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His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

KUWAITIS CELEBRATE HIS HIGHNESS THE AMIR'S 10-YEAR ASCENDENCY

KUWAIT: The sun shines ever so brightly on a Thursday which marks 10 years since His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah stood before the parliament to take his oath of office as the 15th ruler of Kuwait.

His Highness Sheikh Sabah is a distinguished ruler who received both executive and legislative backing along with the support of the people at the start of his reign and continues to do so.

A born statesman

Born on June 16, 1929, the fourth son of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was handpicked as a potentially astute statesman. After studying at the local Mubarakiya School, his father sent him to the West to pick up on diplomatic skills he would soon be able to master. Upon his return in 1954, Sheikh Sabah was immediately handed the role of forming one of the sides of a committee tasked with restructuring state bodies despite being only 25 years old.

A year later, he was appointed head of the state social affairs and labour unit, a position he would later thrive in. At a time of heavy regional and international labor migration into Kuwait, he was responsible for regulating the relationship between employee and business owner. He was also behind the formation of specialist training centers, sports clubs, welfare centers for women, children, the elderly and special needs cases and a traditional arts centre.

In 1957, after being tasked with overseeing the state publishing department, the first edition of cultural magazine Al-Arabi (the Arab world's answer to National Geographic) was published. It was to later become a huge hit amongst Arab readers and helped put Kuwait on the map as a serious advocate of culture and knowledge.

A publications' and media law, that placed Kuwait as the

top Arab country in the World Media Index was another of his contributions. Two years after Kuwait's independence in 1961, he was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs - a position he would continue to fill over a 40-year period.

Foreign Minister

His reign as foreign minister was marked by numerous shifts and turbulent circumstances. But thanks to his wise judgement the then minister Sheikh Sabah was able to steady the ship. After raising Kuwait's flag for the first time at the United Nations in 1963, he immediately set out to cover his role with fervor, becoming instrumental in his policy as a regional leader.

His first task was to bring together the conflicting sides in Yemen's civil war, including Saudi Arabia and Egypt who were backing separate sides in the struggle. All the parties were involved in reconciliation talks hosted by Kuwait.

As the fighting continued between the north and the south of Yemen, he later paid a visit to both resulting in the signature of a peace agreement in 1972. In 1980 he also mediated reconciliation between Yemen and its western neighbors Oman. He was also faced with difficult regional conditions which he managed to sail through smoothly like the eight-year-old Iran-Iraq war of the 1980s and Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in 1990.

The role of forming a government, in the place of Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah, was given to him in 2001 after which he was appointed prime minister two years later. This is when his focus on economic affairs began. He launched a local fund for SMEs in order to support the youth. On international affairs, he looked eastwards to sign a total 10 agreements, MoUs and giant business projects with China, Japan, South Korea and Singapore in 2004.

On January 2006 former Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah passed away. His successor was Sheikh Saad, however his extreme sickness prevented him from becoming ruler. It is then that the cabinet sat down to agree that Sheikh Sabah would be the new ruler - a decision that later received the parliament's backing as well.

Development plans

His Highness the Amir's development plans for Kuwait are truly underway. Some projects have been completed while some are in the pipeline, including Jaber Hospital, Mubarak Port, the giant Jaber Bridge which links the north to Kuwait City, Al-Zour refinery, the new airport and Jaber Stadium.

On September 2014, and after Kuwait hosted three international conferences which helped raise billions of dollars in an unprecedented step for humanitarian efforts on the Syrian refugee crisis, His Highness was handed a 'Humanitarian Leader' award by UN chief Ban Ki-moon.

Throughout his 10-year reign His Highness the Amir oversaw the handing out of many other relief aid, grants and loans worth tens of millions to nations around the world, particularly to the Palestinians and impoverished countries in Africa and Asia.

His love for his people was at its most evident when, moments after terrorists bombed Imam Al-Sadiq mosque leaving behind 26 people dead, he showed up unguarded and unarmed to oversee rescue efforts. It was then he made the famous quote "those are my children."

Kuwait will rejoice on the day that their ruler celebrates a tenth year in office. A humanitarian, a champion of the weak, a man of compassion and a patriot - long live His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Kuna

Local Spotlight

'PARTIAL' AMNESTY FOR VIOLATORS



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Earlier this month, the Ministry of Interior announced a partial amnesty for all illegal residents in Kuwait. The decision will allow residency violators to pay their fines and either legalize their status or leave the country without being blacklisted. This means that they will be allowed to return on a new visa in the future (if they so wish and if they can find a job and if they can pay a recruiter - all big 'ifs').

The catch

The catch is that the amnesty will only apply for those who voluntarily turn themselves in. Any residency violator or absconder caught will be deported and banned from ever returning to Kuwait - though they too still have to pay all outstanding fines. Under normal circumstances, the fine for illegal residency is KD 2 per day and this is capped at a maximum of KD 600. The Mol stated that all residency departments in Kuwait are ready to receive violators in order to rectify their legal status, pay fines and leave the country.

This is good news for violators who have the money to pay their fines. But what about those who face legal cases and need the amnesty to rectify their status, but have no money? Workers abscond or lose their residency for a variety of reasons. Yes, some are dishonest criminals who flee their employers to try and make more money on the black market. Some, however, are running from abuse and mistreatment or have been thrown out of the house by unscrupulous employers. Most would return to their homes except for the mountains of debt they went into to pay for a job in Kuwait. There are sadly all too many cases of workers running away after they didn't receive their salaries and their sponsors tried to cancel their visas or report them as absconding.

The reasons for illegals

We need a thorough investigation into the causes for absconding and residency violation and to hold not only the workers but also sponsors accountable. So far, I see the interior ministry is focusing on the legal aspects, but no one from the labor ministry is concerned about why tens of thousands of people violated their residency status in the first place. Were they paid their salaries? Or were they facing abuse? Or what reasons led to their illegal situation?

Human rights and protecting the workers

Another issue here is how to protect their human rights from possible revenge by their sponsors when they are arrested or when they come on their own will to clear their status. Sponsors should be held accountable for the fines. I can't imagine that the worker will pay it after all. This issue is not as simple as it seems. But in some cases, it can be a help for those who have "ghost" sponsors.

Some Kuwaitis sponsors expats in exchange for an annual fee. It's another moneymaking scheme. So they don't really know what this person does for a living, and the worker goes freely to live and work as he/she wishes. The threat here is when they fall into trouble, the sponsor will be held responsible. This is fair and in this case I guess the sponsor must be punished for being a visa trader. In a few cases, the sponsor may forget to renew the residency of his workers and they will be asked to pay the fine.

The ministry recently conducted a series of crackdowns in areas known to be inhabited by large numbers of workers and illegal residents including Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Ardiya, Bneid Al-Gar and the vegetable market in Sulabiya, and many illegals were arrested. The Mol will now allow residency violators in Kuwait to have the chance to set their status right and at least in some cases, they will have the right to choose.

FIRST EVER SNOW IN KUWAIT - MAYBE

KUWAIT: Videos and photos from social media claimed to show snow falling in Kuwait near the Salmi border, possibly for the first time in modern history. Temperatures in Kuwait can reach 55+ C in the summer months but will often sink to as low as 2C during the short winter period. An unusual cold front pushed into Kuwait Thursday, with temperatures reaching as low as 3C in some parts of the country during the early morning hours.

There is no known record of snow ever having fallen in Kuwait though hail and frost as well as dust storms and the occasional rain are normal. Northern and

southern parts of neighboring Saudi Arabia, however, often experience snow falls. Temperatures are expected to recover quickly in Kuwait, with predictions for the rest of the week of highs of 20C though lows are expected to continue to be down around 6C through Sunday before creeping back up. In northern Saudi Arabia, the weather is also set to improve, and temperatures will increase to a high of 19C.

Several of the videos and photos circulated on social media purported to have been recorded in Kuwait but none could be officially or independently verified.



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A new life for original Kuwait bikers



By Nawara Fattahova

'Kuwait Bikers' was the first bikers' team in Kuwait, which formed in 1996 and disbanded in 2004. Last week, 11 founding members got together to form a new version of Kuwait Bikers. "The members of our old team got busy with their lives and not many activities were held, so the team dissolved. Now we have decided to stage a comeback with a new team and new members, both Kuwaitis and expats," Ali Al-Mousawi, group leader and founder of the Kuwait Bikers, told Kuwait Times.

The team has set rules for members. "A potential member should be older than 30, gender and nationality no bar, and hold a valid driving license. The bikes allowed to join our team are touring and cruising bikes. No trikes (three-wheeled bikes) or sports bikes are allowed. All bikers and even pillion riders should always wear DOT certified helmets. We encourage wearing helmets and our motto is 'Respect rules and drive safely,'" Mousawi explained.

These rules have been placed for a reason. "Some groups are noisy, as their bikes are loud, which makes people get annoyed. Also, other groups don't have really strong rules and have many young members who like sports and noisy bikes and high speeds, while we ride with average speeds of 60 to



Ali Almoosawi

100 km/h. We aim to enjoy time with friends and not disturb people, while trying to represent our team in the best way," stressed Mousawi.

The team will hold various activities for members. "We will be teaching about road signs, so all members will be qualified to be road captains, and unlike the other groups, we will have a different road captain every week. No other group or team has done this before and they always have the same road captain for the whole year and maybe even longer," he pointed out.

The team will hold workshops as well. "We will provide workshops and courses for



members both in Kuwait and abroad by professional training instructors. These will include various topics such as mechanical information about fixing bikes, how to maintain the bike in summer and many others. We are also planning to provide more facilities for members such as bringing in sponsors for the team, offering special discounts for them at various places and many other facilities," highlighted Mousawi.

The biking season starts from the end of October till the beginning of May. "Some

bikers also like to ride during summer, but they can only ride between 2am to 6am due to the extremely hot weather. So we hold all our activities during this season to enjoy this great weather," he said. Membership is open for bikers after a probation period. "Our team won't just accept any biker who applies to join us. The applicant should pass a trial that consists of three rides with us to test his behavior on roads and his respect of our rules. After succeeding in this, he may become a member," concluded Mousawi.





Photo taken by Khaled Al-Abdul Mughni at Souq Al Mubarakiya.

Shut up and shoot: The importance of street Photography in Kuwait

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

The scene is quiet. A tall Kuwaiti man crosses his hands, a Leica camera hanging from a strap from his shoulder to the side of his waist. He's chatting with the man behind the counter, an older Arab date vendor, about the future of Souq Mubarakiya. The former is Khaled Al-Abdul Mughni, a prominent Kuwaiti street photographer and a businessman who, on that morning, was turning his lens to the troubles and delights found in one of Kuwait's oldest markets.

Abdul Mughni works to capture the everyday life of Kuwait, the good and the bad, the beautiful and the grotesque. He's not often rewarded for his efforts. In fact, many in Kuwait prefer stylized, heavily-edited photos where only the best and most beautiful aspects of the country are showcased rather than anything that might be deemed negative.

"I was shooting everything, movement of people and light and shadow reflections on things around me. Then I realized the importance of showing the identity of the place. After seven years of practice, I discovered that I'm finding myself more in human dimensions," Abdul Mughni told Kuwait Times.

Because of Executive Director Sami Al-Ramyan's collaborative work with media specialists for documentary film production, he realized early the importance of this medium. "I read a lot about street photography and documentaries. Also, the iPhone made me practice on a daily basis in the streets in the beginning together with my camera," he said.

Challenges

According to Ramyan, there are a lot of challenges facing street photographers in Kuwait. "One day, I went with my sister Huda, who's also a street photographer, to shoot one of the places, where she was very welcomed and the people were very enthusiastic to help with her project. However, I wasn't accepted because of my gender. They trusted her because she's a woman, but they doubt-

ed my intentions and started questioning me whether I was going to take their pictures and publish them on the Internet without their permission, like I was assaulting their honor," he recalled.

Street photographers also have to overcome many hurdles in order to give an objective picture of life in this country. One major problem is the visual pollution caused by the arbitrarily designed architecture. They also have to deal with Kuwaitis' similar outer appearances, which results in monotonous or superficial images. Comparatively, it's easier to photograph expats than take pictures of Kuwaitis. Not to mention that photographers are exposing themselves to legal accountability if they photograph people without their consent or knowledge. Candid photography is limited by law within public events, but people in Kuwait are conscious of being photographed and like to be seen as a conservative society.

Impenetrable facades

In the nineteenth century, British explorer William Shakespeare documented street life in Kuwait during the reign of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah. Abdul Mughni explains why people didn't reject his photography - because at that time they did not see the prints and their impact. "They may not even know what a camera was!" he added.

Now photographers in Kuwait are in constant conflict with the contradictions of its people. Some of them pose for street photographers they encounter outside Kuwait, while behaving the opposite here. Moreover, many of them openly share pictures of their private lives on social media, but they refuse to be a subject of a documentary project within the walls of their homes.

If they do agree, some women cover their hair or faces. They also wear clothes that are usually not worn at home, and even use household utensils that are only for guests. They show the best possible image of them because they are driven by a society that stresses on idealism and conservatism.



Photographer Khaled Al-Abdul Mughni. — Photo by Athoob Al-Shuaibi



"The only way to break this barrier is working within the frame of professional ethics, making well-structured projects and having clear objectives. Certainly, with determination not to give in, the photographer will get what he wants in the end," Ramyán told Kuwait Times.

"These projects should be about stories of life in all its forms - things that need to be appreciated and the things that need to be changed. This type of photography is not for amateurs only, but even the press, because it's the core of photo-journalism. I do not see interest by Kuwaiti newspapers to document everyday lives - as far as I know, Kuwait Times is the first and only paper to do this," he declared.

Why is it Important to Kuwait?

There is a broad difference between street photography, travel photography and event photography. "Photos of citizens expressing delight during the national celebrations are

real, but they don't probe the depths of society," Abdul Mughni explained.

The scarcity of documentary archives of our social life emphasizes the wrong stereotype about people of Kuwait. We are in 2016 and there are still many people around the world who believe that there is oil gushing from every house yard of Kuwait. If one is asked about Kuwait, his answer would probably be Saddam Hussein and the Gulf War.

The breach in the balance of depicting the positive and negative aspects leads to create a perverted image of Kuwait. Every picture of this society is a part of a larger media puzzle we pass on to future generations. What do you want your grandchildren to know about Kuwait? How do you want the world to see it now? Let's photograph the present through our parent's eyes, disregarding what we would like to fix and not ignoring the success stories of community members of different statuses.



Photographer Sami Al-Ramyán. — Photo by Athoob Al-Shuaibi



Photos of citizens taken by Sami Al-Ramyán.



A. Hala February Theater
 B. Heritage vehicles exhibition
 C. Kuwait Al-Atta (giving) march
 D. Vehicles exhibition
 E. Children play ground
 F. Medvac (choppers)
 G. Restaurants

H. Embassies
 I. Small business
 J. Children exhibition
 K. Youth skills
 L. Info Ministry Studio
 M. Sea show
 N. Air show

O. VIP stand
 P. Sea performance
 Q. Air performance
 R. Kuwait Atta vehicles march
 S. Concert
 Kuwait Al-Atta March activities:

Time
 1:00 pm Sea show
 2:00 pm Air Show
 3:30 pm Kuwait Atta Vehicles March
 8:00 pm Concert

GULF ROAD TO BE CLOSED

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Relations and Security Department at the Interior Ministry said that preparations

have been made for Hala February carnival, including security and traffic. Gulf road will be closed from 1:00 am today - starting from Third Ring Road to the British Embassy cross-roads

(from the seaside) - then both directions will be closed starting at 9:00 am. Several public's parking lots have designated. They include; Graduates society parking and the open area

next to it; Parking next to the embassies area; The Martyrs Hall parking; Daeya Coop parking; Parking across from Sharq police and the open area across from Souq Sharq.

KUWAIT SEES A RECORD BUDGET DEFICIT ON FALLING OIL INCOME CABINET APPROVES DRAFT BUDGET FOR 2016-17 FISCAL YEAR

KUWAIT: OPEC member Kuwait projected a record budget deficit for the fiscal year starting April 1 on the sliding price of oil, the finance ministry said yesterday. The shortfall for the 2016-17 fiscal year is estimated at 11.5 billion dinars (\$38 billion) or a massive 30 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) due to a sharp decline in oil revenues, the ministry said on its Twitter account. Spending was estimated at 18.9 billion dinars, just 1.6 percent lower than in the current year, the ministry said. Revenues were projected at 7.4 billion dinars (\$24.4 billion) of which oil income was estimated at \$19.1 billion or just 78 percent of the public revenues.

In the past, income from oil contributed more than 94 percent of revenues in the Gulf emirate, before the decline in crude prices. The budget was approved at a joint meeting of the cabinet and the supreme planning council on Wednesday night. The oil income

estimate for 2016-17 is 46 percent lower than in the current year, and 74 percent below the actual oil revenues in 2014-15, the ministry said. The oil revenues are calculated on the basis of a crude price of \$25 a barrel, down from the current year's \$45 a barrel. The price of Kuwaiti oil dived to as low as \$19 a barrel last week.

Currently it is hovering around \$23 a barrel. Kuwait has projected a shortfall of \$23 billion in the current fiscal year, the first deficit after 16 years of surplus. The Gulf state, which has a native population of just 1.3 million, has built around \$600 billion in fiscal reserves in those years. Figures posted on the finance ministry website show that actual income earned in the first three quarters of 2015/2016 fiscal year is \$37.6 billion, or 46.2 percent lower than last year. The Gulf state posted a provisional deficit of \$8 billion in the first nine months. The shortfall normally swells in the last quarter due to

accounting adjustments. All the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states-Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates-have posted deficits after oil prices lost three quarters of their value since mid-2014. The Gulf states have announced a series of austerity measures that included raising the prices of fuel products, electricity, water and others. Kuwait has liberalized the price of diesel and kerosene and is considering cutting subsidies on other services. But it is facing difficulties to cut spending which has increased more than four folds since 2006, mostly on wages and subsidies, according to official figures. The wage bill in the new budget is estimated at \$34 billion or 55 percent of total spending while subsidies account for 15 percent.

Kuwaiti oil price up

In another development, the price of Kuwaiti oil was up \$1.56 to \$23.37 per barrel

Wednesday in contrast to \$21.78 pb Tuesday, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. In world market, the price of oil rose, following a statement by the Russian Energy on the possibility of holding talks with OPEC countries about output cuts to bolster oil prices. The price of the Brent mix went up yesterday by \$1.30 to reach \$A33.10 pb. The American crude increased by 85 cents to reach \$32.30 pb.

US dollar stable

The exchange rate of the US dollar against the Kuwaiti dinar was stable at KD 0.302, the euro was at KD 0.329 compared to the exchange rates for Wednesday, said a statement by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. According to the CBK, the exchange rate of the Sterling pound was stable at KD 0.431 while the Swiss franc at KD 0.297. Exchange rate of the Japanese Yen remained the same at KD 0.002. — Agencies



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs a joint meeting of the Cabinet and the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD). — KUNA



KUWAIT: Photo shows the First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister handing the flag to an officer during the hoisting of flag at Safat Square in downtown Kuwait City. State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdallah Al-Mubarak, Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, First Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamand Al-Sabah attended the event.

GCC EDUCATION MINISTERS AGREE ON KING SALMAN'S VIEW

RIYADH: Kuwait's Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Hamad Al-Essa said yesterday he and his GCC counterparts have agreed on all the topics that seek to implement vision of Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, on education. Al-Essa made the statement to KUNA following the second meeting of the GCC Education Ministers' Committee held in Riyadh today. He stressed the ministers' consensus on car-

rying out King Salman's vision for boosting joint GCC action, especially in education, in addition to completing the integrative steps for realizing the aspired GCC unity.

The Saudi King's vision, endorsed in the recent 36th GCC Summit, comprises a multitude of points and items, which the GCC leaders ordered to be implemented by the end of the 2016, the Kuwaiti minister said. A report is to be submitted to the leaders in

their next consultation meeting. According to Al-Essa, King Salman's vision focuses on placing all the GCC education institutions and organizations, including the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, under the umbrella of the GCC Secretariat, and the direct supervision of the Education Ministers' Committee.

Today, the GCC education ministers discussed a host of crucial topics on education,

among them recommendations by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States under the umbrella of the GCC Secretariat. A committee was formed to discuss the issue. The minister concluded by thanking Saudi Arabia for hosting the committee meeting and to the GCC Secretariat for organization and preparation for the gathering. The Committee's first constituent meeting was held in Doha, Qatar last year.— KUNA

Brief

Report

Kuwaitis to be granted entry visa to Azerbaijan

KUWAIT: Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan here announced yesterday that Kuwaiti nationals would be granted single entry visa upon their arrival to airports in the Republic of Azerbaijan as of February 1. An embassy statement said that the entry visa will be valid for 30 days. It added that Azerbaijan will also allow nationals of Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Japan, China, South Korea, Malaysia and Singapore to enter the country based on the single entry visa aimed at encouraging trade ties with those countries.

Kuwait eyes well-trained, skillful Egyptian workers

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti officials have demonstrated their commitment to linking Egypt and Kuwait electronically to ease the importation of Egyptian labor to the Kuwaiti marketplace, said a visiting Egyptian minister yesterday. Jamal Suroor, Minister of Manpower in Egypt, said in a press statement after meeting with Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Henda Al-Sabeeh, that he discussed with the Kuwaiti minister and other officials on labor affairs the status of the Egyptian workforce in Kuwait. He commended Kuwait's efforts at hosting Egyptian workers and at improving working conditions for them, including easing the process of acquiring permits to leave the country from their Kuwaiti employers.

Obesity Association posts plan to combating obesity

KUWAIT: Kuwait Obesity Association posted yesterday its new 2016 plan for combating the spread of obesity in Kuwait, including adopting new ideas for this goal. The plan will include holding various lectures to raise awareness on the dangers of obesity in schools, which will be carried out routinely in coordination with the ministry of education, the association's Board of Directors Dr Yosif Bo Abbas said. Abbas noted the plan would also include publishing a magazine on obesity, in addition to establishing obesity centers in several health centers, in coordination with the ministry of health.



KUWAIT: One of traditional Kuwaiti settings that can be seen in Bait Al-othman Museum. — KUNA

KUWAIT DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION CELEBRATES 19 YEARS VERSARY

KUWAIT: Kuwait Dyslexia Association celebrates its 19-year anniversary yesterday having brought hope to hundreds of thousands of people in Kuwait and the wider Arab region. The association is the first of its kind in the Arab region, and was formed after its chairman Mohammad Al-Qatami failed to find specialists in Kuwait able to determine or cure his son's learning and reading difficulties.

"After much investigation and a trip to the United Kingdom, I learned of the condition called dyslexia for the first time. It was then that I decided to put my son through treatment which proved successful. That summed up his decision to conduct a Masters degree paper on the subject followed by the formation of the KDA using the knowledge he had obtained in order to offer a helping hand to other struggling families in Kuwait.

At that time, Al-Qatami said, the Arab

region was oblivious to this condition and after humble beginnings in Kuwait his mission later assumed the more ambitious goal of its regional neighbors. KDA was launched with state funding from the local Patients' Support Fund, the Ministry of Education and Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, enabling it to later build its own main local office. The association has managed to pinpoint some 300,000 people, including 50,000 children, affected with the condition across Kuwait.

After its success on the local scale, the association went on to form similar initiatives across the Arab world - the most successful of which was in Egypt, in cooperation with the United Nations. Recent success stories include a PC program that enables families to determine whether their children are affected with dyslexia, and a website which offers in-depth

knowledge and background on the condition to thousands across 100 countries in Arabia and the Middle East. Others include an approved proposal to create "dyslexia-friendly" sections within government-established schools in Kuwait, and a study into pupils affected with reading difficulties in Kuwait.

The study has showcased an astonishing 12 percent amongst boys and 10 percent amongst girls. About diagnosis, he said, that this would typically be carried out by a psychiatrist or psychologist. Tests would reveal whether the condition is physiological or psychological, and based on this treatment would be prescribed. With its widespread regional success comes international ambitions as Al-Qatami hopes to transport the body's experience to the outside world starting with the creation of a dyslexia diagnosis smartphone app.—KUNA

International

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Bettered Iraqi refugees in Germany head home

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Trump takes risk with decision to skip debate

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PARIS: French President Francois Hollande (right) meets with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (3rd L) yesterday at the Elysee presidential Palace in Paris. — AFP

ROUHANI HAILS 'NEW RELATIONSHIP' WITH FRANCE

IRAN, FRANCE TO SIGN HOST OF POST-SANCTIONS DEALS

PARIS: President Hassan Rouhani hailed a "new relationship" between Iran and France during a visit yesterday that saw the signing of a host of post-sanctions business deals. "Let us forget the resentment," Rouhani said, calling for both countries to take advantage of the "positive atmosphere" following the removal of sanctions over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program.

"We are ready to turn the page" and establish a "new relationship between our countries", Rouhani told a meeting of business leaders. French Prime Minister Manuel Valls responded that "Iran can count on France". "France is ready to use its companies, its engineers, its technicians and its many resources to help to modernise your country," Valls said. Rouhani was welcomed to Paris with military honours and national anthems on the second leg of a trip signalling Iran's rapprochement with Europe since sanctions were lifted.

The real business of the visit will come when Rouhani officially signals Iran's intention to buy more than 100 passenger planes

from European aircraft maker Airbus.

French carmaker Peugeot said it will return to the Iranian market in a five-year deal worth 400 million euros (\$436 million) that was announced yesterday.

Peugeot will produce 200,000 cars a year in a joint venture with local manufacturer Iran Khodro, according to a statement. The French carmaker was forced to pull out of Iran in 2012 as sanctions began to bite. In another potential bonanza for France, the head of French oil giant Total said his firm would sign a deal to buy Iranian crude.

Although the French state is rolling out the red carpet for Rouhani, the Iranian opposition will hold a human rights demonstration and Jewish groups also intend to protest in Paris.

Rouhani is to hold talks with President Francois Hollande which are expected to include discussions on Iran's role in Syria, where it is backing President Bashar al-Assad in a war that has killed 260,000 people. Talks are due to begin today in Geneva to take tentative steps towards ending the conflict. After

arriving from Italy, where he sealed deals for steel and pipelines worth between 15 and 17 billion euros, Rouhani began his Paris visit on Wednesday by unveiling a scheme to guarantee investment by French firms in Iran.

'A hand grenade'

A source involved in the deal to buy Airbus planes said that only letters of intention will be signed at this stage, because some sanctions are still in place.

However, Iran is keen to bring its ageing fleet of mid- and long-haul aircraft up to date, so the deal is widely expected to go ahead soon, giving a huge boost to the European aviation industry. Rouhani's meeting with Hollande is also expected to touch on Iran's bitter feud with regional rival Saudi Arabia. In a reference to Saudi Arabia, the Iranian president told an audience in Paris that "some countries had wanted to use terrorism for their own means".

"But this is a hand grenade with the pin removed," he added. During his visit to Rome, Rouhani dismissed suggestions that

Iran should apologise to the Saudis for an attack on its embassy by demonstrators furious over Riyadh's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric, Nimr al-Nimr.

"Why should we apologise, because Nimr al-Nimr was executed? We are the ones to apologise because they are killing the people of Yemen? Apologise to them because they are helping terrorists?" he asked. In the Italian capital, Rouhani and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi met at the Capitoline Museum where nude statues were covered up out of respect for the Islamic Republic's strict laws governing propriety.

But Rouhani denied he had asked his Italian hosts to cover up the statues and Italian Culture Minister Dario Franceschini, who accompanied Rouhani on the museum trip, called the move "incomprehensible". Rouhani also visited the Vatican for the first time and met Pope Francis. Rouhani, a 67-year-old former academic and diplomat who is seen as a pragmatist, was elected in 2013 on a pledge to end sanctions and improve relations with the West. — AFP

PLANE SEARCHED AT CAIRO AIRPORT AFTER BOMB THREAT

CAIRO: Egyptian security began searching a passenger plane at Cairo airport yesterday afternoon after receiving a warning that a bomb was hidden on board, security sources said. The EgyptAir plane had been due to depart for Istanbul but was halted after the threat was passed on to Egyptian authorities by a foreign embassy, the sources said. The passengers had been evacuated and the plane isolated while the search was conducted, but nothing suspicious had been found so far, the sources added.

Egypt is under pressure to bolster airport security after a Russian plane crashed in late October in the Sinai, killing all 224

passengers on board and damaging the country's tourism industry. Egypt has hired global consultancy Control Risks to review security at its airports. The Egyptian-led investigation team says it has found no evidence so far of terrorism or other illegal action linked to the October crash, but Russia said in November that the jet was brought down by a bomb. Islamic State, the militant group that has seized swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria, claimed responsibility and said it had smuggled a bomb on board hidden in a soft drink can.

IS claims deadly attack
Meanwhile, an Egyptian affiliate of the

jihadi Islamic State group claimed responsibility yesterday for an attack that killed a colonel and three soldiers in North Sinai, where it is spearheading a deadly insurgency.

Wednesday's bombing in North Sinai's provincial capital of El-Arish targeted the troops' armored vehicle when it was engaged in a search operation, security officials and emergency services said. Another 12 soldiers were wounded in the blast. In a statement posted on jihadist forums, IS affiliate the Sinai Province said its members used explosive devices to target the army west of El-Arish.

