
14:45 Gator Boys
15:40 Treehouse Masters
16:35 Tanked
17:30 Cheetah: Race To Rule
18:25 River Monsters
19:20 Big Fish Man
20:15 Tanked
21:10 Elephants In The Room
22:05 Treehouse Masters
23:00 Big Fish Man
23:55 Gator Boys

00:10 Eastenders
00:40 Holby City
01:35 Stella
02:20 Ripper Street
03:15 Doctors
03:45 Eastenders
04:10 Eastenders
04:35 Starlings
05:20 Starlings
06:05 Holby City
07:00 Stella
07:50 Doctors
08:20 Eastenders
08:50 Call The Midwife
09:50 Call The Midwife
10:45 The Musketeers
11:40 The Musketeers
12:35 The Musketeers
13:35 Holby City
14:30 Doctors
15:05 Eastenders
15:35 New Tricks
16:30 New Tricks
17:25 New Tricks
18:20 Doctors
18:50 Doctors
19:20 Father Brown
20:15 War And Peace
21:00 War And Peace
21:50 Doctor Foster
22:45 Stella
23:35 Doctors

00:00 What'd You Miss?
01:00 Charlie Rose
02:00 First Up With Angie Lau
03:00 First Up With Angie Lau
04:00 Trending Business
05:00 Trending Business
06:00 Asia Edge
07:00 Bloomberg West
08:00 Charlie Rose
09:00 Countdown
10:00 Countdown

10:30 On The Move
11:00 On The Move
12:00 The Pulse
13:00 Bloomberg Surveillance
14:00 Bloomberg Surveillance
15:00 Bloomberg Go
16:00 Bloomberg Go
17:00 Bloomberg Go
18:00 Bloomberg Markets
19:00 Bloomberg Markets: European
Close
20:00 Bloomberg Markets
21:00 Bloomberg Markets
22:00 Bloomberg Markets
22:30 Brilliant Ideas
23:00 Bloomberg Markets

00:00 News Update
00:30 Dialogue
01:00 News Update
01:15 China 24
02:00 The Heat
02:30 News Update
03:00 Global Business
04:00 News Update
05:00 News Update
06:30 Dialogue
07:00 News Hour
08:00 Global Business
09:00 News Update
10:30 Sports Scene
11:00 Global Business
12:00 News Update
12:30 Culture Express
13:00 Africa Live
14:00 News Update
14:30 Dialogue
15:00 News Update
15:15 China 24
16:00 News Update

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

01:00 Inside China
01:30 Access: Middle East
02:00 U.S. Squawk Alley
03:00 Asia Squawk Box
05:00 Asia Street Signs
07:00 Fast Money: Half Time Report
08:00 Capital Connection
09:00 Squawk Box Europe
12:00 Europe Street Signs
13:00 Worldwide Exchange
14:00 U.S. Squawk Box
17:00 Squawk On The Street
19:00 U.S. Squawk Alley
20:00 Fast Money: Half Time Report
21:00 U.S. Power Lunch
23:00 U.S. Closing Bell

00:20 Fast N' Loud
01:10 What On Earth?
02:00 Unearthed
02:50 Kings Of The Wild
03:40 Storage Hunters
04:05 The Liquidator
04:30 Auction Hunters: Pawn Shop
Edition
05:00 How It's Made: Dream Cars
05:30 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Mythbusters
06:50 The Weapon Hunter
07:40 Big Giant Swords

02:00 Born To Kill
03:00 50 Ways To Kill Your Lover
04:00 Campus Nightmares
05:00 Born To Kill
06:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
07:00 The FBI Files
08:00 The FBI Files
09:00 Frenemies
09:30 Private Crimes
10:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
11:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
12:00 Beyond Scared Straight
13:00 Fatal Vows
14:00 Crime Stories
15:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
16:00 Frenemies
16:30 Private Crimes
17:00 The FBI Files
18:00 Beyond Scared Straight
19:00 Crime Stories
20:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
21:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
22:00 Frenemies
22:30 Private Crimes
23:00 Bill Cosby: The Women Speak

00:20 Fast N' Loud
01:10 What On Earth?
02:00 Unearthed
02:50 Kings Of The Wild
03:40 Storage Hunters
04:05 The Liquidator
04:30 Auction Hunters: Pawn Shop
Edition
05:00 How It's Made: Dream Cars
05:30 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Mythbusters
06:50 The Weapon Hunter
07:40 Big Giant Swords

08:30 The Island With Bear Grylls
09:20 Men, Women, Wild
10:10 River Monsters (Best Of Series 1-5)
11:00 What On Earth?
11:50 Unearthed
12:40 Kings Of The Wild
13:30 Fast N' Loud
14:20 Street Outlaws
15:10 Street Outlaws
16:00 What On Earth?
21:00 Fast N' Loud
21:50 Street Outlaws
22:40 Extreme Car Hoarders
23:30 Kidnap And Rescue

00:40 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
01:05 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
01:30 The Haunted
02:20 Ghost Lab
03:10 Deadly Affairs
04:00 Swamp Murders
04:45 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
05:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
05:30 The Haunted
06:20 Fatal Encounters
07:10 True Crime With Aphrodite
Jones
08:00 Dr G: Medical Examiner
08:50 On The Case With Paula
Zahn
09:40 Fatal Encounters
10:30 Murder Shift
11:20 Deadly Affairs
12:10 True Crime With Aphrodite
Jones
13:00 The Will
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:40 California Investigator
15:05 Dr G: Medical Examiner
15:55 Fatal Encounters
16:45 On The Case With Paula
Zahn
17:35 Murder Shift
18:25 I Almost Got Away With It
19:15 The Will
20:05 Deadly Affairs
20:55 True Crime With Aphrodite
Jones
21:45 California Investigator
22:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
22:35 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
23:00 Serial Killers
23:50 Deadly Devotion

00:35 Weird Or What?
01:20 How It's Made
01:44 How It's Made
02:08 Mega Builders
02:55 Space Pioneer
03:42 Mythbusters
04:29 Weird Or What?
05:16 Mega Builders
06:03 Space Pioneer
06:50 Unchained Reaction
07:37 How Do They Do It?
08:00 How Do They Do It?
08:23 Weird Or What?
09:08 Mythbusters
09:53 Unchained Reaction
10:38 How It's Made
11:00 How It's Made
11:23 Invent It Rich
12:08 Space Pioneer
12:53 Unchained Reaction
13:38 Weird Or What?
14:23 How It's Made
14:46 How It's Made
15:10 Mythbusters
15:57 Invent It Rich
16:44 Space Pioneer
17:31 Unchained Reaction
18:18 Mythbusters
19:05 Weird Or What?
19:50 Alien Mysteries
20:40 Moon Machines
21:25 How It's Made
21:50 How It's Made
22:15 Mythbusters
23:00 Alien Mysteries
23:45 Moon Machines

00:40 Solved
01:30 Codes And Conspiracies
02:20 American Guns
03:05 Prehistoric Elephant
03:50 Solved
04:35 Extreme Engineering

05:20 Deadliest Catch
06:05 Bizarre Foods
06:50 100 Miles From Nowhere
07:35 Origins
08:00 Deadliest Catch
08:50 Codes And Conspiracies
09:40 100 Miles From Nowhere
10:30 Bizarre Foods
11:20 Extreme Engineering
12:10 Deadliest Catch
13:00 Dinosaurs: Return To Life
13:50 Bizarre Foods
14:40 Extreme Engineering
15:30 Codes And Conspiracies
16:20 100 Miles From Nowhere
17:10 Deadliest Catch
18:00 Prehistoric Elephant
18:50 Bizarre Foods
19:40 Codes And Conspiracies
20:30 Somali Pirate Takedown: The Real Story
21:20 How The Bismarck Sank HMS Hood
22:10 Extreme Engineering
23:00 Somali Pirate Takedown: The Real Story
23:50 How The Bismarck Sank HMS Hood

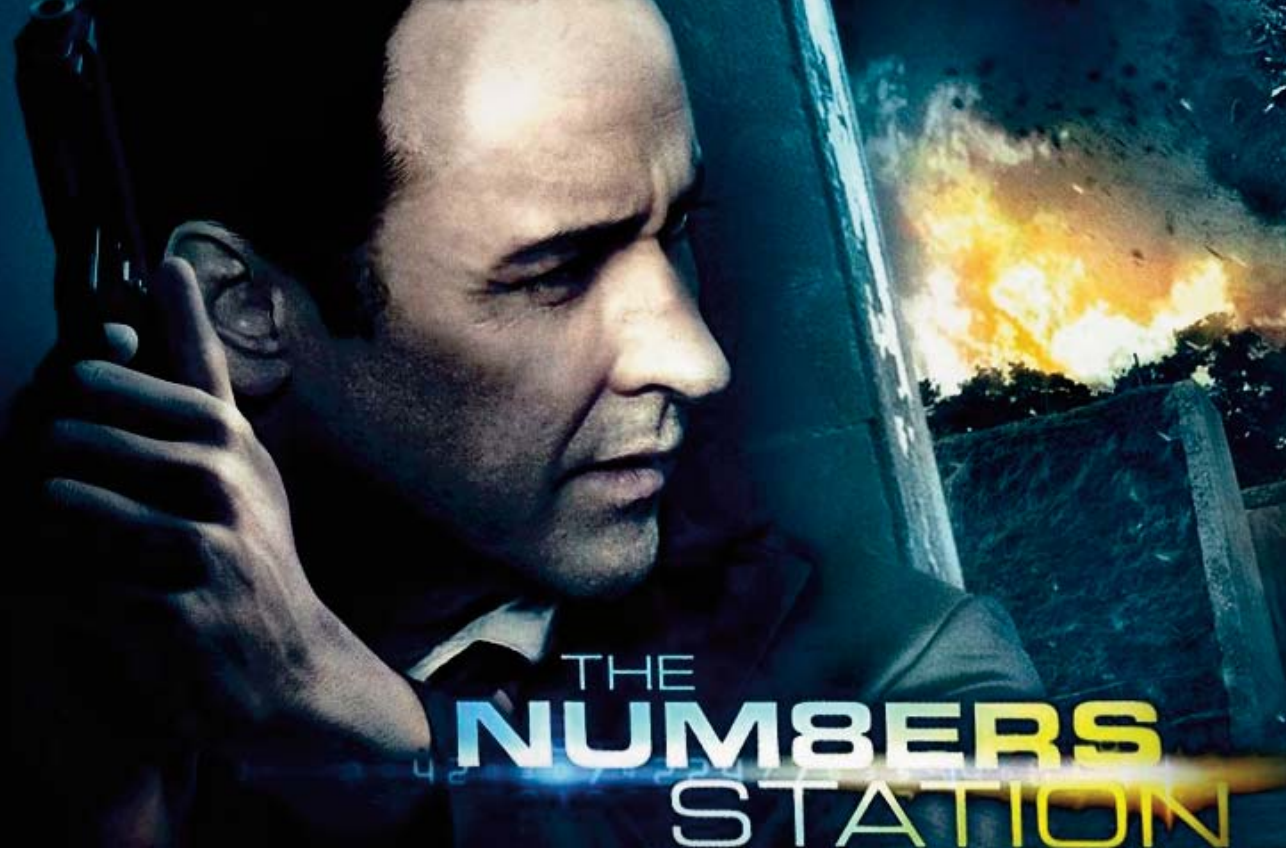
00:00 Violetta
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Hank Zipzer
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:30 Violetta
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Hank Zipzer
04:35 Binny And The Ghost
05:00 Violetta
05:45 The Hive
05:50 Mouk
06:00 Lollipop
06:25 Sofia The First
06:50 Gravity Falls
07:15 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
07:40 Jessie
08:05 Shake It Up
08:30 Shake It Up
08:55 That's So Raven
09:20 That's So Raven
09:45 Austin & Ally
10:10 Austin & Ally
10:35 A.N.T. Farm
11:00 A.N.T. Farm
11:25 Jessie
11:50 Jessie
12:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
12:45 Fish Hooks
12:55 Fish Hooks
13:10 Good Luck Charlie
13:35 I Didn't Do It
14:00 Dog With A Blog
14:30 H2O
14:55 Girl Meets World
15:20 Jessie
15:45 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
16:10 Violetta
17:00 I Love Violetta
17:10 Invisible Sister
18:40 I Didn't Do It
19:05 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
19:30 Violetta
20:20 I Love Violetta
20:30 Aladdin & The King Of Thieves
22:00 Binny And The Ghost
22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:10 Hank Zipzer
23:35 Binny And The Ghost

00:05 Henry Hugglemonster
00:20 Calimero
00:35 Zou
00:50 Loopdidoo
01:05 Art Attack
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:45 Calimero
02:00 Zou



