



Scores arrested in crackdowns around Kuwait

4



Brazil interim govt gets to work in crisis

7



Ibra announces departure from PSG

45



150 Fils

BLAST KILLS HEZBOLLAH MILITARY CHIEF IN SYRIA

BADREDDINE SENTENCED TO DEATH, JAILED IN KUWAIT IN '80S



Min 28°
Max 41°



TOKYO: Japan's Emperor Akihito meets Kuwait's Prime Minister HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah at the Imperial Palace yesterday. During the reception, Sheikh Jaber handed a letter from HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the emperor, enclosing an invitation to visit Kuwait. The letter also discussed distinguished bilateral relations. — AP

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Hezbollah announced yesterday that its top military commander had been killed in an attack in Syria, where the group has deployed thousands of fighters backing the Damascus regime. Hezbollah said it was investigating the cause of the blast near Damascus airport but did not immediately point the finger at Israel as it did when the commander's predecessor was assassinated in the Syrian capital in 2008.

The death of Mustafa Badreddine, who had led Hezbollah's intervention in support of President Bashar Al-Assad's regime since the start of the five-year war, came as a fragile truce in Syria teetered on the brink of collapse. Badreddine, in his mid-50s, was a key player in Hezbollah's military wing. He was on a US terror sanctions blacklist, was a key suspect in the 2005 assassination in Beirut of Lebanese premier Rafiq Hariri and was one of the "most wanted" by Israel.

Badreddine was also sentenced to death in Kuwait for his role in bomb attacks there in 1983. He escaped from prison in Kuwait after Iraq, under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, invaded the country in 1990. His release from jail in Kuwait was one of the demands made by the hijackers of a TWA flight in 1985, and of the hijackers of a Kuwait Airways flight in 1988.

The Iran-backed Hezbollah did not say which of Badreddine's many enemies it held responsible for his death. But second-in-command Sheikh Naim Qassem told mourners at the funeral he was killed in a "huge blast" at a Hezbollah position near Damascus airport. He said a probe was under way, but "because there are many possibilities, we don't want to anticipate the investigation". "I assure you however that within hours, no later than Saturday morning, we will give a detailed account about what caused the blast and who was behind it," Qassem said.

Hezbollah has "clear indication" on who was responsible and how it happened, "but we need some more time to be one hundred percent sure", he added. Baghdad-based US military spokesman Colonel Steve Warren said it was unclear who carried out the strike, but the United States was not involved. He also said "it's simply too soon to tell" who was behind the attack and what its effect would be.

Qassem spoke at Badreddine's funeral in Hezbollah's stronghold in the southern suburbs of Beirut. A huge crowd thronged the streets as Badreddine's coffin draped in Hezbollah's yellow flag was carried by uniformed young men. Mourners carried portraits of Badreddine, or threw handfuls of rice and flowers to celebrate his death as a "martyr". Badreddine's predecessor, Imad Mughniya, his cousin and brother-in-law, was killed in Damascus in a 2008 bombing that drew immediate threats by Hezbollah of heavy retaliation against Israel. It made no such threats after Badreddine's death.

Israel made no comment, as was also the case in 2008, but Israeli media underlined Hezbollah's failure to apportion blame. Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV listed Israel among the group's enemies. "The enemies of our great martyrs are known, the Zionists (Israel), the Americans or the takfiris (extremists)," it said. Badreddine's death comes months after another Hezbollah figure, Samir Kantar, was killed in a Dec 2015 air strike near Damascus which the group blamed on Israel. — Agencies



Mustafa Badreddine

FIFA CONFIRMS KUWAIT BAN

MEXICO CITY: Indonesia's suspension from international football for government interference in the country's football federation has ended after almost a year, FIFA president Gianni Infantino announced yesterday. However, the FIFA Congress confirmed the existing suspensions for Kuwait and Benin over alleged government interference in their football associations. Representatives of Kuwaiti clubs who traveled to Mexico City had called for the ban to be lifted, but their plea failed.

Infantino however said that the cases involving Kuwait and Benin would be resolved swiftly. "I'm very sad to be here and have to propose to you that we suspend two associations," said Infantino. "On the other hand, we need to protect our associations from government interference - it is one of our major tasks." The Kuwait FA (KFA) was suspended by FIFA in October after soccer's governing body said a draft sports law constituted interference in the nation's football association, leading to three World Cup qualifying match forfeits.

The International Olympic Committee also banned the country for the same reasons.

The delegation from Kuwaiti clubs lobbying for the FIFA Congress to lift the suspension had been confident of victory ahead of yesterday's vote. "So far, we have received a lot of support from the FIFA family and we are very optimistic," said Saad Al-Houthi, captain of the Kuwait team that reached the 1982 World Cup in Spain.

"It's time to let our players play. Kuwait football is suffering," Houthi said. "Clubs from all leagues, players from all levels and the development system have been completely blocked from any activity for more than half a year now. The most frustrating part in all of this is that our FA is not doing anything to have the suspension lifted. This is why we are in Mexico City this week, to defend the future of football in our country."

Abdullah Al-Maayouf, an MP member who was also on the World Cup side from 34 years ago, said personal agendas and politics played a role in the ban. "The process that led to our suspension was

unclear, unfair and not worthy of the new FIFA administration," Maayouf said. "No proper legal investigation was made by FIFA before the suspension was imposed." He cited no suspensions for Kuwait's cycling, athletics or badminton governing bodies as a sign the ban was wrongly imposed.

"This makes us believe something else is behind our suspension in FIFA because only sports organizations where certain people from Kuwait have a lot of influence, such as FIFA and the IOC, have suspended Kuwait. We believe these international sport leaders from Kuwait pushed for the suspension in order to drive their personal political agendas."

Hasan Abu Al-Hasan, secretary general of Qadsiya sports club, said Maayouf was among those lawmakers whose support for the new laws affecting the KFA prompted the suspension. "It was not an individual who caused the suspension," he said. "We hope now the law will be amended in accordance with the FIFA statutes so the KFA can be reinstated." — Agencies



ROME: Kuwait's Minister of Public Works and State Minister for National Assembly Affairs Ali Al-Omair (center) attends FAO's 33rd regional ministerial meeting for the Middle East and North Africa. — KUNA

KUWAITI MINISTER, FAO DIRECTOR DISCUSS TRAINING, EMPLOYING KUWAITIS

ROME: Kuwait's Minister of Public Works and State Minister for National Assembly Affairs Ali Al-Omair and FAO Director General Jose Graziano da Silva discussed yesterday affording Kuwaitis the opportunity to work for FAO either at its headquarters or in any of its many regional offices. The two officials also discussed a starting date for having FAO operate a regional office in Kuwait. They were meeting on the sidelines of FAO's 33rd regional ministerial meeting for the Middle East and North Africa.

Attending that meeting was Kuwait's ambassador to Italy Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. The ambassador said after the meeting that da Silva thanked Kuwait for its positive participation in FAO's programs and activities.

Da Silva agreed to have FAO train Kuwaitis in institutions and technical centers associated with FAO, for which the

trainees will be awarded diplomas recognized officially by FAO and its subsidiary operations around the world.

Moreover, the two officials discussed food security issues and the need to properly manage fish and livestock resources as well as the impact of climate change on the environment. Omair invited da Silva to visit Kuwait next November as he took the opportunity to sound da Silva on the proposal to have one of the halls at FAO's headquarters be named after Kuwait.

Food security

On Thursday, Omair said that Kuwait is fully cognizant of the imperative to make use of FAO's initiatives and ideas to achieve food security and sustainable growth in the Middle East and North Africa region. Attending FAO's 33rd regional ministerial meeting for the Middle East and North Africa, Omair said the region's perennial hardships remain paucity of natural resources, especially water, compounded in recent times with flare-ups of armed struggles, the influx of refugees and the displaced, the rise in the rates of malnutrition, in particular among children, all of these require reliance on solution ideas from the likes of FAO.

He said Kuwait has worked hand-in-hand with FAO on numerous undertakings, the latest was consecrated in an agreement on setting up a national agricultural growth plan to improve the agriculture sector in Kuwait. Further, he indicated in the meeting Kuwait's concern regarding healthy eating in view of increasing rates of obesity in the region. The Kuwaiti minister recognized the numerous challenges facing countries of the region, stressing that food insecurity is affecting conflict areas in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. In that regard, he said Kuwait is ready to work with FAO on achieving the noble goal of sustainable food security in the world. — KUNA



Kuwait's Minister of Public Works Ali Al-Omair meets with FAO's head José Graziano da Silva.

GCC FAST ON TRACK TO REALIZE INTEGRATION: COMMERCE MINISTER

RIYADH: The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states are proceeding at accelerating pace to achieve trade and industrial integration, said Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry Dr Yousef Al-Ali. They possess the potential that can help bolster GCC joint march in all fields, Ali said on Thursday on the sidelines of the 53rd meeting of the GCC Commercial Committee and the 42nd meeting of the GCC Industrial Cooperation Committee in Riyadh, and that of the GCC Standardization Organization, all held in Riyadh.

The GCC states have cut a long path toward integration, and efforts are being lavished to complete the implementation of the GCC Customs Union and unify customs, economic and legal policies, as well as accomplishing the Gulf road and railway networks, Al-Ali added.

Thursday's three meetings discussed a multitude of recommendations on boosting intra-GCC trade and industrial exchange, the minister said. These were topped with Saudi King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz Al Saud's Vision on boosting the GCC joint action in economy.

The commercial cooperation committee (GCC ministers of commerce) discussed the unified competition law and a draft bill on combating trade fraud, as well as the obstacles of trade among GCC states. Referring to the meeting of the industrial



RIYADH: Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry Dr Yousef Al-Ali attends the 53rd meeting of the GCC Commercial Committee. — KUNA

cooperation committee, Ali said they had addressed the 'General Framework' and the strategic plan for promoting the GCC industrial non-petroleum exports for the period 2016-2030. — KUNA

OFFICIAL EXTOLS VISIT TO ITALY'S NATIONAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

ROME: Chief of the Kuwaiti media and cultural delegation visiting Rome, Sheikha Rasha Al-Sabah, touted yesterday the results of the delegation's tour of the National Central Library of Rome and the National Archives of Italy.

The delegation's two-day visit to the Library and the Archives and meeting with expert officials in these two places "gave us an excellent opportunity to learn first-hand about the way these two institutions are run," said Sheikha Rasha. She added that information gleaned from the delegation's visit to these institutions would be useful in running Kuwait's National Library and in safekeeping of the nation's archives.



Sheikha Rasha Al-Sabah

Italian officials in these two institutions agreed with the Kuwaiti delegation to further expand their bilateral contacts and exchange of expertise in the field of running libraries and archiving documents, she said. The delegation included officials from the Kuwait National Library, the Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait, and Kuwait News Agency (KUNA).

Italy's central state archives was established in 1875 under the name of the royal archives. The archives, located in Rome, switched to its current name by 1953 and it operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. — KUNA



ROME: Consul General in Milan and North Italy Abdunnasser Bou-Khaddur meets with Milan's Prefect Alessandro Marangoni. — KUNA

MILAN'S PREFECT STRESSES DEPTH OF KUWAIT-ITALIAN TIES

ROME: Milan's Prefect Alessandro Marangoni stressed the depth of relations between Kuwait and Italy in all levels. The Italian official made the statement on Thursday while visiting the Kuwaiti Consulate, said Consul General in Milan and North Italy Abdunnasser Bou-Khaddur.

The visit was a reply to another one paid by the consul last February, it said, adding that Abdunnasser and Marangoni discussed deep-rooted ties and means of promoting cooperation between the two sides, mainly the economic, cultural and the commercial ones.