Jihadists have regularly attacked securi-

ty forces in the peninsula since the army toppled Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in July 2013.

They say their attacks are in retaliation for a government crackdown targeting Morsi supporters that has left hundreds dead and thousands imprisoned. The authorities say hundreds of policemen and soldiers have been killed in attacks, mainly in North Sinai, since 2013, although there have also been attacks in the Nile Delta and in Cairo. Egypt's branch of IS also said it planted a bomb that caused the crash of a Russian airliner in the Sinai in October, killing all 224 people on board.—Agencies

ISRAEL RELUCTANT TO ACCUSE IS OVER BAR SHOOTINGS DESPITE HALLMARKS

JERUSALEM: It appeared to have hallmarks of the first Islamic State attack in Israel: A Muslim citizen opened fire on a Tel Aviv bar days after the militant group threatened the country, and left behind a black ISIS banner. But security officials, given pause by the erratic conduct of the slain gunman and wary of aggravating strains with Israel's largely quiescent Arab minority, are steering clear of definitively linking him with Islamic State. "This really was not a classic ISIS terrorist attack," a security official told Reuters on Thursday after the Shin Bet domestic intelligence agency and Justice Ministry issued their findings on the Jan. 1 shooting rampage by Nashat Melhem that killed three people.

The 31-year-old died a week later in a gunfight with police. The attack fell six weeks after 130 were killed in militant attacks on bars, cafes and a concert hall in Paris. An Israeli indictment against three Arab citizens for abetting Melhem's escape said he had "sought to help the enemy, including the ISIS group, fight Israel". He left a black banner in Tel Aviv with the group's name in handwritten Arabic and Hebrew as well as a flag with Koranic text, the indictment says.

In selfie recordings released by the authorities, Melhem is seen holding a bullet and vowing to hit "the Jews" again in Tel Aviv, cursing Shia Islam and telling US President Barack Obama: "Become a Muslim, you Crusader, if you want to be saved." He also uses foul language and is seen drinking from a beer bottle, smoking and bragging about taking drugs. Relatives said Melhem, previously jailed for assaulting an Israeli soldier, had psychiatric problems.

The security official described Melhem's behavior as inconsistent with Islamist piety and a reason the Shin Bet believed he acted alone. Another was the absence of any evidence he received direct instruction from Islamic State. By contrast, the Shin Bet last year arrested several Israeli Arabs it said were trying to form an armed cell under orders from two fellow citizens fighting with Islamic State in Iraq. Israel faces more active threats from armed Palestinian factions like Hamas, as well as from Hezbollah guerrillas in neighboring Lebanon, though officials point to Islamic State affiliates in the Egyptian Sinai as having the potential to launch cross-border attacks too.

What constitutes genuine Islamic State action outside its Middle East fiefdoms is a question bedeviling security agencies worldwide. They must weigh media outreach, which is designed to inspire "lone wolf" strikes, but are reluctant to exaggerate the scope of the threat. Yoram Schweitzer, a terrorism expert with Tel Aviv University's Institute for National Security Studies, said Israel was especially mindful of the impact of Melhem's actions on fellow Arab citizens, who make up a fifth of its population.

While often sympathetic to the Palestinians, Israeli Arabs seldom resort to political violence - a fact often noted by the Shin Bet. But with dozens of Israeli Arabs having left to join Islamic State, authorities worry the domestic danger is growing. "I think that while the ISIS menace cannot be ignored, what is more important is not to inflate it," Schweitzer said. "Israeli authorities have an interest in this regard, as no one wants to see Melhem copycats - not least because he managed to kill three people and get away, in what made them look like a bit of a circus."—Reuters



AIN AL-HANASH: Syrian pro-government troops hold positions in the Syrian town of Ain Al-Hanash near I-Bab in Aleppo's eastern countryside as regime forces have recaptured the area from Islamist jihadists.—AFP

SYRIA OPPOSITION GROUPS MEET; CLOCK TICKS DOWN ON UN TALKS

'RUSSIAN STRIKES' KILL AT LEAST 54

RIYADH: Syrian opposition members met for a third day yesterday to decide whether to attend UN peace talks, with less than 24 hours before the negotiations were due to open in Geneva. The Saudi-backed High Negotiations Committee formed last month in an effort to unite Syria's fractious opposition-said it was waiting for answers from the United Nations before agreeing to attend the talks, which were to open on Friday in the Swiss city.

Western diplomats have piled pressure on the opposition to take part in the negotiations, part of the biggest push yet to resolve Syria's nearly five-year civil war. But after two days of meeting in the Saudi capital the Committee, which was formed to lead negotiations and insists it alone must represent the opposition, had yet to agree to participate. The Committee has asked for "clarifications" after the UN issued invitations to other opposition figures and wants assurances from the international community that it will move to end regime attacks on civilians and allow humanitarian aid.

Salem al-Meslet, a Committee spokesman, said it was waiting for an answer from UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on the application of a Security Council resolution adopted in December that endorsed a roadmap for peace. He said UN Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura had already assured the opposition that two of the resolution's articles-calling for immediate access for humanitarian aid and an end to attacks on civilians-were non-negotiable.

'Historic opportunity'

Security Council members "must take their responsibilities and commit to applying resolution 2254. We are waiting for an answer," Meslet said. "We are serious about participating in the negotiations. The ones who are hindering the start (of talks) are those who are bombing and starving civilians." An opposition source said the issue of providing humanitarian aid was non-negotiable. "The regime wants the humanitarian question on the table during the negotiations, but this is illegal and illegitimate," the source

said. The talks are part of a UN-backed plan, agreed by top diplomats last year in Vienna, that envisages negotiations followed by a transitional government, a new constitution, and elections within 18 months. The roadmap is the most ambitious plan yet to end the conflict which has killed more than 260,000 people and forced millions from their homes. Instead of meeting face-to-face, Geneva delegations are expected to engage in indirect negotiations. Officials have said the talks, only the second dialogue between Syrians since the start of the conflict, would run over six months, with the first round expected to last between two and three weeks.

Russia said yesterday it wanted another meeting of world powers on Syria in Munich on February 11, when the first round of the Geneva talks could still be taking place. US Secretary of State John Kerry met with Committee members in Riyadh at the weekend and Washington, which has backed opposition to Assad, has kept up the pressure on them to attend.—AFP

SUDAN OPENS BORDER WITH SOUTH SUDAN

KHARTOUM/JUBA: Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir ordered the opening of his country's border with South Sudan for the first time since the south's secession in 2011, paving the way for better economic links between the two nations.

The border was closed in 2011 when relations deteriorated after the south seceded following a long civil war, taking with it three quarters of the country's oil, estimated at 5 billion barrels of proven reserves, according to the US Energy Information Administration.

"President Omar al-Bashir issued a decree today ordering the opening of borders with the state of South Sudan and ordered the relevant authorities to take all measures required to implement this decision on the ground," Sudan's state news agency SUNA reported on Wednesday.

Michael Makuei Lueth, South Sudan's government spokesman, said the reopening of the border would boost economic ties. "This is a positive move in a right direction because this is what will lead to the normalisation of our relations with Sudan," he told Reuters.

Khartoum accuses Juba, the capital of South Sudan, of backing a rebellion in its Darfur region and a separate but linked insurgency in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. South Sudan denies the allegations.

"We hope that South Sudan takes its helping hand away from rebel movements that are against our government in Darfur, Blue Nile, and South Kordofan," Sudan's information minister, Ahmed Bilal Osman, told Reuters on Thursday.

Osman said he expected commercial relations to be restored and landlocked South Sudan would now be able to benefit from Sudan's sea ports as it had done in the past.

South Sudanese President Salva Kiir had unexpectedly and unilaterally announced a normalisation of relations on Tuesday in response to Bashir agreeing to cut the transit fees for South Sudanese oil crossing Sudan's territory via pipelines to the Red Sea last week.

After the reduced transit fees were announced, Kiir ordered South Sudanese troops stationed at the border to retreat five kilometres, a move that paved the way for the border to be opened, Osman said. Relations have been tense between the two countries since 2011 as they failed to agree on borders and the status of several regions that both sides claim sovereignty over. — Reuters



JUBA: Displaced people walk next to a razor wire fence at the United Nations base in the capital Juba, South Sudan. When a delegation of South Sudanese rebels returned to the government-controlled capital Juba last month after two years of war, many refugees thought they would finally return to the homes they fled.— AP

TURKEY'S ERDOGAN DENIES PERSONAL AGENDA

ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan laid out his case for a new constitution and a more powerful presidency yesterday, saying it was not a matter of personal ambition but a necessity in a country whose parliamentary system he said was out of date.

Erdogan, who won Turkey's first direct presidential election in August 2014, said a head of state elected by the people should have more than a symbolic role. Previously, parliament had picked Turkey's president. The current situation, in which both the prime minister and president are popularly elected, is unsustainable, Erdogan said in a speech to more than 1,000 members of civil society groups that was seen as the start of a public campaign for the changes.

"In building the 'New Turkey', we think Turkey needs an executive presidential system and a new constitution. This discussion should not be presented as a matter of my personal ambition," he told a packed conference hall.

"If the presidential system is the right choice for Turkey's future then it should be put into practice," he said. Erdogan served as prime minister for more than a decade and ran for the presidency in 2014 in the expectation of swift constitutional reform that would grant the head of state new executive powers. But his plans have been impeded in part because of opposition fears of creeping authoritarianism.

Opposition parties agree on the need to replace the current constitution, born of a 1980 army coup and still bearing the stamp of its military authors, in a country which is a candidate for European Union membership. But they oppose the plans to entirely overhaul what is now a largely ceremonial presidency.

Erdogan has already stretched the powers of the post since becoming head of state, insisting that even without constitutional change, his election by the people automatically granted him extra authority. In that vein, he has chaired several cabinet meetings in the presidential palace.—Reuters

US GENERAL: MOSUL DAM COULD FACE CATASTROPHIC COLLAPSE

IRAQI ARMY LEARNS RAMADI'S LESSONS IN US TRAINING

BAGHDAD: The US military has a contingency plan to deal with a potential collapse of Mosul dam in northern Iraq which would be catastrophic, the top US general in Iraq said yesterday. US Army Lieutenant General Sean MacFarland said Iraqi authorities understood "the potential" for the collapse of the hydroelectric dam, whose foundation requires constant grouting to maintain structural integrity.

He said the military was working with the government on a plan to protect Iraqi civilians from the impact of a collapse, which would send a surge of water down the heavily populated Tigris river valley.

"The likelihood of the dam collapsing is something we are trying to determine right now ... all we know is when it goes, it's going to go fast and that's bad," MacFarland, head of the US-led coalition bombing Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, told reporters in Baghdad. "If this dam was in the United States, we would have drained the lake behind it. We would have taken that dam out of commission," he added.

Islamic State seized Mosul dam in August 2014, raising fears they might blow it up and unleash a wall of water on Mosul and Baghdad that could kill hundreds of thousands. Kurdish Peshmerga fighters recaptured the dam two weeks later with the help of coalition airstrikes and Iraqi government forces. While Islamic State militants are no longer a clear threat to the dam, coalition spokesman U.S. Army Col. Steve Warren said they had stolen equipment and chased away technicians. "There was a steady grouting

schedule that had been maintained for a long time. When that stopped, obviously the deterioration of the dam increased accordingly," he said.

US-led coalition forces training Iraqi soldiers to fight Islamic State are applying lessons from last month's recapture of Ramadi to prepare the army to retake the northern city of Mosul later this year. Iraq's elite counter-terrorism forces pushed the insurgents out of most of Ramadi, in the Euphrates river valley west of the capital, after a six-month siege in which roadside bombs laid as densely as conventional minefields slowed the military's advance to a crawl.

Now the army's 72nd infantry brigade is receiving training in combined arms breaching - a mixture of tactics used to overcome such obstacles - as part of a 10-week course at Besmaya, a base south of Baghdad. That will make it the army's best-trained brigade and equip it for a key role in the government's promised offensive to retake Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, from Islamic State.

If successful, that would mark the biggest military blow against the jihadists since they seized large parts of Iraq and Syria in 2014 and declared an Islamic caliphate, where they have carried out mass rape, beheadings and slaughter.

The 72nd will set the standard to which others should be equipped, said US Army Lieutenant General Sean MacFarland, the Baghdad-based head of the anti-Islamic State coalition.

"One hundred percent this (training) is based on the lessons that we learned watching the challenges in Ramadi and

Tikrit and Sinjar and Baiji where the enemy had obstacle belts," MacFarland told reporters this week, referring to cities retaken from IS in recent months.

"It's about breaching obstacles just like we do in conventional manoeuvres," he said during a visit to observe a live-fire exercise at Besmaya, where most of the coalition trainers are from Spain and Portugal. Soldiers advancing across the training site in armoured vehicles stopped behind an earthen embankment and launched a line of explosive charges to clear bombs planted on the other side. After a large blast sent up a dark plume of smoke, they proceeded with a bulldozer to clear remaining obstacles.

Using a mix of machine guns and snipers, the forces attacked a simulated enemy before advancing into an urban combat scenario as Iraqi and coalition commanders watched from observation platforms.

They used equipment and arms drawn from a \$1.6 billion train-and-equip fund that Washington began delivering last summer. Despite billions of dollars in US aid since the 2003 invasion that toppled Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and disbanded his army, Iraq's military collapsed eighteen months ago in the face of Islamic State's lightning advance across Iraq's north and west.

The government has since relied heavily on Iranian-backed Shi'ite militias, a small group of elite commandos and support from coalition air strikes to secure Baghdad and southern Shi'ite shrines and then push the insurgents out of key cities like Tikrit and Ramadi.— Agencies

'DEAD SYRIAN' FACEBOOK POST HIGHLIGHTS REFUGEE FEARS

A RASH OF ONLINE RUMORS OVER GERMAN REFUGEE INFLUX

BERLIN: A Facebook post about the death of a Syrian refugee in Germany sparked a storm of reaction this week, only for the author to admit making it up, highlighting a rash of online rumors fuelled by a record asylum seeker influx. At first glance, it was all too credible: a 24-year-old Syrian had been queuing for days in the cold at Berlin's notoriously chaotic refugee registration centre Lageso even though he was ill.

Homeless and penniless, he finally went into cardiac arrest on the way to hospital and died, according to the account posted on Wednesday by kind-hearted volunteer Dirk Voltz, who had taken the man in.

But Voltz in fact fabricated the tale, duping not just national media and authorities but also Moabit Hilft, the neighborhood aid group that he volunteers with.

"I acted out of a relationship based on trust," said a dismayed Diana Henniges, from the aid group, who had confirmed the purported death to national media before Voltz finally admitted he had invented it.

In a gripping "live" text-message style exchange with a friend published online, Voltz said he rang for an ambulance as the man was suffering from a "39.4 degree fever, chills and could no longer speak".

He told his friend to find an Arabic speaker quickly to communicate with the refugee, but after his friend gave him a number, he said it was too late and the Syrian had died.

Moabit Hilft went to town with the "exchange", even publishing an obituary on Twitter: "You survived so much. You did not survive Lageso. You caught a fever, chills and cardiac arrest. You died last night. We are crying."



A wheelchair-bound elderly woman arrives along with other migrants and refugees to the village of Miratovac after crossing into Serbia via the Macedonian border yesterday. — AFP

But as national media began reporting on the "tragedy", emergency services said there was no trace of such a case.

Finally, Voltz confessed to police he had, in a drunken stupor, lied. "It is indicative of this overly excited, sometimes hysterical time, but also of the state of Lageso, that so many people have immediately believed such a death," Berlin daily Der Tagesspiegel said in an editorial.

'Official cover-up'

After all, Moabit Hilft were the good guys - one of the key volunteer groups credited with averting disaster so far at Lageso by

handing out clothes, warm drinks and food to asylum seekers huddling in the cold. Berlin authorities on the other hand have come under fire repeatedly for failing to improve conditions at Lageso, where thousands of newcomers wait, often for days, in an unsheltered courtyard to get an appointment with an overwhelmed bureaucrat.

While this purported death was seized on as seeming to lay bare how Germany was failing the 1.1 million asylum seekers who arrived last year, other rumours, often surrounding "crimes" committed by foreigners, are also doing the rounds on the Internet. — AFP

S AFRICAN RACIAL TENSIONS FOIL OPPN CHALLENGE TO ANC

JOHANNESBURG: A racist Facebook post by a member of South Africa's main opposition party has caused a national furore and left it scrambling to shake off its image of an organisation that chiefly serves the interests of the minority white community.

The episode highlighted how racial tensions simmer in the country more than two decades after Nelson Mandela become its first black president, with wealth and income gaps that are still clearly visible along race lines fuelling perceptions of white privilege.

It could set back the Democratic Alliance's efforts to attract black votes and present an effective opposition to the African National Congress (ANC), whose hold on power has been virtually untested since the end of apartheid despite rising discontent over an ailing economy and job losses. The furore erupted this month after estate agent Penny Sparrow, a Democratic Alliance (DA) member, referred to black people as "monkeys" in a New Year's Day rant on Facebook against littering at a public beach. It triggered hundreds of posts on social media condemning the comments, in turn leading to nationwide media coverage and to some rival politicians saying Sparrow had expressed views secretly shared by many DA supporters - who, along with its political leaders, are predominantly white.

In the following days, the ANC organised several anti-racism marches attended by hundreds of people. The DA was quick to denounce and expel Sparrow, but the episode dealt a blow to its drive to convince voters it is committed to an equal society, despite having elected its first black leader last year, Mmusi Maimane. It risks costing the party the support of some black middle-class voters like Nodana Nkomani, who had grown disenchanted with the ANC and was thinking of giving the opposition a chance at this year's local government elections. "Now I'm not so sure," said the 27-year-old financial market analyst from Johannesburg. "It seems like apartheid is still alive and well."

Mcebisi Ndletyana, a professor of political science at the University of Johannesburg, said the Sparrow post has exacerbated the DA's credibility problem on the issue of race. "Mmusi Maimane's presidency started off on a good footing ... but they've taken a step back. Racial identity is a strong problem that the DA faces both at national and local elections and that problem has been compounded." Tensions in the country rose further when, days after Sparrow's post, prominent Standard Bank economist Chris Hart suggested on Twitter that 25 years of ANC rule had perpetuated poverty and entrenched a tendency to blame whites for all of South Africa's ills. — Reuters

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GBAGBO TRIAL REKINDLES CONTROVERSY IN AFRICA

DAKAR: The groundbreaking war crimes trial in The Hague yesterday of former Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo has rekindled a bitter row across Africa over the international justice system.

With Gbagbo the first ex-head of state hauled into the dock at the world's only permanent war crimes court, some in Africa are lashing out at the International Criminal Court (ICC) for allegedly pursuing Africans alone. The continent, they argue, instead should have its own court.

"It leaves me a bit puzzled to see former African leaders dragged before the ICC," Babacar Ba, who heads a judicial forum in Senegal, said.

"It's as if we Africans are incompetent to decide the law or lack the resources to judge our own people," added Ba. Instead of trying Gbagbo at the ICC, "we could've set up Extraordinary African Chambers as we did for Hissene Habre," he said, referring to the special court set up in Dakar by the African Union to try the former Chadian leader.

Delayed for years, the first phase of the Habre trial for atrocities wrapped up in December, setting a historic precedent as up until then African leaders had been tried in international courts for such abuse. The Habre trial has set a precedent in the struggle to end impunity as it sees a former African head of state forced to account for his actions in another African nation's court under the principle of "universal competence".

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon this month said the Habre trial, along with several cases before the ICC, showed "the surge in accountability mechanisms."

"The world is witnessing a sea change in ending impunity for atrocious crimes," Ban added in his New Year message.

Row over Sudan's Bashir

At stake at the Habre trial that opened last year was Africa's "capacity to judge its own children so others don't do it in its stead", said Marcel Mendy, spokesman for the Extraordinary African Chambers.

But Babacar Ba said it was key for African states to follow Senegal's lead and adopt the principle of "universal competence" to enable them to hold such trials.—AFP

SWEDEN LIKELY TO DEPORT UP TO HALF OF LAST YEAR'S ASYLUM SEEKERS

STOCKHOLM: Sweden is likely to deport up to half last year's record 163,000 asylum seekers either voluntarily or forcibly, presenting a major challenge to authorities, Interior Minister Anders Ygeman said on Thursday.

Between 60,000 and 80,000 people will likely have to leave, Ygeman said, which would represent about 45 percent of the total number of applicants. Sweden, with a population of almost 10 million, is one of the countries that has borne the brunt of Europe's migrant crisis as hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing war and poverty in the Middle East and north Africa have moved north to wealthier members of the European Union.

Germany took in an unprecedented 1.1 million migrants last year. Both countries have tightened asylum rules to stem the flow and force other countries to share the burden.

The Swedish government fears many people whose applications for asylum are rejected will go into hiding. Police will seek to find and deport them. Of the 13,000 sent back from Sweden last year 10,000 went voluntarily whereas 3,000 were forcibly deported.

Over the past few years Sweden has rejected about 45 percent of claims for asylum, but with last year's record influx the greater numbers are putting an increasing strain on immigration and police authorities.

"We have a big challenge ahead of us. We will need to use more resources for this and we must have better cooperation between authorities," Ygeman was quoted as saying by daily Dagens Industri. Adding to the problem is a backlog of applications. The Migration Agency says recent arrivals will have to wait between 15 and 24 months just to have their applications assessed.

Ygeman said he thought chartered planes would be more widely used and hoped flights could be coordinated with Germany. Germany deported 20,000 foreigners last year.

Sweden reversed its open door immigration policy late last year and has introduced border controls and identity checks to stem the flow of asylum seekers. —Reuters



BERLIN: Travel agent Alaa Hadrous (left), hands over a passport to traveler Hussein Hotuman from Iraq (right) at the 'Golf Reisen' (Gulf Travels) travel agency in Berlin, Germany. Homesick and tired of waiting for Germany's backlogged bureaucracy, a steady stream of Iraqis are heading home on their own. —AP

BETTERED IRAQI REFUGEES IN GERMANY HEAD HOME

A CHANGE OF HEART FOR MANY AFTER A FEW MONTHS

BERLIN: It's a change of heart that Iraqi immigrant Sekvan Agho never saw coming. Agho was among the wave of nearly 1.1 million asylum-seekers who came to Germany last year seeking a new life, making his way from his native Iraq to Turkey, then across the seas to Greece before tramping north and eventually making it to Berlin. The thousand-mile journey is grueling - borders to cross, smugglers to pay, trains and buses to scramble for a seat on and miles in-between to trudge on foot in all sorts of weather.

Yet only three months later, the 26-year-old stood in line Wednesday at the German capital's Tegel Airport, his newly-issued, yellow one-time-use Iraqi passport in hand, getting ready to head home to Kurdistan on an Iraqi Airlines flight. Agho said Germans treated him well, but the country just wasn't what he expected. The daily drudgery and boredom as he waited for his asylum request to be processed also didn't help. "I'm not saying that Germany is not nice. It is nice, but it's for European people," he told The Associated Press before getting on board his flight. Agho is one of a small but steady stream of asylum-seekers who are voluntarily returning home.

As Germany struggles to cope with the sheer number of would-be refugees who entered last year, the government has been encouraging people to return home on their own, and 37,220 did so last year. All but about 5,000 of those, however, were from Balkan nations

with little hope that their asylum request would be granted.

Others have much stronger asylum cases due to conflict in their homelands. Nearly 122,000 Iraqis arrived in 2015 and only 724 went home. Similarly, 309 Afghans voluntarily went home, as did 148 Pakistanis, though only seven Somalis and 13 Syrians chose to return to their restive nations. Iraqi Airlines spokeswoman Andesha Karim said about 40 of the 180 passengers on the weekly Wednesday flight from Berlin to the Iraqi city of Erbil were asylum-seekers who had decided to head home. She said the airline sees about the same numbers each week, and also on flights from Duesseldorf to Erbil and from Frankfurt to Baghdad.

Hameed Majeed, who sells tickets to the flights directly at the airport and also from his travel agency in Berlin, said asylum-seekers typically pick up temporary travel papers from the Iraqi Embassy, then head directly to the flight home.

"If they wait, then that means that they have to live another week in an asylum home and they have no patience," he said. Majeed said he hadn't heard of asylum-seekers returning home because they felt treated badly or feared attacks by the far-right, more that their expectations were so high that many grew quickly disillusioned as they found themselves dealing with backlogged bureaucracy with hundreds of thousands of others, put up in temporary housing and unable to

work or go to school.

Germany has been working to streamline those processes, although is still struggling to deal with the unexpectedly vast number of people who arrived last year.

"They came here with a big dream, and then go to an asylum home and see it's a gym with 300 people," Majeed said. "They're disappointed."

That disappointment is keenly felt. Hussein Hotuman, 27, lost his job as a tailor in Iraq after his company shut down and said he came to Germany hoping to start over. He had plans to go to school, work, and eventually start his own business. Yet only one month in, however, he decided to head home on the same flight as Agho.

"A lot of people I met have been here for more than a year and haven't had any opportunity," he said. "I couldn't wait that long." Agho said his epic journey across the continent was worth it even though it didn't work out. "It was my heart's desire to come to Europe. I've seen it, and that's it," he said, adding that he planned to go back to serving in the Kurdish government's Peshmerga militia forces when he returns.

Agho said his parents had to wire him 370 euros (\$404) to purchase his one-way ticket home as he'd been unable to earn any money while in Germany. Still he considered the money well spent.

"As soon as I'm back on Kurdish soil, I'll kiss the ground," he said. — AP

FEARFUL OF RUSSIA, EUROPE'S DEFENSE CUTS SLOW

BRUSSELS: NATO defense cuts slowed sharply in 2015, alliance data showed yesterday, also revealing a split between big-spending eastern European nations fearful of Russia and others such as Italy that are still reducing their budgets.

Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, failing states on NATO's borders, and the spread of Islamic militancy have refocused governments on the need to defend home territory after more than a decade of NATO-led operations in Afghanistan. NATO's defense spending as a share of economic output fell 1.5 percent in 2015, the sixth straight year of cuts, dragged down by a 12 percent decrease in Italy, the US-led alliance said in its annual report. The 2008/09 finan-

cial crisis and the ensuing euro zone crisis forced many NATO allies into drastic measures to reduce their budget deficits, leading to sometimes sharp cuts in defense spending.

But NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg welcomed the data showing total defence budget reductions outside the United States, which accounts for almost three-quarters of NATO military spending, fell just 0.3 percent last year. Overall, the alliance's total cuts were the mildest in four years. "We have started to move in the right direction," Stoltenberg told a news conference, saying that 16 allies spent more on defence in real terms in 2015 and there was also an increase in spending on new equip-

ment. "The cuts have now practically stopped among European allies and Canada."

Poland's decision to increase defence spending by almost a quarter, as well as a strong showing in the Baltic nations that want more NATO troops in the region, helped offset the decrease in Italy and smaller reductions in Britain, Belgium and France.

Stoltenberg said NATO was now facing "the biggest security challenges in a generation", pointing to potential risks from its former Cold War adversary Russia as well as on its southern flank, ranging from Libya to Iraq and the wider Middle East.

He cited the need to invest in modern equipment and also more surveillance and

intelligence to counter cyberattacks.

"We see a more assertive Russia to the east, a Russia that has invested heavily in defence over several years and which has also shown the will to use military force to change borders in Europe," he said, referring to Crimea.

NATO and its biggest contributor, the United States, have warned European allies since the 2008/09 financial crisis that the alliance's military power and influence is at risk while countries such as China and Russia increase their budgets. Britain, Poland, Greece and Estonia are the only European nations to meet a NATO goal of spending at least 2 percent of gross domestic product on defense. — Reuters

SECURITY FEARS HALT BELGIUM SYRIAN FIGHTER HEARING

BRUSSELS: A Belgian court yesterday cited security concerns as it adjourned the appeal hearing of several people—some linked to key figures in the Paris attacks—against jail terms for recruiting fighters for Syria. "We are adjourning the hearing until tomorrow because security measures are not satisfactory," judge Pierre Saint-Remy announced in court.

"If tomorrow we do not have satisfactory security measures, then the hearing will be adjourned sine die (indefinitely)," Saint-Remy said. Judicial sources said the decision appeared to reflect concerns about personal protection for the judges as Belgium remains on high alert after the Paris killings, with armed troops patrolling the streets and guarding key buildings and institutions.

In July, a court handed down jail terms of up to 20 years after 32 people were tried for allegedly running one of Belgium's largest jihadist recruitment networks sending fighters to Syria.

Most of the defendants were tried in absentia, chief among them Abdelhamid Abaaoud who helped organise the November 13 Paris gun and bomb attacks which left 130 people dead and hundreds wounded. Abaaoud, sentenced to 20 years, was killed by French security forces a few days after the attacks.

Among the others sentenced, Chakib Akrouh, given a five-year jail term, died with Abaaoud, a Belgian of Moroccan origin who lived in the gritty Molenbeek quarter of Brussels. Belgian investigators said at the time that Abaaoud was the ringleader of an Islamist cell the authorities broke up in January as it planned attacks on the police.