JURASSIC ATTACK ON OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 02:15 Loopdidoo
02:30 Art Attack
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
03:05 Calimero
03:20 Zou
03:30 Loopdidoo
03:45 Art Attack
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 Calimero
04:35 Zou
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 Calimero
08:10 Zou
08:25 Loopdidoo
08:40 Miles From Tomorrow
09:05 Sofia The First
09:30 Goldie & Bear
09:45 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
10:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:35 Doc McStuffins
11:00 Sofia The First
11:30 Goldie & Bear
12:00 Miles From Tomorrow
12:25 Special Agent Oso
12:40 The Hive
12:50 Handy Manny
13:15 Jungle Junction
13:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
14:00 Sofia The First
14:25 Goldie & Bear
14:50 Doc McStuffins
15:15 Zou
15:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
15:55 Loopdidoo
16:10 Miles From Tomorrow
16:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
17:00 Sofia The First
17:25 Jungle Cubs
17:50 Aladdin
18:15 Gummi Bears
18:40 Goldie & Bear
19:05 Miles From Tomorrow
19:30 Sofia The First
19:55 Doc McStuffins
20:10 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
20:35 Miles From Tomorrow
21:00 Goldie & Bear
21:30 Sofia The First
22:00 Jungle Cubs
22:25 Aladdin
22:50 Gummi Bears
23:20 Lilo And Stitch
23:45 Cars Toons
23:50 Zou
- 00:30 Weird Loners
01:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
01:30 Web Therapy
02:00 Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll
02:30 Big Time In Hollywood FI
03:00 New Girl
03:30 Playing House
04:00 I Hate My Teenage Daughter
04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
05:30 Modern Family
06:00 \$#! My Dad Says
06:30 Community
07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
08:00 I Hate My Teenage Daughter
08:30 Cristela
09:00 New Girl
09:30 Kevin From Work
10:00 Hot In Cleveland
10:30 Community
11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
12:00 \$#! My Dad Says
12:30 I Hate My Teenage Daughter
13:00 Cristela
13:30 Community
14:00 Playing House
14:30 Kevin From Work
15:00 Hot In Cleveland
15:30 Weird Loners
16:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
16:30 \$#! My Dad Says
17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
18:00 Fresh Off The Boat
18:30 Black-ish
19:00 Parks And Recreation



THE NUMBERS STATION ON OSN MOVIES HD

- 19:30 The Simpsons
20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
21:00 Weird Loners
21:30 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
22:00 Louie
22:30 Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll
23:00 Big Time In Hollywood FI
23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers

OSN FIRST HD

- 00:00 Supernatural
01:00 Blindspot
02:00 Wicked City
03:00 Scream Queens
04:00 Good Morning America
06:00 Parenthood
07:00 The Whispers
08:00 C.S.I. Cyber
09:00 American Idol
10:00 Blindspot
11:00 The Whispers
12:00 Parenthood
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 American Idol
15:00 Live Good Morning America
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 C.S.I. Cyber
19:00 American Idol
21:00 Grey's Anatomy
22:00 Survivor: Kaoh Rong
23:15 The Strain

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 00:00 Predator 2
02:00 Toxin
04:00 Jurassic Attack
06:00 The Italian Job (2003)
08:00 Gone In Sixty Seconds
10:15 Born To Race: Fast Track
12:00 388 Arletta Avenue
13:30 The Italian Job (2003)
15:30 Betrayed
17:15 Gone In Sixty Seconds
19:30 The Bourne Legacy
21:45 Duplicity

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Wanderlust
02:00 Dunston Checks In
04:00 The Love Guide
06:00 50 First Dates
08:00 Serial (Bad) Weddings
10:00 The Love Guide
12:00 Dunston Checks In
14:00 Good Deeds
16:00 Serial (Bad) Weddings

- 17:45 Blues Brothers 2000
20:00 The World's End
22:00 Good Luck Chuck

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

- 01:30 S.O.S. Mulheres Ao Mar
03:15 True Colors
05:15 The Mirror Has Two Faces
07:15 Secret Window
09:00 Little Man Tate
11:00 The Mirror Has Two Faces
13:00 1911
15:00 Tea With Mussolini
17:00 Little Man Tate
19:00 What's Love Got To Do With It
21:15 Half Of A Yellow Sun
23:15 The Motel Life

OSN MOVIES HD

- 01:00 Syrup
02:45 The Mark
04:30 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part I
06:45 Salinger
09:00 The Fault In Our Stars
11:15 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part I
13:30 Bears
15:00 The Numbers Station
17:00 Edge Of Tomorrow
19:00 The Last Of Robin Hood
21:00 The Longest Ride
23:15 Winter's Tale

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

- 01:15 Miffy The Movie
02:45 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
04:15 Ghatotkach - Master Of Magic
06:00 Columbus In The Last Journey
08:00 Daddy I'm A Zombie
10:00 Space Warriors
11:45 Bolts And Blip
13:15 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
14:45 Memory Loss
16:15 Worms
18:00 Space Warriors
20:00 Hook
22:30 Memory Loss

OSN MOVIES PREMIERE

- 00:45 Beneath
02:30 Life Of A King
04:15 Bully

- 06:00 Fatal Instinct
08:00 Robot & Frank
09:45 Believe
11:45 Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom
14:15 Dragonheart 3: The Sorcerer's Curse
16:00 Robot & Frank
18:00 The Maze Runner
20:00 The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies
22:30 The Departed

OSN NEWS

- 01:00 Live MSNBC Mtp Daily
02:00 Live MSNBC With All Due Respect
03:00 Live NBC Nightly News
03:30 ABC World News With David Muir
04:00 Live MSNBC All In With Chris Hayes
05:00 Live MSNBC Special Coverage
07:00 Live MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
08:00 NBC Nightly News
08:18 ABC World News With David Muir
08:39 Live ABC Nightline
09:06 MSNBC Special Coverage
11:00 Live ABC World News Now
11:30 Live ABC World News Now
12:00 Live NBC Early Today
12:30 Live ABC America This Morning
13:00 Live ABC America This Morning
13:30 Live ABC America This Morning
14:00 Live ABC America This Morning
14:30 MSNBC First Look
15:00 Live NBC Today Show
19:00 MSNBC Special Coverage
21:00 Live MSNBC Special Coverage
23:00 Live MSNBC Special Coverage

OSN SPORTS 1 HD

- 01:00 Gillette World Sport
01:30 AFL NAB Challenge
04:00 LPGA Tour Highlights
05:00 Golfing World
06:00 Live PGA European Tour
08:00 World Match Racing Tour Highlights
08:30 World Rugby
09:00 Inside The PGA Tour
09:30 European Tour Weekly
10:00 Live PGA European Tour
13:00 Trans World Sport

- 14:00 Gillette World Sport
14:30 World Rugby
15:00 Live Welsh Open Snooker
19:00 AFL NAB Challenge
21:30 Gillette World Sport
22:00 Live Welsh Open Snooker

OSN SPORTS 2 HD

- 00:00 Mobil 1 The Grid
00:30 Inside The PGA Tour
01:00 Live PGA Tour
04:00 Gillette World Sport
04:30 Premier League Darts
08:00 Golfing World
09:00 Trans World Sport
10:00 AFL Premiership Highlights
11:00 Live AFL NAB Challenge
13:30 Premier League Darts
17:00 LPGA Tour Highlights
18:00 WWE NXT
19:00 WWE Bottom Line
20:00 WWE Superstars
21:00 WWE Main Event
22:15 Top 14 Highlights
22:45 Live Top 14

OSN SPORTS 3 HD

- 01:30 PGA European Tour
07:00 Trans World Sport
08:00 Europro Tour
09:00 Welsh Open Snooker
12:00 The Weber Cup
13:00 Europro Tour
14:00 LPGA Tour Highlights
15:00 AFL NAB Challenge
17:30 Inside Sailing
18:00 The Weber Cup
19:00 Europro Tour
20:00 NRL All-Star Match
22:00 LPGA Tour Highlights
23:00 Live Rugby League World Club Challenge

OSN SPORTS 4 HD

- 01:00 WWE Vintage
02:00 Extreme Sailing Highlights
02:30 FIA Asia Cup Championship
03:00 Mass Participation U.K
04:00 Triathlon UK
04:30 UIM XCATS Power Boat World Series
05:00 TCR International Series
05:30 TCR International Series
06:00 Extreme Sailing Highlights
06:30 This Week In WWE
07:00 Porsche GT3 Cup Middle East
07:30 Mobil 1 The Grid
08:00 Pro Kabaddi
09:00 WWE NXT
10:00 WWE Smackdown

- 12:00 NHL
14:00 F1 H2O World Championship Highlights
14:30 WWE Raw
17:20 Live Pro Kabaddi
18:30 Live Pro Kabaddi
20:00 Pro Bull Riders
21:00 NHL
23:00 WWE Main Event

sundance CHANNEL

- 02:00 Return Of The Secaucus 7
03:45 Dust
04:00 Rake
05:00 Singing In The Shadows: Children Of Rock
06:35 Movie Talk
07:00 Lock Chamer
08:20 Proof
10:00 The Myth Of The American Sleepover
11:40 Wreckers
13:05 Unknown White Male
14:35 Movie Talk
15:00 Lock Chamer
16:15 Proof
17:55 Wreckers
19:20 The Myth Of The American Sleepover
21:00 Theatreland
21:30 Hollywood's Best Film Directors
22:00 Flirting With Disaster
23:35 Polite People

STAR MOVIES HD

- 00:15 Unbreakable
02:15 Beyond A Reasonable Doubt
04:15 The Husband She Met Online
06:00 The Eagle
08:00 Dragonfly
09:45 Another Year
12:00 Arthur 2: The Revenge Of Maltazard
13:45 Armageddon
16:15 Unbreakable
18:15 Beyond A Reasonable Doubt
20:00 American Outlaws
21:45 All Hat
23:15 Dedication

STAR WORLD HD

- 00:00 American Idol
01:00 Lost
02:00 Revenge
03:00 Revenge
04:00 The Secret Life Of The American Teenager
05:00 How I Met Your Mother
05:30 How I Met Your Mother
06:00 The Simpsons
06:30 The Simpsons
07:00 Cops
07:30 Cops
08:00 American Idol
09:00 Lost
10:00 Revenge
11:00 Revenge
12:00 The Secret Life Of The American Teenager
13:00 How I Met Your Mother
13:30 How I Met Your Mother
14:00 The Simpsons
14:30 The Simpsons
15:00 Cops
15:30 Cops
16:00 Lost
17:00 Happy Endings
17:30 Cougar Town
18:00 The Listener
19:00 The Listener
20:00 72 Hours
21:00 Happy Endings
21:30 Cougar Town
22:00 Lost
23:00 Lost



Aries (March 21-April 19)

This is a day where much can be accomplished. The first part of this day leaves no room for rest. You move forward quickly as you analyze facts. An important clue into new investments may be worth your review now. Some new information comes to your attention that you can explore. Give this some time and you will benefit from your choices. You and a friendly co-worker will be able to put your feet up and commiserate before the clock says you can go home. Something electric is in the air and later this evening your charisma shines! You need a break from your general routine. It is time for a fun date, a new friend or some creative plans for a future party. Consider your friendly co-worker when you make out your future party invitation list.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Although this day may have a problem getting off to a good start, you will be pleased to find the end results will be quite rewarding. You could experience a few setbacks early in the day. Take the time to reassess and then . . . Begin again. This afternoon is a good time to lead the way on a project-your originality is fine-tuned. If you give your best effort now, considerable success will follow. Later today, you may become actively concerned about the welfare of others in your business or the people who work under you. Try listening to this person's needs before deciding how best to be helpful. Socializing and love interests are favored this evening. So is overindulgence, but be smart and avoid the smorgasbord table-watch the calories.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

All sorts of weird feelings and emotions may be gurgling up from your subconscious now. Little things keep happening that remind you of old friends or old jobs. It could be a close friend's birthday or a wedding shower in the forecast. Games may come to mind and you remember a game or two that you could bring to the party in case they are needed. You are pleased to be helpful in a work situation today and coming to the rescue even in little things places you in an interesting position. Your afternoon is too busy to daydream but the memories were fun and may be useful later. The weather just calls for headgear and you may shop in a couple of places this evening to find something for yourself and a loved one. A warm head keeps the chill away.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have an increase in personal magnetism that makes it a good time for business dealings. This is one of those great days when you will be able to accomplish anything. Emotions have taken intellect by the hand and discipline just went out the window. Stay away from the buffet table. If you must go shopping, leave those credit cards at home. On the plus side, your warmth will reflect back to your loved ones, and everyone will enjoy your company. This may be a time of sudden personal growth that corresponds to changes in your romantic life. On the positive side, it is a good day to just reflect or help others. Consider collecting family histories by asking grandparents to make tape recordings of amusing stories from their past.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You are wise to ask for feedback after you give instructions; you can share that you do not want to make any mistakes in the explaining. You are most concerned that you communicate your ideas successfully. There is something about your appearance and how you present yourself to others that keep an interested audience attentive. Use this to your best advantage. This is a great time to ask for any job changes you feel you may need in order to do your best. Your creative intellect and communication skills are enhanced. You may feel a renewed interest in art, literature and nature. Difficulties from the past have vanished and now you can take some time to help others. Tonight is for relaxation. Prop your feet up and enjoy your family.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today is a natural for self-expression. Smart as a fox, you solve problems and sail through the day. If you deal with groups, you will probably be advocating sweeping changes. Just do not become involved in any project that may require a later follow-through. There could be some changes in the family budget this afternoon. This could include incentives for all the members of your family to adhere to the budget. A good conversation with family members is possible this evening. This is a great time to be with others-you promote good cooperation. You could all work toward building funds to do things that would include some fun times with new friends. You could also be looking for different kinds of places to spend a family vacation.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