They also dealt with measures of safeguarding the consulate and residences of the head of diplomatic mission and staff as well as methods of providing protection for Kuwaitis visiting Milan and North Italy, the statement pointed out. The two sides focused on horizons of economic, cultural and investment cooperation to live up to historic and deep-rooted relations, it noted. — KUNA



Indian naval ships INS Delhi (right) and INS Deepak (left) are docked at Shuwaikh Port.

INDIA LOOKS TO SIGN MOU WITH KUWAIT ON DEFENSE COOPERATION

THREE INDIAN NAVAL SHIPS IN KUWAIT ON GOODWILL VISIT

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: India is looking to sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Kuwait to further strengthen defense cooperation between the two countries, said Indian Ambassador Sunil Jain on Thursday. He was talking to the Kuwait media onboard visiting Indian naval ship INS Delhi, accompanied by Rear Admiral Ravneet Singh NM, flag officer commanding of India's Western Naval Fleet. Three Indian naval ships - INS Delhi, INS Tarkash and INS Deepak - arrived at Shuwaikh Port on Thursday on a three-day goodwill visit. Captain of INS Delhi Capt Sandeep Singh Sandhu, captain of INS Tarkash Capt Pradeep Singh, captain of INS Deepak Capt Sujit Kumar Chhetri and India's defense attache, the Gulf region, Capt Gurpal Singh, were also present at the press conference.

Jain, Ravneet Singh and captains of the three ships called on Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Khalid Jarrah Al-Sabah on Thursday morning. Chief of General Staff and Deputy Chief of General Staff of Kuwait Armed Forces and Commander of Kuwait naval forces were also present during the meeting. "We discussed various issues involving bilateral cooperation including the possibility of signing an MoU to further expand defense cooperation. This proposed MoU could serve as an umbrella suiting the interests of both countries. India and Kuwait are also members of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)," the ambassador added. IONS is a voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime cooperation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean region. Currently, 35 countries are members of IONS.

Bridges of friendship

"We, in the Indian navy, build bridges of friendship over oceans. We visit friendly countries, make friends, learn from their experience and go back," Ravneet Singh said, elaborating on the purpose of the visit of the three naval ships, which is by far the largest Indian naval contingent visiting Kuwait. "In IONS, we are all like-minded people who meet together, discuss problems and chart out our way. We learn from each other's strengths, try to share our experiences and make up for our weaknesses. It is a combined effort, and as we understand, there are problems such as natural disasters and terrorism. If we work together, we can fight and defeat them," he said.

During the stay, the crew of Indian naval ships will hold pro-



KUWAIT: Indian Ambassador Sunil Jain, India's Western Naval Fleet commander Rear Admiral Ravneet Singh NM and the captains of three Indian ships during a press conference on board INS Delhi on Thursday. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

fessional interactions with the Kuwaiti naval force pertaining to nuances of maritime operations, including means of combating maritime terrorism and piracy. In addition, the officers will call on senior Kuwaiti government and military authorities to bolster cooperation and strengthen mutual understanding between the two navies.

"We want to enhance our friendship with the navy of Kuwait, taking our relationship to the next level, learn some good things from the navy of Kuwait and share our experiences with them. When we sail out, we will hold joint exercises," said Rear Admiral Singh.

Incidents of piracy

"Incidents of piracy have come down significantly in the last few months, thanks to the joint patrolling of the navies together," he added. IONS has declared that the Indian Ocean region is free of piracy as it has been now contained only to the Gulf of Aden. Talking about the massive evacuation called 'Operation Rahat' from war-torn Yemen in last April, Captain Pradeep of INS Tarkash, said: "In one of the largest evacuation missions, three Indian ships rescued nearly 7,000 people from 31 countries."

Commissioned in Nov 1997, INS Delhi was the first ship designed in India itself, with 6,700-ton guided missile destroyers. It is a multipurpose command and control platform capable of operating in a multi-threat environment. It carries two Sea

King helicopters, capable of both anti-submarine as well as anti-surface operations.

INS Deepak was commissioned in Jan 2011 and it is a modern fleet tanker designed to be utilized as a fleet support ship. It has adequate facility for providing frontline support to fleet ships and has an advanced Integrated Platform Management System which seamlessly integrates auxiliaries and battle damage management of the ship using microprocessor-based digital control systems.

Commissioned in Nov 2012, INS Tarkash remains one of the latest platforms for the Indian navy and is a workhorse of the Western Fleet. Its weapon package includes surface-to-surface missiles, surface-to-air missiles, advanced torpedo launchers, anti-missile defense system and 100mm guns. It is thus capable of accomplishing a wide variety of naval missions, primarily finding and eliminating enemy submarines and large surface ships.

The last goodwill call by the Indian navy was in Sept 2015 when INS Deepak and INS Tabar visited Kuwait. Recently, on an invitation from the Indian side, an official from Kuwait's ministry of defense joined the 72nd Course of Defense Services Staff College in Wellington, India. The Indian ships sailed off from India on May 3. After leaving Kuwait tomorrow, the vessels will call on ports at Bahrain and Muscat before returning to Mumbai on May 27.



KUWAIT: This handout photo shows two persons arrested during crackdowns yesterday with possession of homebrewed liquor bottles.



A suspect arrested for forging security clearance certificates for Bangladeshi labor forces.



Camels pass by a police patrol car. Two shepherds were arrested yesterday for failure to control their animals.

SCORES OF LAWBREAKERS ARRESTED IN CRACKDOWNS AROUND KUWAIT

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A security source said policemen arrested an Asian man wanted to serve a two-month jail sentence, five others wanted on civil cases, and a Jordanian and American for being drunk.

In Hawally, four persons were arrested with drugs, three wanted on civil cases, four absconders, four without IDs and 30 traffic citations were filed. In Ahmadi, police arrested six people wanted on civil cases, two absconders, one wanted on a criminal case, 14 residency law violators, two on drugs charges, one who had drugs and 51 without IDs; 184 citations were issued and 17 vehicles were impounded. They also arrested a Kuwaiti man and girl with 95 illicit tablets. An Asian man was arrested with 20 bags of homebrewed liquor.

Meanwhile, Jahra security arrested eight wanted people over debts estimated at tens of thousands of dinars. In Farwaniya, police arrested a Kuwaiti man wanted to serve a four-year jail sentence, a man wanted on a KD 20,000 debt, another wanted to serve a one-month jail sentence, a person wanted on a KD 3,500 debt and an Asian with marijuana. A Bangladeshi man was arrested with possession of 133 Tramadol tablets, four wanted on civil cases in additions to arresting a Kuwaiti man wanted to serve a 15-year jail sentence. In Mubarak Al-Kabeer, police arrested three people wanted on civil cases, six absconders, three with-

out IDs, four violators of residency law, while 36 Asians were arrested with 36 bottles of homebrewed liquor.

Forgery

Residency detectives arrested an Egyptian man for forging security clearance certificates for Bangladeshi nationals, helping them bypass a current ban on the private sector's recruitment of Bangladeshi labor forces. Information was received that the suspect processed a transaction for a food company, so he was arrested and confessed to his actions, saying he got a larger number of transactions than what was announced.

Shepherds deported

Environment police, in cooperation with the Environment Public Authority, took action against violators of the shepherding law, and arrested a number of shepherds who were sent for deportation. The shepherds left their animals wandering on the roads without being watched, endangering motorists.

Traffic campaign

The traffic department carried out a campaign on Thursday that resulted in issuing 3,995 traffic citations, 234 vehicles and motorcycles were impounded, a person was sent for deportation and 10 juveniles were sent to concerned authorities. In other news, the Interior Ministry announced that the Wafra detour will open on Road 306 (in Mina Abdullah between King Fahd and Fahaheel roads) from today.



An environment police officer looks on as a camel is being lifted to safety.

300 FILIPINAS SUBJECTED TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT LAST YEAR: AMBASSADOR

KUWAIT: Human and infant trafficking in Kuwait has many aspects, and talking about one or two cases may unearth more that are still hidden, which must be discussed in order to safeguard Kuwait's image from being distorted. While the Ambassador of the Philippines to Kuwait Renato Pedro Villa said he did not have accurate statistics of cases of sexual harassment or rape against Filipinas last year, he estimated the numbers to be 300 sexual harassment cases and nearly 80 cases of illegal pregnancies, adding that 96 percent of these cases are related to domestic helpers.

According to Interior Ministry statistics, there are more than 219,000 Filipinos in Kuwait, 141,000 of whom are domestic helpers. The ambassador said he visited the domestic help shelter center a week ago along with some embassy officials, where they met the center's director Falah Al-Mutairi and agreed about the possibility of moving some Filipino workers at the two embassy

shelters who have completed the fingerprinting process with immigration to the center, in addition to appointing four persons as liaison officers from the embassy to work at the shelter, including a social worker and two translators.

He said there are 12 Filipinas at the government shelter, but this number is expected to rise after more arrive from the embassy shelters. He said most of the Filipino nationals in the shelter are absconders from their sponsors, or their residencies have expired, while some of them still have financial dues pending with their sponsors. The envoy added that most of them do not have their passports, so the embassy will issue travel documents for them that are recognized by Kuwait immigration authorities and allow the holders to leave.

He said the embassy has two shelters that house 400-450 people on average, adding, "We hope to return them to their country with the cooperation of Kuwaiti officials." — Al-Rai



A sports car is being impounded during a recent traffic campaign.



EDUCATION MINISTRY DEPOT CATCHES FIRE

KUWAIT: A depot of the Ministry of Education in Subhan caught fire yesterday, but no casualties were reported, a senior fire squad official said. Four squads of the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) were dispatched to put the fire under control, said Major General Khaled Al-Mekrad, KFSD Director General said. Firemen were able to prevent the fire from reaching neighboring warehouses, he added. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Firefighters tackle a blaze at a Ministry of Education warehouse in Subhan yesterday. — KUNA photos



Crime

Report

POLICE ARREST MAN FOR CARRYING FISH INSIDE MALL

KUWAIT: Police summoned a citizen after video footage showing him carrying a snapper grouper fish inside a mall was circulated online. The source said environment police will charge him with moving perishable foodstuff without regards to health conditions, and this makes article 162 of the environmental law applicable to him. A security source said the citizen stated he was taking the fish to a restaurant.

Prostitutes arrested

Salmiya police arrested three Chinese women who arrived in Kuwait 20 days ago and began prostitution activities, and one of them is suspected of having AIDS. The three spoke about another group that is also being sought. Police investigations revealed that the Chinese women entered on commercial visit visas and used an apartment rented by a company as a brothel, and were charging KD 20 per hour.

Indecent acts

Hawally police put an end to an indecent act between a man and a woman in the parking lot of a Nugra building. Both are citizens and were charged. Police acted after a call was received about the two, who were arrested and taken to the police station for further legal action. Separately, two Filipinos and an Indian were sent to the public prosecution charged with committing indecent acts on the seafront. Interior Ministry mounted policemen saw the act and arrested the expats. The Filipinos did not have any ID, while the Indian only had a copy of his passport.

Drug dealer caught

A drug dealer was arrested by Mubarak Al-Kabeer police with 15 joints and drug paraphernalia and was sent to the Drugs Control General Department. A security source said while patrol officers were roaming in Qusoor, they spotted a motorist driving erratically. The man was stopped and searched, and the drugs were found.

Doctors questioned

Ahmadi detectives summoned two doctors for questioning over charges of forging a medical report and find if other forged medical reports were issued by them. A security source said Ahmadi governorate's head of investigations received a complaint by an Egyptian man accusing two expat doctors of forging two medical reports from Ahmadi Hospital. Detectives are working on the case, and probing whether reports were made in exchange of money.