Police shot and killed two suspected militants in Verviers, eastern Belgium, with the country on edge after a three-day string of Islamist attacks in Paris that killed 17 people, mainly at the offices of satirical offices Charlie Hebdo. In February, Abaaoud claimed responsibility for the Verviers plot and said he had joined the Islamic State group in Syria. The case attracted a lot of attention amid fears that young Belgians could return home from the battlefields of Syria and Iraq both battle-hardened and dangerously radicalized. — AFP

16 DEAD, MANY CRITICALLY WOUNDED IN CHIBOK, NIGERIA

LAGOS, Nigeria: Multiple suicide bombings have killed 15 civilians and a soldier and the toll is expected to rise among those critically wounded in Chibok, community leaders said yesterday in the town from which Boko Haram kidnapped scores of schoolgirls almost two years ago.

Many wounded people suffered severe burns and are "battling for their lives" after Wednesday's attack, Dr. Idrissa Danladi told The Associated Press by telephone. Ten people were evacuated for better medical care on Wednesday but the town's small hospital still is overwhelmed, he said. "People are trying to help with donations, but there's a shortage of blood," he said.

Residents blamed Boko Haram, the Islamic extremist group that kidnapped nearly 300 schoolgirls in April 2014. Dozens escaped but 219 remain missing. The militants have turned to suicide bombings of soft targets since troops last year forced them out of towns and villages. The 16 victims were buried Wednesday, said Pogu Bitrus, head of the Chibok Development Association.

He said six male and female suicide bombers entered the northeast Nigerian town on Wednesday, when people gather for the weekly vegetable market. The first blast came when a man blew himself up at a military checkpoint. A soldier was injured and later died, Bitrus said. — AP



MARSHALLTOWN: Supporters of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump cheer to drown out protestors chants during a campaign event at the Roundhouse Gymnasium, in Marshalltown, Iowa. — AP

TRUMP TAKES CALCULATED RISK WITH DECISION TO SKIP DEBATE

FOES SAYS HE IS TOO AFRAID TO FACE RIVALS ON STAGE

DES MOINES, Iowa: Donald Trump has figured out how to make the buzz around a yesterday's night debate of Republican presidential candidates all about him: By vowing to skip it. But the billionaire's move, days before Iowa holds the first nominating contest of the 2016 election, is a gamble.

After Trump said he was boycotting the Fox News-sponsored debate because of a feud with anchor Megyn Kelly, rivals accused him of being too afraid to face them on stage. While some of Trump's fans were supportive of his decision, several undecided voters said they were unimpressed.

"I was on Trump's doorstep until this whole thing happened. I was disappointed," said Bryan Moon of West Des Moines, Iowa, who was attending an event for Republican Marco Rubio. "If this is how he's going to act, that 'I'm taking my ball and going home,' then that is just not going to work."

Voter Jill Ruby, another West Des Moines resident at the Rubio event, was equally put out by Trump's decision. "Are you kidding me, a reporter ticked him off?" she said. "He's a coward. I think it will come back and bite him. That's not how a president acts, you don't just run away."

Although Trump leads polls of Iowa

Republicans over US Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, many voters remain undecided and are looking to the debate to aid their decision-making. "It gives people a reason to be disappointed in him and take a look at the other candidates," said Republican strategist Charlie Black. "It could hurt him with people who might be undecided."

Trump planned to hold a fundraiser for veterans at Drake University in Des Moines at the same time as the Fox debate, according to an invitation circulated by his campaign.

Early yesterday, Trump tweeted: "Wow, two candidates called last night and said they want to go to my event tonight at Drake University." He did not elaborate and there was no word from other candidates about plans to join the front-runner. Trump's rivals view the debate, which begins at 9 pm EST (0200 GMT), as a chance to get their own messages across without having to compete with Trump's bomb-throwing rhetoric.

"It gives us more time at the microphone and more time to talk about answers to substantive issues that Iowa voters are demanding right now," said David Kochel, a senior adviser to Republican candidate Jeb Bush. On the down side, the number of people who tune in could be

lower without Trump at center stage.

"It is undeniable that what he's doing is denying his opponents a large audience as they make their final arguments to Iowa voters," said Eric Fehrstrom, a Republican strategist who advised the party's 2012 nominee, Mitt Romney. Trump's decision to stage a benefit event to help military veterans instead of participating in the debate was welcomed by some supporters.

Pat Wiltfang, 59, of Grinnell, Iowa, a lifelong Republican who had watched all the previous debates, said she was pleased with Trump's decision and would gladly skip this one. "That's a great move," said Wiltfang, who plans to caucus for Trump. "All it is is just everyone trying to attack." While it might be tempting for Trump's rivals to use the debate to criticize him aggressively, some Republican analysts are cautioning against a scorched-earth approach.

"It's delicate for the candidates because you have to pull back from attacking a man who is not there," said Ari Fleischer, who was White House press secretary for President George W. Bush. "It will be OK to make a passing reference or two, the fact that he's not there. But if you try to beat him up, it won't play well because he's not there to defend himself." — Reuters

SUSPECT DIES, TROOPER SHOT IN ATLANTA-AREA CHASE

MARIETTA, Georgia: A highway chase in suburban Atlanta ended with a Georgia state trooper being shot and the suspect fatally wounded in an exchange of gunfire, authorities said.

Trooper Jacob Fields was patrolling Interstate 75 southbound Wednesday in Cobb County shortly after 3:30 p.m. when he saw a black Chevrolet Silverado speeding, Georgia State Patrol spokesman Capt. Mark Perry said. Fields recorded the pickup truck going 98 mph and when he tried to pull the Silverado over, the driver fled, Perry said. The driver was 26-year-old Israel Vladimir Rodriguez of Acworth, Georgia Bureau of Investigation spokesman Scott Dutton said.

Fields chased the Silverado for about 10 miles with two other troopers

joining in to try to execute a "box-in maneuver," in which they try to bring it to a slow stop, Perry said. Before they could complete that, the Silverado hit a civilian vehicle and came to a stop.

Rodriguez got out of the truck holding a handgun and began shooting at the troopers; Fields and two other troopers returned fire, Perry said.

Fields was shot in the leg and abdomen just below his vest and above his gun belt, and Rodriguez was hit multiple times in the abdomen area, Perry said.

Rodriguez underwent surgery but died at a hospital around 10:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dutton said. He would have faced a number of charges, including aggravated assault on a

police officer.

Fields, a three-year veteran, underwent surgery Wednesday evening and was expected to make a full recovery, the Georgia State Patrol said. He was expected to remain in the hospital for two or three days. Perry didn't speak to Fields but said he heard the trooper speaking to his family.

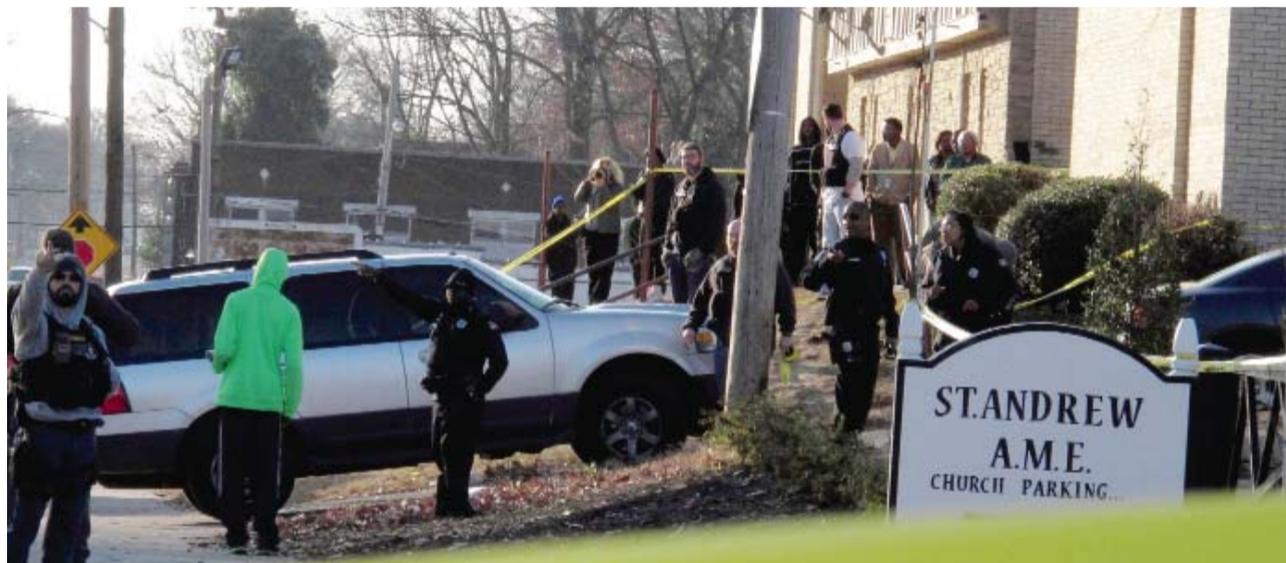
"He sounded very lucid, very awake, very alert, and he was very coherent and speaking, explaining what happened," Perry said. All three troopers who exchanged fire with Rodriguez were placed on paid administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation, which is standard procedure.

Marietta Police spokeswoman Brittany Wallace said the shooting

caused all but two lanes of the busy highway to shut down.

The southbound lanes were completely blocked off for several hours with numerous police cars, fire trucks and an ambulance parked at the scene. Police diverted traffic off I-75 heading south to clear the way for the investigation.

Many truck drivers pulled over and parked on the shoulder of the interstate during the traffic backup. Dozens of the big rigs remained parked on the side of the highway before dawn Thursday, a sight reminiscent of the 2014 snow and ice storm that led to motorists leaving their vehicles for a time. Traffic was flowing freely around the semis early yesterday morning. — AP



MEMPHIS: Law enforcement officers gather near the scene of a fatal shooting involving a police officer in Memphis, Tennessee. —AP

POLICE FATALLY SHOOT MAN, SEARCHING FOR ANOTHER

MEMPHIS, Tennessee: Memphis police fatally shot one man and were still looking for another involved in a chase Wednesday, authorities said.

The incident began when officers in two Memphis police cruisers tried to stop a Chevrolet Impala for a routine traffic violation but the driver of the car drove away, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation spokesman Josh DeVine said. Officers started

to pursue the car but backed off for safety reasons, DeVine said. Police continued to watch the car as it drove recklessly through a south Memphis neighborhood and crashed.

Two men in the car then fled on foot and an officer from each police vehicle gave chase, he said. A third officer, a Shelby County sheriff's deputy, was in the area and also responded to the scene. During the foot chase, one of the men from the Impala opened fire on the

officers, DeVine said. He said the two Memphis officers returned fire, shooting the suspect, who died on the scene. He didn't indicate in what part of the body the man was shot but did note that he was not in custody at the time. The second man who fled the car had not been located, and a search for him was still underway Wednesday night. DeVine said the TBI was not releasing the identity of the dead man yet because the next of kin needed to be notified.

People who identified themselves as relatives of the person who was shot were crying and hugging near the St. Andrew A.M.E. Church, where dozens of people were gathered, some screaming expletives at police. More than two dozen marked and unmarked police cars lined the streets. The identities of the officers involved in the shooting had not been released, but DeVine did say that one is white and one is black. The dead man was black. Memphis officers involved in shootings are routinely placed on administrative leave.

In July, a 19-year-old black man was fatally shot by a white police officer during a fight at a traffic stop in Memphis. The shooting of Darrius Stewart led to peaceful rallies and protests, and calls for the officer, Connor Schilling, to be charged. A grand jury declined to indict Schilling, but federal prosecutors are investigating the shooting. — AP

TORNADO TOSSES VEHICLE ALONG FLORIDA TURNPIKE

MIAMI: A tornado picked up a southbound vehicle on Florida's Turnpike near Fort Lauderdale Wednesday morning and dropped it in the northbound lane as a line of severe storms hit the area, officials said. They said the storms tossed cars and trucks, knocked down trees and damaged some roofs in south Florida.

Broward Fire Rescue spokesman Mike Jachles said one person was hurt on the turnpike. He didn't know how many vehicles were overturned in the area. The southbound lanes were closed for a time north of Fort Lauderdale.

At least six cars were damaged in the

parking lot at the nearby north campus of Broward College, said Coconut Creek police spokesman Henry Cabrera. The college issued an advisory in an email urging students to take precautions shortly before the storm. Miami television stations showed video of numerous downed trees, downed power lines, and minor roof damage to condominiums and other buildings.

The National Weather Service issued a tornado warning for parts of Broward and Palm Beach counties earlier Wednesday. The agency confirmed later Wednesday evening that the area had been hit by a tornado. — AP

DRUG DISPUTE LIKELY STARTED DEADLY SEATTLE HOMELESS SHOOTING

SEATTLE: A shooting at a Seattle homeless encampment that left 2 people dead and three others wounded appears to have originated with a drug-dealing dispute, according to the police chief.

A man and woman who lived in the "The Jungle" were killed in the gunfire Tuesday evening. The three others remained in serious condition. "The investigators feel strongly that's probably the case, but again we always have to keep open minds in this type of investigation," Chief Kathleen O'Toole said at a news conference Wednesday afternoon.

Officials with the King County Medical Examiner's Office identified the 45-year-old woman killed as Jeannine L. Zapata, who is also known by the last name Brook. They identified the slain man as James Q. Tran, 33. No arrests have been made although police say they have eyewitnesses and believe at least two people were involved in the shooting.

Police said they believe the shooters weren't homeless but were acquainted with the victims. O'Toole also said Wednesday police have no evidence the people shot were targeted because they are homeless.

It was the second fatal attack at a homeless camp in Seattle within the past six months. In August, a homeless woman was beaten to death under a bridge and her husband was attacked.

Mayor Ed Murray and King County Executive Director Dow Constantine declared a state of emergency regarding homelessness in November, pledging more than \$7 million to address the crisis.

Murray said Wednesday "significant parts" of the homeless services system in Seattle and throughout the country "are broken."

Despite providing shelter for 2,000 people per night in the city, Murray said it's not enough. He also reiterated a call he made in November for help at the federal level. "These are humans. And for the most part, they're not criminals," he said. O'Toole said police officers and social workers have been visiting other nearby homeless camps to reassure people that they are not in danger because of the shooting. Police also hope to interview the three survivors at Harborview Medical Center, where they've undergone surgery for gunshot wounds to their upper bodies.

The conditions of the wounded continue to improve, Harborview Medical Center spokeswoman Susan Gregg said Wednesday in a news release.

The two women shot are breathing on their own and remain in serious condition in intensive care, Gregg said. The male victim had another surgery Wednesday, and his condition remains serious, she said. The names of the injured victims have not been released. They range from 25 to 45 years old. — AP

IN KASHMIR, MISSING MEN REVIVE FEARS OF 'DISAPPEARANCES'

DARDPORA: On a freezing winter's day in a remote Kashmiri village, Begum Jan and her 10 children huddle around a wood burner inside their dimly-lit home, worried about the fate of their missing father. The 42-year-old labourer has been missing since November and his family fears he may have been taken by the Indian army, whose presence in the disputed Himalayan territory many locals resent.

Jan, 38, says she has no hope of her husband returning. "If the army has taken him, they must have killed him," she told AFP, her children sobbing in the background.

Indian government forces deployed in Kashmir have for decades faced charges of killing locals in faked gun battles to claim cash rewards and win promotion.

Rights groups say as many as 8,000 people, mostly young men, were "disappeared" in Indian Kashmir from 1989, when an armed insurgency against Indian rule erupted in the Muslim-majority region. There has been a sharp decline in such cases in the past decade but fresh incidents continue to be reported.

The latest incident has brought back memories of a 2010 incident in which soldiers killed three young Kashmiri men and branded them as Pakistani militants.

Their deaths triggered months-long mass demonstrations across Indian Kashmir that ended with government forces killing 120 civilians. A rare police investigation later found the three had been lured away by the soldiers and killed in a staged gun battle.

'I keep waiting'

Situated close to the Indian side of the de facto border with Pakistan known as the Line of Control (LoC), Dardpora is a Himalayan picture postcard, surrounded by glittering pine trees and sparkling streams.

But it has also been the scene of some of the ugliest episodes of the decades-long Kashmir insurgency. Jan's husband Ghulam Jeelani Khatana has been missing since November 17 when he and another villager, Mir Hussain Khatana, left home with a soldier from the Indian army. Locals say the men were lured away by a soldier who was arrested three weeks later on suspicion of abducting them.

But the exact circumstances of their disappearance remains unclear. Left alone with 10 children to support, Begum Jan has been trying to trace her husband herself, with the help of relatives.

This led them to Hassina, wife of a former rebel, Ali Mohammad, who went missing around the same time. The same soldier repeatedly called Mohammad the day before he left home in a hurry, Hassina told AFP as she wept at her home.

"I keep waiting all the time, like my three small children, hoping he might just come back," she said. Local police superintendent Aijaz Ahmed Bhat confirmed to AFP that a soldier had been arrested and remanded in custody on abduction charges. Police have also arrested a cab driver who said he took the soldier and three men to a spot near an army camp around 30 kilometres (20 miles) from the village. He has identified two as the men from Dardpora.—AFP



Begum Jan (behind left) with some of her children at their home in Dardpora, a Himalayan village on the Indian side of the de facto border that divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan. — AFP



PESHAWAR: Pakistani Elite Police Force take part in a drill to fight against militants at a school in Peshawar yesterday. A Pakistan university attacked by the Taliban last week has demanded the government arm its staff as it seeks to boost security after the deadly assault in which 21 people were killed, officials said. — AFP

PAKISTANI CLERIC WILLING TO REVIEW BLASPHEMY LAW

MISUSE OF LAW LED TO HUNDREDS OF DEATHS

ISLAMABAD: The head of a powerful religious body said yesterday he is willing to review Pakistan's harsh blasphemy laws that critics say are regularly misused and have led to the deaths of hundreds, to decide if they are Islamic.

Pakistan's religious and political elites almost universally keep clear of debating blasphemy laws in a country where criticism of Islam is a highly sensitive subject. Even rumours of blasphemy have sparked rampaging mobs and deadly riots.

But Muhammad Khan Sherani, chairman of a body that advises the government on the compatibility of laws with Islam, told Reuters he was willing to reopen the debate and see whether sentences as harsh as the death penalty were fair.

"The government of Pakistan should officially, at the government level, refer the law on committing blasphemy to the Council of Islamic Ideology. There is a lot of difference of opinion among the clergy on this issue," Sherani said in an interview at his office close to Pakistan's parliament.

"Then the council can seriously consider things and give its recommendation of whether it needs to stay the same or if it needs to be hardened or if it needs to be softened," Sherani, dressed in a traditional black robe, said. Sherani, who has hit the headlines in recent weeks after his council

obstructed a bill to deter child marriages, did not disclose his own position. Pakistan's blasphemy laws mandate the death penalty, although no sentence has been carried out. Critics say the law is abused in poor, rural areas by enemies falsely accusing others to settle personal scores.

Presenting evidence in court can be considered a new infringement, so judges are reluctant to hear cases. Those acquitted have often been lynched. Salman Taseer, a prominent liberal politician, was killed by his own bodyguard in 2011 after he had championed the cause of a Christian woman sentenced to death under the law.

CHILD MARRIAGE

Sherani, a member of parliament representing Pakistan's largest Islamist party, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, for some embodies Pakistan's struggle to balance modern, democratic ideals with pleasing conservative religious bodies demanding the imposition of strict Islamic law.

In recent years his 54-year old council has ruled DNA cannot be used as primary evidence in rape cases, and supported a law that requires woman alleging rape to get four male witnesses to testify in court before a case is heard. His members' decision this month to block a bill to impose harsher penalties for marrying off girls as young as eight or nine has angered

human rights activists.

Senators have since debated whether the council, in its current form, is right for the modern democratic Pakistan that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said his country must represent.

Sherani, head of the council since 2010, defended its recommendations, saying it was his job, as mandated by the constitution, to ensure the laws of the land were in line with Islam. The council's advice is not binding.

"The state should only be concerned up until a point with the question of marriage," he said. "After reaching the age of maturity (puberty) the child has the right to reject a union."

Three percent of girls in Pakistan are married before they turn 15 and 21 percent before age 18, according to UNICEF. Sherani said there were many un-Islamic laws on the statute book that he was advising the government to overturn, including presidential pardons for a murderer.

Many of Pakistan's problems, including violence against religious minorities, were the result of the government failing to be sufficiently Islamic and instead pandering to the West, he said.

"Pakistan's present government is a defender of the interests of the West," Sherani said. "Don't equate what the government thinks to what Islam is."—Reuters

JAPAN UNVEILS FIRST STEALTH FIGHTER JET

KOMAKI, Japan: Japan yesterday unveiled its first stealth fighter jet, officials said, with the maiden test flight planned for next month. The defence ministry's acquisition agency showed off the domestically developed, radar-dodging X-2 fighter at a regional airport near the central city of Komaki.

Its first flight is scheduled in mid-February before delivery to the defence ministry by the end of March next year, the acquisition agency said. The X-2, developed by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, measures 14.2 metres (47 feet) long and 9.1 metres wide and was built

as a successor to the F-2 fighter jets developed jointly with the United States.

Presently, only the United States, Russia and China have been internationally recognized as having successfully developed and flown manned stealth jets, the agency said. Japan has reportedly spent about 39.4 billion yen (\$332 million) to develop the aircraft. In November Japan's first domestically produced passenger jet, also developed by Mitsubishi Heavy, made its maiden test flight, a landmark development for the country after being barred from developing aircraft following its defeat in World War II. — AFP



TOYOYAMA: The first domestically-made stealth aircraft, X-2, is shown to the media at Nagoya Airport in Toyoyama town, central Japan, yesterday. — AP



Taiwan's President Ma Ying-jeou, second from right, arrives on his visit to Taiping Island, also known as Itu Aba, in the Spratly archipelago, south of Taiwan yesterday. — AP

TAIWAN PRESIDENT, IGNORES FLAK, VISITS DISPUTED ISLAND

TRIP AIMED AT PROMOTING PEACE: MA

TAIPEI: Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou, ignoring US criticism, flew to a disputed island in the South China Sea yesterday to reaffirm Taipei's sovereignty and said the trip was aimed at promoting peace.

Ma's one-day visit to Itu Aba came amid growing international concern over tension in the South China Sea, especially in the wake of Beijing's rapid creation of seven man-made islands in the Spratly archipelago. The United States, Taiwan's biggest ally, on Wednesday called Ma's trip "extremely unhelpful", adding it would not do anything to resolve disputes over the waterway.

But Ma, who steps down in May, said he had told the United States about his trip a few days beforehand. "The US and we (Taiwan), when it comes to the big direction for the South China Sea, are the same," Ma told reporters on his return. "We all hope for peace, hope there is no conflict or war."

Beijing on Thursday reiterated that China and Taiwan had a common duty to protect Chinese sovereignty in the South China Sea. Beijing, recognised by most of the world as the head of "one China", the People's Republic of China, deems Taiwan a wayward

province to be taken by force if necessary.

Taiwan, which goes by the official name of Republic of China, is recognised by only a handful of countries. Ma also said his trip was aimed at bringing attention to Taiwan's stand. Both China and Taiwan claim most of the South China Sea. Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei have competing claims.

The Philippines has launched an arbitration case against China in The Hague which Ma said could result in a ruling affecting Taiwan. The visit was now or never because of the pending ruling that might rule on land formations that could determine economic zone rights for claimants.

"Our diplomatic situation is difficult. On the topic of the South China Sea, we want to talk but have nowhere to file our complaint," Ma said. "This was the time to go. If I didn't go now, it would have been too late."

Vietnam's top official in Taiwan said Hanoi "resolutely opposed" Ma's visit. The Philippine Foreign Ministry said all parties had a shared responsibility to refrain from actions that could increase tensions.

Taiwan has just finished a \$100 million

port upgrade and built a new lighthouse on Itu Aba, known as Taiping in Taiwan. The island, which lies in the Spratlys, also has an airstrip, a hospital and fresh water.

Given the tensions over the South China Sea, few senior political officials from any of the claimants have visited the contested region in recent years. Ma's visit follows elections won by the independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which declined a request by Ma to send a representative along. The DPP said Taiwan had a responsibility to maintain peace and stability in the area.

The claims of both China and Taiwan are based on maps from the late 1940s belonging to the Nationalists, when they ruled all of China. The Nationalists fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing the Chinese civil war to Mao Zedong's Communists. China has appeared unfazed by Taiwan's upgrading work on Itu Aba. Military strategists say that is because Itu Aba could fall into China's hands should it ever take over Taiwan.

The 46-hectare (114-acre) island supports around 180 people, about 150 of them coast-guard personnel. — Reuters

MALAYSIA'S LAWYER REJECTED ADVICE TO CHARGE PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's anti-graft agency had recommended that Prime Minister Najib Razak be charged with criminal misappropriation, a source said, amid growing outrage after the premier was cleared of any offences in a multi-million-dollar scandal.

The attorney-general closed all investigations of Najib, after reviewing reports from the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) on a case that involved the transfer of \$681 million into the prime minister's personal bank account. Najib has consistently denied any wrongdoing, saying the funds were a political donation and he did not take any money for personal gain. After he was cleared of any offences by the country's chief law officer on Tuesday, he said the scandal had been "an unnecessary distraction". A source at the MACC told Reuters that, when it handed its findings to the attorney-general last month, the agency had recommended that Najib be charged with criminal misappropriation. The source did not specify the grounds or the legal basis for the MACC's recommendation.

"It's a pretty straightforward case. We had made recommendations for charges to be filed that the attorney-general has instead chosen to reject," said the source, who declined to be identified or to elaborate on the MACC's findings. The attorney-general's office declined to comment. Najib's office said it had no immediate comment. The MACC said it would not comment on whether it made any recommendation to charge the prime minister.

In a statement on Wednesday, the agency said it would seek a review of the attorney general's decision to close the investigations, but declined to make any further public comment on his findings.

Najib has been buffeted for months by allegations of graft at the debt-laden state fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) and by revelations of the transfer of funds, adding to a sense of crisis in a country under economic duress from slumping oil prices and a sliding currency.

DRAWING A LINE

Attorney-General Mohamed Apandi Ali appeared to have drawn a line under the scandal on Tuesday, announcing that the money was a private donation from Saudi Arabia's royal family and that no further action needed to be taken on the matter.

While Malaysian law places limits on the amounts individual candidates can spend in an election campaign, there is no ceiling on donations to parties or requirement for them to disclose the source of their funds. However, popular opinion seems to be against Najib as he tries to rebuild support ahead of a 2018 general election, and on Wednesday commentators and critics denounced the attorney-general's ruling as a whitewash.

"The court of public opinion will continue to try him," said veteran journalist and former editor-in-chief of the state-linked New Strait Times newspaper, A Kadir Jasin. "As for all of us, we have to do some serious soul-searching if we care for this country and its future."

Najib's ruling United Malays National Organisation party welcomed the attorney-general's decision. Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said it had brought a moment for the country to unite and move forward under the prime minister's leadership.

Influential former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, one of Najib's fiercest critics, said in a blog that having that much money in his account was wrong in itself, even though it might not be illegal.

Mahathir said the attorney-general's role as both judge and prosecutor amounted to an injustice. — Reuters

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Friday Times

Lifestyle

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A model presents a creation for Viktor & Rolf during the 2016 spring/summer Haute Couture collection in Paris. — AFP

Rossini opera on Syria to come to US

Rossini opera on Syria to come to US

A long obscure Rossini opera set in Syria will be performed for the first time in the United States at New York's Caramoor summer festival. The festival, announcing its lineup on Wednesday, said that staging the opera was especially timely in light of Syria's bloody civil war but that the US premiere was "centuries overdue." "Aureliano in Palmira" revolves around

the beautiful queen Zenobia of the Syrian city commonly spelled as Palmyra, which in more recent times has been ravaged by extremists from the Islamic State group.

In Rossini's opera, the queen is in love with a Persian prince but they come under attack from the Roman emperor who wants Zenobia as his bride. The opera premiered at Milan's La Scala in

1813 — starring one of the last famous castrati, Giovanni Velluti—but faded into obscurity as Rossini gained greater recognition for his other works.

"Aureliano in Palmira" has been revived in recent years and was recently restored to its original form by Will Crutchfield, the opera director at Caramoor.

His restored production opened at the Rossini Opera Festival in Italy in

2014. The Caramoor festival, launched in 1945 as World War II was ending, emphasizes opera but offers a range of genres at a Mediterranean-style estate some 50 miles (80 kilometers) north of Manhattan. Other highlights of the 71st season, which runs from June 18 to August 7, include a jazz day headlined by the trio of piano great Chick Corea. — AFP



In this file photo, singer Rihanna poses before Christian Dior's Spring-Summer 2016 ready-to-wear fashion collection to be presented during the Paris Fashion Week, in Paris. — AP

Rihanna releases long-awaited album in streaming exclusive

R&B superstar Rihanna late Wednesday released her long-awaited eighth album "Anti" as she offered exclusive early access through commercial tie-ups. "Anti," Rihanna's first album since 2012, had been announced late last year but the timing of the release was a surprise and came hours after she put out the first single. Tidal, the streaming service led by rap mogul Jay Z in which Rihanna is a partner, premiered "Anti" and said it would not appear elsewhere for the first week.

Rihanna signed a deal reported to be worth \$25 million with South Korean electronics giant Samsung, which set up an "Anti" interactive website accessible on its smartphones. Tidal said that Samsung users who used the website would be able to download "Anti" and receive a two-month free trial of the streaming service. The release marks the latest effort by an upstart streaming companies to challenge the dominance of streaming leader Spotify through exclusive releases. Prince put out his two last albums on Tidal while pop superstar Taylor Swift released a tour video only on Apple Music.