If you have been considering a new business venture, today is an excellent day to begin. Business dealings may be particularly fruitful. There could be an opportunity for a round-table discussion in the workplace. Your viewpoint will be heard-patience. Expect a sense of support and goodwill from those around you. Try to see people for who they truly are-your intuition will guide you. For some reason, the family scene this afternoon is a busy one. This is a good time to try and foster a sense of togetherness and team play. Team play can also be enjoyed in some team sports or some fitness program with friends-you could be leading a competitive group. Something you suspected to be true is and you will be glad.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Mental stimulation from others is a key for you right now-it's a good idea to make every effort to cooperate and compromise with others. A project in the workplace should have great success. This is a feel-good day. Friendships are a source of great pleasure and you, in turn; should be quite popular, particularly after work. In addition, this is an excellent time for taking part in social activities with friends. This harmony should be very useful in easing past tensions in a relationship or in concluding some difficult financial matters. Expressing affection should come easily and can do much good for your disposition. The desire for intimacy and love with a partner is great at this time, with the expression of affections being most satisfying to you.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your success depends on your mannerisms and reaction to others. This is probably because you will be in group situations that demand much of your attention. You may be prone to impulsiveness and wanting things your own way. The positive side of this is that you break down barriers between people that may have been having an awkward time of things . . . Especially if they are new on a particular job. Progressive people and concepts play a more important role in your life now. Communicating with faraway associates and involvement in social functions with nearby friends are strong. Do not keep someone waiting this evening-good surprises are coming. Warm memories are recalled and familiar laughter is heard as you visit with old friends.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Problems in the workplace can be solved easily-look at the technical side. Outside interest in a current project of yours can bring you some extra funds. Use the confidence you feel now to get the most pressing projects at work completed-this could bring considerable success. Your fertile mind will be picking up new concepts and inspirations all day-like a radio receiver. The air is electric and your mind is wide open. Other people's ideas, once illogical to you, may now seem quite logical. You have a greater appreciation for things of value and the idea of value itself is in order. Finances are not great but not bad either-try comparison shopping. You will enjoy communicating, witticisms, writing letters, mental games and puzzle solving.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Your company may agree to help you with further education or offer to send you to lectures in order to study and learn new techniques or styles of working. You are empowered to take full advantage of your position in the workplace now. You may find yourself lecturing for the company with which you work. This is a rewarding day. If you are forced into decision making today, make sure it is for the good of the whole. Study your motives in order to make nonprejudiced choices. Events could conspire to make it difficult for you to act. Anything that can wait should be moved to a waiting position for a day. Concentrate on the job at hand first! Celebrations are in order-you may earn, win or gain in some way.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You become a big influence in the workplace today. Others need guidance and just automatically seek your advice. If this is part of your job-keep on track. Although you can be influential, you may want to stop and go back to work on a particular project. There could be many demands on your time today. Artistic inspiration manifests itself in creative work or just the urge to experience the beauty of nature. Whether you are listening or participating-music can be a source of inspiration and may have a healing effect. Your good cheer enhances your social life and may intensify romance. A new love interest is available. Avoid excessive spending just now. This is a good time to use the home as a vehicle for entertaining.

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

CANCER PATIENTS SNAGGED IN TANGLED PAPERWORK

THOUSANDS LOSING SUBSIDIES UNDER NEW HEALTH LAW

WASHINGTON: Walt Whitlow was under treatment for cancer when he got an unwelcome surprise. His financial assistance under President Barack Obama's health care law got slashed. That meant his premium quadrupled and his deductible went from \$900 to \$4,600.

Hundreds of thousands of people lose subsidies under the health law, or even their policies, when they get tangled in a web of paperwork problems involving income, citizenship and taxes. Some are dealing with serious illnesses like cancer. Advocates fear the problems, if left unresolved, could undermine the nation's historic gains in health insurance.

Ana Granado was scheduled for reconstruction after breast cancer surgery when she was notified that her coverage would be canceled because of questions about her immigration status. Legal aid attorneys got that cleared up quickly, but Granado's financial assistance for her premiums was suspended.

Lynn Herrin got irritated when she had to pay \$700 to the IRS after it determined she got too big a tax credit for premiums under the health law. Since she was also having trouble finding a doctor who accepted her insurance, Herrin canceled. It was a costly mistake. She was diagnosed with oral and neck cancer and depleted her family savings to pay for treatment.

Not every case is as distressing, but coverage disruptions due to complex paperwork requirements seem commonplace in the health law's system of subsidized private insurance, which currently covers about 12.7 million people.

Documentation issues

The government says about 470,000 people had coverage terminated through Sept 30 last year because of unresolved documentation issues involving citizenship and immigration. During the same time, more than 1 million households had their financial assistance "adjusted" because of income discrepancies. Advocates say "adjusted" usually means the subsidies get eliminated.

"When people get that bill for a full-price plan, they panic and they cancel the insurance," said Elizabeth Colvin of Foundation Communities, an Austin nonprofit that serves low-income people. Some worry the problem could undermine the law's insurance markets, now in their third year.

"These problems can grow, and they can contribute to undermining consumer faith in the system, and that could lead to attrition," said Rachel Klein of Families USA, an advocacy group that supports the health law. Pressured by a Republican-led Congress hostile to Obama's overhaul, the administration is highly sensitive to criticism that some people may be getting benefits they're not legally entitled to. But Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia M. Burwell recently acknowledged the paperwork tangle is more likely to trap the innocent than fraudsters. The administration has made customer retention a priority, and Burwell said she's focused on making the system less challenging for consumers eligible for benefits.

The next few months will tell whether improvements to the



CHARLOTTE: Ana Granado, left, and her daughter Andreia Walker, right, look over healthcare paperwork at their home. Granado had health insurance through the federal health care law and was undergoing treatment for breast cancer when she found out her premiums were going up more than six-fold. — AP

HealthCare.gov website in the 2016 sign-up season helped cut down on problems. The technology now alerts consumers to gaps in their applications that could later trigger documentation problems. If there's a documentation issue, consumers have about three months to straighten things out.

But Whitlow, a self-employed remodeling contractor from Volente, Texas, said he was blindsided. He had requested that HealthCare.gov contact him by mail, but he found out his subsidy was slashed when his doctor's office called the family. Not only was he on the hook for the full, unsubsidized premium, but he also faced far higher copays and deductibles.

"It kind of blew my mind," said Whitlow. He said he had submitted bank statements to prove his income, but apparently that wasn't enough. His family chipped in to maintain his coverage while he got follow-up treatment for throat cancer. "I was really impressed with the quality of care, but the paperwork was just unbelievable," said Whitlow. With help from Foundation Communities, the family appealed and eventually won.

Private coverage

Granado, a legal immigrant from Brazil, lives with her daughter in Charlotte, North Carolina. Under the health overhaul, legal immigrants are

eligible for subsidized private coverage in the insurance exchanges. With daughter Andreia Walker translating her Portuguese, Granado said the health care law saved her life by allowing her to get coverage after she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Under the law, insurers can no longer turn away patients who are sick. The family was billed more than \$100,000 for treatment before Granado got insurance.

But the paperwork battle, first over her immigration status and then over her income, was "a huge stress," she said. The family spent hours on the phone with HealthCare.gov as Granado was preparing for reconstructive surgery. Her daughter said they would have been lost without representation from Legal Services of Southern Piedmont.

Herrin's experience is a cautionary tale about acting out of frustration with the new system. Herrin, of Wimberley, Texas, had sold a family business after her husband's death and committed to living simply so she could do volunteer work. She signed up for health insurance in 2014 when it became a legal requirement. She was quoted a discounted premium, after tax credits.

But last year at tax time, Herrin said she found out she owed \$700 to the IRS - one of 1.8 million taxpayers who had to repay health insurance credits, an average of \$860 apiece. Herrin canceled her policy in disgust, only to be diagnosed with cancer a few months later. She spent about \$70,000 in savings on treatment, but was able to sign up for a new policy that started in January. — AP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

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CHANGE OF NAME

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Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2016



China's consumer inflation quickens to five-mth high

IRAN SEES OIL FREEZE PACT AS NOT ENOUGH TO HELP MARKET

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TOKYO: People walk on the scramble crossing at Shibuya shopping district in Tokyo yesterday. The OECD yesterday cut its 2016 economic growth forecast to 3.0 percent from 3.3 percent owing to disappointing data, sluggish demand, weak investment and a high risk of financial instability. —AP

OECD CUTS 2016 GROWTH FORECAST TO 3.0% WORLD LEADERS URGED TO TACKLE FLAGGING GROWTH

PARIS: The OECD yesterday cut its 2016 economic growth forecast to 3.0 percent from 3.3 percent owing to disappointing data, sluggish demand, weak investment and a high risk of financial instability.

"Financial instability risks are substantial," the 34-member Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said in its latest interim outlook, urging a strong collective response to combat sagging global growth, which it predicts will not surpass 2015's already pallid showing.

The Paris-based body trimmed its outlook for this year as growth slows in many emerging countries and advanced economies only expected to achieve modest recovery after a 2015 that saw the slowest growth in five years.

"Global growth prospects have practically flat-lined, recent data have disappointed and indicators point to slower growth in major economies, despite the boost from low oil prices and low interest rates," said OECD Chief Economist Catherine L. Mann at a news conference.

Mann urged "greater use of fiscal and pro-growth structural policies, to strengthen growth and reduce financial risks" after a

forecast coming in well below a long-run average of around 3.75 percent, the OECD said, adding it would expect a higher figure during a "recovery phase" for advanced economies and for "emerging economies in convergence mode".

In its November outlook, the OECD had already downgraded its initial 2016 estimate, citing stagnating trade amid a slowdown in China. But it said it felt compelled to do so again, while also revising downward an initial November projection for 2017 to 3.3 percent from 3.6 percent in an environment likely to impact most severely on the United States, the eurozone and economies reliant on commodity exports.

Tackle collectively

"A stronger collective policy response is needed to strengthen demand," said the organisation a week before G-20 finance ministers and central bank governors meet in Shanghai, noting "contractionary" fiscal policy in many major economies amid slowing structural reform.

The downgrade reflects "a broad range of disappointing incoming data for the fourth quarter of 2015 and the weakness and

volatility in global financial markets", trends "apparent in both advanced and emerging economies," said the OECD, identifying further risk as emerging market currency volatility and debt, notably in Russia, Turkey and Brazil.

It added poor growth prospects were pushing down equity prices, helping to spark recent market volatility.

"Structural reform momentum has slowed," said the OECD, identifying a combination of negatives affecting the global outlook, with fuel and commodity prices in a trough amid sluggish demand while China stays stuck in third gear. "Monetary policy cannot work alone" to achieve sustained growth, warned the OECD.

The body, which repeatedly cut its 2015 outlook from an initial 3.7 percent, said that whereas relatively healthy growth in emerging countries had in previous years partially compensated for a slowdown in emerging nations, this was currently no longer the case.

"Global GDP growth is projected to be no higher than in 2015, itself the slowest pace in the past five years," it concluded, noting that "sluggish growth is reflected in weak trade

and has contributed to recent falls in commodity prices." One means of reviving growth would be to commit to greater public investment, the OECD said. Although global trade flows are edging back from last year's stormy waters, they "remain subdued" with lower export demand for advanced economies flattening growth last year by around five percentage points.

On a country by country basis, the OECD saw across-the-board weakness. It reduced the forecast for the United States by 0.5 percent to 2.0 percent. For sputtering EU locomotive Germany, it cut growth by 0.5 percent to 1.3 percent, compared to the German government's own forecast of 1.7 percent.

The cut for France was smaller at just 0.1 percent down to 1.2 percent—the Paris government current forecast is 1.5 percent. The forecast for China remained unchanged on the November assessment of 6.5 percent while India enjoyed a small upward revision of 0.1 percent to 7.4 percent.

But Brazil, in freefall after being hit severely by plunging commodity prices and falling Chinese-led demand, was downgraded by 2.8 percentage points to a 4.0 percent contraction. —AFP



LOS ANGELES: Reusable shopping bags are offered for sale at a Wal-Mart Neighborhood Market, in the Chinatown district of Los Angeles. —AP

WAL-MART'S Q4 PROFITS BEAT WALL ST ESTIMATES

NEW YORK: Wal-Mart is reporting an 8 percent decline in fourth-quarter earnings as the retailer prunes its global footprint. Wal-Mart, based in Bentonville, Arkansas, earned \$4.57 billion, or \$1.43 per share in the three-month period ended Jan. 31. That

compares with \$4.97 billion, or \$1.53 per share, in the year ago period.

On an adjusted basis, the figure was \$1.49, higher than the \$1.46 per share estimated by FactSet.

The company's revenue of \$128.6 billion is short of the \$130.5 billion

that Wall Street was looking for, according to FactSet, and shares tumbled 5 percent before the opening bell.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc is trying to fend off competition on all fronts, including online leader Amazon.com. —AP

IRAN SEES OIL FREEZE PACT AS NOT ENOUGH TO HELP MARKET

'MARKET UNIMPRESSED, COUNTRIES LIKE SAUDI MUST CUT'

ANKARA/LONDON: Iran believes a global agreement to freeze oil output will not be enough to help prop up prices as the world is producing too much crude, Iranian oil sources told Reuters.

Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh and his counterparts from Qatar, Iraq and Venezuela held talks in Tehran on Wednesday aimed at persuading Iran to join a global pact to restrain output, agreed this week by OPEC leader Saudi Arabia and non-OPEC member Russia, the world's two largest oil exporters.

Zanganeh chose his words very carefully after the meeting saying Iran, OPEC's third largest producer, supported the initiative as a first step to rebalance the markets and help prices recover from their lowest in over a decade.

But during talks Iran stuck to its standard line that Tehran needs to regain market share it lost during years of sanctions while adding that regardless of what Iran does, the world was already awash with unwanted oil.

"The problem in the oil market is the glut. There is a need to do something to bring down these extra barrels. The freeze for those people that have been producing to the maximum does not help the market," one Iranian oil source familiar with discussions told Reuters.