Search for thieves

Ahmadi detectives are hunting three unidentified persons in a black SUV for questioning over charges of robbing a man of KD 500 after posing as detectives. The Pakistani man told Ahmadi police that while walking, he was stopped by three persons who told him he is under arrest on drugs charges and asked him for all his belongings, searched his car, apologized and left. He then discovered that KD 500 was missing. — Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa



KUWAITI RELIEF TEAM ORGANIZES CONCERT FOR REFUGEES' KIDS

URFA: A volunteering team from the International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) and Ataa relief society have organized a concert for children of Syrian refugees in the city of Urfa southeast Turkey.

The event aimed to celebrate the renewal of sponsorship and care for 30 orphan children and the distribution of 300 toys for the Ataa School students, as

well as food parcels to the families of orphans along with booking a hall for 200 children.

The team on Thursday visited Urfa, where about a hundred families have been living for seven months with no shelter. The team members distributed 280 food parcels for each family, which is enough for a month, a matter which was applauded by those families.

Chairwoman of the women's team Noura Al-Bassam said that the team was established under the supervision of the IICO to have a legal umbrella and has so far organized 35 volunteer trip since 2012. She stressed keenness of team members to provide psychological support, especially for women and orphans, saying they were going through "big psychological pressure." — KUNA

KUWAIT REITERATES KEENNESS ON FINANCIAL COMMITMENTS TO UN

WASHINGTON: Kuwait has reaffirmed keenness on honoring its financial commitments to the UN, and doing that on time so that the international organization can carry on with its missions. It is just unfair to task the organization with too many missions and responsibilities in various fields, peace, security, development, human rights, and to demand the UN bodies with further effectiveness and efficiency and transparency amid failure to fulfill financial commitments, diplomatic attache Lulua Al-Rashidi told a UN committee meeting recently. She also expressed Kuwait's relief over the UN 'sound and positive' financial status in general. Rashidi pointed to times when the UN faced financial problems that negatively impacted its performance and missions, and emphasized the necessity that member states pay their financial dues to the organization. — KUNA



Diplomatic attache Lulua Al-Rashidi.

KUWAITI AMBASSADOR SUBMITS CREDENTIALS TO NORWAY'S KING

BERLIN: Kuwait's Ambassador to Sweden Nabil Rashed Al-Dakheel submitted on Thursday his credentials to King Harald V of Norway, as an extraordinary ambassador and non-resident delegate to the Kingdom. The ambassador conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the King, said a statement, adding that the King also told ambassador to convey greetings to His Highness the Amir. During the meeting, the two sides lauded the 'distinguished' relations between Kuwait and Norway, and means of promoting and developing them, and also discussed international issues of mutual interest, the statement noted. — KUNA

SOUTH AFRICAN ENVOY PRAISES KRCS' AID



KUWAIT: South African Ambassador to Kuwait Mzolisa Bona presents a memento to KRCS's chief Dr Hilal Al-Sayer. — KUNA

KUWAIT: South African Ambassador to Kuwait Mzolisa Bona expressed appreciation to all humanitarian assistance given by Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to those who need it. KRCS' help has reached many parts of the world to provide life-saving assistance to victims of natural and man-made disasters, Bona said on Thursday after a meeting with KRCS's chief Dr Hilal Al-Sayer. Sayer, meanwhile, pointed out that the aid organization has a long experience in helping the unfortunate, whether through providing food packages or medical care. The South African envoy was provided with an overview on the latest humanitarian assistance in Syria, Yemen and Iraq. — KUNA

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BRASILIA: Brazil's interim President Michel Temer (center) gestures between Chief of Staff Eliseu Padilha (left) and Economy Minister Henrique Meirelles during the first ministers' meeting at the Planalto Palace yesterday. —AFP

BRAZIL INTERIM GOVT GETS TO WORK

TEMER DIVES INTO TOUGH NEW JOB: SAVE BRAZIL IN CRISIS

BRASILIA: Brazil's interim president Michel Temer was expected yesterday to launch urgent economic rescue measures as he kicked off his new administration a day after his predecessor was suspended to face an impeachment trial. The former vice president's new business-friendly cabinet held its first meeting yesterday morning, just hours after his boss-turned-nemesis, Dilma Rousseff, quit the presidential palace. The swift transfer of power ended 13 years of rule by the leftist Workers' Party, which helped lift tens of millions of people from poverty with progressive social programs but became mired in corruption scandals, recession and political paralysis.

Now Temer will have to steer clear of the vast graft scandal engulfing Brazil's political and business elites, while working to fix the economy. "We don't have much time," Temer, a veteran of the center-right PMDB party, said on taking office. "We must rebuild the foundations of the Brazilian economy and significantly improve the business environment for the private sector so it can get back to its natural role of investing, producing and creating jobs."

Temer announced the start of the cabinet meeting on Twitter. It was to be followed at 1430 GMT by a news conference by incoming Finance Minister Henrique Meirelles, who was expected to unveil urgent measures to drag Latin America's biggest economy out of its worst recession in decades.

Vulnerable to Scandal

But Temer faces many of the same stumbling blocks as his predecessor, plus a few of his own. Political analysts warned his honeymoon may not even last until he opens the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro on August 5 - South America's first. Temer is just about as disliked as the deeply unpopular Rousseff. A recent poll found he would receive just two percent of the vote in a presidential election. He will also face a deeply hostile left resentful of being sidelined in what it calls a "coup".

And he will have to coexist with Rousseff, who will still be holed up in the presidential residence mounting her defense during an impeachment trial that could drag on for up to six months. Temer appealed Thursday for "dialogue" to heal the wounds of the

impeachment battle, but stoked opponents' outrage with his cabinet appointments: all 24 of his ministers are white men. And Temer remains exposed to the swirling scandal at state oil company Petrobras, which has snared top members of his party, the PMDB, as well as Rousseff's PT. Temer, 75, is not under investigation himself. But some of his ministers are.

Long Goodbye

A onetime Marxist guerrilla tortured under Brazil's military dictatorship in the 1970s, Rousseff was suspended over allegations she illegally used loans from state banks to boost public spending and hide the depth of the budget deficit during her 2014 re-election campaign. She claims the accounting maneuver was commonly accepted practice in Brazil and is not an impeachable offense. But in the all-night Senate session leading up to the impeachment vote, lawmakers held her responsible for more than that. One speaker after another attacked her for presiding over an economic collapse, a multi-billion-dollar corrup-

tion scandal and political gridlock. She lost the vote 55 to 22 - far more than the simple majority the pro-impeachment camp needed in the 81-member Senate. The final tally was especially troubling for Rousseff since it is already one vote clear of the two-thirds majority needed to remove her from office permanently at the end of her trial. Defiant to the end, she used what may have been her last speech from the presidential palace to condemn the "coup" against her yet again and urge her supporters to mobilize. "What is at stake is respect for the ballot box, the sovereign will of the Brazilian people and the constitution," she said, dressed in white and flanked by her soon-to-be-sacked ministers. "I may have made mistakes, but I committed no crimes."

She then exited the building to shake hands, hug and wave to some 500 supporters in a cheering, red-clad crowd gathered outside the modernist capital's seat of power. After giving another fiery speech outside, she slowly made her way to an awaiting convoy of black vehicles, which whisked her away after a long goodbye. — AFP

NEW MPs MAY MAKE OR BREAK IRAN REFORM DRIVE

DUBAI: Iran's parliament reconvenes in late May with dozens of greenhorn lawmakers who will hold the key to accelerating reforms to boost foreign investment and trade - but whether they eventually make or break the modernization drive is hard to predict. Elected in February, the 290-seat assembly replaces one dominated by hardliners suspicious of detente with the West and who curbed pragmatist President Hassan Rouhani's plans to liberalize the economy and raise lackluster productivity.

Pro-Rouhani candidates raised their representation and 60 percent of MPs are first-timers. Yet independent tallies suggest this will be the first parliament in more than 20 years without either a conservative or reformist majority, and the novices' allegiances may switch between Iran's many factions. "On the one hand (this) is a positive sign of ...the possibility of fresh forces reaching parliament and new people gaining experience in lawmaking," said Jamileh Kadivar, a reformist former lawmaker now living in London. "On the other ..., until the new representatives are able to gain the necessary experience, parliament could be outmaneuvered by other state bodies, or become susceptible to outside influence."

Even within the chamber the picture is unclear. Iran does not have rigid party affiliations and some election candidates were backed by both camps, while deal-making ahead of the opening of parliament on May 27 could see independent MPs throw in their lot with one side or the other. The contest to elect a speaker, one of parliament's first tasks, will be an early test. If veteran reformist Mohammad Reza Aref can oust incumbent Ali Larijani, a conservative with broad appeal, that could herald a more actively pro-Rouhani chamber, with more power to push for his policies.

A centrist, Rouhani is under pressure to create jobs, boost the private sector, reduce graft and make the flagging economy more attractive to foreign investors - not least if he hopes to contest presidential elections in June 2017.

Hope and Inexperience

Both conservative and reformist camps worry the new faces may lack the clout to push - or to block - Rouhani's reforms and the experience to stay united in the face of setbacks. Morale appears higher among reformists, despite the fact that their main parties remain banned after an uprising in 2009, with many prominent figures in jail or under house arrest. The Guardian Council, a unelected 12-member clerical body, barred nearly all known reformist figures from standing in the elections. Their supporters then rallied around a slate of little-known candidates known as Hope List.

Hope Listers united during the campaign. Backed by Rouhani's moderate allies, former presidents Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami, their candidates ended a decade of conservative dominance of parliament by ousting many hardliners. But there is no guarantee reformists can sustain that harmony, and some analysts doubt the newcomers can challenge Iran's powerful religious establishment.

Rouhani is not free to steer economic policy, with the Guardian Council able to vet all laws, and Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei - who has in the past closed down parliamentary debates by decree - given the last word on important matters of state. Ahmad Salamati, a former lawmaker living in Paris, thinks the Hope List could fragment quickly if it loses momentum under such pressures, because it is held together only by popular support. "The members of the Hope List ... can only remain united in the new parliament if they can maintain people's support by implementing tangible economic reforms, especially creating jobs," he said.

The conservatives, in contrast, suffer from an abundance of parties. They could not join forces during campaigning and their morale remains bruised after a heavy blow in the election - losing all 30 seats of the capital Tehran.

Either way, without a majority Rouhani's government will have to pick its battles. Analysts say the president is likely to focus on pushing economic reform rather than social liberalization. That could bring a fresh set of problems, frustrating millions of young, well-educated Iranians who voted for him in 2013 hoping for more political and social freedoms. For all the new faces, just 12 percent of incoming lawmakers are aged 40 or under, according to Interior Ministry data, whereas around 60 percent of Iranians are under 30. — Reuters



DIYARBAKIR: People look in a huge crater after a powerful blast yesterday in the area of Sarikamis on the outskirts of this majority Kurdish city. — AFP

8 TURKEY TROOPS KILLED IN ANTI-PKK OPERATIONS

ERDOGAN VOWS TO PRESS OFFENSIVE

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey: Six Turkish soldiers were killed yesterday in a clash with Kurdish militants in the southeast of the country while two more lost their lives when a military helicopter sent to the scene crashed, the army said. The six troops were killed and eight others wounded in fighting with members of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) near a military base in the Cukurca district of Hakkari province. A Cobra helicopter dispatched to the scene then crashed due to a technical problem, resulting in the deaths of the two pilots, the army added.

Turkish F-16 jets, helicopters and drones were scrambled to fight the "terrorists" behind the attack and reinforcements were sent to the area. So far, six PKK militants have been "neutralized" in the follow-up operations which are continuing, the army said. Pro-PKK news site Firat news claimed that the helicopter had been downed by PKK fighters.