Streaming services, which offer on-demand access online, have grown rapidly in recent years and become a key part of the music industry's commercial strategies. Rihanna earlier Wednesday put out a first single from "Anti" that features chart-topping rapper Drake. Entitled "Work," the song is set to tropical house, the light-feeling electronic genre that has become increasingly popular in the past year.

The song returns to Rihanna's familiar theme of feeling taken advantage of in a relationship, while Drake in his verse raps of his struggle finding intimacy. "Anti" starts off with the track "Consideration," a collaboration with SZA, an R&B singer who has come to prominence more recently. "Anti" does not include "FourFiveSeconds," a song that Rihanna released a year ago in a collaboration with Paul McCartney and Kanye West. Rihanna quickly became one of the 21st century's top-selling artists after releasing her debut album in 2005, but the Barbados-born singer's prolific output stopped after a seven-year stretch. The two-month delay between the launch of the Samsung website and the album triggered speculation among fans who wondered if there were disagreements behind the scenes. Some music industry observers suspected that Rihanna did not want to compete with British ballad singer Adele, whose album "25" broke first-week sales records in November. However, it is unclear how Rihanna will fare on the charts as her album is not available for conventional purchase. Rihanna has already announced a world tour to promote "Anti," which will begin on February 26 in San Diego. — AFP

Grammys to showcase artist collaborations

Next month's Grammys will feature a series of duets between nominees, keeping up the award ceremony's knack for attention-grabbing collaborations, the Recording Academy announced Wednesday. Live performances at the February 15 gala in Los Angeles will include a song bringing together English pop star Ellie Goulding and the American R&B singer Andra Day, who released her first full album last year and received two Grammy nominations.

Sam Hunt, a country singer who is in the running for Best New Artist, will perform with a more established country star—Carrie Underwood. And two artists who are competing against each other for Best New Artist—British singer and guitarist James Bay and US singer Tori Kelly—will share the stage together. The Recording Academy earlier announced solo performances from artists including Kendrick Lamar, the rapper who leads the Grammys in nominations, and English ballad singer Adele, whose latest



This file photo shows singer Ellie Goulding performs during the 2015 Victoria's Secret Fashion Show in New York.

album has broken sales records but was released too late for Grammy contention. The music industry's biggest night has long emphasized exclusive performances and collaborations in the quest

for a television audience. Last year's ceremony included a performance that brought together young English soul singer Sam Smith, the night's big winner, with R&B great Mary J Blige. — AFP

DiCaprio bonds with Pope over protecting planet

Pope Francis received US film star Leonardo DiCaprio at the Vatican yesterday, with the pair bonding over their shared passion for defending the environment. Blue-eyed DiCaprio was spotted listening earnestly as the Argentine pontiff explained that he was presenting the actor with a copy of his hard-hitting thesis on climate change, *Laudato Si*, published last year. The 41-year old star won the Crystal Award at the World Economic Forum in Davos this month for his green credentials. The movie great, who rose to fame with "Titanic" and has been nominated for a best actor Oscar for his role in "The Revenant", set up a foundation in 1998 dedicated to protecting endangered wildlife and vulnerable ecosystems. Raised in Los Angeles in a Catholic family of Italian and German origins, atheist DiCaprio-looking dapper in a black suit and tie—was all smiles with the white-robed pope, who has repeatedly blamed mankind

for climate change. He may also be hoping the photo-op with the popular pontiff will give his Oscar nomination

a boost: The actor has been nominated four times but never won one of the coveted gold statuettes.—AFP



This handout picture released by the Vatican press office yesterday shows Pope Francis exchanging gifts with US actor Leonardo DiCaprio (left) during a private audience at the Vatican. — AFP

Film academy reforms spark new round of protests



In this March 2, 2014 file photo, an Oscar statue is displayed at the Oscars at the Dolby Theatre in Los Angeles. — AP

Since the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences said it was altering membership rules in response to an outcry over the diversity of its voters and nominees, another uproar has erupted around Hollywood. Many academy members are protesting that the new measures unjustly scapegoat older academy members and imply they're racist. Fiery letters have poured into the academy. Trade magazines are littered with critical op-eds from members. Meanwhile, civil rights leaders and others say the academy's actions didn't go far enough. More steps are needed, they say, to make the Oscars and the industry more inclusive.

Reforms meant to calm a crisis seem to have only further enflamed it. This year's Feb. 28 Academy Awards are looking less like a glitzy gala and more like a battlefield. "We all have to calm down a bit. The conversation has become unduly vitriolic," says Rod Lurie, the writer-director of "Straw Dogs" and "The Contender" and a member of the academy's directors' branch. "Nobody in the academy should dignify any accusations of racism," Lurie said in an interview, "but there obviously are biases that are created by the demographics of the academy."

Exclusive members

The typically slow-moving academy acted swiftly last week, holding an emergency meeting of its Board of Governors. In the wake of a second straight year of all-white acting nominees - and calls for a boycott of the Oscars broadcast - the 51-member board unanimously voted to revamp membership rules in an effort to change the makeup of the largely white, male and older association of some 7,000 exclusive members.

Though Oscar voting was previously for life, it will now be restricted to members who have been active in the industry within the past 10 years, with a few exceptions like for previous Oscar nominees. The academy also set a goal to double minority and female members by 2020. Some academy members, while applauding efforts to diversify the academy, said taking away voting rights from older members smacks of ageism, and that they aren't to blame for the dearth of minority nominees in the past two years; the industry is.

Studies have shown that minorities remain underrepresented in all levels of the movie business, from protagonists on screen to executives who can green-light a film. But the last two years are something of an aberration in recent Oscar history. In the 10 years prior, 24 of the 200 acting nominees were black. (Far less is the rate of nods for Hispanics or Asian-Americans, however.) William Goldstein, a composer and longtime academy member, chastised the academy in a Los Angeles Times editorial for "capitulating to political correctness" while missing the bigger picture.

He believes outreach and mentor programs will make a difference, not manipulating demographics. "The set of voters that they're going to get rid of have seen more movies and have more context in which to judge something than any newbie coming into the academy," Goldstein told The Associated Press. "You can bring in more women, you can bring in more anybody. Everybody's a human being. They're going to vote what they're going to vote. Nothing's going to change." —AP

This image released by DreamWorks Animation shows character Mei Mei, voiced by Kate Hudson performing a ribbon dance in a scene from "Kung Fu Panda 3." — AP



'Kung Fu Panda 3' to deliver a punch to the US box office

'Kung Fu Panda 3' should win the upcoming weekend box office in the US with at least \$40 million at 3,955 theaters. Fox is distributing the animated comedy for DreamWorks Animation five years after "Kung Fu Panda 2" opened in late May with \$47.7 million domestically on its way to \$162.5 million. The 2008 original opened with \$60.2 million and ended its run with \$215 million in the US. Moviegoing should recover from last weekend, when a massive snowstorm held down box office in the eastern US and "The Revenant" led with \$16 million.

"Kung Fu Panda" makes the move from summer to late January and should deliver a solid punch to the box office solar plexus as families who have ostensibly been left out in the cold with few options for appropriate entertainment at the multiplex of late, will flock to theaters this weekend and give the film a debut that should land somewhere between the first two installments," said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst with Rentrak. "Kung Fu Panda 3," with Po traveling to a panda sanctuary, has been co-produced with four-year-old Oriental DreamWorks and carries a price tag of at least \$120 million. It's also opening in China, South Korea and

Russia this weekend while most international markets will launch in March.

The day-and-date opening in China is aimed at taking advantage of the upcoming celebration of the Chinese New Year on Feb 8. The first two films each grossed over \$600 million worldwide. "Kung Fu Panda 3" carries an 89% "fresh" rating on Rotten Tomatoes and online ticket service Fandango said it is the top advance ticket seller for the weekend with numbers above previous DreamWorks titles "Home" and "Kung Fu Panda 2" at the same point. The weekend will also see two other wide releases: Disney's sea rescue adventure "The Finest Hours," starring Chris Pine, which opens at about 3,143 locations, and Open Road's spoof "Fifty Shades of Black," starring Marlon Wayans, at 2,075 sites. The Weinstein Company is handling the release of Relativity's Natalie Portman western "Jane Got a Gun" at 550 screens.

Awards season

"The Revenant," which is heading into its fourth weekend of wide release, may lead the rest of the pack. The Leonardo DiCaprio epic has topped \$122 million as of Tuesday in the US and another \$110 million overseas. "The Revenant" will con-

tinue to make its considerable presence felt and hold strong with continued momentum through this awards season and add additional revenue to its already impressive totals both in North America and in the international territories," Dergarabedian said. "The Finest Hours," which recreates the 1952 Coast Guard rescue mission off the New England coast, is heading for an opening in the \$10 million range. It will open in 2,700-plus 3D locations and 190 Imax screens with older males expected to be the largest demographic.

"Fifty Shades Of Black," a satire of "Fifty Shades Of Grey," re-teams Wayans with director Michael Tiddes after two "A Haunted House" movies for Open Road. "Fifty Shades of Black," a \$5 million project that was financed by IM Global, is expected to take in \$9 million to \$10 million. "Jane Got a Gun" stars Portman, Joel Edgerton, Noah Emmerich and Ewan McGregor. The film was shot in 2013 in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with Gavin O'Connor directing after Lynne Ramsay left the production. The release of "Jane" was delayed several times by Relativity before TWC bought distribution rights last July. — Reuters



Johnson's 'Baywatch' movie casts Jon Bass

Jon Bass has joined Paramount's movie reboot of the 1990s television series "Baywatch," Variety has learned exclusively. Dwayne Johnson, Zac Efron, Alexandra Daddario, Ilfenesh Hadera and Kelly Rohrbach have been cast in "Baywatch." The film is directed by Seth Gordon. Producers are Beau Flynn, Ivan Reitman and Tripp Vinson as well as Johnson and producing partner Dany Garcia. Executive producers are Tom Pollock, Greg Bonnan, Michelle Berk, Michael Berk and Doug Schwartz Bass will play the role of Ronnie, who's described as funny, awk-

ward and a skilled disco dancer. He falls in love with Rohrbach's CJ Parker character at the beach.

Damian Shannon and Mark Swift wrote the latest draft of the script. Production is expected to begin in the next few months. Bass recently wrapped the Jeff Nichols movie "Loving" with Joel Edgerton and Michael Shannon. He was also a series regular on "Big Time in Hollywood, FL" for Comedy Central, and has guest starred on "House of Lies," "The Newsroom" and "Girls." He's repped by Gersh. — Reuters

Fergie applauds Jean Paul Gaultier's couture

homage to '80s

It was probably before the time of his front row stars singers Fergie and Beth Ditto - but they laughed and applauded nonetheless at Jean Paul Gaultier's fashion homage to the Palace club, France's answer to New York's once-famous Studio 54. Here are the highlights of Wednesday's spring-summer 2016 couture collections in Paris.



Models present creations for Viktor & Rolf during the 2016 spring/summer Haute Couture collection in Paris. — AP/AFP photos

Viktor & Rolf's surreal couture

They say couture is the "ideas factory" for the fashion industry. No one tries to demonstrate this more than Dutch design duo Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren - who in Wednesday's installment conjured up a bizarre series of huge, white fabric figurative face sculptures. The show started with a wearable buttoned white mini-dress - of which the vertical buttoned down part morphed into a large human nose in profile. As the collection progressed - things took a turn for the surreal, at times evoking Pablo Picasso's one-line drawings from the 1950s.

Blown-up segments, which resembled pieces of paper cut into shapes, adorned the looks. They started small - like a face across the bust - but grew in size and complexity until the models' faces were completely obscured by the weird paper-like sculptures. Some fashionistas were worried that one model, with a huge fan covering her face, might crash into the front row. She didn't.





The palace party

The glamorous, underground theater was the hippest place in Paris from its inauguration in 1978 by Grace Jones, who famously serenaded the guests with her version of "La Vie en Rose," all the way to its end in 1983. The converted theater represented a golden age in French disco culture and saw Mick Jagger, Jerry Hall and Andy Warhol rub shoulders with designers such as Yves Saint Laurent, Karl Lagerfeld, and, yes, Gaultier himself. It was immortalized in a song by disco-queen - and Salvador Dali muse - Amanda Lear, 69, who sat at the Gaultier show as her music boomed in the soundtrack. Model Farida Khelfa, also a famed Palace regular, laughed and clapped from the front row.

Gaultier's '80s theatre

At Wednesday's show the fashion dial was turned to the beginning of '80s. Sequined pill box hats, strong shouldered tuxedos, jumpsuits, silken pajama suits, and big, big hair dazed guests at the high-energy show delivered with a funky 1980s soundtrack. The litany of stars that graced the famed Palace venue were the inspirations for the designer's myriad 69 looks. Grace Jones was reimagined in a dull shimmering black-and-brown sequined jumpsuit and brown lace robe. Khelfa was spotted on the catwalk in a black perfecto jacket with blood-red nails, lips and shirt. And one look, big blond hair against a black crepe bustier dress with fuchsia satin, must surely have been the glamorous Hall.



Models present creations by Jean-Paul Gaultier during the 2016 spring/summer Haute Couture collection.





Paris Fashion Week

Models wear creations for Maison Margiela's Spring Summer 2016 Haute Couture fashion collection.

Maison Margiela's collage couture

John Galliano demonstrates a seemingly effortless flair in anything he does. For Maison Margiela's spring show, the former Dior man explored the process of couture through the construct of collage and spontaneous fusion. It made for the wackiest styles seen this season - but possibly also the most artful. Twenty-five creations played on billowing volumes, contrasting fabric and styles, and pieces of clothing stitched together in unexpected places. If this sounds like a recipe for a fashion mess, in the hands of Galliano it blossomed.

An off-white trench coat in triple georgette and baggy black riding boots meshed with a layered, pleated skirt, cutting a beautiful feminine silhouette. A silk dress with Chantilly lace was covered at the front with an enveloping layer of sheer black silk that wrapped the entire look - as if blown on the model accidentally by the wind. It billowed gracefully backward as the model walked forward - proving true method in the madness.





Models wear creations for Valentino during the 2016 spring/summer Haute Couture collection.

Paris Fashion Week



Valentino's beauty

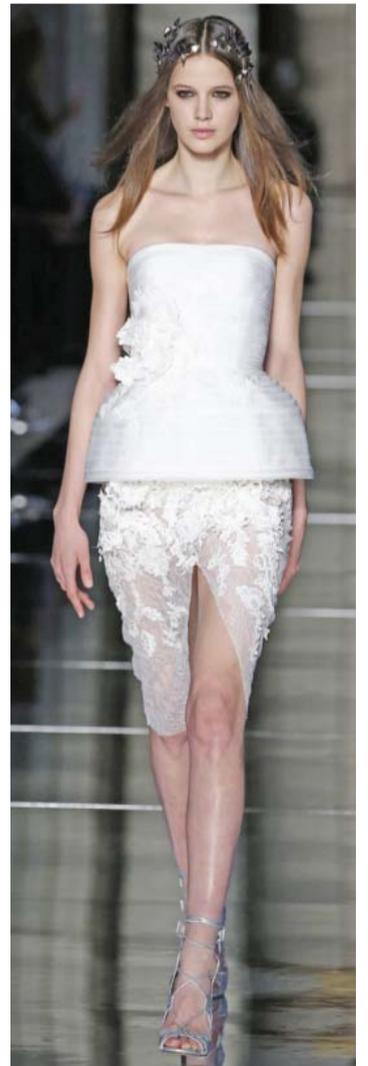
Valentino designers Pierpaolo Piccioli and Maria Grazia Chiuri described their collection as an "airy and vertical" approach to couture. Yet this description missed so much. It was a truly divine collection of flowing column gowns that played deftly on classical references. Inspired by 1900s fashion designer Mariano Fortuny, the designs mixed up fluid Greco-Roman silhouettes with those of more embellished Eastern Byzantine. A loose, white velvet dress sported gentle gold handmade impressions and a twisted Grecian knot down one arm. Other crepe gowns evoked a tunic silhouette.

They contrasted gently with "eastern" looks, such as a powder rose tulle dress with high collar and arabesque appliques that were lifted with a stylish vermilion band across the bottom. No assessment of a Valentino collection would be fair without mention of the elderly "petites mains" (seamstresses) that are the motors behind this astonishing couture. Many of the dresses in the 66-piece-show took over 1,800 hours to make. —AP



Paris *Week*
Fashion

Models wear creations for Valentino during the 2016 spring/summer Haute Couture collection.



Models wear creations by Zuhair Murad during the 2016 spring/summer Haute Couture collection in Paris.



Paris Week
Fashion
Paris



Models wear creations by Zuhair Murad during the 2016 spring/summer Haute Couture collection in Paris.

Friday Times

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2016

Travel



48 hours in

Downtown

Los Angeles





Think of Los Angeles and you probably think of Hollywood, Santa Monica, Venice and Beverly Hills, with Downtown barely registering on the where-to-go radar. And until about a decade ago, you'd have been right - back then this area of the city was a ghost town nights and weekends after office workers went home. These days though Downtown Los Angeles (DTLA to its friends) deserves a few days exploration in its own right. The city's historic core, seat of government, cultural center, regional hub of business, commerce, law, finance and transportation and ethnic crossroads, is now one of its coolest neighborhoods too. At lightning speed, everyone has moved in from hipsters to buttoned-down businessfolk. The result: DTLA is one of California's most vibrant districts, (finally) befitting the nation's second largest metropolis. Here's a too-short summary of how to get the best out of DTLA's past and present in just 48 hours.

Day 1 - Old DTLA

Morning: Mexican-American

The busy, historic district El Pueblo de Los Angeles sits near where the first settlers arrived in 1781, when LA was little more than a dusty, lawless outpost.

Here the pedestrianized Olvera St, is like a trip to Mexico without a passport. Amid gaudy decorations and kitschy souvenirs are some authentic finds: Chicano art; thick, Mexican-style hot chocolate; handmade crafts; and candy. It's all centered around Avila Adobe, a former ranch house and LA's oldest existing building (1818). Across the street, the 1822 church affectionately known

as La Placita is a worth a peek for its gold-festooned altar and painted ceiling. It's next to La Plaza de Cultura y Artes, an artistically presented museum of the Mexican-American experience.

On the other side of Olvera St, Union Station (1939) is one of America's grandest railroad stations. Its cathedral-style lobby melds Spanish Mission and art deco styles, and its architectural charms have led to big screen appearances in films from Blade Runner to Pearl Harbor.

For lunch, head to Chinatown or detour to the food stalls of Grand Central Market (grandcentralmarket.com). In business since 1917, it was just named one of America's best

"new" restaurants by Bon Appetit magazine, thanks to a sweeping renovation.

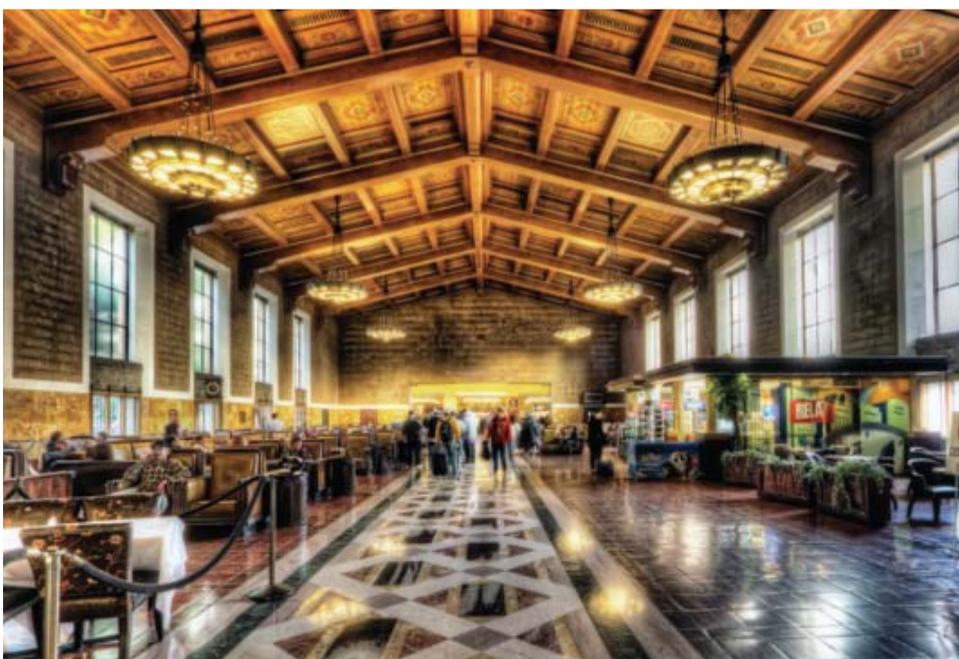
Afternoon: Asian-American

Union Station was built on the site of the original Chinatown, which has since moved a short walk north. Even though the Chinese-American population has largely left the suburban San Gabriel Valley to the east, Chinatown firmly abides in the community's and wider city's heart.

Around the unabashedly touristy Central Plaza are dozens of spots to feast on dim sum, Peking duck and boba tea, or to browse for curios, herbal remedies and lucky bamboo. Chinese cuisine not your

bag? Philippe the Original (opened 1908) is a classic sandwich shop, one of two claiming to have invented the French dip sandwich. Avant-garde art galleries on once-run-down Chung King Rd are a 21st-century addition, but you can still hear the click-clack of mah jongg tiles from nearby social clubs.

It's a quick ride on the Metro Rail Gold Line to Little Tokyo. Although LA's Japanese-American community goes back to the 1880s, Little Tokyo's population shrank due to their infamous WWII exile to internment camps (the U.S. government later apologized and paid reparations). The Japanese American National Museum



30

Travel

Friday Times

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2016



engagingly covers the internment and Japanese-American life in general. Just next door is the vast Geffen Contemporary, a branch of the Museum of Contemporary Art housed in a former police garage cleverly converted by LA-based starchitect Frank Gehry. Across the street, Japanese Village Plaza is a buzzing pedestrian mall with J-pop shops, restaurants selling sushi to cream puffs, and good people-watching, particularly when the teens are dressed for cosplay.

Evening: All-American

End your day at a pro sports match with one of LA's storied teams: baseball (Dodgers; season Apr-Oct), or, at Staples Center, basketball (Lakers or Clippers; late Oct-mid-Apr) and hockey (Kings; Oct-mid-Apr). For a nightcap with an old-time twist, the Varnish offers Depression-era style and award-winning food; it's in the back room of Cole's (circa 1909), the other restaurant that claims to have invented the French dip. Or catch a band amid pirate ship decor at Redwood Bar & Grill.

Day 2 - New DTLA

Morning: Hipster to hip-hop

Breakfast the hipster way at the Nickel Diner, famous for its maple-bacon donut, or with the smart set at the glam Italian restaurant-bakery Bottega Louie. Then head to the Grammy Museum where interactive exhibits remind us that LA is about more than just movies. It's part of LA Live, where awards shows are held at the Nokia Theatre.

From here it's a short walk to the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, a private college with a gallery that often shows costumes worn by actors in Academy Award-nominated movies. Bargain hunters: check out the FIDM Scholarship Store, selling new but slightly damaged fashions donated by department stores, for rock bottom prices.

FIDM graduates often go on to launch their own brands or work for established labels in the 90-block Fashion District, worth a browse for clothing from everyday to outré. Or bejewel yourself at America's sec-

ond-largest Jewelry District or stock up on party favors to piOatas in the Toy District.

For lunch, Fig at 7th (figat7th.com) boasts branches of some of LA's best loved eateries, from fresh takes on traditional Mexican at Loteria Grill (loteriagrill.com) to whaaat?-inducing combinations in sandwiches and salads from locally grown ingredients Mendocino Farms (mendocinofarms.com).

Afternoon: High culture

Thus fortified, ascend Grand Avenue to LA's cultural corridor, where some of California's most important arts institutions have been built since the turn of the Millennium.

Walt Disney Concert Hall (opened 2003) is Frank Gehry's signature US building, a shell of swirling stainless steel sheets encasing an equally curvaceous interior; come for a concert by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, one of the world's leading orchestras, or at least explore its one-of-a-kind exterior via hidden walkways and catwalks. Across Grand Avenue is the main pavilion of the Museum of

Contemporary Art, and, just south, the Broad Museum (thebroad.org) is scheduled to open September 2015 to house an enviable, 2000-piece modern art collection.

One block north, the three theaters of the Music Center of Los Angeles County stage opera, ballet, musicals and plays. Diagonally across the street, America's largest Roman Catholic archdiocese is headquartered at the postmodern Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels (2002); look for Jose Rafael Moneo's unique bell tower and quirky, inverted floorplan.

Evening: The future

At last you've earned a rest. Take it at the new Grand Park (2013), which slopes down from the Music Center toward LA's landmark, ziggurat-topped City Hall (1928). With the sun setting behind you and illuminating City Hall's much-photographed facade as the sky fades purple in the distance, it's a great place to contemplate this ever-evolving city, convergence point of old, new and yet-to-come.

—(www.lonelyplanet.com)



WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Movie Actors 2

Find and circle all of the Movie Actors that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a movie for which William Hurt won an Oscar.

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

- ASTIN, Sean
- BLOOM, Orlando
- BROSNAN, Pierce
- BUSCEMI, Steve
- CAGE, Nicolas
- CONNERY, Sean
- CROWE, Russell
- CRUISE, Tom
- DAFOE, Willem
- DE NIRO, Robert
- DIESEL, Vin
- DOWNEY JR, Robert
- DREYFUSS, Richard
- DUVALL, Robert
- EVERETT, Rupert
- FERRELL, Will
- FIENNES, Ralph
- FREEMAN, Morgan
- GERE, Richard
- GOSLING, Ryan
- HANKS, Tom
- HARRELSON, Woody
- HOFFMAN, Philip Seymour
- HOWARD, Terrence
- HURT, William
- JACKSON, Samuel L.
- JONES, Tommy Lee
- KEATON, Michael
- KILMER, Val
- LABEOUF, Shia
- MAGUIRE, Tobey
- MARTIN, Steve
- MORTENSEN, Viggo
- MYERS, Mike
- PATTINSON, Robert
- PENN, Sean
- REYNOLDS, Ryan
- ROGEN, Seth
- RUDD, Paul
- SMITH, Will
- STALLONE, Sylvester
- STEWART, Patrick
- VAUGHN, Vince
- WILKINSON, Tom
- WILLIAMS, Robin
- WILSON, Owen

Yesterday's Solution

Movie Actresses 2

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

- BATES, Kathy
- BINOCHÉ, Juliette
- BRESLIN, Abigail
- BULLOCK, Sandra
- BURSTYN, Ellen
- CLARKSON, Patricia
- CRUZ, Penelope
- DELPY, Julie
- DESCHANEL, Zoë
- DUNST, Kirsten
- FARMIGA, Vera
- FLETCHER, Louise
- HAYEK, Salma
- HEIGL, Katherine
- HUDSON, Kate
- JOHANSSON, Scarlett
- KIDMAN, Nicole
- KNIGHTLEY, Keira
- LINNEY, Laura
- LOHAN, Lindsay
- MACLAINE, Shirley
- MCADAMS, Rachel
- MOORE, Julianne
- PFEIFFER, Michelle
- PORTMAN, Natalie
- REID, Tara
- ROBERTS, Julia
- RYDER, Winona
- SARANDON, Susan
- SMITH, Maggie
- SPACEK, Sissy
- STEENBURGEN, Mary
- STEWART, Kristen
- STREEP, Meryl
- SWINTON, Tilda
- THURMAN, Uma
- TOMEI, Marisa
- WALTERS, Julie
- WATTS, Naomi
- WEAVER, Sigourney
- WEISZ, Rachel
- WINSLET, Kate
- WITHERSPOON, Reese
- ZELLWEGER, Renee

The hidden movie title is: ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

CROSSWORD 1152

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77				78				79			80		
81				82							83		

ACROSS

- The executive agency that advises the President on the federal budget.
- Failure of some tissue or organ to develop.
- God of love and erotic desire.
- A close friend who accompanies his buddies in their activities.
- Perennial herb of North America.
- (Roman mythology) God of love.
- The compass point midway between east and southeast.
- Capable of being added or added to.
- A quantity of no importance.
- Malevolent aspect of Devi.
- Informal terms for a mother.
- A genetic abnormality resulting in short stature.
- As much as a teacup will hold.
- Hungarian choreographer who developed Labanotation (1879-1958).
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- Related on the mother's side.
- Having undesirable or negative qualities.
- Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
- A barrier consisting of a horizontal bar and supports.
- God of fire.
- Having unsuitable feminine qualities.
- Goddess of fate.
- Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
- A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
- Unknown god.
- (trademark) An acrylic fiber or the lightweight crease-resistant fabric made with Orlon yarns.
- A representation of the Virgin Mary mourning over the dead body of Jesus.
- Made from residue of grapes or apples after pressing.
- Exhibiting or restored to vigorous good health.
- An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- A rare polyvalent metallic element of the platinum group.
- Displeasing to the senses and morally revolting.