A second Iranian source said the global pact idea should be discussed further when "countries that have increased their output - mainly Saudi Arabia - drop their production and Iran reaches pre-sanction levels of production".

OIL MARKET UNIMPRESSED

Saudi Arabia and Russia said the global deal to freeze output could become the first step in the right direction to balance the market if all major producers agreed to abide by it.

But the idea has failed to impress the market so far with oil prices fluctuating sharply this week and trading yesterday at \$35 per barrel. This is a fraction of what most producers need to balance their budgets resulting in ratings agency S&P downgrading ratings on major oil nations on Wednesday.

The West's energy watchdog, the International Energy Agency, said this month that even in the optimistic scenario of flat OPEC output this year, the world would continue to stockpile huge volumes of unwanted crude adding to the already record inventories. The IEA said it saw the pace of stockbuilding slowing in the second half of 2016 but still continuing until 2017: "In the market already awash in oil, it is very hard to see how oil prices can rise significantly in the short term."

Meanwhile, the likelihood of OPEC keeping output flat is very low given that Iran has pledged to raise exports after the lifting of Western sanctions in January. The sanctions, imposed over Iran's nuclear program, were lifted last month after an agreement with world powers, allowing Tehran to resume selling oil freely in international markets.

Tehran has pledged to raise supply by around 1 million bpd in the next 6-12 months and on Wednesday some Iranian banks were reconnected to the SWIFT global transaction network, which will allow it to facilitate banking business. —Reuters

IS SAUDI WINNING THE WAR AGAINST SHALE?

LONDON: Saudi officials insist the kingdom's oil production strategy is not aimed at putting US shale producers out of business, a message that has been repeated to visiting US policymakers. The United States remains the kingdom's most important security partner, and Saudi officials do not want to be seen to be deliberately trying to halt the shale revolution. Rising domestic oil production is important to US policymakers because it has given the United States a greater sense of energy security, and the Saudis remain keen not to offend their most important ally.

Saudi officials talk about defending market share and refusing to subsidise "high cost" production which encompasses unconventional output such as oil sands and frontier areas such as deep water and the Arctic. In response to the plunge in prices, capital expenditures totalling almost \$400 billion on a range of exploration and development projects have been axed or postponed, which will reduce non-shale non-OPEC production in the latter part of the decade.

In the short term, however, the brunt of the oil market adjustment has fallen on shale producers, since other forms of exploration and production have much longer lead times.

The battle between Saudi Arabia and the shale producers has been a war of attrition in which progress has been slow so far. But the most recent data show the tide may finally be turning in the kingdom's favour, as US shale producers run out of cash and fresh financing, and are unable to maintain output.

TURNING THE TIDE

Even after oil prices began falling in June 2014, US production (including condensates) continued to increase by another 1 million barrels per day (bpd). Between June 2014 and its peak in April 2015, oil output rose from an estimated 8.7 million bpd to 9.7 million bpd, according to the US Energy Information Administration. Since April 2015, production has fallen, but it was still running at 9.3 million bpd in November 2015, the latest month for which reasonably comprehensive estimates are available. How much progress this represents depends on the baseline against which it is measured. In absolute terms, output has fallen by around 375,000 bpd between the peak in April 2015 and November 2015. If output had continued to increase on its pre-June 2014 trend, it would have been running at almost 11 million bpd by November 2015.

The reduction compared to the pre-June 2014 trend is around 1.6 million bpd, which is one measure of how far the strategy has worked. The EIA was more cautious about the outlook for US oil output; in June 2014 the agency predicted oil output would be running at 9.5 million bpd in November 2015.

The price war has reduced production by around 150,000 bpd compared with this more conservative baseline. So the impact of the price war on US shale output could be estimated at anything between 150,000 bpd and 1.6 million bpd. Shale proved far more resilient than almost anyone thought possible as producers concentrated drilling and expenditure on the most promising areas, accelerated drilling times and optimized fracturing operations. The result is that the Saudis have been forced to push prices much lower for much longer than they anticipated to defend their market share and rebalance the market.

WINNING BUT AT A COST

The effort may finally be paying off as a result of the latest downward lurch in prices. The US shale industry finally appears to have reached a tipping point where output is contracting rather than just flat-lining. The EIA has revised its projection for end-2016 output down from 9.7 million bpd in July 2014 to just 8.5 million bpd in February 2015 ("Short-Term Energy Outlook", EIA, July 2014 and February 2015).

Low prices are expected to remove another 800,000 bpd from the market by the end of this year. Even that may prove to be too low because the EIA's forecast is conditioned on WTI recovering to \$43 by end-2016. Oil production in North Dakota, one of the states at the heart of the shale boom, fell to just 1.15 million bpd in December 2015, down almost 6 percent from the all-time high of 1.23 million bpd in December 2014.

"Oil price weakness is now anticipated to last into at least the third quarter of this year and is the main reason for the continued slowdown," according to the chief of the state's Department of Mineral Resources. In the meantime, however, the market remains severely oversupplied. Global inventories of crude and refined products have climbed by 1 billion barrels according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). —Reuters

FED TO WEIGH FINANCIAL MARKETS IN RATE DECISIONS

WASHINGTON: Financial markets turmoil has clouded the US economic outlook and will be a key factor in charting interest rate increases, the minutes of the Federal Reserve's January meeting showed Wednesday. Participants at the January 26-27 meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee "emphasized that the timing and pace of adjustments will depend on future economic and financial market developments and their implications for the medium-term economic outlook," the minutes said.

Generally, the policymakers saw that risks to the US economic outlook had worsened since they lifted interest rates for the first time in more than nine years in mid-December, by a modest quarter percentage point.

Intending to normalize rates after keeping them near zero for seven years to support the economy's recovery from the Great Recession, the Fed at that time had envisioned four rate hikes this year in gradual steps.

But at the January FOMC meeting, policymakers noted mixed US economic data and a turbulent start to the year in global financial markets, and left the federal funds rate range at 0.25-0.50 percent.

Participants judged that the implication of recent developments for the outlook on the US economy was unclear, "but they agreed that uncertainty had increased, and many saw these developments as increasing the downside risks to the outlook."

They discussed "tighter" financial conditions in the United States, including the market volatility that had pushed share prices sharply lower and sent the dollar higher, according to the minutes. Some expressed the view that the markets were doing some of the Fed's heavy lifting on tightening credit. "The effects of these financial developments, if they were to persist, may be roughly equivalent to those from further firming in monetary policy," according to the minutes.

Officials also voiced concern that recent structural changes and financial imbalances in China "might lead to a sharper deceleration in economic growth in that country than was generally anticipated."

"Such a downshift, if it occurred, could increase the economic and financial stresses on other EMEs (emerging-market economies) and on commodity producers, including Canada and Mexico," among the top US trade partners. "Moreover, global financial markets could continue to be affected by uncertainty about China's exchange rate regime."

China drag

Some participants "were concerned about the potential drag on the US economy from the broader effects of a greater-than-expected slowdown in China and other EMEs."

The dollar was little changed in the wake of the release of the report. "The minutes are indeed a more dovish tint to the Fed's language and on balance, likely suggest a lower likelihood of the Fed raising rates in March. However, the market was already positioned for dovish minutes so there was little in the way of surprise in these minutes," said Omer Esiner, chief market analyst at Commonwealth Foreign Exchange. —AFP



BRUSSELS: The European Central Bank President Mario Draghi arrives to address the committee on economic and monetary affairs at the European parliament in Brussels. —AP

ECB OFFICIALS WORRIED ABOUT GLOBAL TURMOIL

FRANKFURT: Top officials from the European Central Bank expressed concern at their last meeting about turbulent financial markets and the increasingly dim outlook for China and other emerging economies. Members of the bank's 25-member governing council also debated whether current low levels of inflation in Europe could become chronic by being ingrained in wage and price agreements.

The concerns expressed in the summary of the Jan. 21 meeting could push the council to add to its current stimulus measures when it next meets to review policy on March 10. Europe's economy is recovering slowly with stronger domestic demand, but faces risks from a slowdown in global trade that could hurt exports.

The central bank could increase the size of its 60 billion euros (\$67 billion) in

monthly bond purchases, a step which drives down already low borrowing costs and pumps newly printed money into the economy. The ECB could also cut the rate on deposits that commercial banks store with the central bank even farther into negative territory, from minus 0.3 percent. The negative rate is an unconventional step aimed at pushing banks to lend the money rather than hoard it. In the summary, ECB members expressed concern that "global economic growth and global trade growth were decelerating in a context of heightened volatility in global financial and commodity markets and weaker global confidence."

"The environment had deteriorated in emerging market economies in particular." They also debated whether current low inflation - only 0.4 percent annually - was working its way into the

setting of wages and prices by businesses and workers. That would make it even harder for the ECB to reach its goal of pushing inflation up toward its goal of just under 2 percent, and would be another reason to enact more stimulus. Just under 2 percent is considered healthiest for the economy.

In that context, members noted weaker than expected wage growth. The no-names summary also related worries that slowing growth from China's rebalancing of its economy away from manufacturing and infrastructure construction toward consumer spending "could turn out to be more pronounced than expected and trigger a hard landing."

The concerns were similar to those expressed by the US Federal Reserve at its January meeting, according to minutes released Wednesday. —AP

POLISH MORTGAGE SCHEME 'UNCONSTITUTIONAL': BANKS

WARSAW: A controversial plan by Poland's new right-wing government to convert foreign currency mortgages, mostly in Swiss Francs, into the local zloty currency is unconstitutional, according to the EU member's banking association. A draft bill on the conversion "unequivocally contradicts the most important canons of the constitution," Jerzy Banka, deputy chief of the Polish Banking Association (ZBP) told the Thursday edition of the Rzeczpospolita broadsheet daily.

The conversion plan was one of several campaign promises concerning the banking sector made by the populist Law and Justice

(PiS) party which won an unprecedented majority in October elections.

But PiS development minister Mateusz Morawiecki, a former banker, warned Wednesday that the mortgage scheme risks opening the door to litigation by banks unless it is voluntary. Poland's central bank chief Marek Belka has dubbed the plan "pure evil" arguing it will trigger both "serious losses" for banks and "slower loan growth and a destabilised economy".

He is echoed by global ratings agency Moody's, which said Monday the conversion scheme would be "credit negative", hurting

the domestic banking sector's "ability to lend and absorb future shocks".

Last month, Moody's also warned that a levy on banks-another PiS campaign promise-threatens not only the sector's profitability but also overall economic growth.

The levy is designed to fund a raft of PiS social spending measures including a child allowance, among others. The PiS government has pushed through several other pieces of controversial legislation, including institutional changes to the country's constitutional court and public media that critics insist have tightened its grip on power.

The European Commission responded by launching an unprecedented probe into whether the changes violate EU democracy rules and merit punitive measures.

The PiS moves also prompted the first-ever downgrade by global ratings agency Standard and Poor's in January. Poland expects to see its economy expand by up to 3.8 per cent this year following a 3.6 per cent advance in 2015. Having grown each year since it shed communism a quarter of a century ago, the EU and NATO member of 38 million is regarded as Central Europe's powerhouse. —AFP

CHINA'S HNA SNAPS UP US TECH FIRM FOR \$6.0 BILLION

LATEST EYE-POPPING ACQUISITION BY A CHINESE COMPANY

SHANGHAI: A Chinese firm has splashed out \$6 billion for a US tech firm that distributes products for Apple and Microsoft, the latest eye-popping acquisition by a Chinese company seeking greater profits abroad as the economy slows down at home. HNA will pay the enormous figure for Ingram Micro, a company statement said Wednesday, making it among the top ten most valuable overseas acquisitions ever made by a Chinese company, according to data from research firm Dealogic.

Growth in the world's second largest economy has waned in recent years, and Beijing has pushed local firms to look beyond the country's borders for deals that can both improve their balance books and strengthen their operations.

Ingram Micro, which also distributes products for IBM and Cisco, has more than 200,000 customers in approximately 160 countries, the company says on its website.

HNA—best known as a parent of Hainan Airlines—said the acquisition

would help grow its business overseas and transform its existing logistics unit.

"With the help of Ingram Micro, HNA Group would have access to business opportunities in emerging markets, which have higher growth rates and better profitability," HNA chief executive Adam Tan said in the statement.

Tianjin Tianhai Investment, a unit of HNA, will pay \$38.90 per share in an all-cash transaction, New York-listed Ingram Micro said Wednesday.

The payout is a 31 percent premium to its closing price on the day. HNA also has interests in tourism, hotels, financial services and real estate, according to its website. Subsidiary Tianjin Tianhai, originally a maritime shipping company, is seeking to transform itself into a logistics firm.

The transaction, which has already been approved by the boards of both companies, is expected to be completed in the second half of the year, the HNA statement said.

Ingram Micro will remain headquartered in California and the current management team will stay in place, it said. Despite an economic slowdown and weakening yuan currency, "China's major companies with abundant cash flows are eyeing more and more overseas targets, which are quite attractive to them price-wise", Phillip Securities analyst Chen Xingyu told AFP.

"Chinese giants are trying to upgrade and expand their business", he said. State-owned China National Chemical Corp. (ChemChina) this month offered \$43 billion for Swiss pesticide and seed giant Syngenta, the biggest-ever overseas acquisition by a Chinese firm if completed, although political concerns in the US may block the move.

Besides the Syngenta deal, ChemChina in January announced plans to buy German machinery firm KraussMaffei Group, and last year unveiled a takeover of Italian tyre maker Pirelli.