In a separate operation in the neighboring Sirtak province, 15 PKK members have been killed, the army said. Turkey has been waging an offensive against the PKK after the collapse in 2015 of a two-year ceasefire declared by the group. Hundreds of members of the Turkish security forces have been killed in attacks since then, with funerals of army personnel being laid to rest in front of grieving relatives a daily event on national television.

But President Recep Tayyip Erdogan vowed that despite the latest attack the fight against the PKK "will continue with determination". "No clash, no ambush, will prevent us from defending Turkey's unity," he said in a statement. "As long as the nation stands behind our brave security forces, Turkey will rid itself of these bloody organizations and dirty alliances," he added.

'Nothing of our House Left'
On Thursday night, four PKK militants

said to have been loading explosives onto a stolen truck were killed in a huge explosion in an area near Diyarbakir in the southeast that was felt throughout city. The explosives detonated prematurely, the interior ministry said. Dozens of local residents gathered on Friday to inspect the huge crater left by the immense blast, whose power also blew out walls and windows of nearby homes, an AFP correspondent said. "I was lying in my bed. Suddenly an explosion went off, the glass in the windows exploded and I was covered in glass," said local resident Mehmet Emin Akyuz. "There were body parts everywhere. There's nothing left of our house," he told AFP.

That incident came hours after at least eight people including soldiers were injured by a remotely-detonated car

bomb aimed at a military vehicle in Istanbul. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the car bomb. But the official Anatolia news agency said eight people had been detained, including PKK members. On Tuesday, three people were killed and 42 others wounded when a car bomb attack claimed by the PKK struck a police vehicle in Diyarbakir.

The PKK is listed as a terrorist group by Ankara and its Western allies but Erdogan has repeatedly accused the European Union and United States of not doing enough to halt its activities. Over 40,000 people have been killed since the PKK took up arms in 1984 demanding a homeland for Turkey's biggest minority. Since then, the group has pared back its demands to focus on cultural rights and a measure of autonomy. — AFP

US NAVY DISMISSES OFFICER IN CHARGE OF SAILORS HELD BY IRAN

WASHINGTON: The officer in charge of 10 US sailors who were briefly captured by Iran in the Arabian Gulf was relieved of his command Thursday, the Navy announced. Commander Eric Rasch "was relieved due to a loss of confidence in his ability to command," the Navy said in a statement, adding he has been temporarily reassigned to a new role. The dismissal is the first time a sailor has been held publicly accountable after two US riverine patrol boats veered off course into Iranian territorial waters off Farsi Island in the Gulf.

Navy spokesman Lieutenant Commander Tim Hawkins said other sailors have also been held accountable, but he would not say who these were because the incident remains under investigation. "The commander of US Fifth Fleet took administrative action involving personnel assigned under his authority,"

Hawkins told AFP. "Administrative action can range from verbal counseling to a formal letter of reprimand."

The Navy probe is expected to be wrapped up by the end of the month and will be released publicly soon after. Though the sailors were held for less than 24 hours, the incident was a major embarrassment for the US Navy and President Barack Obama. The United States carefully avoided escalating the situation, maintaining a conciliatory tone with Tehran days ahead of the implementation of a historic international deal over Iran's nuclear program. Iranian media broadcast humiliating images of the American sailors during their detention, showing them kneeling on their boats at gunpoint with their hands on their heads. The US military says the incident was caused by navigational and mechanical problems. — AFP

RIVAL LIBYA FORCES RACE TO EXPEL IS FROM SIRTE

TRIPOLI: Rival Libyan forces are preparing separate offensives against the Islamic State group as the jihadists gain new territory, in another sign of deep divisions in the North African country. The UN-backed unity government based in Tripoli has announced the formation of a new military command to take charge of the battle against IS. It has urged military forces to unite and not to launch any unilateral offensive on Sirte, the Mediterranean city which IS overran last June and has turned into a recruitment and training camp.

"We have finalised our preparations to retake Sirte and other regions and the military operation will begin soon," a member of the new military command told AFP. But in the east, the so-called Libyan Arab armed forces under the command of General Khalifa Haftar are also preparing for battle. A spokesman for Haftar said military plans have been drawn up to "liberate Sirte" in an operation that will be launched from the Bamba region, east of second city Benghazi. He said ground, air and naval forces would take part in the operation. "We have the capability and the equipment," he said, declining to give a date for the launch of the offensive or say how many forces will take part.

Mattia Toaldo, a policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, warned that separate attempts by the unity government and Haftar to wage war against IS could backfire. "If pushed with uncoordinated efforts IS could either be in a better position to resist or decide to sneak out and move elsewhere," he said. He said the failure of Libya's armed forces to unite under one banner would create a new "military problem" and ultimately crush any hope of the unity government imposing its authority across the nation.

His comments come as IS jihadists have over the past



BANI WALID, Libya: Displaced Libyan children who fled the eastern Libyan cities of Abu Grein and Sirte look out of the window at a school where they are taking shelter on May 10, 2016. — AFP

week advanced from Sirte into territory held by the unity government, capturing key checkpoints along the Mediterranean coast. On Wednesday, IS suicide bombers attacked the Saddada highway checkpoint killing four soldiers and wounding 24 others, a week after a similar assault on Abu Grein.

Residents Flee

The attacks have given IS a strategic edge, allowing the jihadists to create a defensive line along part of the coastal

highway that links the east of Libya to Tripoli. The jihadists have also inched closer to the loyalist city of Misrata, which is located 200 km from Tripoli and about the same distance from Sirte. Sirte has a port and an airport and this has fuelled fears that the jihadists could use the city as a staging post for attacks on European soil. IS is estimated to have around 5,000 fighters in Libya, and it is trying to enlist hundreds more.

Claudia Gazzini, senior analyst on Libya for the International Crisis Group, warned of the political implications of separate operations to expel IS from Sirte. "The race for Sirte is driving the two extremes of the Libyan political spectrum ... making a compromise political solution more distant," she said. The jihadists have already fed on the political and military divisions that have plagued Libya since the 2011 uprising that toppled and killed longtime leader Muammar Gaddafi to build a bastion in Sirte. It has claimed deadly attacks, including beheadings, and targeted foreign embassies.

The jihadist assault on Abu Grein sparked an exodus from the town, with hundreds of families fearing the brutal rule of IS fleeing to the town of Bani Walid, 150 km southeast of Tripoli. According to local official Abdel Rahman Al-Hmayl, Bani Walid is now home to around 20,000 people who have been displaced from Sirte and Abu Grein. Raja Saliman, who fled Abu Grein with her mother and three brothers, said she was at school when IS jihadists entered her town. "I went home, thinking I would not make it alive," she said. "We heard the sound of clashes and we were afraid. And then we heard that people were fleeing. We didn't know what to do but then we decided to leave too," she said. — AFP

US READY TO LOOSEN LIBYA ARMS EMBARGO

WASHINGTON: The US government is ready to loosen a ban on arms exports to Libya, in a bid to help the country's fledgling unity government fight the Islamic State group, officials and diplomats have told AFP. Under White House-backed plans, the United Nations would carve out exemptions to an embargo introduced by the Security Council in 2011, during Muammar Gaddafi's failed attempt to suppress a popular uprising. "If the Libyan government prepares a detailed and coherent list of things that it wants to use to fight ISIL and responds to all the requirements of the exemption, I think that Council members are going to look very seriously at that request," a senior administration official told AFP.

"There is a very healthy desire inside of Libya to rid themselves of ISIL, and I think that is something we should be supporting and responding to," the official said, using an acronym for the Islamic State group. Gaddafi's regime was deposed with the help of NATO airpower in 2011 and he was ultimately killed in October of that year, but the country has been in turmoil since. Dozens of militia groups have carved up the country into virtual fiefdoms, and two rival governments have been formed.

Western nations and many Libyans have watched in horror as the jihadist IS group has emerged from the chaos to control a swathe of central Libya around Gaddafi's hometown of Sirte. With its port and airport, there are fears the jihadists could use the Mediterranean city as a staging post for attacks on Europe. They have already hit nearby oil installations, choking much-needed oil revenues. The Pentagon earlier this year estimated that as many as 6,000 Islamic State fighters were in the country, with a standing call for foreigners to join them.

US President Barack Obama's administration and its European allies have been eager to help the government establish itself and take on the jihadists. When asked earlier this year about his greatest mistake in office, Obama cited Libya: "Probably failing to plan for the day after what I think was the right thing to do in intervening in Libya." But the West has had to avoid the risk of appearing to interfere and, in so doing, undermining the fragile government. — AFP

WAR ON MILITANTS TESTS TUNISIA'S DEMOCRACY

SECURITY SERVICES STILL EMERGING FROM ABUSIVE PAST

TUNIS: Four days after Islamist militants shot dead 21 tourists in Tunisia's Bardo museum last year, police rounded up dozens of people suspected of links with the gunmen. One of the men, a laborer, was arrested in his Tunis home. The man, who has denied any connection to the militants, said he was taken to a police detention center where he was tied to a metal bar and had his head and feet smashed with a pipe. "I told them everything, I even told them I was guilty, just so they would stop," said the laborer who is on release from prison and spoke to Reuters last month in the company of his attorney. "I thought I didn't have any other way out."

Several recent cases of police abuse - which the Tunisian government acknowledges still sometimes occurs - underscore the difficult path Tunisia is treading as it tries to both nurture the young democracy it founded after the 2011 revolution and simultaneously fight Islamist militants. Like France, Belgium and other victims of Islamist bombings and attacks, Tunisia is trying to figure out how to protect people while also protecting their rights.

That process is even more difficult in a country where the security services themselves are trying to emerge from a history as abusers. As they take on the Islamists, there is a risk that police abuse will undermine the country's democratic progress. Rights groups such as Amnesty International and lawyers say cases of abuse at police detention, arbitrary arrests and torture have emerged, undermining the new democracy.

"When it comes to the war on terrorism, people say rights are taking a back seat," said lawyer Anouar Aouled Ali who has defended suspected militants. The government said more needs to be done to stop it. In April, it set up an independent commission to prevent torture and other abuses, an initiative praised by the United Nations. "We know there are cases of torture, but it is not systematic or a strategy. They are individual cases and we are working on them with civil groups so we can stop this type of abuse," said Justice Minister Omar Mansour during a visit to a women's prison on May 8.

Many of the inmates there were arrested under terrorism charges and have complained of beatings. Few accuse Tunisia of a return to the worst days of its past when Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali's security services operated with impunity. Since the 2011 uprising ended his repressive regime, Tunisian civil society, rights groups and a free press have brought the state under scrutiny in a way never imagined under Ben Ali.

At the same time, the Islamist threat has many people calling for a harsh crackdown. Militants have struck three times since Bardo, gunning down tourists at a Sousse beach, dispatching a suicide bomber in Tunis and raiding a border town. President Beji Caid Essebsi regularly tells Tunisians they are at war with militants trying to attack its democracy. The laborer who was beaten by police, who told him he was a suspect because he lived in the same neighborhood as one of the Bardo gunmen, said

such brutality left him fearful. "I always heard about people being tortured, but never thought I would become a victim myself," he said.

Wider Powers

There is little doubt Tunisia is at risk from militants. More than 4,000 Tunisians have left to fight for Islamist state and other groups in Iraq, Syria and Libya. A state of emergency extended since the Sousse hotel attack in June has given state security wider powers to make arrests and detain suspects. A new anti-terrorism law has also extended the pre-trial detention period to 15-days. Tunisia's army has made progress in counter-terrorism, in part thanks to training from Western nations such as border protection tactics. But police reforms have lagged behind and the government has brought back former Ben Ali officers to beef up its intelligence ranks.