DOWN

- An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- A mixture of mashed malt grains and hot water.
- The sound of sheep or goats (or any sound resembling this) v 1.
- A port city in southwestern Iran.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- Having leadership guidance.
- A unit of current equal to 10 amperes.
- An island in the Netherlands Antilles that is the top of an extinct volcano.
- Not in good physical or mental health.
- Disposed or willing to comply.
- A Dravidian language spoken in southern India.
- At full speed.
- A youth subculture that began in London in the early 1960s.
- The biblical name for ancient Syria.
- In such a manner as could not be otherwise.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- The local time at the 0 meridian passing through Greenwich, England.
- (chemistry) Being or containing an acid.
- Reverse the winding or twisting of.
- Either of two bean-shaped excretory organs that filter wastes (especially urea) from the blood and excrete them and water in urine.
- United States tennis player who was the first Black to win United States and English singles championships (1943-1993).
- The capital of Turkey.
- (Greek mythology) Son of Daedalus.
- A Russian prison camp for political prisoners.
- Occurring or payable every year.
- The syllable naming the fourth (subdominant) note of the diatonic scale in solmization.
- Syncopated music in duple time for dancing the rumba.
- Following surreptitiously.
- Of or pertaining to or written in Altaic.
- The person who delivers personal property (goods or money) in trust to the bailee in a bailment.
- Any of various large tropical carnivorous lizards of Africa Asia and Australia.
- A metallic element having four allotropic forms.
- American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
- Roman Emperor notorious for his monstrous vice and fantastic luxury (was said to have started a fire that destroyed much of Rome in 64) but the Empire remained prosperous during his rule (37-68).
- Any cone-shaped artifact.
- Explorer and United States naval officer.
- (anatomy) A somewhat rounded subdivision of a bodily organ or part.
- A town in north central Oklahoma.
- Not of long duration.
- Electronic warfare undertaken under direct control of an operational commander to locate sources of radiated electromagnetic energy for the purpose of immediate threat recognition.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.

Daily SuDoku

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

very hard

Yesterday's Solution

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

hard

Yesterday's Solution

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



00:20 Misfit Garage
01:10 What On Earth?
02:00 Unearthed
02:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
03:40 Storage Hunters
04:05 The Liquidator
04:30 Storage Wars Canada
05:00 What Happened Next?
05:30 How Machines Work
06:00 Mythbusters
06:50 You Have Been Warned
07:40 You Have Been Warned
08:30 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
09:20 Dual Survival
10:10 River Monsters
11:00 What On Earth?
11:50 Unearthed
12:40 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
13:30 Fast N' Loud
14:20 Street Outlaws
15:10 Engine Addict With Jimmy De Ville
21:00 Fast N' Loud
21:50 Street Outlaws
22:40 Street Outlaws
23:30 Kidnap And Rescue

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?



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 Wolfblood
02:05 Wolfblood
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 Wolfblood
04:35 Wolfblood
05:00 Violetta
05:45 The Hive
05:50 Mouk
06:00 Lolirock
06:25 Sofia The First
06:50 That's So Raven
07:15 Gravity Falls
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 Hank Zipzer
12:45 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 Liv And Maddie
15:45 Jessie
16:10 Violetta
17:00 I Love Violetta

17:10 Meet The Robinsons
19:05 H2O
19:30 Violetta
20:20 I Love Violetta
20:30 Pocahontas II: Journey To A New World
21:50 Violetta Recipes
22:00 Binny And The Ghost
22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:10 Wolfblood
23:35 Wolfblood



00:00 Christina Milian Turned Up
00:55 The Grace Helbig Show
01:25 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
02:20 E! News
03:15 Giuliana & Bill
04:10 The E! True Hollywood Story
05:05 E! Entertainment Special
06:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
06:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
07:50 Style Star
08:20 E! News
09:15 Giuliana & Bill
10:15 Giuliana & Bill
11:10 The Grace Helbig Show
11:35 The Grace Helbig Show
12:05 E! News
13:05 Christina Milian Turned Up
14:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
16:00 Dash Dolls
17:00 Dash Dolls
18:00 E! News
19:00 Hollywood Cycle
20:00 WAGs
21:00 Fashion Bloggers
21:30 Fashion Bloggers
22:00 E! News
23:00 House Of DVF



00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
02:00 Dinner At Tiffani's
03:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Chopped

07:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
07:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
08:00 Chopped
09:00 Grandma's Secret Cookbook Special
10:00 The Kitchen
11:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
12:00 Chopped
13:00 Guy's Big Bite
13:30 Guy's Big Bite
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
15:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
16:00 Chopped
17:00 The Kitchen
18:00 Siba's Table
18:30 Grandma's Secret Cookbook
19:00 Chopped
20:00 Guy's Grocery Games
21:00 Ching's Amazing Asia
21:30 Ching's Amazing Asia
22:00 Jenny Morris Cooks The Riviera
22:30 Jenny Morris Cooks The Riviera
23:00 The Freshman Class



00:10 Pick Me!
01:05 Emmerdale
01:30 Coach Trip
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Murdoch Mysteries
03:25 Midsomer Murders
05:15 The Chase
06:10 Cook Me The Money
07:05 Coach Trip
07:30 Midsomer Murders
09:20 Murdoch Mysteries
10:15 The Chase
11:10 Coach Trip
11:35 Pick Me!
12:30 Cook Me The Money
13:25 Emmerdale
13:50 Emmerdale
14:20 Coronation Street
14:45 Murdoch Mysteries
15:35 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
16:30 The Jonathan Ross Show
17:25 Code Of A Killer
18:20 Cook Me The Money
19:10 Coronation Street
19:35 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
20:30 The Jonathan Ross Show
21:25 Code Of A Killer
22:20 Coronation Street
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Emmerdale
23:40 Coach Trip



04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
18:00 Fresh Off The Boat
18:30 Black-ish
19:00 Parks And Recreation
20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
22:30 Girls
23:00 Girls
23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers



00:00 The X-Files
01:00 Blindspot
02:00 Empire
03:00 The X-Files
04:00 The X-Files
05:00 American Idol
07:00 Drop Dead Diva
08:00 Witches Of East End
09:00 American Idol
11:00 Drop Dead Diva
12:00 Top Gear (US)
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 Witches Of East End
15:00 Live Good Morning America
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 Witches Of East End
19:00 American Idol
21:00 Grey's Anatomy
22:00 Dominion
23:00 The Strain



00:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
01:00 Good Morning America
03:00 Satisfaction
04:00 Olive Kitteridge
05:00 Good Morning America
07:00 Top Gear (US)
08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
09:00 Supernatural
10:00 Top Gear (US)
11:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
12:00 Resurrection
13:00 Shark Tank
14:00 Supernatural
15:00 Survivor: Cambodia
16:00 The Voice

17:00 Resurrection
18:00 Shark Tank
19:00 Supernatural
20:00 Resurrection
21:00 Shark Tank
22:00 Satisfaction
23:00 Olive Kitteridge



00:00 Predator
02:00 Pawn Shop Chronicles
04:00 Toxin
06:00 Betrayed
08:00 Automata
10:00 Forget And Forgive
12:00 Rush Hour
14:00 Justice League: Throne Of Atlantis
16:00 Automata
18:00 Superfast
20:00 Rush Hour
21:45 Star Trek



00:00 Pawn Shop Chronicles-18
02:00 Toxin-PG15
04:00 Betrayed-PG15
06:00 Automata-PG15
08:00 Forget And Forgive-PG15
10:00 Rush Hour-PG15
12:00 Justice League: Throne Of Atlantis-PG15
14:00 Automata-PG15
16:00 Superfast-PG15
18:00 Rush Hour-PG15
19:45 Star Trek-PG15
22:00 Predator 2-18



00:00 Keith Lemon: The Film
02:00 The Waterboy
04:00 Charlie And The Chocolate Factory
06:00 UHF
08:00 When In Rome
10:00 Charlie And The Chocolate Factory
12:00 The Waterboy
14:00 Mr. Wonderful
16:00 When In Rome
18:00 Blues Brothers 2000
20:00 Walk Of Shame
22:00 We're The Millers



01:00 United Passions-PG15
03:00 God Help The Girl-PG15
05:00 Chalet Girl-PG15
07:00 Second Coming-PG15
09:00 Late Bloomers-PG15
11:00 Chalet Girl-PG15
13:00 God Help The Girl-PG15
15:00 10 Years-PG15
17:00 Late Bloomers-PG15
19:00 Not Fade Away-PG15
21:00 Nightcrawler-PG15
23:00 Fort Bliss-18



01:00 Against The Ropes
03:00 Rushmore
05:00 See Girl Run
06:45 Great Expectations
09:00 1911
11:00 See Girl Run
13:00 Rushmore
15:00 Sleepless In Seattle
17:00 1911
19:00 Siberian Education
21:00 How I Live Now
23:00 The Double



01:00 Playing It Cool-PG15
03:00 Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2-PG15
05:00 Oggy & The Cockroaches: The Movie-PG
07:00 The Little Rascals Save The Day-PG
09:00 Step Up All In-PG15



00:35 Mythbusters
01:20 How It's Made
01:44 How It's Made
02:08 Stephen Hawking's Universe
02:55 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
03:42 How The Universe Works
04:29 Mythbusters
05:16 Stephen Hawking's Universe
06:03 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
06:50 Prototype This
07:37 How Do They Do It?
08:00 How Do They Do It?
08:23 Mythbusters
09:08 How The Universe Works
09:53 Prototype This
10:38 How It's Made
11:00 How It's Made
11:23 Invent It Rich
12:08 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
12:53 Prototype This
13:38 Mythbusters
14:23 How It's Made
14:46 How It's Made
15:10 How The Universe Works
15:57 Invent It Rich
16:44 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
17:31 Prototype This
18:18 How The Universe Works
19:05 Mythbusters
19:50 Strangest Weather On Earth
20:40 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
21:25 How It's Made
21:50 How It's Made
22:15 How The Universe Works
23:00 Strangest Weather On Earth
23:45 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?



DISCOVERYID
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 Deadly Affairs
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



PREDATOR 2 ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 2016

11:00 Paul Blart: Mall Cop 2-PG15
 13:00 Louder Than Words-PG15
 15:00 From Up On Poppy Hill-PG
 16:45 Step Up All In-PG15
 18:45 Into The Woods-PG
 21:00 The Second Best Exotic Marigold Hotel-PG15
 23:15 The Other Woman-PG15

OSN MOVIES HD

KIDS

01:00 Goat Story 2
 02:45 Blackie And Kanuto
 04:30 Daddy I'm A Zombie
 06:00 Zarafa
 08:00 Worms
 10:00 The Unbeatables
 11:45 The Elf Who Stole Christmas
 13:00 Blackie And Kanuto
 14:30 Back To The Sea
 16:15 Tom And Jerry: The Lost Dragon
 18:00 The Unbeatables
 20:00 True Story Of Puss'n Boots
 22:00 Back To The Sea
 23:45 Marvel's Thor: Tales Of Asgaard

OSN MOVIES HD

PREMIERE

00:00 Capital-PG15
 02:00 The Giver-PG15
 04:00 A Turtle's Tale 2: Sammy's Escape From Paradise-FAM
 06:00 Pompeii-PG15
 08:00 Justice League: War-PG15
 10:00 Miss Julie-PG15
 12:15 Song For Marion-PG15
 14:15 Barefoot-PG15
 16:15 Justice League: War-PG15
 17:45 Need For Speed-PG15
 20:00 What If-PG15
 22:00 Wicked Blood-18



PAWN SHOP CHRONICLES ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD



03:55 Pieces Of Dreams
 05:35 Bound For Glory
 08:00 Futureworld
 09:45 Island Of The Lost
 11:15 Little Sister
 12:50 Clifford
 14:20 The Great Escape
 17:10 Of Mice And Men
 19:00 Nobody's Fool
 20:45 Big Screen
 21:00 Doubt
 22:45 Big Screen
 23:00 Cold Mountain
 01:35 Stand By Me



03:00 50 Ways To Kill Your Lover
 04:00 Private Crimes
 04:30 Private Crimes
 05:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
 06:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
 07:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
 08:00 Surveillance Oz
 09:00 Surveillance Oz
 10:00 Frenemies
 10:30 Frenemies
 11:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
 12:00 Crime Stories
 13:00 Homicide Hunter
 14:00 After The First 48
 15:00 Frenemies
 15:30 Frenemies
 16:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
 17:00 Crime Stories
 18:00 The First 48
 19:00 After The First 48
 20:00 Homicide Hunter
 21:00 Crime Stories
 22:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
 23:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
 00:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
 01:00 My Crazy Ex
 02:00 I Was Possessed



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 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
 09:05 Sofia The First
 09:30 Miles From Tomorrow
 09:55 The Hive
 10:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
 10:35 Doc McStuffins
 11:00 Sofia The First
 11:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
 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 Doc McStuffins
 14:50 Henry Hugglemonster
 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 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
 19:05 Miles From Tomorrow
 19:30 Sofia The First
 19:55 Doc McStuffins
 20:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
 20:45 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
 21:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
 21:35 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
 00:05 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
 02:15 Loopdidoo
 02:30 Art Attack
 02:55 Henry Hugglemonster



07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
 07:25 K. C. Undercover
 07:50 Supa Strikas
 08:15 Lab Rats
 08:40 Annedroids
 09:10 Kirby Buckets
 09:35 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
 10:00 Rocket Monkeys
 10:25 Ultimate Spider-Man
 10:50 Boyster
 11:20 Boyster
 11:45 Pair Of Kings
 12:10 Pair Of Kings
 12:35 Lab Rats
 13:00 Lab Rats
 13:30 Phineas And Ferb
 13:55 Phineas And Ferb
 14:20 Kickin' It
 14:45 Kickin' It
 15:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
 15:40 Rocket Monkeys
 16:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
 16:30 Kirby Buckets
 16:55 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
 17:25 K. C. Undercover
 17:50 Supa Strikas
 18:15 Lab Rats
 18:40 Mighty Med
 19:10 Annedroids
 19:35 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
 20:00 Kirby Buckets
 20:25 Gamers Guide To Pretty Much Everything
 20:55 K. C. Undercover

21:20 Supa Strikas
 21:45 Lab Rats
 22:10 Mighty Med
 22:40 Super Matrak
 23:05 Super Matrak
 23:30 Boyster
 00:00 Programmes Start At 7:00am
 KSA



03:00 Leepu & Pitbull
 04:00 American Daredevils
 04:30 American Daredevils
 05:00 Big Rig Bounty Hunters
 05:25 Big Rig Bounty Hunters
 05:50 American Pickers
 06:45 Down East Dickering
 07:35 Storage Wars: Best Of
 08:00 Duck Dynasty
 08:25 The Legend Of Shelby The Swamp Man
 08:50 The Legend Of Shelby The Swamp Man
 09:15 Mountain Men
 10:05 Shipping Wars
 10:30 Shipping Wars
 11:00 Leepu & Pitbull
 12:00 Counting Cars
 12:30 Counting Cars
 13:00 American Pickers
 14:00 Storage Wars
 14:30 Storage Wars
 15:00 Pawn Stars
 15:30 Pawn Stars
 16:00 Ice Road Truckers
 17:00 Counting Cars
 17:30 Counting Cars
 18:00 Leepu & Pitbull
 19:00 American Pickers
 20:00 Storage Wars
 20:30 Storage Wars
 21:00 Search For The Lost Giants
 22:00 Pawn Stars
 22:30 Pawn Stars
 23:00 Outlaw Chronicles: Hells Angels
 00:00 Pawn Stars
 00:30 Pawn Stars
 01:00 American Pickers
 02:00 Outlaw Chronicles: Hells Angels

nickelodeon HD

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



04:15 Barking Water
 05:35 Day In The Life: Samuel L. Jackson
 06:00 The Red Road
 07:00 Christmas, Again
 08:30 Les Paul: Chasing Sound
 10:00 Hamlet
 11:50 Big Star: Nothing Can Hurt Me
 13:45 California Solo
 15:20 Good Rockin' Tonight: Legacy Sun Records
 17:15 Circles
 19:10 Miss Firecracker
 20:50 Charge!
 22:25 California Solo
 00:00 Theatreland
 00:30 Hollywood's Best Film Directors
 01:00 Drunk Stoned Brilliant Dead
 02:40 For Ellen



03:40 World's Worst Mum
 04:30 Jon & Kate Plus 8
 05:00 Little People, Big World
 05:30 Cake Boss
 06:00 Say Yes To The Dress, Äi Bridesmaids
 06:25 Cake Boss
 08:05 Randy To The Rescue
 09:45 The Autistic Gardener
 10:35 Curvy Brides
 11:25 Say Yes To The Dress, Äi Bridesmaids
 13:30 Belief
 14:20 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
 15:10 Little People, Big World
 17:15 Dare To Wear
 18:05 Extreme I Do's
 18:55 Cake Boss
 19:20 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
 20:10 7 Little Johnstons
 21:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
 21:50 7 Little Johnstons
 22:40 Long Island Medium
 23:05 My Weight Is Killing Me
 00:45 The Day I Almost Died
 01:35 An Hour To Save Your Life
 02:25 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners:...



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You are invigorated today and probably feel as though you could conquer the world. There is not only a desire for outdoor, physical activity at this time, but there will most likely be many opportunities to enjoy your surroundings. Do not become over involved in games of chance; if you do . . . Know when to walk away. You desire more excitement and may find it through altering an existing relationship or starting anew. The alignment of the planets at this time intensifies love and physical desires. Any relationships started now will be especially intense. If you are already in a relationship, you will find that relationships deepen in positive ways. Now that January will soon be coming to a close, chances of increasing your money get better.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This is an excellent time to be in your office and get many things accomplished. You may decide to pay the bills-tend to chores, etc. You may find yourself deep in thought today and able to discover new ways to achieve the goals you set for yourself earlier today. You may decide to strike out on your own this afternoon-giving your creative energies free rein. Some type of tourist attraction may have your interest after you leave work and if you are not dating, this may be the time to enjoy the company of friends. A book, movie or vision from your own front door may be spiritually uplifting this evening. A higher consciousness fills you with the most exalted form of love. Look for ways to save your money-think about taking a class in investing.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You appreciate your independence and give others their space as well. You are learning that the young children under your care need more guidance than the friend type of relationship. You could teach babysitting care classes to young teenagers. In your own personal relationship, you and your sweetheart may have created a new rule of thumb, so to speak. Before turning that television on or settling down to a good book or hobby, you may need to ask about a loved one's day. This way you will become more alert to the needs of those close to you, as well as they of you. You have a non-hostile manner that makes it easy for people to come to you and talk with you. A family time of closeness can be enjoyed this evening-lots of friendly laughter.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are a good listener-however, if you are not careful, you may find yourself listening to everyone's problems today. You can use your inventory of one-liners for a needy friend or co-worker-not to be unfeeling, but to easily show the truth of a matter. You have lots of friends and even in the workplace your co-worker acquaintances can become life friends. If you are not going to be traveling soon, you may find yourself planning a trip. Shopping, whether it is for a trip, a date or just some new clothes, has successful outcomes as you seem to be in the right place at the right time for a good transaction. A little writing exercise before bed this evening finds you expressing yourself in prose or story form. A beautiful story is bursting to be born.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may be planning an adventure with your friends for the near future. This could be hunting, camping, fishing, climbing, etc. Much of your time at work is taken up with little snippets of conversation. You have quite a talent for communication and might consider broadcasting or public-relations. This afternoon you enjoy puttering around the house and perhaps working on some ongoing project. If you have adult children, you may find them underfoot but by giving them some art tools you may be pleased with the results. If any sort of sport contest is aired on television or in your community, you will be there to watch and so will your friends. You may finish your project quickly in order to run and visit with these friends later this evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

By becoming better organized, you can use your learned skills to improve production in the workplace. You and your loved one, or even a good friend, may decide to take a class in solving technical problems. It will not be long before the problems you thought you had will be cleared away very quickly. Young people could learn from you as you proceed to balance the budget or pay those bills. You are a genius when it comes to keeping track of your money-and you are getting better every month. If you are brave, you can plan your investments in a timely manner. Most of your goals this year are proceeding as planned. The only thing lacking is the fitness side of your life. Balance is everything and your fitness needs to merge into your routine now.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Any projects that have had a puzzling start may now seem as though they are developing on their own. Any finishing touches or additions can be completed with your own creative touch. Before long, everything seems to run in a smooth manner. This evening, people may find you with a notebook in your hand. You have new ideas and they just keep coming. You may try to keep up with a tape recorder and then type your notes for later. It is possible that you will become published, or at the least, recognized for your works this year-you just feel it. Friends enjoy your wit this evening. You may appear confusing to a young person and taking time to listen to this person may help you to see where the problem began and how to correct it.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

The energies of the universe are working in your favor-there is an attitude change-for outward thinking. Spread your wings and try new skills. Be encouraged to discard limiting ideas of your personal capabilities. Do not allow false limitations to undermine your dreams. The creative works of others stimulate you into expressing your own creative side. You appreciate new discoveries and expect nothing but the truth. You use your knowledge to find answers for any given moment. This is the time to allow others to support you, especially if you are the one making new discoveries. You must also learn to enjoy the support and help that others extend to you. This could be the gift of money, possessions or the opportunity for adventure.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Whether you are at home or at work, you will find this a very busy and productive day. There are plenty of interruptions this morning. Frustrations are visible but you rise above any delays and use them constructively. Some may not continue to interrupt or distract you if you give them jobs to do every time they distract you. You will also find brainstorming to be quite effective in finding imaginative solutions to difficult situations. This afternoon is a much better time to reflect and understand your own situation, just how you feel about yourself. Emotions and feelings of those around you may be very clear this afternoon. Young people seem to be pronouncing their words better or you have just figured out the code.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Changes you want to make around the office will be smart changes to make and quickly accepted. A round table discussion may also pull in new ideas. If you feel a new plan for your own business is necessary, now is the time to regroup. Consider gathering statistics or examples of what you want changed and the effects that will be created by the changes. You are not really in so much of a hurry anyway. This evening is a good time to try and foster a sense of togetherness with the family members. They want to be included in your ideas so . . . Include them. Later tonight, a loved one is interested in getting out this evening to trip the light fantastic. If you have kids, call the sitter-now is a good time to enjoy a loved one's company.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

There are many thoughts about past lives and future lives-you may become involved with several conversations along this line. This would be a great time to visit your favorite psychic. What better time than on your birthday! New goals and creative ways to complete those old goals are talked about with family members. Although your mode of thinking is so individual and independent, you know that you can gain from the feedback of others. With much planning, you could also develop an idea into the next best invention! You are determined to keep your positive insight focused on any of the challenges you may face this year. An older person gives youthful advice. You are most optimistic about this new birth year.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your enthusiasm is high and your creative juices are flowing, ready to be applied to whatever you want to accomplish. Make sure both your expectations and abilities are realistic before diving into something you may not be able to get out of without harm or embarrassment. You have an increased desire to please others and help them make decisions. Real-estate decisions are good and you can make a positive difference in someone's future as you are good at listening to what is needed before deciding on how best to help. Relations with members of the opposite sex are strengthened. This evening is an excellent time to take it easy and reflect on your life and accomplishments. Your understanding of a love interest is enhanced now.

COUNTRY CODES

Afghanistan	0093	Lithuania	00370
Albania	00355	Luxembourg	00352
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antigua	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Bahamas	001242	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahrain	00973	Martinique	00596
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritania	00222
Barbados	001246	Mauritius	00230
Belarus	00375	Mayotte	00269
Belgium	0032	Mexico	0052
Belize	00501	Micronesia	00691
Benin	00229	Moldova	00373
Bermuda	001441	Monaco	00377
Bhutan	00975	Mongolia	00976
Bolivia	00591	Montserrat	001664
Bosnia	00387	Morocco	00212
Botswana	00267	Mozambique	00258
Brazil	0055	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brunei	00673	Namibia	00264
Bulgaria	00359	Nepal	00977
Burkina	00226	Netherlands	0031
Burundi	00257	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Cambodia	00855	New Caledonia	00687
Cameroon	00237	New Zealand	0064
Canada	001	Nicaragua	00505
Cape Verde	00238	Niger	00227
Cayman Islands	001345	Nigeria	00234
Central African	00236	Niue	00683
Chad	00235	Norfolk Island	00672
Chile	0056	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
China	0086	North Korea	00850
Colombia	0057	Norway	0047
Comoros	00269	Oman	00968
Congo	00242	Pakistan	0092
Cook Islands	00682	Palau	00680
Costa Rica	00506	Panama	00507
Croatia	00385	Papua New Guinea	00675
Cuba	0053	Paraguay	00595
Cyprus	00357	Peru	0051
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Philippines	0063
Czech Republic	00420	Poland	0048
Denmark	0045	Portugal	00351
Diego Garcia	00246	Puerto Rico	001787
Djibouti	00253	Qatar	00974
Dominica	001767	Romania	0040
Dominican Republic	001809	Russian Federation	007
Ecuador	00593	Rwanda	00250
Egypt	0020	Saint Helena	00290
El Salvador	00503	Saint Kitts	001869
England (UK)	0044	Saint Lucia	001758
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Pierre	00508
Eritrea	00291	Saint Vincent	001784
Estonia	00372	Samoa US	00684
Ethiopia	00251	Samoa West	00685
Falkland Islands	00500	San Marino	00378
Faroe Islands	00298	Sao Tome	00239
Fiji	00679	Saudi Arabia	00966
Finland	00358	Scotland (UK)	0044
France	0033	Senegal	00221
French Guiana	00594	Seychelles	00284
French Polynesia	00689	Sierra Leone	00232
Gabon	00241	Singapore	0065
Gambia	00220	Slovakia	00421
Georgia	00995	Slovenia	00386
Germany	0049	Solomon Islands	00677
Ghana	00233	Somalia	00252
Gibraltar	00350	South Africa	0027
Greece	0030	South Korea	0082
Greenland	00299	Spain	0034
Grenada	001473	Sri Lanka	0094
Guadeloupe	00590	Sudan	00249
Guam	001671	Suriname	00597
Guatemala	00502	Swaziland	00268
Guinea	00224	Sweden	0046
Guyana	00592	Switzerland	0041
Haiti	00509	Syria	00963
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Serbia	00381
Honduras	00504	Taiwan	00886
Hong Kong	00852	Tanzania	00255
Hungary	0036	Thailand	0066
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Toga	00228
Iceland	00354	Tonga	00676
India	0091	Tokelau	00690
Indian Ocean	00873	Trinidad	001868
Indonesia	0062	Tunisia	00216
Iran	0098	Turkey	0090
Iraq	00964	Tuvalu	00688
Ireland	00353	Uganda	00256
Italy	0039	Ukraine	00380
Ivory Coast	00225	United Arab Emirates	00976
Jamaica	001876	United Kingdom	0044
Japan	0081	Uruguay	00598
Jordan	00962	USA	001
Kazakhstan	007	Uzbekistan	00998
Kenya	00254	Vanuatu	00678
Kiribati	00686	Venezuela	00582
Kuwait	00965	Vietnam	0084
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Laos	00856	Virgin Islands US	001340
Latvia	00371	Wales (UK)	0044
Lebanon	00961	Yemen	00967
Liberia	00231	Yugoslavia	00381
Libya	00218	Zambia	00260
		Zimbabwe	00263

ZIKA VIRUS 'SPREADING EXPLOSIVELY'

GENEVA: Declaring that the Zika virus is "spreading explosively," chief of the World Health Organization announced that it will hold an emergency meeting of independent experts on Monday to decide if the virus outbreak should be declared an international health emergency. At a special meeting Thursday in Geneva, WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan said the virus - which has been linked to birth defects and neurological problems - is becoming more of a threat.

Chan said although there was no definitive proof that the Zika virus was responsible for a spike in the number of babies being born with abnormally small heads in Brazil, "the level of alarm is extremely high." She also noted a possible relationship between Zika infection and Guillain-Barre syndrome, which can cause temporary paralysis. "The possible links, only recently suspected, have rapidly changed the risk profile of Zika from a mild threat to one of alarming proportions. The increased incidence of microcephaly is particularly alarming, as it places a heart-breaking burden on families and communities," Chan said.

The Zika virus was first detected in 1947 and for decades only caused mild disease, but Chan noted that "the situation today is dramatically different." According to the US Centers for Disease Control, the Zika virus is now in more than 20 countries, mostly in Central and South America. It is spread by the Aedes mosquito, which also spreads dengue and yellow fever. WHO called the special session in part to convey its concern about an illness that has sown fear among many would-be mothers, who have responded by covering themselves head-to-toe in clothing in largely tropical Brazil or putting on many coats of insect repellent.

Chan cited four main reasons why WHO was "deeply concerned" about Zika: The possible link to birth defects and brain syndromes, the prospect of further spread, a lack of immunity among people living in the newly affected areas and the absence of vaccines, treatments or quick diagnostic tests for the virus. Declaring a global emergency is akin to an international SOS signal and usually brings more

money and action to address an outbreak. The last such emergency was announced for the devastating 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, which eventually ending up killing over 11,000 people. Polio was declared a similar emergency the year before.

Still, convening an emergency committee does not guarantee that a global emergency will be declared - WHO has held 10 such meetings to assess the Middle Eastern respiratory syndrome coronavirus and no emergency has been announced. One reason the UN health agency may be examining the Zika virus so quickly is because WHO was criticized for its slow response to Ebola; nearly 1,000 people had died before the agency declared it to an international emergency. The Associated Press found that senior agency officials resisted the Ebola declaration for two months, citing political and economic reasons.