China's biggest completed overseas acquisition to date was energy giant CNOOC's purchase of Canadian oil firm Nexen for \$15.1 billion in 2013. "More China-related M&A (merger and acquisition) deals are also on the horizon," US-based law firm Baker & McKenzie said in a statement in January, citing greater use of the yuan currency in cross-border transactions. — AFP



BEIJING: The HNA logo is seen on a building in Beijing. — AFP



BEIJING: An employee gives customers a group lesson on using an iPhone at an Apple Store in Beijing yesterday. Apple Inc yesterday launched its smartphone-based payment system in China where the electronic payments market is already dominated by an arm of e-commerce giant Alibaba. —AP

APPLE LAUNCHES CHINA PAYMENTS SERVICE IN CROWDED MARKET

SHANGHAI: Apple yesterday launched its mobile payment service Apple Pay in China, pitting the US technology giant against strong domestic rivals in a large but already crowded market.

Success in the world's second-largest economy is crucial for the California-based firm. Apple Pay is available in only a few other countries including the United States, Britain, Canada and Australia. But unlike most other countries, mobile payment systems are already well-established in China and Apple does not have a first-mover advantage.

"Can't wait for you to try it and see how incredibly easy it is to use!" Apple chief executive Tim Cook said of the service on a verified China microblog.

Some users complained of difficulties linking their bank cards, the key step to using the payment service, apparently because people rushed to sign up. "Apple Pay, I have already waited a long time for you in vain. But your back-end technology basically cannot survive in this hot spot China," said one in a microblog posting under the name Erzi Wangpeng.

China had 359 million online payment users in mid-2015, up almost 18 percent in six months, according to the state-backed China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC).

China's mobile transactions were valued at some 9.3 trillion yuan (\$1.4 trillion) last year, up an annual 57 percent, one industry estimate showed. The dominant mobile and online payment providers are e-commerce giant Alibaba with nearly three-quarters of the market, followed by Tencent-operator of the popular messaging app WeChat—which has some 17 percent, according to Beijing-based BigData Research. The Apple brand commands a strong following in China, especially as a status symbol among the emerging middle class, with reports circulating of people selling their kidneys to buy iPhones in recent years.

Intense competition

Ray Zhao, an Internet industry analyst at Guotai Junan Securities, told AFP: "There is still a chance for Apple Pay to grab some market share. Some loyal Apple users may prefer using it instead of other payment tools."

"But the space for Apple Pay is still small," he added. Analysts said Apple's iOS system could provide better security for transactions, but most Chinese people use Android phones, ruling them out as Apple Pay users. Tencent and Alibaba's Alipay squared off during the recent Lunar New Year, encouraging users to send billions of "red envelopes"—cash gifts traditionally exchanged over the holiday—online.

Just two days ahead of the Apple Pay launch, Tencent said it would start levying fees for withdrawing funds from its WeChat Wallet, according to a statement, apparently a move to discourage users from leaving. Rival Alipay said it would not charge.

Apple has found a powerful partner in China, bank card provider UnionPay, which has links to the central bank but has lagged technology companies in developing online payments, analysts said.—AFP

NOUVEAU-RICHE BLING BLOSSOMS IN EMERGING CUBA

HAVANA: Eddy Relova used to scrape a living buying and selling goods in the street, but now he sits wearing a thick gold necklace at a posh restaurant in Havana.

State controls over Cuba's economy are gradually easing, unleashing a new class of moneyed consumers in a communist island where wealth is largely taboo.

Now, aged 23, Relova can sell jewelry as a private entrepreneur. His earnings have risen, making him one of these Cuban nouveaux riches. "State-controlled work doesn't let you get anywhere," he said, sitting with his partner Valentina and their nine-month-old baby daughter.

Until recently, only a privileged few such as military officials, state company bosses, tourism workers or artists could afford cars or designer clothes.

But since Raul Castro began a gradual process of opening up the economy after becoming president in 2008, upmarket bars and eateries in Havana have been opening and filling up.

"Every day, we see more Cubans coming here to eat," said Ernesto Blanco, 47, owner of the trendy La Fontana restaurant in western Havana, where the singing star Rihanna recently dined. "There are more people working on their own account and I guess that's what makes it possible for them to come to eat in places like this."

Gold bracelets

The state still controls 80 percent of economic activity on the island. But the other 20 percent is making some Cubans relatively rich. "We have seen this more clearly over the past four or five years, with the rise of private entrepreneurship," said Daybell Panellas, a psychologist at Havana University

who has written studies about the phenomenon. Studies estimate that about half a million people are now working in this new private sector and paying taxes on their earnings to the Cuban state. Panellas said the ones earning the most are restaurant owners, mechanics, landlords of rental properties and building entrepreneurs. Another diner, Raul, 36, admitted his fortunes have improved since he has been able to work as a private taxi driver. He would not give his family name nor say how much he earns. Flaunting wealth is still taboo in an island that prizes relative social equality.

"It has improved our standard of living a bit," said Raul, sitting in a restaurant with his wife, whose numerous gold bracelets clinked when she moved. "It lets us buy things that are a bit more expensive" and travel more, he said.

Hiding it from the neighbors

Not all Cubans are ready to display their wealth. Some wait until nightfall to get their shopping bags out of the car, to avoid making their neighbors jealous. "Being rich is not the rule in Cuba. Among the population at large, having a lot of money still carries a stigma," Panellas said.

They may still be far from the wealth of other more developed economies, but the trend is already raising the prospect of social tension.

The average salary on this Caribbean island is still no more than \$20 a month. "The opening up of private enterprise has driven a rise in inequality due to differences in income," said Panellas. "We have not lost our sense of solidarity and our social values, but people are noticing that without money their possibilities are limited. They are torn."—AFP



BEIJING: A boy sells with his mother vegetables at a market in Beijing yesterday. China's consumer inflation rate climbed higher in January, official data showed yesterday as the world's second-largest economy struggles with slower growth. — AFP

CHINA'S CONSUMER INFLATION QUICKENS TO FIVE-MTH HIGH

DATA SHOWS DEFLATIONARY PRESSURES PERSIST

SHANGHAI/BEIJING: China's consumer inflation quickened to a five-month high in January due to rising food prices but producer prices shrank for a 47th straight month as falling commodity markets and weak demand add to deflationary pressure in the world's second-largest economy.

The consumer price index (CPI) rose 1.8 percent in January from a year earlier, slightly less than market expectations and up from a 1.6 percent increase in December, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed yesterday. But the slight increase was mainly due to a 4.1 percent seasonal rise in food prices before the long Lunar New Year celebrations, and did not imply any visible improvement in economic activity and broader consumer demand, analysts said.

Indeed, non-food consumer inflation remained muted, growing 1.2 percent in January on-year, up only slightly from December. The price data also showed fur-

ther signs of strain on Chinese companies, particularly in the mining and processing sectors, as sluggish demand and fierce competition force them to repeatedly cut their selling prices. The producer price index (PPI) fell 5.3 percent in January from a year earlier, slightly less than expectations of a 5.4 percent decline and easing from 5.9 percent fall in December.

Lingering worries of deflation have reinforced economists' views that the government and central bank will have to roll out further stimulus measures this year to spur the economy, which grew last year at its slowest pace in a quarter of a century.

"The figures highlight persistent weakness in the economy, leaving room for further monetary policy easing," said Zhao Yang, chief China economist in Nomura.

Nomura expects four cuts to banks' reserve requirement ratio (RRR) this year, each by 50 basis points (bps), together with two more interest rate cuts.

Zhao noted that changes in China's consumer inflation may be less volatile in future after the NBS appeared to have lowered the weighting of food in its consumer price basket, at the same time as it changed the base year to 2015 from 2010.

The NBS said the new comparison bases affected the January CPI and PPI data by 0.08 and 0.002 percentage points, respectively, but exact weightings in the basket are secret.

Economists at ANZ also said more support is on the cards. "Overall, China will likely face strong deflationary pressure in the remainder of the year," they said in a note.

"In addition to the risk of deflation, China also continued to face capital outflows in January, as foreign reserves declined further. Therefore, we believe that further monetary policy easing is still needed."

UNDER PRESSURE

Chinese producers have seen their selling prices fall for nearly four straight years, reflecting sliding commodity prices, sluggish demand at home and overseas and overcapacity in key sectors including steel and energy. Industrial profits fell for a seventh straight month in December, and were down 2.3 percent in 2015. Many firms in the industrial sector also face very high refinancing costs in real terms, which have helped fuel bond defaults and an increase in bad loans.

Consumer prices have held up better, reflecting the relative strength of the labor market, but analysts have been watching closely to see whether weakness in the industrial sector and anaemic global trade will start to be felt more strongly in wages and income growth this year.

However, People's Bank of China officials have indicated that they are wary of further broad-based monetary easing such as interest rate cuts, which could help boost activity but spur higher capital outflows and put more pressure on the yuan. — Reuters

VENEZUELA RAISES FUEL PRICE, DEVALUES BOLIVAR AMID CRISIS

CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Wednesday devalued the currency and raised heavily subsidized fuel prices in an effort to stem a widening economic crisis, though critics of the socialist leader quickly dismissed the moves as insufficient.

The measures are meant to help shore up the OPEC nation's finances as plummeting oil prices and a collapsing state-led economic model have left the country with a severe recession, triple-digit inflation and chronic product shortages. "This is a necessary measure, a necessary action to balance things, I take responsibility for it," Maduro said, in reference to the fuel hike during a combative four-hour speech in which he insulted opposition leaders and occasionally used foul language.

The reforms risk fueling triple-digit inflation at a time when millions are struggling to make ends meet, and comes two months after the ruling Socialist Party suffered a blistering defeat in parliamentary elections due to anger over the crisis.

The package will likely be seen by Wall St. investors, who are increasingly concerned about a potential default, as mildly positive but still vastly insufficient to help Venezuela make some \$10 billion in debt payments amid a major cash crunch. "Bottom line is no change to cashflow for this year and hefty year end debt payments," wrote Siobhan Morden of Nomura in an email.

The measures devalue the strongest official exchange rate by 37 percent to 10 bolivars per dollar from 6.3, and streamline the previous three-tiered system into a dual exchange rate mechanism. The weaker of the two rates will be a free float based on an existing system that currently sells dollars at around 200 bolivars, Maduro said. Critics immediately questioned the latter claim, noting that the government has repeatedly announced "free-floating" systems that withered away precisely because authorities never allowed them to be determined by demand. — Reuters



TOKYO: A container is loaded onto a cargo ship at a pier in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

JAPAN SWINGS BACK TO TRADE DEFICIT AS CHINA EXPORTS PLUNGE

TOKYO: Japan swung back to a trade deficit in January as exports to China plunged, official data showed yesterday, underscoring the impact of a slowdown in one of Tokyo's biggest trade partners. The disappointing figures come after Japan's economy shrank 0.4 percent in the October-December quarter or an annualized 1.4 percent drop owing to weak demand for big-ticket items like cars and home appliances. That was Japan's second quarterly contraction in 2015, and dealt another blow to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's bid to slay deflation and kick-start the world's number three economy.

The monthly deficit came in at 646 billion yen (\$5.7 billion), reversing a 140 billion yen surplus in December, figures released yesterday showed. Overall exports slid almost 13 percent from a year ago, while shipments to China dived 17.5 percent, as the powerhouse economy wobbles. Despite diplomatic tensions, China is a key trading partner for Japan. Exports to other major markets also fell, with a 5.3 percent decline in US shipments and 3.6 percent fall for EU-bound exports.

Imports, meanwhile, dropped 18.0 percent as the cost of oil and gas fell. Japan's weak trade figures are likely to fan speculation that the Bank of Japan will launch fresh easing measures.

Last month, policymakers shocked markets with an unprecedented negative interest rate policy, which aims to boost lending by penalizing banks for storing excess reserves in the BoJ's vaults. — AFP

UKRAINE READY FOR COURT BATTLE WITH RUSSIA OVER \$3BN BOND

KIEV: Ukraine is ready to defend itself against a lawsuit brought by Russia in relation to a \$3 billion Eurobond that Moscow insists Kiev must repay, the Ukrainian Finance Ministry said in a statement yesterday.

Ukraine included the two-year bond in the commercial debt it planned to restructure to shore up its war-torn economy, but Russia, which lent the money, has refused to participate and on Wednesday filed a lawsuit in London. "Ukraine acknowledges the formal commencement ... of proceedings before the English High Court of Justice. Ukraine intends and is fully prepared vigorously to defend its interests," the ministry said in a statement.

The Eurobond was taken out by the government of Moscow-backed ex-president Viktor Yanukovich just two months

before he fled to Russia in February 2014 in the face of street protests that brought a pro-European government to power.

Kiev has offered Russia the same restructuring terms, including a writedown, that it offered its other creditors. Russia, whose political relations with Kiev are at rock bottom over the Kremlin's role in Ukraine's separatist insurgency, has refused to accept the restructuring terms, insisting the bond is an official country-to-country loan, not commercial debt.

In a surprise move late last year, President Vladimir Putin offered Ukraine new terms on the bond, saying Moscow would accept an annual debt repayment of \$1 billion over three years if the West provided guarantees. Ukraine did not agree to those terms, but said it was willing to negotiate a deal. — Reuters



DUBAI: Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland follows his ball on the 11th hole during 1st round of the Omega Dubai Desert Classic golf tournament. — AP

MCILROY BEGINS HIS ROAD TO THE MASTERS

LOS ANGELES: The road to the Masters starts on the other side of the country for Rory McIlroy. McIlroy has heard enough of Riviera that he decided to play the Northern Trust Open for the first time, and 27 holes over the last two days have left him convinced that it was a smart move and that it was worth it to add one more event to a busy schedule.