"They bring knowledge in security in general and counter-terrorism," one senior Tunisian security official told Reuters. "Of course, abuses can happen, but the cases of mistreatment and torture are only individuals. All those cases that are proven, we punish them." Tunisia's Human Rights Minister Kamel Jandoubi said his country is trying to get the balance between security and human rights, but acknowledges difficulties. "How do you fight against a group seeking death and do it with the principles of rights? A society has to defend itself," Jandoubi said. "When we arrest someone, it is always with the principle of human rights." — Reuters

'AVENGERS' THREATEN NEW INSURGENCY IN DELTA

YENAGOA/ABUJA: They call themselves the Niger Delta Avengers. Little is known about the new radical group that has claimed a series of pipeline bombings in Nigeria's oil-producing region this year and evaded gunboats and soldiers trawling swamps and villages. Their attacks have driven Nigerian oil output to near a 22-year low and, if the violence escalates into another insurgency in the restive area, it could cripple production in a country facing a growing economic crisis.

President Muhammadu Buhari has said he will crush the militants, but a wide-scale conflict could stretch security forces already battling a northern rebellion by hardline Sunni Muslim group Boko Haram. Militancy has been rife over the past decade in the Delta, a southern region which is one of the country's poorest areas despite generating 70 percent of state

income. Violence has increased sharply this year - most of it claimed by the "Avengers" - after Buhari scaled back an amnesty deal with rebel groups, which had ended a 2004-2009 insurgency.

Under the deal, more state cash was channelled to the region for job training and militant groups were handed contracts to protect the pipelines they once bombed. But Buhari cut the budget allocated to the plan by about 70 percent and cancelled the contracts, citing corruption and mismanagement of funds. The "Avengers" have carried out a string of attacks since February that reduced Nigerian oil output by at least 300,000 barrels a day of output, and shut down two refineries and a major export terminal.

On Thursday the group emailed journalists a statement saying they were fighting for an independent Delta and would

step up their attacks unless oil firms left the region within two weeks. "If at the end of the ultimatum you are still operating, we will blow up all the locations," it said. "It will be bloody. So just shut down your operations and leave." "To international oil companies, this is just the beginning and you have not seen anything yet. We will make you suffer," it said.

Authorities have no hard facts about the group - such as its size, bases or leadership, Nigeria-based diplomats say. Diplomats and security experts say it has shown a level of sophistication not seen since the peak of the 2004-2009 insurgency, which halved Nigeria's oil output. They say it must be getting help from sympathetic oil workers in identifying the pipelines to cause maximum damage. "It's scary. Their demands are impossible to meet so there will be probably more

attacks," said a security expert, asking not to be named.

Gunboats

In February the group claimed an attack on an undersea pipeline, forcing Shell to shut a 250,000 barrels a day Forcados terminal. Last week, it took credit for blasting a Chevron platform, shutting the Warri and Kaduna refineries. Power outages across Nigeria worsened as gas supplies were also affected. There have been other smaller attacks and this week another explosion, which bore the hallmarks of the group, closed Shell's Bonny Light export program. Reuters, like other media, has been unable to reach the group, which mainly communicates via Twitter, with the location tracker switched off, and on its website. Its members describe themselves there as "young, well travelled" and mostly educated in eastern Europe. — Reuters

MIGRANT ARRIVALS TO GREECE PLUNGE AS DEAL SPUTTERS

TURKEY VISA DEAL UNRAVELS AS ERDOGAN DEFIES EU

GENEVA: A controversial EU-Turkey deal dramatically cut the number of migrant arrivals in Greece last month, data showed yesterday, even as a row between Brussels and Ankara threatened to sink the agreement. Last month 3,360 migrants and refugees landed on the Greek islands, compared with 26,971 in March - an 88 percent drop, according to figures from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The EU border agency Frontex also reported what it described as a "dramatic" slowdown, saying it had registered 2,700 arrivals in Greece last month.

The figures are the first for a full month-long period since the EU-Turkey deal came into force in March and will be seen as a key measure of its effectiveness. "The total for all of April is well below the number of people we often saw reaching just the island of Lesbos on a daily basis during last year's peak months," Frontex chief Fabrice Leggeri said in a statement. Under the March deal, Turkey agreed to take back Syrian migrants landing on Greek islands in exchange for incentives, including billions of euros in aid and visa-

free European travel for its citizens. The agreement is the cornerstone of the EU's plan to curb a crisis that has seen 1.25 million Syrian, Iraqi, Afghan and other migrants enter Europe since Jan 2015.

'Not Hopeful'

But the deal was at risk of unravelling after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan defiantly vowed Thursday that Ankara would not amend its counter-terror laws - a key condition set by Brussels for Turkey to secure visa-free travel. With Turkey's military battling rebels from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the Kurdish-majority southeast, Ankara has said that it cannot change its anti-terror legislation. Ankara must also fulfil four other outstanding conditions including anti-corruption and data protection issues. Turkey has so far complied with 67 requirements of the deal. Turkish EU Affairs Minister Volkan Bozkir voiced pessimism at the prospect of smoothing the rift with Brussels. "At this stage I would not say we are very hopeful," he told Turkish reporters in televised comments in Brussels following talks with EU

Enlargement Commissioner Johannes Hahn. With alarm growing over the deal's future, European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker bluntly told Erdogan that Turks would only enjoy travel to the passport-free Schengen area if all conditions were met and it would be "his problem" if this failed to materialize. Erdogan accused the European Union of "hypocrisy" for telling Ankara to adapt its counter-terror laws in return for visa-free travel while it was in the throes of fighting PKK rebels.

"The EU stands up and says 'soften your approach over the terrorist organization'," Erdogan said in a speech in Ankara, referring to the PKK. "Since when are you running this country? Who has given you the authority?" he asked, in one of his most stinging attacks in recent weeks on the EU. "They believe they have a right for themselves (to fight terror) but find it a luxury and unacceptable for us. Let me say it clearly - this is called hypocrisy."

'Historic Abdication'

The agreement had run into widespread criticism from the United Nations, rights groups and several EU member states even before it came into force. Medical charity MSF yesterday described it as "a historic abdication" of Europe's moral and legal responsibilities. More than 850,000 people - most of them fleeing conflicts in war-ravaged Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan - arrived on the Greek islands last year alone, and so far this year another 155,765 people have landed, UN refugee agency figures show.

Italy however saw nearly 154,000 arrivals last year, and more than 31,000 so far in 2016. But the balance shifted last month, with Italy recording 9,149 arrivals - nearly three times more than Greece, according to the IOM. "For the first time last month there were more arrivals in Italy than in Greece," UNHCR spokesman William Spindler told reporters. There has been speculation that the virtual closure of the route to Greece would push refugees from Syria to begin travelling through North Africa and onto Italy instead. — AFP



VIENNA: Picture taken on March 19, 2012 shows the CEO of the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) Christian Kern posing after an interview. — AFP

KERN APPOINTED NEW AUSTRIAN CHANCELLOR

VIENNA: Austria's Social Democrats have decided to appoint national railways boss Christian Kern as the country's chancellor following Werner Faymann's resignation, the interim head of the party said yesterday. "The decision has been taken," the Austria Press Agency quoted Michael Haeupl as saying. He added that a formal decision will be taken on Tuesday by the party's directorate. Kern, 50, is widely credited with turning around Austria's creaking national rail company. Experts say that as an outsider he is well placed to heal rifts within the Social Democrats (SPOe).

Faymann, 56, quit on Monday two weeks after a historic defeat in the first round of an election for the largely ceremonial post of president at the hands of the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖe). The Social Democrats and centre-right People's Party (ÖVP) have dominated Austrian politics since 1945 but support has been falling for years, and they only just managed to scratch together a majority at the last general election in 2013. Like elsewhere in Europe, they have been bleeding support to fringe groups, in particular to the populist FPÖe after almost a million migrants passed through Austria last year.

The FPÖe under Heinz-Christian Strache is leading opinion polls with more than 30 percent, compared to the low 20s for the SPOe and ÖVP, ahead of the next election scheduled for 2018. Faymann took a harder line on migrants in recent months, but this failed to boost his support and alienated many in the SPOe, particularly those in the left wing of the party. The final straw was the first round of the presidential election on April 24 when the FPÖe's Norbert Hofer scored 35 percent and the main parties' candidates won a dismal 11 percent each. Hofer, 45, portrayed as a friendly face of the FPÖe, will take on Alexander van der Bellen, 72, the professorial former head of the Greens, in a runoff on May 22. — AFP



ATHENS: A Syrian refugee girl reacts as she tries to hold a plastic bowl with water at the port of Piraeus yesterday. — AP

VENEZUELA LYNCH MOBS BURN THIEVES ALIVE

CARACAS: Josefina can still hear the shrieks two men made when a crowd set them on fire. She was heading home from work at dusk when she saw a mob beating them. As she got closer, the flames broke out. "I shudder when I remember those lads' screams of pain," the 43-year-old hairdresser told AFP. Terrified by the violence in her neighborhood, she would not give her second name. The crowd accused the two of thieving. They were among a growing number of people targeted by mob justice as Venezuela's economic crisis boils over into desperation and violence.

In a worsening economic and political situation, citizens are suffering shortages of food - and also police. When someone is caught stealing in Josefina's neighborhood of Los Ruices in eastern Caracas, the cry of "Catch him!" rings out. Quickly a call goes out on the WhatsApp mobile phone messaging service to 350 neighbors in the group, she says. They rush to their doorsteps to catch the suspected thief as he runs away. "We have to defend our-

selves because there are not enough police patrolling," says William Collins, a local neighborhood leader. He insists the groups organized themselves aiming to scare off thieves, not kill them. "The lynchings broke out spontaneously."

Wrong Man Lynched

The chief of police for the surrounding municipality of Polisucre, Manuel Furelos, admitted he does not have enough boots on the ground. "The United Nations recommends deploying four police officers per thousand inhabitants," he told AFP. "In Polisucre, like in most police forces in this country, we have half that." Robberies accounted for 37 percent of all crimes investigated by Venezuela's state prosecutors last year, according to official data. The state prosecution service recorded 4,696 murders in the first quarter of this year - higher than the average for 2015.

Last year there were 17,778 murders, or 58 for every 100,000 inhabitants. The state Venezuelan Violence Observatory (OVV)

however estimates the rate is much higher - about 90 murders per 100,000 people, or more than ten times the world average. In mid-April, attorney general Luisa Ortega said her office was investigating 26 cases of vigilante violence that left 20 people dead. Two were from 2015; the rest dated from the first quarter of this year.

Two weeks later, Ortega said the number of such cases being investigated had risen to 74, involving 37 deaths. "No one should carry out lynchings, even if the person has committed a crime, because sometimes injustices are committed," she said. The family of 43-year-old cook Roberto Bernal said a crowd mistook him for a robber in Los Ruices. He was beaten, doused in petrol and burned to death. One person has been charged for that killing, but prosecutors say he was ambushed by a whole group.

Psychologist Magally Huggins says lynchings show that citizens "do not believe they are guaranteed justice" by the authorities. Furelos said that in Polisucre,

"eight out of 10 people who are arrested red-handed get back on the street without being charged, because the courts are overwhelmed." But he condemned vigilante justice. "It is dangerous when violence becomes an acceptable private way to settle disputes," said criminologist Andres Antillano. "You lose sight of the difference between someone who kills to rob and someone who kills to stop it."