Marcos Espinal, WHO's director of infectious diseases in the Americas region, said Brazil is conducting studies to determine if there is scientific evidence that Zika virus causes birth defects and neurological problems. He said they are hopeful Brazil may have data to share in a couple of months. Brazil's Zika outbreak and the spike in microcephaly cases among babies have been concentrated in the poor and underdeveloped northeast of the country, though the prosperous southeast, where Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are located, are the second hardest-hit region.

Rio de Janeiro is of special concern, since it will host the Aug 5-21 Summer Olympic games that are expected to be attended by millions from around the world. Earlier this week, officials in Rio ramped up their fight against the mosquitoes that spread Zika, dispatching a team of fumigators to the Sambadrome, where the city's Carnival parades will take place next month. There is no specific treatment or vaccine for Zika. The virus is related to dengue, and scientists have struggled for years to develop a dengue vaccine; the first such shot made by Sanofi Pasteur was licensed last year in Brazil. — AP

MICROCEPHALY: WHAT'S HAPPENING TO BABIES?

PARIS: Pregnant women are being urged to think twice before travelling to Latin American and Caribbean countries battling a rise in cases of microcephaly—a rare but brutal condition that shrinks the brains of unborn babies. The increase has coincided with an outbreak of the usually benign Zika virus. But the virus and the birth defects have not been scientifically linked, leaving many questions about what is happening to these children in the womb. We asked the experts.

What is microcephaly?

Babies with microcephaly have an abnormally small brain and skull for their age, in the womb or at birth, with varying degrees of brain damage as a result. It has many potential causes: Infections, viruses, toxins or unknown genetic factors.

What are the consequences?

In serious cases, early death. If the brain is under-developed, the body cannot function properly. In French Polynesia (one of the regions affected), these deformities have caused most of the babies to be stillborn, as the unborn infants simply cannot survive. For children who survive pregnancy and are born with microcephaly, the future is bleak. In the worst cases, children will be severely intellectually and physically handicapped. But even those less severely affected will likely struggle with psychomotor impairment—characterised by slow thought, speech and physical movements. "It is a real tragedy."

An unborn child

Many types of viral infections, such as rubella or cytomegalovirus, can cause physical deformities and intellectual deficiencies, especially during the first three months of pregnancy, when the vital organs are being formed. Viruses can

travel through the placenta and infect the foetus directly, sometimes in the brain.

Linked to Zika virus?

Microcephaly cases seem to have increased in the zone of the Zika outbreak. But also, the virus has been detected in stillborn children with microcephaly, as well as in the amniotic fluid. The link between Zika and microcephaly is highly likely, but has not yet been proven scientifically. This is a very new situation. Until a few months ago we did not know that Zika could cause congenital infections (which are present from birth) and microcephaly. It caught us all by surprise. The evidence for the link is relatively strong, and considered strong enough to warrant public health measures. Laura Rodrigues of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, via the Science Media Centre.

What are we doing?

Studies are underway in French Polynesia, where a Zika outbreak occurred around the end of 2013 - beginning of 2014, to better understand how the virus may affect foetuses. In Martinique, where there is an outbreak right now, a trial group of pregnant women is being put together for study. The difficulty is that people infected with the virus usually have no symptoms. A pregnant woman can thus be infected without knowing it. On the other hand, cases have been observed of pregnant women infected with Zika whose children did not develop microcephaly.

Is Zika contagious?

There has been a case of sexual transmission, and theoretically transmission by transplantation or transfusion cannot be ruled out. The main route of infection is through mosquitoes. — AFP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times

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M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAFP. PEM

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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (21/01/2016 TO 27/01/2016)

Channel	Time	Programme	Time	Programme
SHARQIA-1	12:15 PM	AMERICAN HERO	12:30 AM	AMERICAN HERO
	2:00 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	11:45 AM	CONCUSSION
	4:00 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	2:15 PM	CONCUSSION
	6:00 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	4:15 PM	CONCUSSION
	8:00 PM	AMERICAN HERO	6:45 PM	CONCUSSION
	9:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO	9:15 PM	CONCUSSION
	11:30 PM	AMERICAN HERO	11:45 PM	CONCUSSION
	1:15 AM	AMERICAN HERO		
SHARQIA-2	12:00 PM	CONCUSSION	11:30 AM	EXPOSED
	2:30 PM	CONCUSSION	1:45 PM	EXPOSED
	5:00 PM	CONCUSSION	3:45 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP
	7:30 PM	CONCUSSION	5:45 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP
	10:00 PM	CONCUSSION	8:00 PM	RIDE ALONG 2
	12:30 AM	CONCUSSION	10:00 PM	EXPOSED
			12:05 AM	EXPOSED
SHARQIA-3	11:45 AM	STANDOFF	12:45 PM	AVENUES-1
	1:30 PM	STANDOFF	12:45 PM	RIDE ALONG 2
	3:30 PM	STANDOFF	2:45 PM	RIDE ALONG 2
	5:15 PM	STANDOFF	4:45 PM	RIDE ALONG 2
	7:00 PM	THE BOY	6:45 PM	RIDE ALONG 2
	9:00 PM	STANDOFF	8:45 PM	LOST IN THE SUN
	10:45 PM	THE BOY	10:45 PM	RIDE ALONG 2
	12:45 AM	STANDOFF	12:45 AM	RIDE ALONG 2
MUHALAB-1	11:45 AM	EXPOSED	12:15 PM	AVENUES-2
	1:45 PM	EXPOSED	3:15 PM	MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic
		NO FRI+SAT	6:15 PM	MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic
	1:45 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	9:15 PM	MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic
		FRI+SAT	12:15 AM	MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic
	3:45 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP		
	5:45 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	11:45 AM	AMERICAN HERO
	7:45 PM	EXPOSED	1:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO
	9:45 PM	EXPOSED	3:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO
	11:45 PM	EXPOSED	5:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO
MUHALAB-2	1:00 PM	AMERICAN HERO	7:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO
	2:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO	9:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO
	4:30 PM	SAALA KHADOOS - Hindi	11:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO
	6:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO		
	8:30 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	12:00 PM	AVENUES-4
	10:30 PM	AMERICAN HERO	2:45 PM	CONCUSSION
	12:15 AM	AMERICAN HERO	5:30 PM	CONCUSSION
MUHALAB-3	11:30 AM	CONCUSSION	8:15 PM	CONCUSSION
	2:00 PM	CONCUSSION	11:00 PM	CONCUSSION
	4:30 PM	CONCUSSION		
	7:00 PM	CONCUSSION	1:00 PM	360°-1
	9:30 PM	CONCUSSION	3:15 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP
	12:05 AM	CONCUSSION	5:30 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP
FANAR-1	12:00 PM	AMERICAN HERO	7:45 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP
	2:15 PM	AMERICAN HERO	10:00 PM	DARKNESS DESCENDS
	4:15 PM	AMERICAN HERO	12:15 AM	DARKNESS DESCENDS
	6:15 PM	AMERICAN HERO		
	8:00 PM	THE REVENANT	12:30 PM	360°-2
	11:00 PM	AMERICAN HERO	12:30 PM	EXPOSED
	12:45 AM	AMERICAN HERO	2:45 PM	EXPOSED
FANAR-2	12:45 PM	STANDOFF	5:00 PM	DARKNESS DESCENDS
	2:45 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	7:15 PM	EXPOSED
	4:45 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	9:30 PM	EXPOSED
	6:45 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP	11:45 PM	EXPOSED
	8:45 PM	STANDOFF		
	10:30 PM	STANDOFF	12:00 PM	360°-3
	12:15 AM	STANDOFF	12:00 PM	STANDOFF
FANAR-3	12:30 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	2:00 PM	STANDOFF
	2:15 PM	MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic	4:00 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP
	5:15 PM	RIDE ALONG 2	6:00 PM	STANDOFF
	7:00 PM	MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic	8:00 PM	STANDOFF
	10:00 PM	MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic	10:00 PM	STANDOFF
	1:00 AM	RIDE ALONG 2	12:05 AM	STANDOFF
FANAR-4	12:15 PM	CONCUSSION	12:00 PM	AL-KOUT.1
	2:45 PM	CONCUSSION	2:30 PM	CONCUSSION
	5:15 PM	CONCUSSION	5:00 PM	CONCUSSION
	7:45 PM	CONCUSSION	7:30 PM	CONCUSSION
	10:15 PM	CONCUSSION	10:00 PM	CONCUSSION
	12:45 AM	CONCUSSION	12:30 AM	CONCUSSION
FANAR-5	1:00 PM	THE BOY	12:15 PM	AL-KOUT.2
	3:00 PM	THE BOY	12:15 PM	RIDE ALONG 2
	5:00 PM	THE 5TH WAVE	2:00 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP
	7:30 PM	THE BOY	4:00 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP
	9:30 PM	THE 5TH WAVE	6:00 PM	ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: THE ROAD CHIP
	12:05 AM	THE BOY	8:00 PM	MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic
MARINA-1	12:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO	11:00 PM	RIDE ALONG 2
	2:30 PM	THE 5TH WAVE	12:45 AM	RIDE ALONG 2
	4:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO		
	6:30 PM	AMERICAN HERO	12:45 PM	AL-KOUT.3
	8:15 PM	THE 5TH WAVE	12:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO
	10:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO	2:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO
			4:45 PM	AMERICAN HERO
			6:30 PM	MIN DAHAR RAGEL - Arabic
			9:30 PM	AMERICAN HERO
			11:15 PM	AMERICAN HERO
			1:00 AM	AMERICAN HERO

REQUIRED

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Thomas Benny Puzhakkara born 24-05-1966, holder of Indian Passport No. J1334036 wish to change my name to Benny Puzhakkara Thomas and my address in India is Puzhakkarayil, Palackamattom Kinginimattom Puthencuruz, Ernakulam, Kerala. (C 5119)

I, Iddinkunhi Alias Mustapa S/o Belma Hasanabba, R/at D.No2-99-7A Koodara House, Near Kalkatta School, Mangalanthi Post, Manjanady, Mangalore, have changed my name as Musthafa Iddin Kunhi vide affidavit dated 6-8-15 before notary Sirajuddin, Mangalore. (C 5118) **28-1-2016**

Shaik Abbas Ali (old surname), S/o Shaik Nazeeruddin, holder of Indian Passport No. G2275319. D.No. 7/111, Maruthi Street, Akkayapalli, R.V.Nagar (Po) Kadapa, Y.S.R (Dist) hence have been change my surname, my father surname Syed Abbas Ali (new surname) S/o Syed Nazeeruddin. **27-1-2016**

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EMERGENCY

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Hospitals

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

Clinics

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



Praise be to Allah
2015 Results

	2015	2014	%
Net Operating Income "KD Million"	386.5	366.7	5.4
Net Finance Income "KD Million"	392.8	363.4	8.1
Net Profit for Shareholders "KD Million"	145.8	126.5	15.3
Earnings per Share "Fils"	31.10	26.98	15.3
Financing Receivables "KD Billion"	8.127	8.119	0.1
Depositors' Accounts "KD Billion"	10.839	10.881	(0.4)
Shareholders' Equity "KD Billion"	1.779	1.746	1.9

To Investors

KFH Board of Directors is pleased to inform the investors that it has been resolved to distribute profits corresponding for the financial year ended 31st Dec.2015 as follows:

Investment Deposits "Al-Khumasiya"

2.35%

Investment Deposits "Al-Dimah" 6 Months

1.30%

Investment Deposits "Al-Mustamera"

2.15%

Investment Savings Accounts "Al-Tawfeer"

0.73%

Investment Deposits "Al-Sedra"

1.50%

Profits will be credited to their bank accounts.

To Shareholders

KFH Board of Directors is pleased to inform the shareholders that it has been resolved to distribute profits corresponding for financial year ended 31st Dec.2015 as follows:

Cash Dividends

17%

Bonus Shares

10%

This recommendation is subject to the approval of General Assembly and other regulatory entities.

KFH POSTS NET PROFIT OF KD 145.8 M FOR 2015

17% CASH DIVIDENDS, 10% BONUS SHARES: AL-MARZOUQ

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) Chairman, Hamad Abdulmohsen Al-Marzouq said that KFH, by the Grace of Allah and His Blessings, has posted a net profit of KD 145.8 million for the fiscal year 2015 compared to KD 126.5 million for the year 2014, thus marking an increase by 15.3 percent over last year. Earnings per share increased to reach 31.1 fils, an increase of 15.3 percent over the same period last year.

Finance portfolio increased to reach KD 8.127 billion. Net finance income increased to reach KD 392.8 m for the year 2015 compared to KD 363.4 million for the preceding year, thus marking an increase by 8.1 percent. Depositors' accounts amounted to KD 10.839 billion.

Total Assets reached KD 16.5 billion. It is worth noting that KFH shrank its share in Alafco Aviation Lease and Finance Company to 47 percent from 53 percent, not to mention that the Gulf Investment Corporation entered as a major shareholder in the said company.

Shareholders' equity reached KD 1.779 billion, which marks an increase by KD 33 million or 1.9 percent over last year.

KFH distributions for the year 2015 are as follows: 2.35 percent for "Al-Khumasiya" investment deposit, 2.15 percent for "Al-Mustamera" investment deposit, 1.50 percent for "Al-Sedra" investment deposit, 1.30 percent for the 6-month Dimah investment deposit and 0.73 percent for savings investment accounts.

The Board of Directors has recommended 17 percent as cash distributions to shareholders and 10 percent as bonus shares subject to general assembly and concerned authorities approval.

Strong position

Furthermore, capital adequacy ratio (CAR) reached 16.67 percent thus exceeding the minimum limit of 13 percent, which confirms KFH's strong financial position.

"Despite the unfavorable operational environment and market volatility caused by political developments in the region along with economic developments, such as the drop in oil prices, KFH succeeded in achieving growth across all its financial indicators in 2015. This achievement was in line with the set plans and consistent with the integration and development of the bank's sectors. The financial results have put KFH on track to achieve sustainable profitability and grow its market share. They will allow the bank to maintain the leadership position locally and globally in the Islamic banking industry, noting that the majority of revenues were generated from the core banking business", added Al-Marzouq.

He went on to say that the overall results of 2015 confirm the stable growth of KFH where it achieved sustainable growth in profitability over four consecutive quarters. This confirms the bank's success in increasing profitability, enhancing service quality and business excellence, and boosting customers' confidence. KFH pursues precise, professional and resilient performance along with prudent management to optimally deal with changes in the business environment.

Efforts were also channeled during the past year toward improving asset quality primarily through reducing the level of NPLs and settling companies' debts at the Kuwait level and the Group level. This serves in preserving and enforcing KFH and shareholders' rights while supporting companies to restructure their business and grow. KFH consolidates the concept of cost rationalization through best practices associated with rigorous regulations and through improving cost to income ratio.

The profits give a strong impetus for KFH to maintain stable growth and maintain its outstanding customer service, while continuing the policy of cost rationalization. KFH will continue enhancing its hedging policy to manage regional and international market forces. KFH follows a conservative policy targeting the improvement of precautionary provisions, strengthening the financial position, and diversifying income resources.

Optimal coordination

Al-Marzouq indicated that KFH took several steps at the Group level to ensure optimal coordination and harmony among group banks and subsidiaries, including harmonization of standards and mechanisms, bolstering cooperation, and exchanging expertise in efforts to take advantage of the different markets in which KFH operates. This contributes to achieving the best results, mitigating risk and unifying procedures and vision which are viewed as a strategic goal to the Group.

He underscored KFH's unremitting efforts in strengthening its role in boosting the national economy, primarily through corporate finance as per the credit and legislative regulations. KFH has provided a KD 100 million finance facility to Al-Rai Real Estate Company; a subsidiary of Mabani Company for the development of the fourth stage of the Avenues mall. As for retail banking, KFH restructured two services rearranging the contract terms for client finances and settling existing banks' debts to allow for new financing per Central Bank of Kuwait regulations. KFH is also studying expanding financing to SMEs in collaboration with government agencies as KFH is seen among the most active banks in this sector, and enjoys the largest segment of SMEs clients in Kuwait. KFH pays great interest to this vital sector as SMEs contribute in reducing the unemployment rates while motivate the youth for further contributions in the economy. KFH offers financing to over 25000 SMEs, which is 35 percent of the total companies in Kuwait that amount to 70000 companies.

KFH is continuing its efforts to issue more sovereign as well as corporate Sukuk, which reaffirms its role in syndicating Sukuk that are considered to be an alternative financial instrument to conventional bonds. One of the largest issues in the past year was the USD 500 Million Sukuk issue for Sharjah Islamic Bank through bank's subsidiary KFH-Investment. KFH will continue its efforts to attract a broad-base of investors to the Sukuk market, be it governments, financial institutions, or investment funds. It is noteworthy that KFH succeeded in leading Sukuk issuances for governments such as Turkey and the Republic of South Africa. Sukuk play significant role in financing governments for implementing infrastructure projects or for bridging their budget deficits. Sukuk can be offered in several sharia forms that address different requirements, capacities and different circumstances.

Al-Marzouq noted that KFH will continue its efforts to further consolidate its role in the local and regional markets, and increase its market share by innovating new products and services. The bank is keen on utilizing technology to offer clients high-end services consistent with security standards. KFH operated seven automated systems in different fields in the bank in line with directives of development. KFH took the initiative in collaboration with Kuwait Clearing Company (KCC) to operate the system of transferring shareholders' cash dividends to their account, and check collecting system.

KFH has 446 branches of which 64 branches in Kuwait spanning all areas. These branches continue their active role in serving clients and activating the marketing performance. KFH succeeded in offering new banking products and services, not to mention outstanding financial solutions and marketing campaigns encompassing banking cards, investment products and clients financing.

He explained that KFH's overseas expansion is gaining considerable momentum and it represents a quantum leap of KFH's efforts to establish strong pillars, and a platform to penetrate new markets, indicating the German market is one of the strongest economies in Europe and KT-Bank AG is a model example serves in penetrating other European markets. He revealed that KT-Bank AG has achieved great success where the financing it offered surpassed Euro 50 m.

Moreover, KFH-Turkey continues its significant role in offering Turkish companies Sharia-compliant financial solutions that meet their financing requirements, mainly for expansion purposes and the desire to penetrate new markets. KFH-Turkey succeeded in leading and participating in arranging 4 Sukuk issues in Turkey and Malaysia.

Al-Marzouq pointed out the inauguration of the Dragon City, a landmark project of Diyar Al Muharraq that is a subsidiary of KFH-Bahrain, affiliated to KFH-Group. The USD 100 m project is poised to rake in enormous trade, commerce and investment opportunities in the GCC, the region and China, especially that the project involves over 500 companies from the GCC and China.

He stressed KFH's readiness to comply with Basel III accords, indicating KFH is fully complaint with the international standards, best international banking practices, and the rigid adherence to Islamic banking guidelines and Sharia legislatives. It is worth noting that international rating agencies affirmed KFH's positive credit ratings. Also, KFH-Group received around 30 prestigious awards from high-profile international institutions during 2015.

Al-Marzouq extended his thanks to shareholders and clients for their support and confidence in KFH and its businesses throughout the year. He praised the efforts of KFH staff, affirming that high caliber human resources are main pillars for further achievements and milestones at all levels.



Hamad Al-Marzouq

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ANGOLA'S CHAOTIC CAPITAL CHOKES UNDER TRASH PILES

LUANDA: For half an hour, the passenger boat sat stranded off the coast of Angola's seaside capital Luanda. Streams of rubbish clogged its engine as it attempted to enter the port of a city sinking under the weight of several months of uncollected trash that blocks traffic and exasperates residents.

"Look at this traffic jam, it's because of the bins overflowing onto the road," said motorist Joao Mampuya, 52. "The rubbish is taking up one of the two lanes and it's been there so long."

The sprawling city, home to 6.5 million people, has become an open-air dumping site. Luanda has for years been a chaotic urban mess. It figures among the world's most expensive cities and the overwhelming majority of residents live in squalid shantytowns with no sanitation or electricity.

The company responsible for removing the trash says it has not been paid by the local authorities, as the country—the second largest oil producer in Africa—buckles under the collapse of the oil price. Renowned independent journalist Rafael Marques de Morais questioned the company's management.

"Did the money disappear? Did they hire incompetent operators? Are the local governments not working? What about the central government?" he wrote in a local independent paper. Whatever the answer, the rubbish continues piling up all over the city, filling up sidewalks outside both luxurious mansions and the shacks of the slums. During the rainy season, the streets become flooded, forming stinking, black rivers that carry the decaying waste into stagnant ponds.

The residents have grown used to throwing their trash in gutters and on sidewalks, drains and ditches, and sometimes setting the stinking mounds on fire. They vent their frustrations online, posting selfies in front of rubbish piles several metres high or on trash-covered railway tracks that have caused many trains to be delays.

Health risks

But since January 11, there's been a new man in charge after the appointment of General Higinio Carneiro as governor—with the specific mandate of cleaning up Luanda's streets. His arrival—as a member of the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) — comes a year before a presidential election, in which President Jose Eduardo dos Santos—in power since 1979 — is expected to retain office.

During his first official visit to some Luanda suburbs last week, Carneiro announced the creation of an urban "command post" in charge of fighting the pollution problem. "We can't go on like this, or we will be forced to declare a health state of emergency," he said.

The governor believes that without action, epidemics could run rampant in the city. Huge billboards promoting sanitation have been put up across town, warning against cholera. Since his appointment, "men in green (uniforms)"—municipal employees, private workers and even volunteers—have been working day and night tackling the rotting mounds. The task ahead of them is enormous. Residents are complaining of rats, cockroaches and flies proliferating around the heaps. "With the accumulation of the bins, I fear for my baby because the rats are pouring into my home," said one domestic worker.

The situation seems to be slowly improving, but residents are holding back praise for a real, long-term results—particularly in the neglected slums. As one resident said, "The trash comes back faster than its removed." — AFP



LUANDA: People walk past a pile of uncollected garbage in Luanda yesterday. Since last summer, Angola's sprawling capital of Luanda, home to 6.5 million people, has become an open-air dumping site. — AFP

CHINA FLOODS FINANCIAL SYSTEM WITH \$52 BILLION

SHANGHAI: China's central bank said yesterday it was funnelling 340 billion yuan (\$52 billion) into the financial system, the second injection in three days to meet surging demand for funds ahead of the Lunar New Year holiday.

On Tuesday, the People's Bank of China (PBoC) poured 440 billion yuan into the system through regular open market operations, which Bloomberg News said was the biggest in three years.

The PBoC also announced in a separate statement that it will carry out similar operations on all working days, instead of just Tuesdays and Thursdays,

for three weeks from Friday and expand its moves to provide short-term liquidity around the holiday.

Chinese companies typically pay salaries and bonuses before the holiday, which falls in early February this year. People also traditionally exchange cash and gifts during the period.

The PBoC last week flooded the financial system with more than 1.5 trillion yuan. Some analysts say the recent cash injections are a replacement for monetary easing as the PBoC has become reluctant to cut reserve requirement ratios—the proportion of money banks must put aside—on worries over

the impact on China's yuan currency, which has been weakening.

China's economy grew at its slowest rate in a quarter of a century in 2015, at 6.9 percent, raising expectations for further cuts in interest rates or reserve requirements. "The huge amount of open-market injections are targeting the pre-holiday cash demand," Liu Changjiang, a Shanghai-based bond analyst at Soochow Securities, told Bloomberg. "As the central bank has become less willing to cut reserve requirement ratios, such short-term funds are only keeping the money market tightly balanced." —AFP

GULF AIRLINES SQUEEZED BY IRAN TENSIONS

DUBAI: Diplomatic tensions are causing airlines in Saudi Arabia, Iran and Bahrain to lose millions of dollars in revenue at a time when all three countries are grappling with the economic impact of lower oil prices. Lucrative flights that carry pilgrims to Islam's holiest sites in Saudi Arabia are among the routes halted by a diplomatic spat between Iran and the two Gulf states.

The significant loss of revenue is pressuring airlines that are already looking for alternative sources to fund fleet expansions as their governments face gaping holes in finances hit by the oil slump.

As airlines contend with higher costs from flying longer routes to avoid regional war zones, the additional squeeze on revenue could push them to tap debt markets

or seek foreign investment.

Saudi Arabia's state-funded carrier Saudia is in the midst of a renewal and expansion plan to boost its fleet to 200 aircraft from 157 in the next four years. Last week it announced plans for a maiden Islamic bond worth 5 billion riyals (\$1.33 billion) to fund expansion.

Kuwait, meanwhile, could be forced to revive plans for the delayed privatization of loss-making Kuwait Airways.

The additional pressure on the Gulf carriers' earnings has come after Saudi Arabia cut diplomatic ties with Iran after the kingdom's Jan. 2 execution of a Shi'ite Muslim cleric triggered an attack by Iranian protesters on its Tehran embassy. Bahrain quickly followed suit.

FLIGHTS SCRAPPED

Bahrain's Gulf Air has scrapped 16 flights a week to Iran since then, Chief Executive Maher Al-Musallam said at the Bahrain air show last week. "Iran is an important market for us and I hope that we can compensate from somewhere else," he said.

At the Bahrain show Gulf Air placed an order for 19 new Airbus aircraft and upgraded a 16-plane Boeing order, but the numbers were short of the proposed purchase of 50 aircraft flagged in October.

About 150 direct flights between Iran and Saudi Arabia, carrying thousands of pilgrims, were also halted as diplomatic relations were cut, aviation sources told Reuters.

Official Saudi air traffic figures show that

Saudia flew 350,000 Iranian pilgrims in 2015. Saudia did not reveal revenue from pilgrim flights, which are mostly on chartered aircraft. However, one charter operator said the price of a return ticket on the Tehran to Jeddah route is about \$550. At that level 350,000 passengers would generate revenue of \$192.5 million.

Budget Saudi operator Flynas had also obtained approval to fly about 100,000 pilgrim passengers from Iran for 2016, but the plans have been scrapped, CEO Paul Byrne told Reuters.

This translates to lost revenue potential of roughly \$62 million, based on Byrne's estimate for average fares. "It's a massive market. Tehran and Mashhad would be lucrative routes," he said. —Reuters

IRAN SAYS LOW OIL PRICES WILL NOT LAST LONG

PARIS: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday that oil prices would not stay low for long as producers restore market balance.

"The price of oil is at a low level ... I don't think it will last in the long term ... The pressure on oil-producing nations means balance will be restored in the short term," Rouhani, whose country is the third-largest producer in OPEC, said at the French Institute of International Relations.

Pragmatist Rouhani arrived in France on Wednesday on the second leg of a state visit to Europe after three days in Italy. Iran is pushing to boost oil exports now that international sanctions against it have been lifted. Reiterating Iran's official stance, Rouhani blamed Iran's Sunni regional rival Saudi Arabia for the drop in oil prices, which have halved since last May as global supply outstrips demand.

Oil futures surged on Wednesday after non-

OPEC member Russia indicated there was a possibility of cooperation with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries to curb output and thus raise the crude price, currently near \$33 a barrel.

Nikolai Tokarev, head of Russia's oil pipeline monopoly Transneft, said on Wednesday Russian officials had decided they should talk to Saudi Arabia and other OPEC countries about output cuts aimed at bolstering crude

prices. But Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said Tehran had not been contacted by Moscow over oil output cuts.

"I have not received anything," Zanganeh said at a Franco-Iranian summit in Paris, adding that Iran would sign an agreement with French oil major Total.

"We will sign an agreement with Total (this) afternoon," he said, without elaborating. Total declined to comment. — Reuters

UK ANNOUNCES HELP FOR NORTH SEA OIL INDUSTRY

LONDON: Britain announced yesterday a £250 million (325 million euro, \$350 million) package of funding to boost the oil industry in northeast Scotland, which has been hit hard by slumping prices. At the same time, Prime Minister David Cameron is to visit the oil city of Aberdeen and meet industry bosses for talks on the current situation. Global oil prices fell by more than 30 percent in 2015 and have dropped by another 20 percent this year amid increasing production and weaker demand.

In London, Brent North Sea crude for March, the European benchmark for crude oil, is currently at \$33.10 a barrel, down from highs of over \$100 in 2014. "Oil and gas is a crucial sector not just for the northeast of Scotland but for the whole of the UK," Britain's Scottish Secretary David Mundell said, confirming the move.

"I know it's a very tough time for people who work in the industry and their families and I am determined the UK government will do what it can to support them."

The funding is expected to be used to help the oil and gas industry export its expertise globally as well as encouraging economic diversification in northeast Scotland. It has been committed equally by the government in London and the devolved Scottish administration based in Edinburgh and led by the pro-independence Scottish National Party (SNP). — AFP

PRIVATE BUSINESS EYES BIGGER ROLE IN VIETNAM ECONOMY

BAT TRANG, Vietnam: After a decade of uneven progress, foreign and local businesses hope the reshuffled leadership of Vietnam's ruling Communist Party will double down on modernizing an economy dominated by state companies. Once a much-hyped rising star among developing Asian nations, foreign perceptions of Vietnam have swung between fears it was on the verge of a financial collapse to seeing it as a rival to China as the world's factory floor.