He is playing five of the next six weeks, and every field will be among the strongest in golf for this time of the year. "I think the Masters at this point of the year is on pretty much everyone's mind," McIlroy said Wednesday. "You're building up to it. You've got some great events between now and then, but obviously I'd love my game to be in peak shape for Augusta in April."

Strong field

McIlroy has played twice this year, a tie for third in Abu Dhabi and a tie for sixth in Dubai, and typically waits until the Florida swing to get into gear. Instead, he tees it up at Sunset Boulevard with a field that has five of the top eight in the world, starting with Jordan Spieth at No. 1. The Honda Classic next week in Florida is expected to have a strong field, and then Doral will bring together the top three - Spieth, Jason Day and McIlroy - for the first time since September.

McIlroy also is scheduled to play at Bay Hill and then the Match Play for the top 64 in the world. "It's going to be a great stretch of golf," he said. "I think the guys that are up at the top of the

world rankings now, we like to play quite a bit. ... It's great to be able to play week in and week out against some of the best fields in the world. You want to challenge yourself, and you want to test yourself against the best that's out here. "I think we'll see that happen here, and then obviously as we move into Florida." Even so, Augusta is on his mind.

McIlroy had all the attention on him last year during the weeks leading to the Masters as the undisputed No. 1 player in the world going after a third straight major and a chance to complete the career Grand Slam. Now he's one of three battling for No. 1 in the world.

McIlroy slipped back to No. 3 this week behind Day. When he won the Match Play last year, he told about a ritual of going to the Official World Golf Ranking website to see the size of his lead at No. 1. Now, he doesn't look at the ranking as much. He knows he's not No. 1. "I will check them. I saw that Jason overtook me last week," he said. "Need a cup of coffee to perk me up after it." Given the strength of fields over the coming weeks, McIlroy has a chance to change that.

Big deal

"It's still a big deal," McIlroy said. "Look, even if you're a player or a fan, anyone wants to know who the best golf is in the world. It's important to me. I'm not really competitive in much other things, but this I'm very competitive and want to try and get back there as fast I can." So is Spieth, who has his own love

affair with Riviera. Spieth said he was torn between going to college at Texas or USC when he was in high school (he eventually chose Texas), and one of the perks of the Trojans was having a playing membership at Riviera while he was in college.

He played on an exemption as an amateur in 2012 and missed the cut when he missed a 10-foot par putt on the 18th hole. He was three shots behind going into the final round in 2014 until closing with a 71. And a year ago, he made bogey trying to make birdie, and it wound up keeping him out of a playoff. Throw in the NCAA title that Texas won at Riviera in 2012, and Spieth figures he has played Riviera as much as any PGA Tour course outside the state of Texas. "It's one of my favorites in the entire world," he said.

McIlroy sounded as though he was ready to join the fan club. James Hahn won last year in a playoff after he, Dustin Johnson and Paul Casey finished at 6-under 278. Only the U.S. Open last year (5 under) had a higher winning score to par. "It's a real treat when you come to a golf course like this where it's not overly long, you don't have to really bomb it off the tee, but it's real strategic," McIlroy said. "You've got to place your ball on the right sides of the fairways. You have to make sure you hit it to the right side of the greens. You can't really get it above the pin. It's a real thinker's golf course, and it's a real treat to play something like this because we don't get to play them that often anymore."

NASCAR'S NEW CHARTERS CREATE PUZZLING PAYOUTS FOR DRIVERS

DAYTONA BEACH: NASCAR's new charter system was introduced as a monumental moment in auto racing - a triumphant merger between a one-time dictatorship and a group of team owners finally organized enough to demand their fair share of the financials.

The franchise-type model introduced days before teams arrived at Daytona International Speedway has been celebrated for a series wracked with instability because of an independent-contractor model that forced competitors to heavily rely on sponsorship. Now the owners are guaranteed a bigger chunk of the pot and 36 slots in the field every week. The drivers? Well, most aren't so certain how good of a deal this is for their bottom line. "I think anyone would like to know before the terms of their employment change, but that is not the situation," Brad Keselowski said. "I am aware of the fact that I am a race car driver, and no matter what happens, I am still going to be OK. I am not looking for anyone to feel bad for me. On the other side, it is not ideal. "It would be like if your employer just said, 'Hey, don't worry about it, you will get paid.' That is kind of where most every driver is."

Complete overhaul

The charter system has completely overhauled how drivers will be paid. Drivers typically negotiated individual contracts with team owners in which they were promised specific salaries and percentages of each week's purse. The new system has set aside a fixed portion of the purse for the 36 charter teams, and an additional portion that goes to charter teams based on a performance scale. Starting with last weekend's exhibition race at Daytona, the race winnings and total purse were not publicized as had been the norm. NASCAR had touted transparency in the charter agreement, but now the public - and some drivers - won't know how prize money was distributed.

Drivers said that when the final charter deal was signed by NASCAR and team owners, the language surrounding their method of pay differed from what they had been led to believe. Most are now scrambling to renegotiate the driver compensation part of their contracts. "I think that everyone will have to have something redone within their contract," Denny Hamlin said. "There's verbiage in stuff that has changed how drivers get paid from the purse. There's not one common standard that one driver or team offers that's going to be the same. It's up to the individual driver and owner to work out those details."

Fair solution

Many weren't concerned about ultimately finding a fair solution with their respective owners. Some weren't pleased with the timing. "Everybody knew there was going to be some contractual stuff that we had to work through," Kevin Harvick said. "For me, I wanted it to happen as openly and as quick as possible because I didn't want it to linger and have things be brought up that really didn't need to be brought up and cause tension between teams. "That was my ultimate goal. I'm not going to sit around and pinch pennies just because of the fact I think I'm being treated unfairly. I want to just be treated fairly. That was really all that I was looking for. I felt like our team did that." Two years ago, drivers wanting a larger voice in industry issues created a text chain that allowed them to vent and debate solutions. At the time, their biggest concern was the direction of the on-track product. — AP



DAYTONA BEACH: Kevin Harvick answers questions at NASCAR media day at Daytona International Speedway. — AP



CALGARY: Minnesota Wild’s Mikael Granlund, right, from Finland, competes for the puck with Calgary Flames’ Mark Giordano during the second period of an NHL hockey game. — AP

JASON POMINVILLE HELPS SLUMPING WILD BEAT FLAMES 5-3

CALGARY: Interim coach John Torchetti will take two points any way he can get them as the Minnesota Wild try to push for a playoff spot. Jason Pominville and Erik Haula each had a goal and an assist, and the slumping Wild beat the Calgary Flames 5-3 on Wednesday night. The Wild have won their first two games under Torchetti after a 1-11-2 stretch cost coach Mike Yeo his job. They are within two points of Nashville and the second wild-card spot in the Western Conference.

“Any win on the road is a good win,” Torchetti said. Pominville entered with only one goal and one assist in his last 23 games. He set up Haula for the game’s first goal midway through the first period, and then was set up by Haula for a one-timer late in the second that made it 4-2.

“We weren’t that far off, but at the same time at key moments of the game we weren’t finding ways to win. Now we are,” Pominville said. “We’ve got to keep it going and keep this streak alive.” The third member of that line, Nino Niederreiter, assisted on both goals.

“We try to keep it simple and make sure that we have that thought in our mind - first take care of our own end and then get north,” Haula said about the strong game for his line. “It doesn’t matter at this time who scores, but it’s always nice to get the line involved.”

Jason Zucker, Mikko Koivu and Charlie Coyle, into an empty net, also scored for Minnesota. Deryk Engelland, David Jones and Mikeal Backlund scored for Calgary. The Flames have lost three straight. “You get down three and it’s just an uphill battle the rest of the night,” Calgary captain Mark Giordano said. “We definitely cost ourselves tonight with some mistakes, again, made a push late but it’s too hard in this league to keep getting down

two, three goals and trying to claw back into games.”

Bad day for Flames

The loss capped off a bad day for the Flames. First, they learned starting goalie Karri Ramo would miss the rest of the season with a torn ACL. Then NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman upheld defenseman Dennis Wideman’s 20-game suspension for cross-checking a linesman. “It’s maybe a little frustrating when we look at the standings and see how far down we are, but it’s a business and we have to

come and winning’s the result everyone wants,” Jones said.

The Wild took a 2-0 lead with a short-handed goal with 26 seconds left in the first when Zucker ripped a shot over Jonas Hiller’s shoulder. Minnesota went up by three at 3:09 of the second on Koivu’s 12th goal. It was the 10th power-play goal allowed in the last four games for the Flames.

Calgary got on the scoreboard at 11:28 of the second on Engelland’s first goal in 56 games. Jones made it 3-2 at 16:38 on a weird one, his shot deflecting into the air off the stick of Wild defense-

man Mike Reilly, hitting his defense partner Matt Dumba in the face, and fluttering over goalie Devan Dubnyk. Backlund scored on a power play with 4:11 left. Dubnyk stopped 25 shots for Minnesota.

BLACKHAWKS 5, RANGERS 3

Chicago’s rookie sensation Artemi Panarin scored his first hat trick to lead the Blackhawks to a come-from-behind 5-3 victory at the New York Rangers on Wednesday and a return to the top of the NHL Central Division.

Andrew Desjardins and Andrew Shaw also scored and Corey Crawford made 31 saves to help Chicago hand New York its first regulation loss at home in 11 games. The Blackhawks, who scored a season-high four power-play goals Monday, got three more against New York. The Rangers were miffed by a controversial late penalty that led to Panarin’s go-ahead goal with 3 minutes to play. He also added an empty-net tally. Kevin Hayes, Derick Brassard and Dan Boyle scored for New York, which rallied from a 2-0 deficit to take a 3-2 lead early in the third period. Rangers captain Ryan McDonagh returned after missing four games with a concussion.

AVALANCHE 3, CANADIENS 2

Jarome Iginla broke a tie with 2:03 left with his second goal of the game in Colorado’s victory over Montreal. Iginla also had a power-play goal in the second period after having a goal waved off for goaltender interference. He has 17 goals this season to push his career total to 606. Erik Johnson also added a short-handed goal for the Avalanche. Andrei Markov and Lars Eller scored for the Canadiens. — AP

NHL results/standings

Chicago 5, NY RANGERS 3; COLORADO 3, Montreal 2; Minnesota 5, CALGARY 3.

Western Conference							Eastern Conference						
Central Division							Atlantic Division						
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS							
Chicago	38	18	5	175	142	81	Florida	33	18	6	160	134	72
Dallas	37	15	6	188	156	80	Boston	31	20	6	174	158	68
St. Louis	33	17	9	145	139	75	Detroit	29	19	9	146	147	67
Colorado	30	26	4	161	166	64	Tampa Bay	30	22	4	149	139	64
Nashville	26	21	10	151	152	62	Montreal	27	27	4	159	161	58
Minnesota	25	22	10	145	145	60	Ottawa	26	26	6	165	182	58
Winnipeg	25	28	3	143	162	53	Buffalo	23	28	7	137	162	53
Pacific Division							Metropolitan Division						
Los Angeles	33	20	3	154	134	69	Toronto	20	26	9	134	163	49
Anaheim	29	19	8	136	137	66	Washington	41	10	4	184	126	86
San Jose	30	20	5	164	148	65	NY Rangers	32	19	6	166	148	70
Arizona	26	24	6	151	171	58	NY Islanders	30	19	6	161	141	66
Vancouver	22	22	12	133	157	56	New Jersey	29	22	7	130	136	65
Calgary	25	28	3	153	173	53	Pittsburgh	28	19	8	142	141	64
Edmonton	22	30	6	146	176	50	Carolina	26	21	10	139	150	62
							Philadelphia	25	21	10	137	151	60
							Columbus	23	28	7	149	180	53
							Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).						

FIVE MEMORABLE INNINGS BY BRENDON MCCULLUM

CHRISTCHURCH: Five memorable innings by New Zealand captain Brendon McCullum who retires after New Zealand play Australia in Christchurch starting on Saturday, ending a 101-Test career:

January 2014, Wellington, 302 v India

An innings where McCullum showed he could put aside his batting belligerence and instead graft away for the good of the team. India led by 246 on the first innings and had New Zealand at 94 for 5 in the second before McCullum began a near 13-hour stand in which he made 302, the only triple-century by a New Zealander, and saved the Test. He faced 559 balls and hit 32 fours and four sixes.

March 2010, Wellington, 104 v Australia

McCullum's first century against Australia and while it did not save New Zealand it spared them from an innings defeat. New Zealand were forced to follow on 302 behind and were 183 for 5 in the second innings when McCullum again showed he could control his naturally aggressive nature. In a tempered innings, he faced 232 deliveries for 104.

December 2014, Christchurch, 195 v Sri Lanka

It was a trademark McCullum performance as Test cricket made its return to Christchurch for the first time since the 2011 earthquakes that devastated the city. He scored one run in the first 11 balls he faced and then opened up. It took 134 balls to reach 195 in an innings that included 18 fours and 11 sixes. In one over from Suranga Lakmal he hit three sixes and two fours and during his blitz became the first New Zealander to score 1,000 Test runs in a calendar year.