Playing God

One local man in Los Ruices showed AFP photographs on his mobile telephone: Two men stripped naked and covered in blood, lying on the ground with their hands and feet tied. He said they were seized by a lynch mob and kept that way while locals waited for the police to arrive. That kind of photo is circulating frequently on online social networks. Surveys carried out by the OVV between 2002 and 2012 indicated that just a third of Venezuelans disapprove of lynchings. — AFP



SANFORD, Florida: In this June 28, 2013 file photo, police officer Timothy Smith holds up the gun that was used to kill Trayvon Martin, while testifying in the George Zimmerman trial at the Seminole circuit court. — AP

PRANK BIDS DRIVE US KILLER'S GUN AUCTION TO \$65M

WASHINGTON: Bidding for the gun used by a Florida neighborhood watchman to kill unarmed black teenager Trayvon Martin hit \$65 million yesterday, as hoax buyers appeared to jack the controversial sale to astronomical levels. Nationwide protests erupted over the 17-year-old's shooting in 2012, in what the watchman George Zimmerman said was self-defense but which the teen's family and friends claimed was a murder driven by racism.

Zimmerman's trial and subsequent acquittal exposed deep racial fissures in US society. Bids for the Kel-Tec PF-9, a 9mm pistol, began at \$5,000 on Thursday - already far above the market value of a secondhand weapon - and had reached \$65,039,000 by yesterday morning on UnitedGunGroup.com, with more than four days left to go in the sale. Some 1,019 bids had been made within less than 24 hours of the sale beginning on the United Gun Group auction site.

US reports said a bidder using the screen name "Racist McShootface" made several offers of around \$65 million overnight, though the account was later deleted. The top bid early yesterday belonged to a user identified as Craig Bryant. It was difficult to verify the validity of the bids, with participants using pseudonyms and seemingly bidding against themselves. The website does not request downpayments for bids. "Newsflash people, we do not post auctions. Our members are solely responsible for that," tweeted United Gun Group, which calls itself "the fastest growing social market place dedicated to the firearms community." — AFP

TRUMP ON BEST BEHAVIOR AS HE WOOS REPUBLICANS

DIFFERENCES REMAIN

WASHINGTON: US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump went on a charm offensive on Thursday to try to win the party establishment's support for his insurgent candidacy, but top Republican Paul Ryan stopped short of endorsing him. Trump was on his best behavior on a day of meetings with Republican lawmakers on Capitol Hill. He listened patiently as they raised concerns about his tone and the need to try to appeal to Hispanic voters.

He avoided strident language, like the frequent criticism he has lobbed from the campaign trail that many lawmakers are awestruck by the corridors of power and forget why they were sent to Washington. "The whole discussion was very solid, reasonable and a warm and winning discussion," said Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah. "I think you're going to find he's going to be better and better all the time." The US budget deficit and debt were among the issues Trump and Ryan discussed, sources familiar with the meeting said.

Trump's day in Washington was aimed at laying to rest some of the concerns that persist among Republicans about his incendiary tone and some policy proposals at odds with party doctrine. The New York billionaire, who needs the party behind him to bolster his chances at winning the Nov 8 election, has vowed to build a wall along the US border with Mexico, deport 11 million illegal immigrants, temporarily ban Muslims from entering the country and impose trade protectionist policies.

Trump held an hour-long session with Ryan, who as speaker of the House of Representatives is the top US elected Republican and can hold sway with many establishment Republicans leery of Trump. "This was our first meeting, but it was a very positive step toward unifica-

tion," Ryan and Trump said in a joint statement. Trump told Fox News in an interview that he had a "very, very good meeting" with Ryan. "I think Paul felt the same way and everybody else did also," Trump said.

Trump said he and Ryan largely agree on issues of border security, trade and beefing up the US military. Party leaders are normally eager to rally around a presidential nominee to combine forces for the battle leading up to the general election. But Ryan has withheld his endorsement of Trump out of concern over the businessman's conservative credentials. In remarks to reporters after the meeting, the congressman said he was encouraged by the session but that more work will be needed.

"There's no secret that Donald Trump and I have had our differences. We talked about those differences today," Ryan said at his weekly news conference. "I do believe we are planting the seeds in getting ourselves unified." Ryan, who may harbor aspirations of running for president in 2020 or later, noted that he represents a wing of the conservatives and that it is positive that Trump is bringing new voters into the party.

Tone it Down

Despite his problems in winning over senior Republicans, Trump received a boost on Wednesday when a Reuters/Ipsos national poll showed him pulling even with likely Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. The online survey found 41 percent of likely voters supporting Clinton and 40 percent backing Trump. Later on Thursday, Trump went into a meeting with Senate Republican leaders, where he posed for photos with them and heard concerns about his campaign rhetoric but appeared to make some progress in tempering concerns

about him. "Everyone here wants you to win," Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell told him at the Senate session, a source said.

Senator Shelly Moore Capito of West Virginia urged Trump to be careful in his tone. Senator Rob Portman of Ohio, a former US trade representative, urged caution on his rhetoric against trade deals. "The issue of tone did come up," said Senator John Cornyn of Texas, who said he gave some advice to Trump on "the importance of the Hispanic vote and the whole idea of distinguishing between illegal immigration and legal immigration."

In a meeting at a Washington law firm, Trump sat down with James Baker, who served as secretary of state for Republican President George H W Bush. Earlier in the day, Baker had testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Under questioning from Senator Marco Rubio, a former Republican presidential candidate, Baker said the world "would be far less stable" without a strong NATO, a slap at Trump's idea of reconfiguring the Western alliance and getting European nations to foot more of the bill. "Secretary Baker had a meeting with Donald Trump that was requested by his campaign," a Baker spokesman said.

Even Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina softened a bit. Graham dropped out of the presidential race earlier this year and had said the choice between Trump and rival Ted Cruz was like trying to decide between being "shot or poisoned". Graham said he had a "cordial, pleasant conversation" on the phone with Trump on Wednesday. "I know Mr Trump is reaching out to many people, throughout the party and the country, to solicit their advice and opinions. I believe this is a wise move on his part," said Graham. — Reuters

TEMER'S ANCESTRAL HOMELAND FETES HIS SUCCESS

BTAABOURA, Liban: In his ancestral village in Lebanon, Michel Temer's rise to power in Brazil is a source of both pride and amusement in a country with no president of its own due to political deadlock. Near the entrance to Btaaboura in northern Lebanon, a street sign carries Temer's name with his former rank of Brazilian vice president. But now that Dilma Rousseff has ceded power to Temer after the Brazilian Senate voted overwhelmingly to suspend her for six months to face impeachment, Btaaboura is preparing to change the sign.

"It will be replaced on Friday. It will read 'President Michel Temer Street,'" beamed municipality chief Bassam Barbar. "We celebrate his promotion with all our heart and we are very proud of him," he told AFP. In a small garden, someone has hoisted a flag of Lebanon and one of Brazil in honor of the son of Lebanese migrants, who has visited Btaaboura twice, in 1997 and again in 2011. In the village his sudden promotion from vice president to acting president of Brazil is on everyone's lips.

And across Lebanon people are joking: "A Lebanese man is leading Brazil, and yet we've had no president for two years". Deep political divisions have left Lebanon without a president since May 2014 when the mandate of Michel Sleiman expired, and parliament has extended its own mandate twice since 2009. "I hope that now they (Lebanese political leaders) will be ashamed," said Barbar.

'We Liked Him'

The country's Christian, Sunni, Shiite and Druze cannot agree on a candidate and parliament has met time and again but failed to break the impasse. The Temer ancestral family home lies in the midst of a thick olive grove. His father lived here but the house is now abandoned and in ruins. Lebanon and Brazil have strong bonds. The Lebanese began emigrating to Brazil and other South American countries in the 19th century with more departures during the 1979-1990 civil war. Many are now settled in Rio de Janeiro and in Sao Paulo. — AFP



BTAABOURA: A Lebanese man uses spray paint to erase the word "vice" from a plaque reading in Portuguese and Arabic: "Street Michel Temer, Vice President of Brasil" at the entrance of this village yesterday during a celebration after Temer became acting President of Brazil. — AFP

RED STAR OF WORKERS' PARTY FADES IN BRAZIL

ONCE UNSTOPPABLE PT CRASHES TO THE GROUND

RIO DE JANEIRO: After 13 years in power, the Workers' Party has been forced out by Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff's suspension and impeachment trial, its emblematic red star tarnished by corruption and economic collapse. Can it battle back? The leftist party won four presidential terms starting with founder Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's landmark election win in 2002, making it the longest-ruling party since democracy was restored at the end of Brazil's military dictatorship (1964-1985).

Lula, a former steelworker, presided

over a watershed economic boom, becoming one of the most popular presidents in Brazilian history. That glow was still shining when Rousseff, his hand-picked successor, won the presidency in 2010. And it was just bright enough to get her re-elected in 2014, despite an economic downturn, a mounting corruption scandal and spreading middle-class discontent that erupted into huge protests the previous year.

But the Senate's decision Thursday to suspend Rousseff from office for up to six months - she is likely never to return

- brought the once unstoppable Workers' Party (PT) crashing to the ground. Rousseff ingloriously ceded power to her vice president-turned-nemesis, Michel Temer, a center-right politician who broke his awkward alliance with her in March and joined the push to impeach her on charges of fudging the government's accounts. If two-thirds of senators vote to remove her at the end of her impeachment trial, Rousseff will be gone for good and Temer will hold power until the next elections in 2018.

But don't count the PT out just yet, political analysts say. "The PT has the best network of any party, with representatives in 98 percent of Brazil's cities," Adriano Codato of the University of Parana said. "This huge organizational force won't just disappear overnight." It won't be easy going, however. The PT faces a "slaughter" in local elections in October, Codato predicted, saying the corruption scandal engulfing Brazilian politics has tainted its "brand".

Although Rousseff does not face charges in the scandal, her opponents say at best she is guilty of letting it happen. And a host of top PT figures, including Lula, have been implicated in the multi-billion-dollar bribery and embezzlement scheme centered on state oil company Petrobras. "The PT has been the victim of its mistakes - such as its corruption problems, which it never resolved - and of its successes, like university quotas for black students, which unleashed 'classist racism'" among disgruntled whites, Codato said. The PT had governed for the poorest and wealthiest Brazilians, forgetting the middle class, which once strongly supported it precisely because of its platform as the "party of ethics", he added. — AFP



SAO PAULO: Supporters of the government of Brazilian suspended President Dilma Rousseff protest against her impeachment trial yesterday. — AFP

BRAZILIAN WOMEN ANGRY AT ALL-MALE NEW GOVERNMENT

BRASILIA: Brazilian interim President Michel Temer's post-impeachment government is not a day old and already has an image problem. Where are the women? All 24 ministers presented to the nation in a televised ceremony, just hours after the suspension of leftist president Dilma Rousseff, bore a striking similarity to each other: They were white males. "It's a government of white men and quite frightening," analyst Ivar Hartmann, a public law expert at the FGV think tank in Rio de Janeiro, said. "It's the first time since the (1964-85) dictatorship that there has not been a single woman. This is worrying."

The advent of an all-male government was all the more arresting because Rousseff, suspended in the early hours of Thursday after a marathon Senate debate, was the Latin American giant's first female president - one of the most powerful women in the world. Temer, 75, talked Thursday about unifying the country with a center-right government of "national salvation." But the absence of women or blacks - both groups each representing about half Brazil's population - immediately threw a question mark over how much unity there could be. "It shows the illegitimacy of this government. It shows they don't represent the people," said Raquel Vasconcelos de Castro, 19, a student attending a small but noisy protest by women outside the presidential palace as Temer arrived to announce his cabinet.