Problems such as episodes of high inflation, festering bad debts at state banks and riots in 2014 against Chinese-owned factories have underlined the risks of doing business. At the same time, Vietnam's young workforce, high if volatile growth rates and low wages have attracted a steady stream of long-term foreign investment involving companies from Intel to Samsung. New free trade agreements have also sent a positive signal to investors.

A five-yearly party congress this week rearranged the deck of top leaders. Among the changes, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung, who has pushed economic liberalization, was unsuccessful in maneuvering to become party general-secretary, which is defacto the No 1 leadership position, and will leave the inner circle. The old guard incumbent, Nguyen Phu Trong, was re-elected as general-secretary. Despite the apparent strengthening of a conservative faction, Vietnam is not expected to undo closer ties with the United States and incremental adoption of free market economic policies.

Tran Minh Thang, who employs 50 workers making cheap porcelain pots, cups and dishes in historic Bat Trang outside Hanoi, said that most of all he wants the government to provide stability because "we cannot do anything if there's no stability." Beyond that, he hopes the new leadership will "speed up economic reforms." Because, he said, "once the country develops, my business will also benefit." — AP



MANILA: Construction personnel work beside scaffolding on a government elevated highway project in Manila yesterday. Philippine economic growth accelerated in the final quarter of 2015, boosted by a burst in government spending, but fell short of the official full-year target. — AFP

BIG-SPENDING PHILIPPINES POSTS STRONG Q4 GROWTH

MANILA: Growth in the Philippine economy picked up late in 2015 as strong domestic demand and government spending cushioned the impact of weak exports which are hurting many of its larger, trade-reliant Asian neighbors. Even the severe El Nino dry spell, which hit farm output, failed to dampen the country's momentum much.

Southeast Asia's fifth-largest economy grew 6.3 percent in the fourth quarter from a year earlier, faster than the 5.9 percent economists had predicted and picking up from a revised 6.1 percent in the third quarter. That brought full-year growth to 5.8 percent, national statistician Lisa Grace Bersales told a news conference, which could mark one of the strongest expansions in the world in turbulent 2015. China has reported 2015 growth of 6.9 percent and Vietnam 6.7 percent.

On a quarterly basis, the economy once known as "the sick man of Asia" grew 2.0 percent in the fourth quarter from the previous three months, slightly less than markets had expected but eclipsing China's 1.6 percent. "The Philippines is not as heavily leveraged to external growth as some other countries in the region, and domestic demand, predominantly government spending and investment spending, is what really pushed up the growth numbers in the fourth quarter," said Rahul Bajoria,

regional economist at Barclays Bank in Singapore.

"This momentum should generally be sustained. We are expecting growth to be around 5.5 percent in 2016, slightly lower but broadly still in a very comfortable position." The resilient performance appeared to support the central bank's conviction that the economy does not need additional stimulus at the moment. Main growth drivers in the fourth quarter were services, where growth accelerated to 7.4 percent on-year, and government spending, which surged 17.4 percent. Consumption also grew at its fastest annual rate in at least two years at 6.4 percent.

BRIGHT OUTLOOK

"We remain bullish. We are maintaining our expansion plans, opening new supermarkets, expanding our convenience stores and putting up new malls," said Leonardo Dayao, president of Cosco Capital, the parent firm of the Philippines' second largest supermarket chain Puregold.

Nearly \$40 billion worth of inflows from business outsourcing contracts and millions of Filipinos working overseas flood into the Philippines every year, lifting incomes and spurring demand for property, cars, consumer goods and services.

"We continue to see no need to adjust policy settings at the moment, given the healthy Q4 GDP...and an inflation outlook of a slow creep to within target over the policy horizon," Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Amando Tetangco said.

But in a sign that the consumption-led economy is not totally immune to the slowdown in China, economic planning secretary Arsenio Balisacan said the Philippines would likely miss the top end of its 7-8 percent target for 2016. Philippine exports were down 5.8 percent in the 11 months to November last year due to sluggish demand from top trading partners Japan, United States and China.

Growth also should be boosted this year from campaign spending ahead of presidential elections in early May, though investors are likely to be cautious until the new leader's policies are clear.

Under outgoing President Benigno Aquino, the economy grew an average of 6.3 percent annually, helping cut the once stubbornly high jobless rate to a record low of 5.6 percent. His efforts to collect more revenue by intensifying a campaign against tax evasion, as well as prioritising infrastructure, helped win the country investment grade ratings from major credit agencies. — Reuters

ITALY CLAIMS OVER 200M FROM GOOGLE AS TAX BATTLE INTENSIFIES IN EUROPE

ROME: Italy is demanding Google pay over 200 million euros (\$218 million) in back taxes following an inquiry into its tax arrangements by the financial police, a judicial source said yesterday. The technology giant is accused of failing to declare 100 million euros in income and pay 200 million euros in royalty taxes, the source said.

Corporate income tax in Italy currently stands at 27.5 percent, putting the total amount due at 227.5 million euros. There were unconfirmed reports in the Italian media that there may already be a deal on the table for the company to pay 150 million euros to cover unpaid taxes between 2008 and 2013.

It would do so in order to avoid a lengthy battle with Italy's tax man, but would not accept wrongdoing, La

Repubblica and other papers said. "Google complies with the tax laws in every country where we operate. We continue to work with the relevant authorities," a spokesperson for the company in Milan said.

The claim comes against a backdrop of mounting controversy over the tax arrangements of multinational groups who use cross-border corporate structures to reduce their tax bills, sometimes with the help of potentially illegal "sweetheart" deals.

Google Italia is part of the company's European operation which is headquartered in Ireland, a country with one of the lowest levels of corporation tax in the European Union. Larry Page, CEO of Google, was named the 10th richest person in the world last year by Forbes, with \$33.3 billion.

Rising anger

According to the Corriere della Sera, financial police have uncovered proof of products originating in Italy—such as advertising packages—but with financial footprints which lead from Ireland, via the Netherlands, to the Bermudas.

Italy's move came as the EU's competition commissioner said she was prepared to investigate a controversial tax deal reached last week with Britain, under which the Internet giant announced it was to pay 172 million euros in back taxes.

French officials are also believed to be pushing for a Google agreement and could ask for as much as 500 million euros. Both Google and Apple have complained they are being unfairly targeted by European authorities discriminating

against multinationals. On Wednesday, over 30 OECD countries signed an agreement to share information about multinationals in a push to boost transparency following public anger over large corporations playing the system to lower their tax bills.

The OECD calculates that national governments lose \$100-240 billion, or four to 10 percent of global tax revenues, every year because of the tax-minimizing schemes of multinationals such as Apple, Facebook and Amazon. In October, the European Commission ordered both Italian auto giant Fiat and coffee chain Starbucks to pay around 30 million euros in back taxes after they were found to have benefited from illegal deals in Luxembourg and the Netherlands. — AFP



TOKYO: Japanese Economic Revitalization Minister Akira Amari is surrounded by reporters upon his arrival to meet Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo yesterday. Amari resigned his post over a corruption scandal, dealing a blow to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe as he looks to build support for a massive trade deal and changes to the country's constitution. — AFP

JAPAN ECONOMY MINISTER QUILTS OVER GRAFT CHARGES

SETBACK FOR ABE'S EFFORTS TO BOOST GROWTH

TOKYO: Japan's economy minister resigned yesterday as he fended off corruption allegations, in a setback for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's effort to rev up growth in the world's third-largest economy.

Akira Amari choked back tears as he announced his resignation in a televised news conference. He denied wrongdoing but apologized for causing "concern and trouble" and for undermining public trust in the government with a "very embarrassing situation."

The corruption scandal surfaced last week after the magazine Weekly Bunshun reported that Amari and his aides accepted at least 12 million yen (\$103,000) in cash and hospitality from the unnamed construction company. As economy and fiscal minister since late 2012, Amari has been one of the most trusted members of Abe's Cabinet. He

also served as Japan's top negotiator for the 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership trade pact. Amari, 66, is a career politician and son of a lawmaker who was first elected in 1983.

With Amari's departure, Abe has lost a key ally as he is gearing up for an upper house election in the summer. Political donations and their handling are perennial weak spots for Japanese lawmakers. The allegations against Amari have become fodder for attacks by Communist Party, Democratic Party of Japan and other members of the opposition, who otherwise are unable to effectively challenge the ruling Liberal Democrats' overwhelming majorities in the lower and upper legislatures. During questioning in parliament, Amari said he did not recall clearly the details of meetings in his office with the construction company.

Shukan Bunshun said that on one occa-

sion, a construction company employee met with Amari in his office in November 2013, handing him an envelope containing 500,000 yen in cash and an expensive Japanese sweet called "yokan."

Asked about the gift, Amari said yesterday that he wasn't sure what was inside the bag, but that it was "very heavy." His resignation comes amid mounting signs Japan's economic recovery is faltering, raising pressure on its central bank to inject still more cash into the economy on top of its already massive monetary stimulus.

Data released yesterday showed weak retail sales in December. Other major monthly data are due for release today. Abe apologized over the scandal and said Amari's resignation was "very regrettable." He said Nobuteru Ishihara, a former environment minister, would take on Amari's posts. — AP

SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS POSTS 40% FALL IN Q4 NET PROFIT

GLOBAL DEMAND FOR SMARTPHONES SLOWS

SEOUL: Slowing global demand for smartphones and memory chips dealt a blow to Samsung Electronics as it reported yesterday a 40 percent on-year drop in fourth-quarter net profit.

The world's top handset maker continued to be squeezed at both ends of the lucrative smartphone market with high-end competition from arch-rival Apple matched by cheaper players like China's Huawei and Xiaomi. But Samsung was not alone, with Apple reporting earlier this week that sales of its popular iPhone rose slower than ever last quarter, raising questions about the future of the saturated smartphone market. Net profit for October to December stood at 3.22 trillion won (\$2.7 billion), below analyst expectations and down 39.7 percent from a year ago, the company said in a statement.

Operating profit rose 16.1 percent on-year to 6.1 trillion won, in line with its earlier estimate. In a statement, the South Korean giant said 2016 was expected to throw up continued challenges to maintaining earnings "due to a difficult business environment and slowing IT demand". Fourth-quarter earnings were down in the face of "global economic headwinds" including a sharp fall in oil prices, as the components side of the business was impacted by weakened prices for DRAM chips and LCD panels due to overall softer demand in the IT market and personal computers. Samsung's semiconductor business since late 2014 has helped offset slumping profits at the firm's key mobile unit.

But sluggish demand for handsets and computers worldwide drove down prices for memory chips, squeezing margins in the semiconductor unit, which posted the first drop in quarterly operating profit for about two years. The strengthening of the Korean won compared to major currencies meant a positive forex impact in the third quarter "changed to a negative impact" of approximately 400 billion won in the October-December period, it added. "The global slowdown affected all the firm's business segments ... I see no major factor to boost profit down the road," said Lee Seung-Woo, analyst at IBK Investment and Securities. "The situation looks pretty bleak," Lee said, warning of a further slip in global chip prices during the first half of this year.

Apple woes

Following the earnings report, shares of Samsung lost 2.55 percent to close at 1,145,000 won on the Seoul stock market.

Samsung lost more than \$8.0 billion in market value in 2015, with its flagship smartphone business struggling to hold market share. Sales of the Galaxy S6 — the latest edition of Samsung's top-of-the-range handset, launched in April—failed to generate much excitement among consumers. On Tuesday, Apple raised the spectre of the end of a technological era after reporting the slowest sales growth ever of its market-leading iPhone and warning it expects worse to come. The California technology colossus said it expects to see its first decline in iPhone sales in the current quarter on a year-on-year basis.

Samsung last year revamped its product lineup to provide a move diverse price range and vowed Thursday more efforts to expand its presence in the non-high end segment.

"The overall smartphone industry is struggling, but the low-and mid-end segments are still growing and competition will be even fiercer," Lee Kyeong-Tae, vice head of Samsung's mobile unit, said at a conference call. The firm will this year launch updated mid-end models like Galaxy A and Galaxy J in emerging markets including China, Lee said. — AFP

'CREDIBLE' ANTI-DOPING AGENCY IN RUSSIA WILL TAKE TIME

TOKYO: The chief of the world's anti-doping organisation said yesterday it could take months before Russia re-establishes a credible anti-doping body following allegations of state involvement in the practice.

Russia was banned from international competitions by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) in November after a World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) independent commission found evidence of "state-sponsored" doping in the country. The country's anti-doping body RUSADA was declared non-compliant by WADA after it was discovered that positive drug tests had been covered up and

samples destroyed. "We are asking Russian authorities to re-establish a new agency with proper people in charge," David Howman, WADA director general, told AFP in an interview on the sidelines of a seminar in Tokyo.

"It could take months," Howman said. "I have no idea." WADA has also requested that an independent international expert join the new board of RUSADA.

UK Anti-Doping, Britain's anti-doping body, has offered to send experts to Russia to drug-testing programmes across all sports in Russia. For now, doping testing in Russia "will be run by RUSADA but under the monitoring of UK Anti-Doping, and we'll see how

it goes," Howman told AFP. Russia must "ensure that they have experienced people who can run the programme themselves, and they need more doping control officers," he said, adding that that will require training. "They need to have managers in charge of the programme who know" how, when and where to conduct anti-doping measures, he said. Howman also said that whether Russian athletes can participate in the Olympics is "not our decision" but one to be made by the International Olympic Committee.

Earlier in a keynote speech at the seminar attended by some 200 sports officials,

Howman called doping the biggest challenge facing sport despite other ills such as reports of match-fixing scandals in tennis. "Doping is still the king," he said regarding its significance as an ethical issue. "Doping, like no other issue, hits athletes where (it) hurts," he said, referring to their quest for glory and gold medals. Efforts to root out foul play in sport have special significance for Tokyo as it prepares to host to 2020 Olympics, he said. "You must ensure that the clean athletes prevail when attention turns to Tokyo," Howman said in the speech, calling for all who dope to be excluded from competition at the 2020 Games. — AFP



LONDON: This file photo taken on November 8, 2014 shows New Zealand's centre Sonny Bill Williams (R) passing the ball during the autumn international rugby union Test match between England and New Zealand at Twickenham Stadium in southwest London. World Rugby forecasts a "game-changing" 2016 for the sport with sevens making its Olympic debut in Rio. — AFP

SEVENS OLYMPIC DEBUT FAILS TO IMPRESS NEW ZEALANDERS

WELLINGTON: World Rugby forecasts a "game-changing" 2016 for the sport with sevens making its Olympic debut in Rio. But interest in the game's short-form is waning in the 15-a-side code's New Zealand stronghold, despite the appearance of superstar World Cup winner Sonny Bill Williams the Wellington Sevens this week.

New Zealand considers itself the spiritual home of rugby, yet only about a third of the available tickets have been sold for this weekend's round of the World Sevens Series in the capital. For a tournament that was once an automatic sellout at the 35,000-seat Westpac Stadium, ticket sales slumped to 18,000 a day last year and are down to 12,000 this year, even though New Zealand are setting their sights on Olympic gold.

This is in sharp contrast to Australia, which is on track to have a capacity 70,000 crowd at Allianz stadium for the Sydney round of the series the following weekend. Interest in sevens in Australia is said to be rising after they made the 15-a-side World Cup final last year where they were beaten by New Zealand. World Rugby chairman Bernard Lapasset said in his overview for 2016 that it will be "game-changing as the Olympic Games provides an exciting opportunity for the world's top teams to showcase the dynamism" of sevens on sport's biggest

stage.

The Olympic debut "is a major and exciting catalyst behind record participation growth ... in a sport that has multiple social and performance benefits from the playground to the podium," he said. New Zealand Rugby chief executive Steve Tew had also claimed this would be "a very exciting year for sevens with the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro just around the corner."

But not even confirmation that one of rugby's most high profile personalities and double-World Cup winner in the 15-a-side code, Williams, will be playing in Wellington has made a difference to flagging ticket sales. Tew revealed only 12,000 tickets had been sold for each day in Wellington. "I don't think it's made a huge difference to date," he said of the impact of Williams's inclusion in the New Zealand squad. Multi-sports star Williams—a member of the World Cup winning 15-a-side All Blacks in 2011 and 2015 — is making his debut in the sevens branch of the game where New Zealand have won the World Series 12 times in its 16-year existence.

'FULL YAWN'

Prominent New Zealand rugby writer Wynne Gray said there was an assumption sevens would become more fashionable now it has been included in the Olympics but

he rated it: "Half a game, half an audience and a full yawn." Sevens' devotees were dwindling and "it's becoming an acquired choice for people's entertainment dollar rather than a lemming-like popularity rush," he wrote in the New Zealand Herald.

The general manager of the Wellington Sevens, Steve Dunbar, remained hopeful ticket sales would improve but said it was clear changes were needed in the way the tournament was run.

"We had 14 or 15 hugely successful years but it was time to shake things up. We have started afresh with new dates, new days - Saturday and Sunday - and new ticket options," he told AFP.

"We expect a big walk-up crowd as fans can decide on the day whether they want to come along."

Fiji and South Africa who won the opening rounds of the 2015-16 series in Dubai and Cape Town head the table going into Wellington with 35 points ahead of USA and Argentina (both on 29), England (26) and France and New Zealand (both 25).

Although rugby is preparing to make its Olympic debut in the abbreviated form, it has been played in the full 15-a-side version at four Olympics. The United States won gold the last time rugby was included at the 1924 — AFP

SPIETH TRAILS AS HORNE TAKES LEAD IN SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE: South Africa's Keith Horne shot a five-under-par 66 to lead the SMBC Singapore Open after the first round of play yesterday, with world number one Jordan Spieth breathing down his neck. Spieth and South Korea's An Byeong-Hun posted identical birdies in the fourth, seventh, 10th and 18th holes, to trail Horne by a stroke as the four-day tournament teed off at the Sentosa Golf Club Serapong Course. Bad weather suspended play late afternoon and competition will resume tomorrow for 57 players who have not completed the first round. Teeing off on the back nine, Horne hit two bogeys but raised his game to top the leaderboard with his seventh birdie in the final hole. Despite not playing at Serapong for a couple of years, the 44-year-old said he usually has a good outing at the course.

"I had a bit of a walkabout in the middle of the round but then I also had a good run coming in," said Horne.

"I putted great today which was important. I put a new driver in the bag... and I hit it so far and straight and that made a huge difference." Playing in the city-state for the first time, Spieth remains focused on winning the Singapore Open but he was frustrated with his drives, but the 22-year-old Texan said he was still adjusting.

"It was a good start," said the 2015 US Open and Masters champion. "I wish I had better chances of putting inside 15 feet to birdie. I just didn't have many today," he added.

"But that will come. It's just the first round in a different country, different time zone. It's still an adjustment and I think each day it will get a bit better." Overall, Spieth said Serapong lived up to what he had heard from PGA Tour pros who had played here previously.

"My expectations were high, considering how highly people have spoken of this golf course," Spieth told reporters. "It played very similar to a pretty challenging PGA Tour." The American has put aside earlier complaints of exhaustion after a top five finish at the Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship on Sunday. Returning after a three-year hiatus and under new sponsorship, the Singapore Open offers a minimum prize purse of \$1 million. It is co-sanctioned by the Asian Tour and Japan Golf Tour Organization. It was formerly one of Asia's richest with a \$6 million purse when last held in November 2012.

The tournament was cancelled in 2013 after British bank Barclays chose not to renew its sponsorship. Japan's Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation is the current sponsor.

Leading scores
66 - Keith Horne (RSA)
67 - An Byeong-Hun (KOR), Jordan Spieth (USA)
68 - Hideto Tanihara (JPN), Rahil Gangjee (IND), Quincy Quek (SIN), Paul Peterson (USA)
69 - Prayad Marksaeng (THA), Choi Jinho (KOR), Scott Strange (AUS), Miguel Tabuena (PHI), Javi Colomo (ESP), Chapchai Nirat (THA). — AFP



SINGAPORE: Jordan Spieth of the United States discusses his shot with caddy Jay Danzi, on the 13th hole during the first round of the SMBC Singapore Open golf tournament at the Sentosa Golf Club's Serapong Course yesterday, in Singapore. — AP

KUWAIT HANDICAPPED SPORTS CLUB CONGRATULATES AMIR

KUWAIT: Kuwait Handicapped Sports Club congratulated HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the 10th anniversary of his assumption of his constitutional duties.

President of the club Shafi Al-Hajiri said HH unlimited support of the handicapped sport is the direct reason for its development and making achievements one after the other, to have Kuwait flag hoisted high in world arenas.

Al-Hajiri said HH the Amir's

follow up and encouragement of the club is evident by his annual visit to the club and meeting with its members, giving them the motive to participate in events and win championships.

He said among the most notable signs of the support is the medals won during the world championship that was held in Qatar lately, as well as the Asian and Arab championships, that besides the qualifying of several athletes to the Paralympics in Brazil later this year.



HH the Amir (right) with Shafi Al-Hajiri.

VASILEVSKIY MAKES 30 SAVES, LIGHTNING BEAT MAPLE LEAFS

TAMPA: Andrei Vasilevskiy made 30 saves for his second career shutout, Steven Stamkos scored his 21st goal and the Tampa Bay Lightning beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 1-0 on Wednesday night. Tampa Bay entered the All-Star break by winning eight of its last nine games. Jonathan Bernier stopped 28 shots for the Maple Leafs, who have lost nine of 10 (1-7-2). Toronto has been outscored 31-11 during that stretch. Stamkos put the Lightning up 1-0 at 4:38 of the first with a shot from the left circle during a power play.

FLYERS 4, CAPITALS 3, OT

Jakub Voracek scored 38 seconds into overtime and the Philadelphia Flyers beat the NHL-leading Washington Capitals in the teams' final game before the All-Star break. Voracek's second goal of the night snapped the Flyers' three-game losing streak and the Capitals' two-game winning streak. Brayden Schenn and Ryan White also scored for Philadelphia. Despite 28 saves from Braden Holtby, the Caps lost at home for the first time since Nov. 19 against the Dallas Stars. Andre Burakovsky had two goals and Nicklas Backstrom scored his 16th of the season. Philadelphia's Michal Neuvirth stopped 27 of the 30 shots he faced to beat his former team for the first time.

PREDATORS 2, FLAMES 1

Shea Weber's power-play goal in the second period stood up as the winner,



WASHINGTON: Goalie Michal Neuvirth #30 of the Philadelphia Flyers makes a save of Tom Wilson #43 of the Washington Capitals during the third period at Verizon Center on Tuesday in Washington, DC. The Philadelphia Flyers won, 4-3, in overtime. — AFP

helping the Nashville Predators complete a perfect road trip with a victory over the Calgary Flames. The Predators finished a four-game trip 4-0-0, having also beaten Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver. Mike Ribeiro also scored for Nashville, and Mattias Ekholm had an assist to extend his points streak to a career-high five games.

Mark Giordano scored the lone goal for Calgary, which has lost three in a row. In the second period, Flames defenseman Dennis Wideman sent linesman Don Henderson to the ice when he checked him from behind. Wideman was skating toward the Flames' bench when he cross-checked Henderson. Wideman said after the game that he didn't intentionally hit Henderson.

AVALANCHE 4, KINGS 3

Nathan MacKinnon scored the tiebreaking goal with 9:25 to play, and the Colorado Avalanche rallied for their fifth win in six games. Gabriel Landeskog scored two goals for the Avalanche, tying it on a 4-on-3 power play with 12:22 to play. Matt Duchene also scored in Colorado's second straight victory over Los Angeles after six straight losses in the rivalry. Drew Doughty and Trevor Lewis scored in the first period for the Kings, who blew an early two-goal lead and a late 3-2 lead. Jonathan Quick made 15 saves in their third defeat in four games heading into the All-Star break. — AP

NZ AND PAKISTAN ODI WASHED OUT IN NAPIER

NAPIER: The second one-day international between New Zealand and Pakistan in Napier was abandoned without a ball being bowled due to heavy rain and a wet outfield yesterday. The calling off means Pakistan, who lost Monday's first one-dayer by 70 runs, can now only hope to level the series when the teams play the third and final match at Auckland on Sunday. Heavy rain rendered the outfield too wet for any play and the umpires finally decided to call off the match after several inspections through the day. New Zealand had earlier won the three-match Twenty20 international series 2-1. — Reuters



NAPIER: New Zealand's Corey Anderson (R), teammate Henry Nichol (front L) and trainer Chris Sorenson (back L) inspect the field as rain delays the start of the second one-day international cricket match between New Zealand and Pakistan at McLean Park in Napier yesterday. — AFP

NHL results/standings

Tampa Bay 1, Toronto 0; Philadelphia 4, Washington 3 (OT); Nashville 2, Calgary 1.

Western Conference							Eastern Conference						
Central Division							Atlantic Division						
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS							
Chicago	33	16	4	147	122	70	Florida	29	15	5	135	108	63
Dallas	31	14	5	162	133	67	Tampa Bay	27	18	4	130	117	58
St. Louis	28	16	8	129	128	64	Detroit	25	16	8	122	124	58
Colorado	27	22	3	143	142	57	Boston	26	18	5	147	131	57
Nashville	24	18	8	129	131	56	Montreal	24	22	4	136	134	52
Minnesota	23	17	9	121	115	55	Ottawa	23	21	6	139	155	52
Winnipeg	22	24	3	126	140	47	Buffalo	20	26	4	114	136	44
							Toronto	17	22	9	114	134	43
							Metropolitan Division						
Los Angeles	30	16	3	129	113	63	Washington	35	8	4	158	104	74
San Jose	26	18	4	142	129	56	NY Rangers	27	17	5	142	129	59
Arizona	24	20	5	131	146	53	NY Islanders	25	16	6	130	118	56
Anaheim	22	18	7	101	111	51	Pittsburgh	24	17	7	121	120	55
Vancouver	20	19	11	122	139	51	New Jersey	25	20	5	114	118	55
Calgary	21	24	3	126	146	45	Carolina	23	20	8	123	135	54
Edmonton	19	26	5	122	149	43	Philadelphia	21	18	8	109	127	50
							Columbus	19	27	5	133	163	43

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).

LEBRON STARS AS SUNS ECLIPSED



CLEVELAND: Cleveland Cavaliers' Iman Shumpert (4) drives against Phoenix Suns' Sonny Weems (10) during the second half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, in Cleveland. The Cavaliers won 115-93. — AP

CLEVELAND: LeBron James scored 21 points before sitting out and dancing - in the fourth quarter, Kevin Love added 21 points and 11 rebounds, and the Cleveland Cavaliers stormed away in the second half for a 115-93 victory over the Phoenix Suns on Wednesday night. Sluggish for the first 24 minutes, the Cavs opened the second half with a 12-0 run and sent Phoenix to its 17th loss in 19 games. Cleveland improved to 2-1 under new coach Tyronn Lue, who took over last week when David Blatt was fired halfway through his second season. The win means Lue and the Cavs' coaching staff will represent the Eastern Conference at the All-Star Game on Feb. 14 in Toronto. Rookie Devin Booker paced the Suns with 16 points and P.J. Tucker and Markieff Morris had 13 apiece.

WARRIORS 127, MAVERICKS 107

Klay Thompson scored a season-high 45 points, Stephen Curry got going after halftime and so did Golden State, which avenged one of its four losses this season by beating Dallas. Curry hit three quick 3-pointers after intermission as Golden State overcame a sluggish first half, and the reigning MVP finished with a modest 14 points on a night the Warriors' role players and bench provided a balanced effort. Thompson had his second 40-point game of the season and sixth of his career, shooting 14 of 20, 7 for 12 on 3-pointers and making all 10 of his free throws. Chandler Parsons scored 23 points for Dallas, which handed the Warriors their second loss of the season, 114-91 on Dec. 30.

SPURS 130, ROCKETS 99

LaMarcus Aldridge had 25 points and 10 rebounds, and San Antonio rebounded from its worst loss in three years to bash Houston and remain undefeated at home. San Antonio (39-7) has won 25 straight at home to open the season and 34 consecutive dating back to last season. Aldridge bounced back - as did the rest of the Spurs - after he was held to five points and three rebounds in a 30-point loss to Golden State on Monday. San Antonio had 32 assists and shot 56 percent from the field in snapping Houston's three-game winning streak and handing the Rockets their worst loss of the season. James Harden had 20 points and Dwight Howard added 13 for Houston.

CLIPPERS 85, HAWKS 83

Jamal Crawford scored 21 points and Los Angeles won again without Blake Griffin, holding off mistake-prone Atlanta. The Hawks turned it over a season-high 23 times but still had a chance to force overtime when Chris Paul lost the handle on an inbounds pass after Al Horford's free throw. Atlanta got it back with 6.7 seconds left and inbounded to Paul Millsap, who drove against Luc Mbah a Moute and got a good look at the basket but came up short on a running one-hander. The horn sounded as the Clippers celebrated their 14th win in 17 games. Los Angeles won for the second straight night after word leaked that Griffin would be out 4-to-6 weeks, having

broken his shooting hand by punching a staff member. He apologized for the incident on Twitter late Tuesday, and his teammates kept on winning. DeAndre Jordan scored 13 points and grabbed 19 rebounds, foiling the Hawks' strategy to keep sending him to line by making 6 of 8 free throws in the fourth quarter. Jeff Teague led Atlanta with 16 points.