March 2015, Auckland, 59 v South Africa

An ODI innings to savour and which put New Zealand into the World Cup final for the first time. In a shortened semi-final New Zealand needed a flying start batting second and facing a target of 298 in 43 overs. McCullum obliged when he opened the innings and made a mockery of some of the world's best bowlers with his 59 off 26 balls, toying with Dale Steyn, Vern Philander and Morne Morkel. One Steyn over produced 24 runs.

November 2014, Sharjah, 202 v Pakistan

An emotionally drained McCullum produced a double century following the death of Australia's Phillip Hughes with whom he had previously played at New South Wales. Batting with the initials PH beneath the silver fern on his shirt, McCullum said he was relying on instinct as he smacked the fastest century by a New Zealander, reaching three figures in 78 deliveries. He was finally dismissed for 202 off 188 balls. —AFP



WELLINGTON: Brendon McCullum of New Zealand plays a shot during day three of the first cricket Test match between New Zealand and Australia at the Basin Reserve. —AFP

SMASH OR CRASH - THE MCCULLUM WAY

CHRISTCHURCH: The cap may be tattered but the legacy Brendon McCullum will leave when he calls it quits is of glowing success, destructive batting, record-setting innings and reshaping the game. McCullum ends his glorious career after the second Test against Australia starting in Christchurch on Saturday.

He doubts he will go down as one of cricket's greats and, taken in isolation, his batting average of a shade more than 38.00 after 101 Tests suggests he may be right. But the 34-year-old has never been just a batsman, nor just a wicketkeeper-batsman in his early days. Whenever he strode to the middle there was an expectant murmur in the crowd and doubt among the bowlers.

"I'll never go down as a great player but I played a role in the team, made some contributions," is how McCullum sees himself. "I've been pretty strong about how I've gone about the style of cricket which I've tried to play throughout my career." Just as he has never changed his Test cap since it was presented to him on the eve of his first Test in 2004, he has never changed his attack-at-all-cost batting approach.

"That can have its knockers as well and at the same time it can change a game too, so that's one thing I'll look back on fondly as I was able to maintain that even through times which were slightly averse," McCullum said.

Joy of sixes

That black cap, by his own admission, "is rancid" after years of use but the brutality of his batting has gone from strength to strength particularly after he took over as captain in 2012, since when had averaged 45 in Tests.

His long list of achievements include becoming the second player, after West Indian Chris Gayle, to score a Twenty20 international century. In total, he has 11 Test centuries, five in ODIs and two in

Twenty20s. Perhaps his best year was 2014, which included scores of 302, two double centuries and a 195, averaging more than 72 per innings, better than Kumar Sangakkara, Angelo Mathews, Younis Khan and David Warner. He is the only player to have hit 200 sixes in ODIs and 100 in Tests and ahead of his final international, shares the world Test record for sixes with Adam Gilchrist. Many consider the dogged and Test-

captain during a tour of Sri Lanka in 2012 it caused an uproar in New Zealand.

And on the subsequent tour to South Africa New Zealand slumped to an embarrassing 45 all out in the first innings of the first Test. That failure, McCullum recalls, was the beginning of a new determination in a side where the captain instilled a need for players to want to hold their heads high.



WELLINGTON: New Zealand's Brendon McCullum (L) receives a cap for 100 test matches from Stephen Boock chairman of New Zealand cricket during day one of the first cricket international five-day Test match between New Zealand and Australia at Basin Reserve. —AFP

saving 302 his most memorable innings, with his knock coming when New Zealand trailed India by 246 on the first innings and were 94 for 5 in the second.

Big turnaround

It was the first triple-hundred by a New Zealander and the near 13 hours in the middle proved he could graft when he had to. When the popular Ross Taylor was replaced by McCullum as

In partnership with coach Mike Hesson, he lifted his and the team's image and turned the New Zealand team to that of a popular side that played entertaining and aggressive cricket. New Zealand have lost only eight of 26 Tests since. "The evolution of the environment and the performances we have started to put up" rate highly with McCullum who feels he can look back a "with sense of pride" in what he has achieved, particularly the camaraderie. —AFP

AJMAL SET FOR CRICKET RETURN AFTER LEARNING NEW ACTION

LAHORE: Pakistan spinner Saeed Ajmal dismantled his technique to relearn the art of off-spin and put himself in line for an international recall with a remodeled action. The late-bloomer emerged as Pakistan's main strike bowler with a dizzying array of tricks in his arsenal until a suspect action brought about a ban in 2014.

He was cleared to bowl again a week before last year's World Cup but has struggled to replicate the control that once made him a universally feared spinner.

"At 38, I have learnt something that I probably never did in my 15 years as a cricketer," Ajmal told ESPNcricinfo. "I had to become a child, like the first time I went into the academy as a 10-year-old." "I will be back, and that day is not far. I have spent a lot of time outside and it hurts me when Pakistan loses."

Ajmal said he bowled with weights strapped to his wrist and ankles to iron out kinks in his action, which he blamed on a broken wrist following a bus accident. He has had to sacrifice some bounce and spin, and the occasional

delivery can exceed the 15 degree elbow extension limit but Ajmal said he still had enough variation to trouble batsmen.

"I will leave cricket with this (new) action. If I am not effective, I will step

aside and leave..."The odd ball might have exceeded 20 degrees but I work hard immediately to rectify that. I watch every video of my matches. Ninety-nine per cent of my deliveries are under control." —Reuters

MALINGA RETURNS TO CHAMPS SRI LANKA IN WORLD T20

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka fast bowler Lasith Malinga has recovered from a knee injury and will lead the defending champions at next month's World Twenty20 in India, the country's cricket board said yesterday. Regular T20 captain Malinga sustained the injury during Sri Lanka's home series against West Indies last year and missed the team's tour of New Zealand and India, where Dinesh Chandimal deputised as skipper. Also returning to the 15-man squad, which will also take part in the upcoming Asia Cup tournament before the March 8-April 3 World Twenty20,

was all-rounder Angelo Mathews.

Malinga and Mathews, who was suffering from a groin strain, missed their recent three-match T20 series in India. Experienced seamer Nuwan Kulasekara and wily left-arm spinner Rangana Herath were also named in the squad after missing the series against India, whom Sri Lanka defeated in the final to win the World Twenty20 in 2014. Sri Lanka are in Group 1 in the Super 10 stage of the biennial event along with England, South Africa, West Indies and a yet-to-be-determined qualifier. —Reuters



MINDANAO: This photo taken on February 15, 2016 shows Philippine boxing icon Manny Pacquiao wearing shorts and shoes with Nike logos during his training session at a gym in General Santos. — AFP

NIKE DROPS MANNY PACQUIAO IN WAKE OF ANTI-GAY STATEMENTS

MANILA: Manny Pacquiao's latest disparaging comments about gays have cost him a contract with Nike. It may not be the only endorsement Pacquiao loses, even as he and promoter Bob Arum scramble to contain the damage done by a television interview in the Philippines in which the boxer said gay people "are worse than animals."

"What he's saying is diametrically opposed to what I believe," said Arum, who is promoting Pacquiao's upcoming fight with Timothy Bradley. "I'm in favor of gay rights and same sex marriage. I'm apologetic personally to the gay movement in the United States."

Nike issued a brief statement Wednesday saying it was severing its ties with the boxer over his comments about gays. The company said it no longer will have any business dealings with the boxer. "We find Manny Pacquiao's comments abhorrent," the statement said. "Nike strongly opposes discrimination of any kind and has a long history of supporting and standing up for the rights of the LGBT community."

Pacquiao, a congressman who is now running for Senate in the Philippines, made the comments to a television station that was asking candidates about their views on same sex marriage. "It's just common sense," Pacquiao said in the remarks posted

online by the TV5 network. "Have you seen any animal having male-to-male or female-to-female relations?"

Animals, he said, were better because they recognize gender differences, and "if you have male-to-male or female-to-female (relationships), then people are worse than animals." Pacquiao's remarks were criticized by several Filipino celebrities, and he responded by issuing an apology of sorts. In it, Pacquiao said he was still against same sex marriage but loved all people.

His last bout

Arum told The Associated Press that Pacquiao is an evangelical Christian who believes that homosexuality is wrong, and that he was trying to win votes in the Philippines, where the issue of same sex marriage has not been decided. "What he said is completely for home consumption for Filipinos wrestling with the question of legalizing same sex marriage," Arum said.

In addition to his campaign for the Senate, Pacquiao is currently training for the April 9 fight in Las Vegas against Bradley in what he says will be his last bout. Arum said he could lose some other fight sponsors because of the remarks. Pacquiao has not fought since losing to Floyd Mayweather Jr last May

in the richest fight ever. Pacquiao reportedly made more than \$100 million for the fight, and is guaranteed \$20 million to fight Bradley.

Arum said he expects some people not to buy the fight on pay-per-view because of the comments, but that others might buy it because of them. "Instead of promoting a fight with a fighter I'm promoting a fight with a politician," Arum said. "It's like of Donald Trump was a boxer and I was promoting Donald Trump when he was running for president. I would be killed by the media for all the stupid statements he is making."

It's not the first time Pacquiao has been involved in a furor over gay rights. In 2012 he was quoted as saying he was against same sex marriage because "It's the law of God" though he denied inferring that homosexuals should be put to death. The eight-time champion is the Philippines' most famous person and the country's most popular athlete.

He has represented the Sarangani province in the Philippines' House of Representatives since May 2010, though has drawn criticism for seldom showing up for legislative duties. Polls in the Philippines show he is a strong contender for the Senate seat, which many believe will eventually lead him to seek the country's presidency. — AP

TOP FOUR SEEDS CRASH OUT IN DUBAI

DUBAI: The top four seeds at the Dubai Tennis Championships all crashed to second round losses on Wednesday, leaving the tournament without a single elite player at the quarter-final stage. Top-seeded defending champion Simona Halep, Spanish pair Garbine Muguruza and Carla Suarez Navarro, and Czech Petra Kvitova were all eliminated in the second round after receiving byes for the first round, in which the tournament's other four seeds had already been knocked out.

Former world number one Ana Ivanovic did the damage to Halep with a 7-6 (7/2), 6-2 victory. Ivanovic's coach Nigel Sears had to convince the Serb to ignore distractions from water leaking onto the court and concentrate on her game. The strategy worked, with Ivanovic saving a set point before taking the opening stanza in a tiebreaker.

The second began with a run of consecutive breaks before Ivanovic took command to reach 5-2, closing out victory a game later. Ivanovic next plays Czech Barbora Strycova, a winner over German Julia Goerges 2-6, 6-3, 6-1. World number 17 Ivanovic called her win over Halep "one of the highest quality matches I have had in maybe the last year".

"I started a little bit anxiously. I was rushing too much. But I was really happy I managed to calm down and raise my level and win," she added. Romanian Halep was just pleased to be feeling close to full fitness having been plagued by a nasal infection recently. "I was doing OK, I was aggressive. She played really well. She came back well," Halep said.

"I'm disappointed that I lost but it's OK. I feel good. I have no pain anywhere. It's good, and the most important thing is that I'm healthy," Elina Svitolina, whose new coaching advisor Justine Henin was in the stands, beat a tearful Muguruza, 7-6 (7-3), 6-3. Muguruza, the 2015 Wimbledon finalist, struck 68 unforced errors in her loss to the Ukrainian.

"I'm not really finding my game," the world number five said. "I'm not really ready to compete. I need to work a little bit more." Caroline Garcia of France waited out a rare rain interruption before advancing to the quarters with a 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 win over Suarez Navarro. The two players were forced off court until evening due to rain, which only hits Dubai a few times a year.

The weather arrived with the Frenchwoman leading 5-3 in the decider, but she served it out on the resumption to complete the win. American Madison Brengle shocked double Wimbledon winner Kvitova 0-6, 7-6 (7/1), 6-3 in a contest which ended early yesterday morning. — AFP



DUBAI: French tennis player Caroline Garcia serves the ball to German Andrea Petkovic during their quarter final WTA game of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championship. — AFP

B GRIFFIN APOLOGIZES FOR PUNCHING CLIPPERS STAFF

LOS ANGELES: Blake Griffin apologized Tuesday for punching a Los Angeles Clippers staff member last month, saying he wishes he could take back the incident that left him with a broken right hand and the employee with facial injuries.

Griffin was suspended four games and docked five games' pay totaling \$859,442 for the altercation with Matias Testi at a Toronto restaurant on Jan. 23. Griffin is

expected to be sidelined until sometime next month by his injury and ensuing suspension. He wore a black wrap on his hand at practice.

"It's something I think about every day and wish I could take it back, and I've told Matias that," Griffin said in his first meeting with reporters since the incident. "I have talked to Matias tons of times since the incident. He actually said it best: 'This stuff hap-

pens and we're like brothers and we just have to move on.'"

Coach Doc Rivers said the team wasn't trading Griffin despite rumors to the contrary. It's likely both Griffin and Testi will rejoin the team when it hosts San Antonio in the Clippers' first game since the All-Star break. Griffin initially took to Twitter to apologize. He said he had already done so with his teammates and management.

"It's something that I feel awful about, something that I haven't had to deal with ever before in life and it's been tough," he said. "But now that the NBA has done their due diligence and the Clippers and I have my punishment, I'm looking forward to just moving on and moving past this and getting back on the court with our teammates." Griffin said he did not believe he needed anger management counseling.