Inspiration

Rousseff, who stood out in the heavily male-dominated world of Brazilian politics, was not known as a feminist leader especially, but landmark laws protecting women against violence and imposing quotas for black students at universities, were passed under her rule. Both groups were represented in her inner circle, with 15 women serving as ministers during her first four-year term and the second, which has been cut off by impeachment just before the two-year mark. One of those was Nilma Lino Gomes, the first black female head of a federal university before becoming Rousseff's minister for women, human rights and racial equality - a post now axed by Temer.

And even if Rousseff, 68, did not make a priority of changing the overwhelmingly male landscape in the capital Brasilia, she was an inspiration to many simply because of what she'd achieved. Now sacked Agriculture Minister Katia Abreu was near tears on Thursday as she recalled "the first female president of Brazil as honest, capable, with the spirit of public service, a good woman".

Maria das Neves, a leftist youth activist who came to support Rousseff in her last hours at the presidential palace Thursday, said "she meant a lot to the young generation of women, to know that we could get any job, even the presidency". "She is not alone," an emotional Das Neves, 28, said. "She represents all Brazilian women." — AFP

MODI REFORMS FLICKER IN RURAL INDIA

RAMPARA KISANA, India: For Indian farmer Sompal Singh, the light bulb that flickers outside his mud hut home is a symbol of progress: The first time electricity from the grid has reached his remote village since independence in 1947. It is also a big deal for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has promised to provide electricity to every village before the end of 2018 and is trying to woo the huge rural population ahead of a key election in Uttar Pradesh state next year. "The (electricity) supply is erratic but we are happy that there has been a start," said Singh, a 37-year-old father of three, who employs a bullock to work the fields in Rampara Kisana, six hours' drive east of New Delhi. "We feel we have not been forgotten."

As Modi approaches the halfway point of his five-year tenure, the leader of the world's biggest democracy has not had it easy. Key economic reforms are stalled, his "Make in India" push to turn the country into a manufacturing powerhouse has floundered and sizeable minority groups blame him and his party for pushing a Hindu nationalist agenda at their expense. Yet his government has made progress elsewhere, most notably in the power sector where change is reaching distressed rural communities in Uttar Pradesh who will go a long way to deciding the outcome of the 2017 ballot.

It was the prospect of tangible change that voters chose in 2014, propelling Modi to a landslide election victory won on the bold promise that "the good days are coming" for 1.3 billion people and by tapping dreams of a more modern India. While many promises remain unrealized, power reforms and the creation of tens of millions of new bank accounts have helped Modi maintain his pop-



NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right) and Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena arrive for a meeting yesterday. Sirisena is on a two-day visit to India. — AFP

ularity. In a February poll for India Today magazine, 40 percent of respondents chose him as the best candidate to be next prime minister, more than any other politician.

Modi is personally stepping up pressure on ministers and bureaucrats to deliver results on everything from financial inclusion to infrastructure and electricity to jobs. One senior government source said Modi warned individual ministers this month that he was personally monitoring the performance of each ministry to shake them into action, as his impatience with underperformance grows. He is also expected to unveil a reshuffle of minis-

ters within weeks, and underperformers could lose their jobs.

Underlining the scale of his ambition, Modi has told power officials he wants to announce that every village has been electrified at his next federal budget in early 2017, 18 months ahead of the original target, a senior official told Reuters. That would allow him to tell voters he had beaten his own target on a flagship policy. "This government's job is to focus its energies on development, to take it (electricity) to every home, not like the erstwhile years where if the power reached ... a few homes in the village the government thought the work

was over," Power Minister Piyush Goyal said in a recent interview. The prime minister's office declined to comment for this article.

Ups and Downs

Modi, 65, has plenty to boast about; economic growth outstrips China's, foreign direct investment grew by a quarter in the 2015 financial year over the previous year and inflation has nearly halved since 2013. Still, recent state election defeats punctured his aura of invincibility, and the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has seen ratings slip. The India Today poll showed a BJP-led coalition would win 286 parliamentary seats if there had been an election in February from 336 in 2014.

Key economic reforms on land and tax remain blocked in parliament, where the opposition controls the upper chamber, and two consecutive droughts hit rural India hard. The government must also find employment for around a million people joining the workforce every month, another major preoccupation for Modi and his team. At a cabinet meeting earlier this year, Modi assessed progress on some key infrastructure projects and asked ministers to focus on those that would sustain the most jobs, a close aide to Modi said.

At the meeting, Modi gave the example of how kings would embark on large-scale construction projects to deal with drought and unemployment in times of crisis. "Numerous new projects will have to be launched and creative ideas will have to be implemented, but we are yet to crack the code," the aide said. The BJP has also been accused of undermining India's traditions of religious tolerance by appealing to the Hindu majority, a shift that worries the Muslim population estimated at around 170 million people. — Reuters

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FALLEN HERO: HOW THE TIDE TURNED FOR MA

TAIPEI: He won Taiwan's largest ever landslide victory, a safe pair of hands promising prosperity and stability - but president Ma Ying-jeou leaves office this month caricatured as incompetent, aloof and wildly out of step with public sentiment. Coolly coiffed with a sweep of jet-black hair, urbane Ma was seen as a reliable "Mr Clean" when he stormed to victory for the Kuomintang party in 2008, replacing an outgoing opposition government mired in corruption.

However, as he prepares to hand the reins of power to opposition leader Tsai Ing-wen on May 20, Ma faces possible court action and leaves a legacy fraught with division. Relations with Beijing had sunk to a low under Ma's predecessor President Chen Shui-bian of the Democratic Progressive Party. Ma banked on friendlier ties for Taiwan to thrive. A rapprochement and a slew of trade deals followed, culminating with a historic handshake with Chinese President Xi Jinping last year.

But while Ma may have fulfilled a personal ambition, the public felt short-changed and increasingly saw him as a mainland puppet jeopardizing Taiwan's



TAIPEI: President Ma Ying-jeou speaks at a local design awards ceremony on April 21, 2016. — AFP

sovereignty. China still views self-ruling Taiwan as part of its territory, with reunification as its ultimate aim. During student-led protests against a China trade pact in 2014, rally posters portrayed Ma with a Hitler moustache. Other banners showed him with antlers growing out of his ears - a pointed jibe after Ma had mistakenly said that deer antlers used for Chinese medicine were actually hair from the animal's ears.

At their worst, his popularity faded to

nine percent - earning him the nickname "nine-percent president" among opponents. Ma was "unable to reach out to the local Taiwanese", said Jean-Pierre Cabestan, political science professor at Hong Kong Baptist University, instead making relations with Beijing his priority. He also failed to bridge divisions within his own party. "He lacks leadership and charisma," said Cabestan. "He was unable to lead and control the KMT, his ministers, and gave the impression of being soft with China and hard with the opposition."

Faded Hopes

After his presidential immunity lapses, Ma will face possible lawsuits from political rivals relating to the alleged leaking of political secrets and failing to declare assets. It is an ignominious sign-off for the Harvard-educated former justice minister and Taipei mayor, and son of a senior KMT official. Beleaguered Ma has admitted his government could have done better to meet the demands of a public stretched by high rents and low salaries - but he staunchly defends his China policy as having brought peace to the region.

"Ma's policies have painted him as for the one percent and China, at a time when society at large is fed up with both," said Jonathan Sullivan, associate professor at the University of Nottingham's School of Contemporary Chinese Studies in Britain. "Adding to these policy outcomes is Ma's personal reputation for aloofness, indecisiveness - but paradoxically with an authoritarian streak - incompetence and inability to balance the interests of his party, Taiwan and his own personal objectives," added Sullivan.

Even staunch KMT supporters have turned their backs, with the party in tatters having lost its majority in parliament for the first time under Ma. "We had high hopes, but we saw our faith in him fading away," said Sun Chieh-yi, 59, a retired watch shop owner who comes from a traditionally pro-KMT family. "People do not feel their lives are any better than before." However, observers say history may look back more kindly on Ma as China relations are set to cool once more under Tsai and the traditionally pro-independence DPP, with concerns cross-strait friction may surge. — AFP

CHINA OFFICIAL CHARGED WITH TAKING BRIBES

BEIJING: An ex-aide of former Chinese president Hu Jintao has been charged with accepting bribes and illegally obtaining state secrets, prosecutors said yesterday, suggesting he will face jail after a trial. The ruling Communist Party last year accused Ling Jihua - once Hu's chief of staff - of bribery and "trading power for sex", after expelling him the previous year. Ling's son died in a notorious Ferrari crash in Beijing which disrupted a once-in-a-decade party leadership change in 2012.

The accusations against Ling are "extremely serious", the country's senior prosecutor said on its website, suggesting a lengthy sentence is likely. He "abused his power" as director of the General Office of the Communist Party's Central Committee, where he worked under Hu, it cited prosecutors in the northern port city of Tianjin as saying. While in several party leadership posts he "illegally received large amounts of property and obtained state secrets," it added.

His prosecution is likely to be followed by a tightly choreographed trial, with a guilty verdict and jail term almost guaranteed. It comes as part of a high-profile crack-down on graft by current President Xi Jinping that has deposed several senior officials, notably former security chief Zhou Yongkang, who was jailed for life last year. Critics say that a lack of transparency around the crack-down means it has been an opportunity for Xi to eliminate political enemies.

The 2012 car crash involving Ling's son scandalized China despite a mainland media blackout - partly because two young women, one nude and one partially clothed, were also injured in the crash, with one reportedly dying months later. Internet users questioned how the son of a party official could afford a car worth a reported five million yuan (around \$800,000). — AFP



Ling Jihua

SHRIMP, LIPSTICK TOYS SALES FACE SCRUTINY BY ACTIVISTS

CONCERNS OVER USE OF SLAVERY IN PRODUCTION

KUALA LUMPUR: With millions of people globally working in slave-like conditions to produce the goods found in our supermarkets and local shops, anti-slavery campaigners admit it may seem near impossible to ensure the items we buy are ethical. From cosmetics and clothes to shrimp and smartphones, the supply chain is often complex with multiple layers - whether in sourcing the raw materials or creating the final product - making it hard to identify exploitation and abuses.

But campaigners trying to combat forced and child labor and poor working conditions have unveiled a variety of approaches they follow to ensure the goods they buy are ethical. Some activists have taken to boycotting certain products, others only buy brands that have been approved ethically. Some source alternative goods locally, while others have chosen simply to reduce their overall consumption.

For example, after an investigation last year found that migrants were being trafficked into slavery to catch shrimp for Thailand's multi-billion dollar seafood export industry, some campaigners said they decided to avoid the product. "Shrimp sourced from outside Vietnam makes me very uncomfortable. I'm very, very careful about that," Mimi Vu, advocacy director of the Pacific Links Foundation, a Vietnamese charity, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "I tend to look and see which companies are sourcing from where. Companies that are opaque about their supply chain, I try not to buy from them as much as possible."

Products of Slavery

Nearly 21 million people globally are victims of forced labor, an industry which

generates \$150 billion a year in illegal profits, according to the United Nations International Labor Organization (ILO). The British charity Anti-Slavery International on its website documents 122 products made by child laborers across 58 countries ranging from Latin America to Asia. These children might be employed at the start of the supply chain, forced into mines to extract gold, mica, diamonds and coal or made to toil in farms to produce commodities such as cotton, sugar, tea, coffee and cocoa.

Children are also found working further down the supply chain, such as in the stitching of garments, manufacturing of footwear, weaving of carpets or in the assembly of fireworks. Archana Kotecha, legal head of Liberty Asia, said she was more cautious when buying certain products. "When I buy children's toys, I'm a lot more careful in investigating if the companies have been engaged in any kind of mistreatment of workers," she said. "Another one is cosmetics. I wear make-up every day, and make-up contains mica. Some of the biggest mica mines come from where my family is originally from in India."