THUNDER 126, TIMBERWOLVES 123

Kevin Durant had 27 points, nine rebounds and five assists, and hit two huge shots in the final two minutes to help Oklahoma City win a second-straight, fast-paced thriller. Russell Westbrook had 24 points, 15 assists and eight rebounds, while Enes Kanter had 23 points and 10 boards for the Thunder, who beat the Knicks in overtime the night before. Oklahoma City outrebounded Minnesota 47-31 to go home from a four-game road trip at 3-1. Zach LaVine scored 35 points on 14-for-17 shooting, Andrew Wiggins added 20 points and Karl-Anthony Towns had 19 points, 13 boards and five assists for the Timberwolves. Minnesota shot 55.6 percent and had 31 assists, but missed 10 free throws.

CELTICS 111, NUGGETS 103

Avery Bradley matched his season high with 27 points, and Boston beat Denver for its fourth straight victory. Kelly Olynyk added 17 points and seven rebounds. Isaiah Thomas finished with 16 points and five assists. The victory ties a season-high win streak for the Celtics. Danilo Gallinari and Will Barton led Denver with 23 apiece. The Nuggets lost for the fourth time in five games.

PISTONS 110, 76ERS 97

Andre Drummond had 25 points and 18 rebounds, and Detroit rallied to beat Philadelphia. Drummond, who came into the game having gone 1 for 14 from the line in the last two games, even hit seven of his 12 free throws. Reggie Jackson added 27 points, while rookie Stanley Johnson had 18 off the bench. Jeremi Grant scored 21 points for the Sixers, while Nerlens Noel had 20. The 76ers played without starters Jahlil Okafor and JaKarr Sampson, who both missed their second game in two nights with the flu.

JAZZ 102, HORNETS 73

Rodney Hood scored 24 points and Utah avenged a double-overtime loss to Charlotte last week. Utah broke loose in the second quarter with a 20-2 run, highlighted by a pair of alley-oops from Hood to Rudy Gobert. Trevor Booker added a pair of dunks that pushed the lead to 38-22. Charlotte worked the lead down to single digits in the third quarter, but a trio of 3-pointers from Trey Burke pushed the lead back up to 19. Gordon Hayward finished with 22 points, seven rebounds and five assists for Utah. Gobert grabbed 12 rebounds and blocked three shots. Kemba Walker was held to 15 points after scoring a franchise-high 52 against the Jazz last week.—AP

NBA results/standings

Atlanta 83, LA Clippers 85; Golden State 127, Dallas 107; Boston 111, Denver 103; Detroit 110, Philadelphia 97; Utah 102, Charlotte 73; Minnesota 123, Oklahoma City 126; San Antonio 130, Houston 99; Cleveland 115, Phoenix 93.

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Toronto	30	15	.667	—
Boston	26	21	.553	5
New York	22	25	.468	9
Brooklyn	12	34	.261	18.5
Philadelphia	7	40	.149	24

Central Division

Cleveland	32	12	.727	—
Chicago	25	19	.568	7
Detroit	25	21	.543	8
Indiana	23	22	.511	9.5
Milwaukee	20	27	.426	13.5

Southeast Division

Atlanta	27	20	.574	—
Miami	25	21	.543	1.5
Charlotte	22	24	.478	4.5
Washington	20	23	.465	5
Orlando	20	24	.455	5.5

Western Conference

Northwest Division

Oklahoma City	35	13	.729	—
Portland	21	26	.447	13.5
Utah	20	25	.444	13.5
Denver	17	29	.370	17
Minnesota	14	33	.298	20.5

Pacific Division

Golden State	42	4	.913	—
LA Clippers	30	16	.652	12
Sacramento	20	25	.444	21.5
Phoenix	14	33	.298	28.5
LA Lakers	9	38	.191	33.5

Southwest Division

San Antonio	39	7	.848	—
Memphis	26	20	.565	13
Dallas	26	22	.542	14
Houston	25	23	.521	15
New Orleans	16	28	.364	22

PHILIPPINES' GREATEST PLAYER LOYZAGA DIES

MANILA: Tributes in the basketball-crazy Philippines flowed yesterday for Carlos "The Big Difference" Loyzaga, a two-time Olympian widely regarded as the nation's greatest player who died aged 85.

Loyzaga, who was part of the team that won the bronze medal at the 1954 Rio de Janeiro world championships in the Philippines' best finish at any international basketball tournament, died at a Manila hospital on Wednesday.

"He was a legend," said Joey Romasanta, spokesman for the Philippine Olympic Committee which led the basketball-crazy nation's tributes for the Filipino great. "We were very fortunate to have had somebody like him play basketball for our team."

At a time when large chunks of the globe were still learning to play the game, the swift-footed, 1.91-metre (6ft 3in) do-it-all centre was putting his young nation, a former US colony, on the basketball map.

"The Big Difference", so named because of his importance to the team, averaged 15.7 points at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, and 10.6 points per game at the 1952 Olympics in Helsinki.

He also made the All Stars team of best players at the 1954 world championships. With Loyzaga as anchor, the Philippines completely dominated Asian basketball, winning four straight Asian Games gold medals between 1951 and 1962. They also won two Asian Basketball championships, now known as FIBA Asia championship, in 1960 and 1963. He then coached the nation to victory in 1967. "Just got word that 'The Big Difference' Caloy Loyzaga just passed. We will be 4ever grateful & honored. RIP #Legend," tweeted former national team coach Vincent "Chot" Reyes.—AFP

FOOTBALL: THE BEAUTIFUL GAME STRUGGLES IN RUSSIA AHEAD OF WORLD CUP

MOSCOW: Half-empty stadiums, low TV viewing figures and uninspiring displays by the national team: Russians are struggling to get interested in football with two years to go before they host the World Cup.

This month a survey conducted by state-controlled pollsters VTsIOM showed the number of people who said they were indifferent to the beautiful game was at 83 percent. "Unfortunately it's a fact," lamented sports minister Vitaly Mutko to the press. "Our people do not attend the matches or even watch football on TV."

A large part of the problem getting people to games in Russia appears to be the dire state of the sport's infrastructure across the nation. Crumbling stadiums that date back to the Soviet-era where fans are left to face the elements are still common and a big turn-off as clubs battle to boost attendance.

"This season the average attendance of the Premier League matches before the

winter break was around 11,000 spectators," Sergei Pryadkin, who heads Russia's top league, said in an interview published on its official site.

But a major part of the preparations for the World Cup in 2018 involves building a string of new stadiums or refurbishing existing ones across the country and those running the sport hope new facilities will attract more interest as they open up.

"We believe that the average attendance may double after the new venues start working," Pryadkin said.

CULTURE CLASH

However, while authorities are hoping that a change of scene will help boost crowds at matches—some football lovers in Russia insist that the game really needs a change of culture.

"I don't want to watch football penned in close with a crowd of aggressive numbskulls," Yevgeny Dmitriyev, 23, a longtime supporter of Spartak Moscow told AFP.

"They're not interested in the game, they do not love football. All they want to do is to swear, make monkey chants at black footballers and set flares alight."

"Nobody behaves this way at ice hockey, volleyball or basketball games, only the football fans are so intolerable."

Changing ingrained habits—and the image of watching the game live in the country—may prove a tough task for authorities who often turn a blind eye to the problems in the sport.

While pledging to crackdown on racism ahead of the 2018 World Cup, Russian officials have consistently downplayed the issue despite a string of high-profile incidents involving foreign players.

And even if Russia does get closer to overcoming the barriers off the pitch, it is likely to be events on the field that will shape perceptions of the sport.

Overpaid and underperforming, the Russian national team drew ire from fans during an underwhelming qualifying cam-

paign for this summer's Euro championship in France that saw them scrape through at the last moment.

Much of the anger was directed at Italian coach Fabio Capello—who was reportedly the highest paid national manager in the game and eventually sacked with a mammoth pay-off as Russia looked like they were not going to make the cut.

"It's easy to see the effect—no results, no interest," sports minister Mutko said.

"The team played mediocre football under Capello and the level of public interest gradually fell."

One glimmer of hope is that the appointment of local manager Leonid Slutsky on a short-term contract to replace Capello immediately appeared to galvanise the squad and they put together a run of wins that saw them through to Euro 2016. "I'm sure that our people still love football," Mutko insisted. "They will come back if our team performs well in France." — AFP

BOATENG INJURY ADDS TO BAYERN WOE IN FINAL GUARDIOLA SEASON

BERLIN: Bayern Munich may be expected to rack up another Bundesliga win against Hoffenheim on Sunday but all is not well with the league leader. Coach Pep Guardiola is reportedly cracking down as he seeks a treble of Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup trophies in his last season in charge. Predecessor Jupp Heynckes managed the feat in his final campaign in 2013.

Despite an eight-point lead over Borussia Dortmund in the league, where Bayern has dropped just five points all season, Kicker magazine reported Thursday the relationship between Guardiola and his players was coming under strain.

The Spanish coach is said to be unhappy with some players' professionalism and their behavior on days off, with trips abroad causing particular annoyance. Kicker also said Guardiola criticized players for being overweight before the league resumed after its month-long winter break last weekend.

Bayern's injury problems have revealed some tension at the club, with Jerome Boateng's name the latest added to a long list. The Germany defender has been ruled out until at least the latter stages of the season with a groin injury sustained in last Friday's 2-1 win at Hamburger SV.

Boateng's absence is a blow for Bayern ahead of the Champions League last-16 match with Juventus on Feb. 23. Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge indicated his frustration when he told the dpa news agency that he recommended the German football federation "keeps back" from Boateng "or there'll be stress with Bayern."

Germany coach Joachim Loew had suggested he would give Boateng every chance to recover for the European championship in France. Rummenigge also revealed Boateng had consulted former Bayern doctor Hans-Wilhelm Mueller-Wohlfahrt. Mueller-Wohlfahrt had quit Bayern after 38 years in April 2015 after rowing with Guardiola over the club's injury list.

Boateng joins Franck Ribery, Mario Goetze, Medhi Benatia, Rafinha and Sven Ulreich among Bayern's sidelined. Guardiola will need to come up with solutions, with Xabi Alonso, Holger Badstuber or Javi Martinez likely to fill in.

"I have huge trust in Guardiola and the team," said Rummenigge, despite his consultations with Mueller-Wohlfahrt. Here are some other things to know about the Bundesliga's 19th round:

DILIGENT DORTMUND

Dortmund will hope to capitalize on any Bayern slip-ups, though publicly at least the club has

ruled out a title challenge despite claiming 41 points from 18 games. Thomas Tuchel's side is unbeaten at home this season and promoted Ingolstadt is the next side to visit on Saturday.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has 12 goals in eight home games for Dortmund, as many as Ingolstadt has scored all season. The Gabon striker will be hoping to return to scoring ways after enduring a luckless game in last weekend's 3-1 win at Borussia Moenchengladbach. — AP



BARCELONA: FC Barcelona's Lionel Messi, center, duels for the ball against Athletic Bilbao's Eneko Boveda during quarterfinal, second leg, Copa del Rey soccer match at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona, Spain, Wednesday. —AP

BARCA INTO CUP SEMIS AS CELTA DUMP ATLETICO OUT

MADRID: Copa del Rey holders Barcelona had to weather a first-half storm from Athletic Bilbao before progressing to the semi-finals for the seventh consecutive season with a 3-1 win to seal a 5-2 aggregate victory.

Atletico Madrid failed to make the last four, though, as they conceded three goals for the first time in a year to lose 3-2 on the night and on aggregate to Celta Vigo. Inaki Williams's early strike for the visitors at the Camp Nou gave Athletic hope of exacting revenge for defeat in last season's final to Barca.

However, the Basques failed to take a series of chances when on top before half-time and Barca responded in the second period thanks to goals from Luis Suarez, Gerard Pique and Neymar.

"The early goal for them made life difficult for us," Suarez told Canal Plus. "We know we didn't play well in the first-half, but in the second-half we came out with a different attitude and that allowed us to save the day and

progress to the semis."

Williams signed a new long-term deal with a 50 million euro buyout clause last week and showed more signs of his burgeoning talent with a cool finish from Aritz Aduriz's fine through ball to register his 11th goal of the season.

Athletic should have then gone in front on aggregate when Javier Eraso turned Williams's dangerous cross wide before Markel Susaeta also failed to hit the target from Aduriz's knockdown.

Those misses were to prove crucial as Barca upped their game after the break as the star front three of Lionel Messi, Suarez and Neymar came alive. Messi created the equaliser when he latched onto Sergi Roberto's ball over the top and his low cross was slotted home at the back post by Suarez for his 30th goal of the season.

Pique killed the tie off nine minutes from time when he rose to power home Dani Alves's cross from the right. And Neymar got

his revenge for some rough treatment dished out by the Athletic defence when he skipped past Mikel San Jose before firing into the corner.

Barca meet Atletico in a top of the table clash in La Liga on Saturday, but there is no chance of the sides meeting in Friday's semi-final draw as Celta produced an upset at the Vicente Calderon thanks to Pablo Hernandez's brace either side of former Manchester City and Celtic striker John Guidetti's sensational strike.

"To come to such a great stadium and club and play such an all-round game with bravery and character, playing our style of football, I am proud to coach these players," said Celta boss Eduardo Berizzo, who hailed the result as his best in charge of the Galicians.

"We didn't play badly. We created plenty of chances, but it is true we made mistakes in the small details of the game and they took advantage of it," said Atletico coach Diego Simeone. — AFP

VAN GAAL BRACED FOR DERBY DUEL IN FA CUP

MANCHESTER: Manchester United manager Louis van Gaal has his back to the wall once again ahead of his side's FA Cup fourth-round tie at second-tier Derby County today. Saturday's woeful 1-0 defeat at home to Southampton prompted press reports that Van Gaal had offered to resign and although those claims were rebutted by figures within the club, defeat at Derby will see the speculation ramp up all over again.

United needed a stoppage-time Wayne Rooney penalty to overcome third-tier Sheffield United in round three and the United captain is anticipating another testing evening at the iPro Stadium, where United won 4-1 in the fifth round in 2009.

"We know, as we've played there before, that it will be a difficult game with a good atmosphere on Friday night," Rooney told MUTV.

"I'm sure they will be really up for it with

their crowd and we will be up for it as we've experienced these games. The players who joined us last year and played against Cambridge and Yeovil will have seen that an FA Cup tie like this is more of a battle than a football game.

"We have to be ready for that and be ready for a tough game as the cup is full of surprises. Derby have nothing to lose. No-one is expecting them to win and they will try to cause an upset. We know that and have to be ready for that.

"It will be a difficult night for us. Sheffield United at home was a tough game, so we have to be ready to battle and win the battle. Hopefully then our qualities will show through." Derby, managed by former Real Madrid assistant coach Paul Clements, go into the game on the back of a heavy 4-1 loss to Championship promotion rivals Burnley, which left them fifth in England's second division.

But Clements is relishing the chance to lead his players out against United, who Derby last overcame in the FA Cup in 1897.

"What a challenge, to play one of arguably the biggest clubs in world football," he told the Derby website.

"It's clear they're not having the best time themselves at the moment, but it's an opportunity for two teams to come together and put in a performance.

"It's going to be nice to put ourselves up against a very good side with world-class players, and a fantastic coach in Van Gaal."

ARSENAL SEEK BURNLEY REACTION

Van Gaal's defensive injury problems continue to mount, with right-back Matteo Darmian, who sustained a rib injury against Southampton, joining Luke Shaw, Antonio Valencia, Marcos Rojo and auxiliary full-back Ashley Young on the sidelines.

Central midfielder Bastian

Schweinsteiger is also unavailable with a knee injury. Derby could award a debut to Swedish international left-back Marcus Olsson, who signed from Blackburn Rovers this week.

Holders Arsenal continue their quest for a third successive FA Cup trophy a feat last achieved by Blackburn between 1884 and 1886 — at home to Burnley tomorrow.

Arsenal squandered an opportunity to regain top spot in the Premier League last Sunday when they lost 1-0 at home to Chelsea, which left them without a win in three games, and right-back Hector Bellerin has urged his team-mates to put the disappointment behind them.

"We need to focus on the next game and it does not matter about the trend," the Spaniard told the club website. "We are not thinking about that. We are just thinking about winning and getting ahead." — AFP

MARTINEZ 'HURT' BY EVERTON'S CUP EXIT

MANCHESTER: Everton manager Roberto Martinez complained that his team had been unjustly denied a place in the League Cup final after a controversy-flecked semi-final loss to Manchester City.

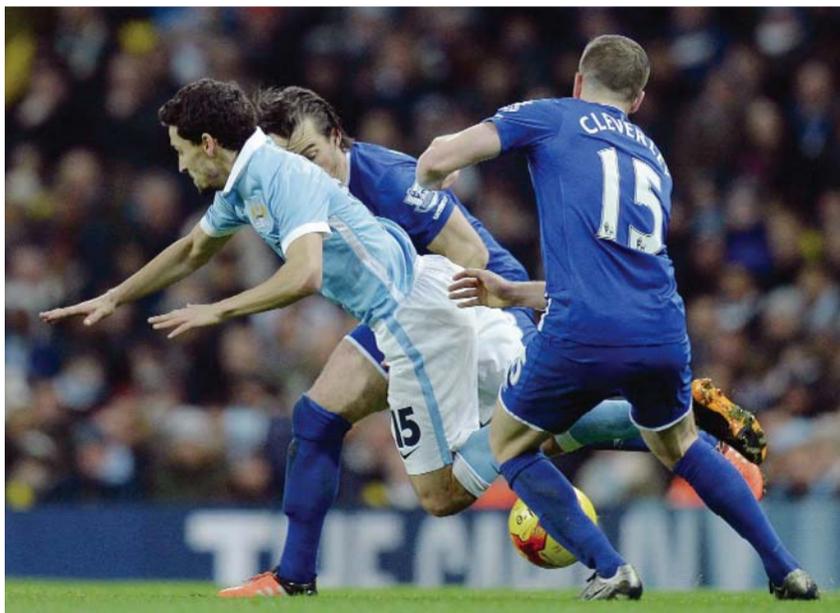
Everton were 3-2 up on aggregate in Tuesday's second leg at the Etihad Stadium when Kevin De Bruyne drew City level in the 70th minute despite Raheem Sterling appearing to have taken the ball beyond the byline before cutting the ball back for his Belgian team-mate.

Six minutes later De Bruyne crossed for Sergio Aguero to head in the decisive goal in a 4-3 aggregate win, setting up a meeting with Liverpool in next month's final, but Martinez felt the damage had been done earlier. "It was a clear decision—the ball is out of play," said Martinez. "The second goal, I felt that decision affected too much the outcome of us reaching Wembley or not. That is why it hurts.

"You don't mind if Manchester City find a way of being outstanding and scoring three goals. It is very difficult to find an explanation in the dressing room for the players, to find a reason we have been knocked out. "That is hurtful and unfair. We want to make sure we pay our fans back and take them to Wembley this season." Asked if the incident emphasised the need for video technology to be introduced to the sport, Martinez responded: "My question is, do we need technology to get that right?"

"For me that action is so clear. I would expect an international or Premier League linesman to get that call right. I would expect a top referee to get his angle and his position right." Leading 2-1 from the first leg, Everton extended their advantage in the 18th minute of the return leg when Ross Barkley left Nicolas Otamendi and Fabian Delph for dead before steering a shot into the bottom-left corner. But Fernandinho swiftly equalised with a deflected shot and after Aguero and David Silva had hit the post, the 66th-minute introduction of De Bruyne tipped the balance of the tie in City's favour.

The Belgian's night was to end in painful fashion, however, as he had to be stretched



MANCHESTER: Everton's English defender Leighton Baines (L) and Everton's English midfielder Tom Cleverley (R) vies with Manchester City's Spanish midfielder Jesus Navas during the English League Cup semi-final second leg football match between Manchester City and Everton the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, on Wednesday. — AFP

from the field after his right knee buckled in a challenge with Ramiro Funes Mori.

'EVERTON CANNOT COMPLAIN'

The 24-year-old will undergo tests on Thursday, but City manager Manuel Pellegrini said he was "optimistic" that De Bruyne would not miss the rest of the season.

Pellegrini dismissed Martinez's complaints about De Bruyne's goal, citing decisions that had gone against City in both the first leg and the recent goalless draw between the teams in the Premier League. "Maybe it was a mistake of the referee, but I think one thing that Everton cannot complain about is the referee," said the Chilean, who led City to a league and League Cup double two years ago. "We lost at Goodison Park with a clear offside in the first goal, with

a clear penalty for Jesus Navas that they didn't whistle. "We drew here 0-0 in the Premier League with a clear penalty against Raheem Sterling. And tonight (Wednesday) the first goal was a clear foul against Aguero.

"It was one mistake against four or five mistakes. I think we were better than Everton on this night and we deserved more than them to be in the final." City lost 4-1 at home to Liverpool when their paths last crossed in November.

But with an FA Cup fourth-round game at Aston Villa coming up this weekend followed by league games against Sunderland, Leicester City and Tottenham Hotspur, Pellegrini is not thinking about facing Jurgen Klopp's men yet. "If you have two very good teams as Liverpool and Manchester City, it will be a brilliant final," he said. — AFP

MORATA HITS BRACE AS JUVE ROUT INTER IN CUP SEMI

MILAN: Alvaro Morata answered his critics with a brace for Juventus in a thrilling 3-0 win in the first leg of their Italian Cup semi-final against Inter Milan in Turin on Wednesday. Morata last hit the net for the league and Cup champions four months ago and has fallen out of favour with coach Massimiliano Allegri amid the spectacular rise of Argentinian Paulo Dybala.

But the former Real Madrid striker was given a rare start in the Cup version of the 'Derby d'Italia'—as the Juve v Inter fixture is commonly known—and reminded fans of his class with a performance that should have seen him bag a hat-trick.

Allegri told Rai Sport: "He had a good game, he broke the deadlock with a penalty that wasn't easy to score and then hit his second. "Tonight, we gave ourselves a good chance of heading to the final, but let's not forget we still have 90 minutes to play at the San Siro." Inter coach Roberto Mancini felt the scoreline flattered Juve, but the former Manchester City handler admitted they now face an uphill climb if they are to reach their first final since beating Palermo in 2011. "They deserved to win but the scoreline didn't reflect the game," Mancini said.

"Up until their penalty, they hadn't threatened us and Samir Handanovic didn't have a save to make. "It will be difficult for us to overcome the result but we have to go out and give it our best." Morata stepped up to beat Inter 'keeper Handanovic from the spot nine minutes from the interval after Jeison Murillo felled Juan Cuadrado in the area to earn the first of two yellow cards on the night. Morata hit a superb second just after the hour when he pounced on Felipe Melo's poor control of Patrice Evra's drive across goal, spinning away from his marker to fire into Handanovic's far top corner.

Morata admitted it had been "an important night for me", adding: "Thanks to all my team-mates for their encouragement and support." Melo's mistake was too much for Mancini, who immediately replaced the Brazilian—who only returned recently from a three-match ban—with Marcelo Brozovic. Brozovic injected some much needed punch into Inter's attack, but their hopes of reducing the arrears suffered a blow only minutes later when Murillo saw red for a second foul on Cuadrado.

It means Mancini will be without two defenders, Murillo and Joao Miranda, for the return leg on March 3. Morata should have had his third on 78 minutes when Frenchman Paul Pogba curled in a delightful delivery for the Spaniard, but somehow Morata ballooned over from eight yards.

Dybala, who has hit 12 Serie A goals this season, wrapped up the win only minutes after coming off the bench to replace Mario Mandzukic with a superb sweeping shot that went through Handanovic's legs six minutes from time. Juve, who secured their first league and Cup double in 20 years last season, travel to Milan for the second leg as favourites for their second Cup trophy. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Serbia's Novak Djokovic hits a return during his men's singles semi-final match against Switzerland's Roger Federer on day eleven of the 2016 Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

DJOKOVIC, SERENA IN MELBOURNE SEMIS

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic hit some spectacular shots and showed true grit to hold off a Roger Federer fightback as he reached the final of the Australian Open for the fifth time in six years with a 6-1 6-2 3-6 6-3 victory yesterday. For the first two sets, 17-times major champion Federer looked as powerless as Agnieszka Radwanska had earlier on the same court when the Pole was taken apart 6-0 6-4 by the reigning women's champion Serena Williams.

Federer restored some pride by taking the third set and made the champion work hard through some breathtaking rallies in the fourth before the Serbian took his place in a title decider against Andy Murray or Milos Raonic.

"These were probably the best two sets I've played against (Roger) over my career," said 28-year-old Djokovic, who will be bidding for a record-equalling sixth Australian Open title on Sunday.

"This was I think a different level than from before. I'm just very, very pleased that I was able to perform the way I did from the very beginning till the end."

Williams was in similarly dominant form in her semi-final as she set up a date on Saturday with Germany's Angelique Kerber, who reached her first grand slam final by ending Briton Johanna Konta's fairytale run 7-5 6-2.

The 45th showdown between Djokovic and Federer, the best two hardcourt players of their generations, was always going to be the highlight of day 11 of the tournament.

Four days after he racked up 100 unforced errors in a messy fourth round win over Gilles Simon, Djokovic started brilliantly and played 55 minutes of near flawless power tennis to take a commanding two sets to nil lead. With the crowd making clear their desperation for the Swiss to avoid a humiliating defeat, however, Federer managed to find another gear to his serve, charged the net more frequently and snatched the third set.

UNBELIEVABLE SERVE

Now playing under a closed roof, Djokovic took some time to regain his level in the fourth but grabbed the crucial break for a 5-3 lead and served out comfortably to reach his fifth straight grand slam

final. "You've got to try and stop the bleeding at some point," said Federer. "It was tough to get back into it but I found a way and made something of a match of it. But clearly I'm still disappointed."

Williams's 20-minute first set against Radwanska was as short as Djokovic's start against Federer and only slightly less impressive because of the Pole's lack of grand slam pedigree.

"There was just no mistake," said fourth seed Radwanska. "Unbelievable serve. Everything, she was going for it. Yeah, I couldn't do much. Not at all, actually. 'I don't think anyone can really play on that kind of level at all.'" Radwanska made the second set more of a contest but she had neither the power nor the skill to prevent the world number one marching on to her 26th grand slam final.

"I've always said that when I'm playing at my best, it's difficult to beat me," said 34-year-old Williams, who has won all six of her previous finals at Melbourne Park.

Kerber stands between Williams and a 22nd grand slam singles title, which would allow the American to match the record of the German's compatriot, childhood hero and mentor Steffi Graf.

The 28-year-old seventh seed raced to a 3-0 lead in the opening set of her match against Konta but the Briton shed her early nerves and won the next four games to get back on serve.

Kerber kept her own nerve, however, and secured a decisive break for 6-5 in the first set before overwhelming the world number 47 in the second.

"I've had a lot of ups, I had a lot of downs. I think the final came to the right moment," said Kerber, the first German in the women's final at Melbourne Park for 20 years. "I am a top player right now. I've been working very hard in the last few years. Here I am. I'm in the final for my first time. I will for sure try and enjoy it." Konta was the first British woman into the last four at the Australian Open for 39 years after a remarkable run on her main draw debut at Melbourne Park.

The Sydney-born 24-year-old had no complaints about her defeat, however. "I played against a better player today who earned her right to a grand slam final," she said. "But I'm really taking a lot of positives out of it." —Reuters

KONTA MADE BRITISH HISTORY IN AUSTRALIA

MELBOURNE: The extent of what she accomplished at the Australian Open hasn't fully sunk in, but Johanna Konta expects it will when she returns home to England. The 24-year-old Konta's strong run at Melbourne Park became big news back home and Down Under when she became the first British woman to reach a Grand Slam semifinal since 1983. That run ended yesterday, when No. 7 Angelique Kerber beat her 7-5, 6-2 for a chance to play No. 1 Serena Williams in the final.

Konta emerged from the defeat saying she felt proud, carrying the positive energy and composure she had displayed on court into her post-match news conference. "I really enjoyed my experience out there," said Konta, who was ranked 47th and is motivated by challenges. "At this level, you're constantly being tested. Whoever you're playing, your limits are constantly being pushed. I'm really happy how I was able to keep pushing my threshold." That could all change, of course, when she gets back home to England. "When I go home, when my mom will say, 'Oh, you're calm.' It will come out more," she joked. Konta's story was the type that tennis fans never tire of - the talented but unnoticed player who seemingly comes out of nowhere to beat a champion.

Konta was playing in the main draw at the Australian Open for the first time, after losing in qualifying rounds for the previous three years. In the first round, she stepped onto the biggest stage at the Australian Open, Rod Laver Arena, and beat seven-time Grand Slam winner Venus Williams in straight sets. She won over the crowds with her athletic, chase-every-ball style, squatting into her forehands and backhands for extra power. She became a local favorite when Melbourne Park fans learned she had been born in Sydney, Australia to Hungarian parents and moved as a teen to England, where she obtained citizenship in 2012.

When Konta made it to the quarterfinals, the tennis establishment in Britain erupted with headlines about her historic success. She became the first British woman since Jo Durie in 1983 to get that far in a Grand Slam. Britain will now have to wait for its first female player to reach a Grand Slam final since Virginia Wade in 1977.

But it appears to have a rising star on the female side, perhaps, to keep Andy Murray company in the second week of the majors. Often, players set a goal to break into the Top 20, or reach a certain number in the rankings.

"I don't look at myself in the mirror and say, 'You're number this in the world. That's not how I view my career and life,'" Konta said. "If I'm accomplishing ... what I would like to accomplish, then I go home happy." — AP



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