ORLANDO: Orlando Magic center Nikola Vucevic (9) and forward Tobias Harris (12) battle with Charlotte Hornets center Frank Kaminsky III (44) for a rebound during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Friday, Jan. 22, 2016, in Orlando, Fla. Charlotte won 120-116 in overtime. —AP

CLOCK WINDING DOWN ON NBA'S TRADE DEADLINE

NEW YORK: The Detroit Pistons and Charlotte Hornets are on the board, not waiting until the NBA's trade deadline to make moves they hope will bolster their playoffs chances this season.

The Pistons acquired scorer Tobias Harris from Orlando while the Hornets added Courtney Lee from Memphis to help fill the void created by the injury to Charlotte forward Michael Kidd-Gilchrist. In a deadline-driven league, both moves were aggressive in that they came well before the 3 pm Eastern time cutoff for trades to be made.

They also may serve as catalysts for other teams out there shopping. The time is nearing for teams that have held cards tightly to their chests to start putting them on the table. There are several issues teams are considering this week as they mull making significant trades. Among them is the sheer dominance of the Golden State Warriors, who have established themselves as the favorites to win the championship again this season.

Conservative trades

As teams went into the All-Star break, there was a feeling across the league that the Spurs, Cavaliers and Thunder may be the only teams equipped to challenge the defending champions for the title. That thought process may cause several other teams just outside of that foursome to play it a little more conservatively when it comes to trades.

The Pistons and Stan Van Gundy didn't let that stop them from acquiring Harris, figuring that adding the cost certainty of the three years remaining on his deal would help them shape their vision going forward rather than look at the unknowns of free agents added this summer. Free agency is another huge factor that will influence teams with the trade deadline looming; it's shaping up to be a free agency bonanza in July.

With a sky-rocketing salary cap, the majority of teams in the NBA will have enough cap room to add at least one max-contract player to their rosters this summer. That will create a frenetic push for the top tier of free agents, including Oklahoma City star Kevin Durant, Detroit center Andre Drummond and Toronto guard DeMar DeRozan. So making a deal now to add an impact player, while difficult to pull off, could help a team avoid having to go all-in next summer. Here are some of the more intriguing teams to watch headed into Thursday's trade deadline:

ATLANTA HAWKS: Last year's feel-good season has given way to a more sober 2015-16, with a 31-24 record good for fourth in the East and the sense that they have to make a big move to vault back into contention with Cleveland and Toronto. They could be the most likely candidate to part with a key piece to make that happen, with Al Horford and Jeff Teague among the players that have been mentioned as possible trade bait.

BOSTON CELTICS: GM Danny Ainge has spent the last few years accumulating assets - perhaps most attractive is Brooklyn's unprotected first-round draft choice this June - to put him in position to make a Godfather offer to a team for one of its established stars. Now that the Celtics are a surprising 32-23 and sitting at No. 3 in the East, the time to give superb coach Brad Stevens the star he has been looking for could be right now.

LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS: They have seemed to find their groove lately, oddly enough while star forward Blake Griffin has been out because of a quad injury and a suspension for punching an assistant equipment manager. Despite all the drama, coach and GM Doc Rivers said on Tuesday that Griffin would not be traded. But Rivers still wants to upgrade his bench and add some more scoring punch to give them every chance possible to come out of the rugged West.

TORONTO RAPTORS: Coach Dwane Casey's crew has done a remarkable job absorbing key injuries to remain as the No. 2 seed in the East. DeRozan and Kyle Lowry give them one of the best backcourts in the league and the hope is DeMarre Carroll will back with a month or so to go in the regular season to gear up for the playoffs. They are looking to add another ball-handler off the bench and a power forward that can stretch the defense with his shooting in hopes of avoiding another early playoff exit. —AP

HEAT GET BACK TO WORK, THIS TIME WITHOUT BOSH

MIAMI: When it comes to Chris Bosh, the Miami Heat are still waiting for definitive answers. Apparently, so is Bosh. The Heat leave for Atlanta and they'll be without Bosh - who will spend the day meeting with more doctors as he keeps trying to find a way to play again this season. Miami resumed practice Wednesday without the All-Star forward, and neither the team nor Bosh has revealed that he has a blood clot. A person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press on Tuesday that Bosh is on blood-thinning medication again to combat a clot in his leg.

"None of us are doctors. None of us are in the rooms with whatever's going on," Heat All-Star guard Dwyane Wade said. "A lot of people hear speculation on a lot of guys. I was around him, got a lot of opportunity to talk to him, to share things, and his spirits are very high. He's doing everything he can to make sure that he figures going on within himself, but he's very positive."

All the Heat will say is that Bosh will not play Friday in Atlanta, and Bosh's lone comment so far came on Snapchat - where he posted the Kendrick Lamar lyric, "We gonna be all right." "He will be with us shortly," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said. So while there's some optimism, others are predictably concerned.

'Sucks big-time'

"I texted him today and just told him I was sorry," Cleveland's LeBron James, Bosh's former Miami teammate, said Wednesday. "I hate that he has to go through this again. ... Just a great guy, man. Professional, great guy. For something like this to happen to him after he was cleared, it sucks. It sucks big-time." Bosh was declared out for the remainder of last season at the All-Star break when a clot was found on one of his lungs, a scare that threatened his career and his life. He returned to basketball activities a few months later, is averaging 19.1 points this season and said just last week he thought the clotting issue was behind him. "I'm still positive," Heat forward Udonis Haslem said. "I can't say we're going through the same roller-coaster yet." The worries for Miami right now are multi-layered.

Bosh's health is paramount and there's the well-being of his family; Bosh is a father of three and he and his wife are expecting twins in a few weeks. And there are short-term team issues as well, including how the Heat should proceed before Thursday's trade deadline.

Miami is fifth in the East, two games back of third and two games ahead of eighth. A playoff berth would hardly seem guaranteed right now even with Bosh, who has \$84 million or so remaining on his contract over the next 3 1-2 years. Being without Bosh - for any amount of time - makes the challenge that awaits over the next 29 games more daunting. "If you're a competitor, and you love to compete, this is an ideal situation to be in," Haslem said. "I'm expecting us to lay it all on the line." —AP



MIAMI: Miami Heat's Dwyane Wade (3) pats Chris Bosh (1) on the chest during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Indiana Pacers. —AP

LEVERKUSEN READY TO PROVE WORTH WITHOUT HERNANDEZ

BERLIN: Bayer Leverkusen must prove they can keep winning without their injured striker Javier Hernandez when they meet Bundesliga powerhouse Borussia Dortmund on Sunday. The Mexico international has been a sensation since joining this season from Manchester United, grabbing 13 goals in the league and scoring a total of 22 times in 26 matches in all competitions so far.

But a muscle injury in their German Cup quarter-final loss to Werder Bremen last week put the 27-year-old out of action just as Leverkusen were on a good run of form. They have gone six league games without defeat, having lost just once in their last nine Bundesliga matches. Hernandez, who has a contract to 2018, was missed in Leverkusen's 2-1 win over promoted Darmstadt 98 on Saturday. The team had to struggle back from a goal down with help from an own goal and a 77th minute winner. But his absence will be felt even more keenly against their second-placed visitors. Leverkusen, who trail Dortmund by 13 points, have won none of their last eight home games against the Ruhr valley club. Dortmund have their own goal-scoring machine in Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, with the Gabon international having netted 20 times in the league and Dortmund enjoying the joint-best attack along with leaders Bayern Munich.

"We have shown that we can keep winning without Javier," Leverkusen coach Roger Schmidt said. "The team has improved in the past weeks. I don't even know if we should say it out loud that we are third in the Bundesliga."

The club has not given a firm timeframe for how long Hernandez will be absent, but Schmidt has said that he hopes it will only be a couple of weeks. With speculation of a possible return to England's Premier League at the end of the season despite his contract, Leverkusen are eager to finish in the top four to secure a Champions League spot for next season and keep Hernandez. The problem is they must do this without his goals, at least for now. "If we qualify for the Champions League then we have very good chances that he will stay with us," said club CEO Michael Schade. "As things stand now we do not want to sell any player." "We are, however, a commercial enterprise and there are limits. If there are huge offers then we will look into them," he said. Dortmund, with three wins out of four matches since the winter break have tightened their hold on second spot and are eight points behind leaders Bayern, who host Darmstadt on Saturday. Fourth-placed Hertha Berlin, on 35 points along with Leverkusen, take on VfL Wolfsburg. —Reuters



DARMSTADT: Leverkusen's players celebrate Leverkusen's midfielder Julian Brandt (front) scoring the 2-1 during the German first division Bundesliga football match SV Darmstadt 98 vs Bayer 04 Leverkusen. —AFP



ROME: Real Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (C) celebrates with Real Madrid's defender Sergio Ramos and Real Madrid's French coach Zinedine Zidane after scoring during the UEFA Champions League football match AS Roma vs Real Madrid. —AFP

ZIDANE KEEPS COOL AS REAL MARCH ON

ROME: Zinedine Zidane won't admit it yet, but 10-time winners Real Madrid remain on course for a sixth consecutive Champions League semi-final appearance after a clinical 2-0 win at Roma in the first leg of their last 16 tie on Wednesday. World Cup winner Zidane won the competition as a player with Real in 2002 and as assistant to former Carlo Ancelotti when the 'Galacticos' claimed their record 10th European Cup or 'Decima' in 2014.

On the night he made his debut as a head coach in the competition, the Frenchman who ended his career by being sent off for headbutting Italian Marco Materazzi in the final of the 2006 World Cup, was left rejoicing with his players on the touchlines as they underlined their status as co-favourites alongside Bayern Munich and holders Barcelona.

After weathering a frustrating first half in which an inspired Roma side failed to finish off a series of promising attacks, Cristiano Ronaldo broke the deadlock on 57 minutes when he ran on to Marcelo's chip to beat Wojciech Szczesny with a shot that deflected off right-back Alessandro Florenzi. It was the Portuguese forward's 12th goal in seven Champions League games this term and lifted huge pressure off the shoulders off Zidane.

"Everyone expects Ronaldo to score, and he fulfilled expectations," said Zidane. To their credit, Roma dug deep in a bid to claim a share of the spoils and were unlucky not to earn a penalty when Florenzi went down under the studs-up challenge of Dani Carvajal. Even after that decision, the hosts battled throughout a dominant late spell inspired by Egyptian winger Mohamed Salah, only to come up short.

It was inspiring stuff, but dozens of the 55,612 home crowd

began leaving their seats five minutes from the finish when Jese flashed a shot across several defenders to beat Szczesny low at his far post. The victory gives Real a huge advantage ahead of the return leg at their Santiago Bernabeu home in three weeks time. But Zidane, who replaced sacked Rafael Benitez last month, said there is a long way to go until the May 28 final in Milan.

'Stats don't count'

"May 28 is still a long way off. We still have to think about the second leg and take it one game at a time," he told media after the game. Despite statistics suggesting Real have a 100 percent chance to go through to the last eight after a 2-0 first leg win, Zidane added: "Statistics don't count, especially when there's still another 90 minutes to play."

As Zidane rejoiced, Roma handler Luciano Spalletti was left wishing he could have turned back time. The Italian was in charge at Roma in 2008 when the Giallorossi beat Real 2-1 twice in succession in the last 16 on their way to a quarter-final defeat to Manchester United. But despite dominating for long spells, Roma ultimately came up short in the final third of the pitch.

Spalletti hit the nail on the head when he said: "You give a player like Ronaldo an inch, and he takes a mile." He added: "The difference is in the fact that when you give players of Real's quality an opening, they seize on it. We just didn't put our chances away, and that's the thing I'm most sorry about." The 50,000-plus crowd was a huge improvement on Roma's usual attendances which have been hit by fans staying away to protest at new stringent security measures. —AFP

DEPLETED MAN CITY FACE CHELSEA IN FA CUP CLASH

LONDON: The lure of reaching the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time will weigh heavily on Manuel Pellegrini's mind as Manchester City and Chelsea prepare for a heavyweight FA Cup fifth-round clash on Sunday. With City flying to Ukraine to face Dynamo Kiev just 24 hours after Sunday's showdown with Chelsea, the FA Cup tie could not have come at a worse time for Pellegrini, who is reluctant to field his strongest side.

"I think it (the FA Cup) is a serious competition and not a competition you can throw away," said the Chilean, whose side were beaten at home by the Premier League's top two,

Leicester City and Tottenham Hotspur, in their last two matches. "But at this moment... the chance to try and get to the Champions League quarter-final for the first time, I think it's a case where we are going to prioritise."

While both teams will line up at Stamford Bridge on the back of defeats, Chelsea are no doubt aware that the Cup presents their best chance of ending the season with a trophy. Hovering in the bottom half of the Premier League is bad enough but a 2-1 defeat at Paris St Germain on Tuesday has left Chelsea in danger of going out of the Champions League at the last 16 stage-with the second leg to

come on March 9.

Hiddink had led Chelsea on a 12-match unbeaten run since taking over from the sacked Jose Mourinho in December but that streak ended on Tuesday when he was forced to reshuffle his back four for the PSG clash after captain John Terry was ruled out with a hamstring injury. Asked if Terry would return for the City game on Sunday, Hiddink said "Difficult." Holders Arsenal will take on second tier Hull City on Saturday as they try to take another step towards becoming the first club since Blackburn Rovers in 1886 to win the FA Cup three years in a row. —Reuters

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2016

Friday Times

Sports

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NETANYAHU took part in a race as part of the inauguration of the MXW motocross track near the Israeli city of Netanya yesterday. — AFP

MINDANAO: This photo taken on February 15, 2016 shows Philippine boxing icon Manny Pacquiao wearing shorts and shoes with Nike logos during his training session at a gym in General Santos. — AFP

Nike drops Pacquiao

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