Andrew Goledzinowski, Australia's Ambassador for People Smuggling and Human Trafficking, said he opted for coffee which is produced under the "Fair Trade" brand. "I also look at labels on tins of fish and there are some brands I've decided not to buy," he said, adding such gestures might seem meaningless, but showed people were becoming more aware of modern-day slavery.

Do the Research

Some experts disagree with boycotts, however, saying this could worsen the sit-

uation for exploited workers as it could stop demand for those goods and mean they lose jobs. For example, forcing a company to shut down its sweatshops might not be the best option if it leaves workers unemployed. Others have another solution - buy local or scale down. "It's my money, and I can decide whom it goes to," said Peck Hoon Tam from the Singapore-based Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics, who prefers to buy from local businesses. "We can use that money to say what we want to say and leverage off this - the consumer must know that they have money to effect change."

Andy Hall, international adviser for the Migrant Worker Rights Network in Thailand, has a simpler solution. "As well as being vegetarian, I also limit consumer tendencies, cutting down on things you don't really need for your everyday life. This whole consumption trend is what pulls people into slavery. Reducing is good," he said. Yet, despite their different opinions, campaigners do agree on one thing - research the products that you purchase.

There are numerous websites, although largely aimed at western shoppers, where ethically sourced and manufactured goods from clothes to coffee to cosmetics can be purchased. Consumers can also check if companies are part of the Ethical Trade Initiative, an alliance of companies, charities and trade unions that promotes respect for workers' rights. "It's incumbent on me to do the research," said human rights lawyer Deborah Papworth, who is based in Cambodia with the charity, Hagar International. "When I have to buy new clothes, while the tendency is to go for cheaper options, I rein that in." — Reuters

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LONDON: International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Christine Lagarde (right), walks with British Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, ahead of a press conference, at the Treasury Office in central London yesterday. — AFP

IMF UNLEASHES STARK BREXIT WARNING

'PRETTY BAD TO VERY, VERY BAD' FOR UK ECONOMY: LAGARDE

LONDON: IMF boss Christine Lagarde waded into Britain's EU referendum battle yesterday, warning that quitting the European Union would be "pretty bad to very, very bad" for the UK economy. The International Monetary Fund's managing director issued a bleak outlook for Britain if it votes to leave the EU on June 23. Lagarde, unveiling the global lender's latest health check on the British economy, said a so-called Brexit could push the country into recession, echoing comments from Bank of England (BoE) governor Mark Carney.

The latest warning comes as Prime Minister David Cameron campaigns fervently to keep Britain in the 28-nation bloc. With six weeks to go to the referendum, the Remain and Leave camps are neck-and-neck at 50 percent each, according to the What UK Thinks website's average of the last six opinion polls. Quitting the EU would result in a "protracted period of heightened uncertainty" for Britain, with a likely hit to output and "sizeable" long-term losses in income, according to the IMF's report out yesterday. Global market reaction to a Leave vote is likely to be "negative and could be severe", it added.

'Forecasts all negative'

Presenting the report at the Treasury in central London, Lagarde said IMF experts had looked at a wide range of

forecasts and scenario plans and done their own calculations. "Frankly, in the very vast majority of what we have seen, we haven't seen anything that is positive-it's always been on the negative side," she said.

"Depending on what hypotheticals you take, it's going to be pretty bad to very, very bad," she said on the impact of Brexit on the British economy. She said GDP could be between 1.5 percent and 9.5 percent down on what it might otherwise be if Britain were to stay in the EU.

Leave supporters, which hit out against Carney for his and the BoE's stance on Thursday, also criticised the IMF's intervention. "IMF has talked down the UK's economy before and has been wrong in past forecasts about the UK and other countries," read a tweet from the official Leave campaign.

Lagarde told reporters that the IMF's findings were not politically-motivated. "We're not doing it out of politics-this is not the job of the IMF. "We are doing it because it's a significant downside risk, number one. Second, it's not just a domestic issue... it's an international issue."

Economy may rebound

The IMF meanwhile forecast the British economy would rebound in the second half of this year if the country stays in the EU. "Assuming that... the UK voters choose to

remain... we will expect growth to rebound," Lagarde said. The report was published one day after Carney warned that Brexit could prompt a technical recession, or two straight quarters of economic contraction.

Questioned about Carney's comments, Lagarde told reporters: "A technical recession is one of the probabilities in the downside scenario in case of a Leave vote."

British finance minister George Osborne, who spoke briefly alongside Lagarde, welcomed the IMF report. "The IMF are very clear today-the hit to growth we could expect from a vote to leave would cost our public finances more than the amount we would gain from no longer contributing to the EU budget," he said. "Put simply, the IMF says a vote to leave costs us money. If we vote to leave, British families will be poorer and Britain will be poorer."

The Washington-based IMF will publish its final pre-referendum report on the British economy around one week before the vote. On a visit to London last month, US President Barack Obama said Britain being in the EU magnified its global influence, and outside the bloc it would go to the "back of the queue" when it came to signing trade deals.

And Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe warned earlier this month that Britain would become "less attractive" for Japanese investment outside the EU. — AFP

OPEC SIGNALS RISING OIL MARKET GLUT IN 2016

FORECAST DROP IN 2016 NON-OPEC SUPPLY IS UNCERTAIN

LONDON: OPEC said the global oil market is oversupplied and signalled the glut may increase this year, as surging output from its members makes up for losses from other countries whose production has been hit by a price fall. Supply from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is climbing after sanctions on Iran were lifted and an initiative with Russia and other non-members to tackle a supply glut by freezing output failed last month.

OPEC pumped 32.44 million barrels

per day (bpd) in April, the group said in a monthly report citing secondary sources, up 188,000 bpd from March. This is the highest since at least 2008, according to a Reuters review of past OPEC reports. "Fundamentally, oversupply still persists," OPEC said in the report published on Friday. "Oil output remains high."

A persistent surplus could weigh on prices, which despite a recovery to \$47 a barrel from a 12-year low of \$27.10 in January, are less than half their level in mid-2014. OPEC's 2014 strategy shift to

defend market share against higher-cost rival output helped deepen the decline.

The price drop is hitting non-OPEC supply as companies have delayed or cancelled projects around the world. OPEC forecasts supply from outside producers will decline by 740,000 bpd in 2016 led by the United States, little changed from last month. OPEC cited factors that could lead to a bigger supply drop, such as the impact of wildfires in Canada that have cut production. The evidence of falling non-OPEC supply should lead to a stronger market next year, it said.

"Outside the US, there have been consistent signs of declines in non-OPEC production, which should likely flip the global oil market into a net deficit in 2017."

But OPEC supply has been climbing since the 2014 policy shift led by top two producers Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The return in December 2015 of Indonesia as an OPEC member has also increased total output. So far this year, Iran is driving the growth. Tehran had refused to join the supply freeze initiative and the deal fell apart on April 17 in Doha after Saudi Arabia insisted Iran took part.

OPEC left its forecast that world oil demand will rise by 1.20 million bpd this year unchanged. It sees demand for OPEC crude averaging 31.49 million bpd in 2016, broadly unchanged from last month's forecast. The report points to a 950,000-bpd surplus on average in 2016 if OPEC keeps pumping at April's rate, up from 790,000 bpd implied in last month's report. — Reuters

MALAYSIA'S ECONOMY GROWS AT SLOWEST RATE SINCE 2009

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's economy expanded in the first quarter at its slowest rate since the global financial crisis, data showed yesterday, as the energy-exporting country grapples with falling oil prices and weak overseas demand. Growth came in at 4.2 percent on-year in January-March, beating a 4.0 percent median estimate in a Bloomberg News survey.

But it was the fifth straight quarter in which the rate of expansion slowed, and the result could put pressure on policymakers to kick-start the struggling economy. A central bank official said it was the slowest rate of growth since the economy contracted 1.1 percent in the third quarter of 2009.

Malaysian gross domestic product

(GDP) grew 4.5 percent in the final three months of 2015. With the recovery in overseas export markets uneven, domestic demand has been a key driver in recent years of an economy that typically relies on exports of oil and gas, electronics and agricultural commodities.

But the central Bank Negara Malaysia said private-sector consumption and investment slowed in the quarter, while public-sector investment was down 4.5 percent. Net exports sank 0.6 percent over the year, it said. Global uncertainty and the depressed oil prices have clouded Malaysia's future, sending the ringgit plunging sharply last year, though it has clawed back some of those losses. — AFP

OIL FALLS AS DOLLAR STRENGTHENS, TRADERS EYE NIGERIAN OUTAGES

LONDON: Oil prices ended a three-day bull run yesterday, falling as a strong dollar weighed and investors cashed in on recent gains, though losses were cushioned by outages in Nigeria that have slashed output there to the lowest in 22 years. The dollar hit a two-week high against a basket of currencies, lifted by expectations the US Federal Reserve will raise rates again before any other major central bank. The strong US currency weighed on greenback-denominated commodities such as oil futures, making fuel imports more expensive for countries using other currencies and potentially hitting demand.

"I would attribute these losses to profit taking after three days of strong gains before the long weekend," said Carsten Fritsch, commodities analyst at Commerzbank. Many European countries, including Germany and France, will observe a public holiday on Monday.

Global benchmark Brent crude futures were down 38 cents at \$47.70 a barrel at 1354 GMT.

US West Texas Intermediate crude futures traded at \$46.22 a barrel, down 48 cents day on day. Losses were capped, however, by worsening production outages in Nigeria that have reduced output from Africa's largest oil producer close to a 22-year low. Exxon Mobil said yesterday it had declared force majeure on Nigerian Qua Iboe crude exports after a drilling rig damaged a pipeline and that a portion of production had been curtailed. Nigeria's finance minister told NTA television the country's oil production, the highest among African nations, had dropped to 1.65 million barrels per day (bpd) from 2.2 million bpd seen before the outages.

"We expected more supply disruptions out of Nigeria this week but the pace of new supply problems from that country beats our expectations," Petromatrix oil analyst Olivier Jakob said. He said Nigerian production was unlikely to be much above 1 million bpd, excluding condensates.

Production losses in Nigeria added to ongoing outages in Canada where wildfires forced the closure of oil sands facilities and declarations of force majeure from at least four major oil firms.

"Wildfires may have temporarily shut in as much as 1.4 million bpd of production, but there appears to be no facility damage. Operations are beginning to restart, but we believe (assuming no pipeline damages) it will take weeks to ramp production," US investment bank Jefferies said. — Reuters

RUSSIA TO SEIZE EXILED OLIGARCH'S FOREIGN ASSETS

MOSCOW: Russia on Thursday said it had obtained a seizure order for foreign assets of exiled billionaire Sergei Pugachev, which includes several properties in France. Among the assets belonging to Pugachev, who was once known as "Putin's banker" for his close ties to the Kremlin, are a 47-metre (155-foot) yacht flying a Cayman Islands flag and several properties on the French Riviera.

They also include a chateau in Nice and a chalet in the French Alps, according to a statement from a Russian agency that handles bankruptcy proceedings. Once one of Russia's richest men who presided over a multi-billion-dollar shipping empire, Pugachev fled to Britain in 2011 after falling out of favour with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

A former senator from the Tuva region of southern Siberia, Pugachev built an empire in Russia until his disgrace which began with the 2010 collapse of his International Industrial Bank (known as Mezhprombank in Russian). He stands accused of fraudulent bankruptcy and is wanted by the Russian authorities on charges of fraud and embezzlement. His overseas assets have been frozen and Interpol has issued a warrant for his arrest.

But Pugachev denies any role in the bank's collapse. Last September he took his case to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, demanding \$12 billion (11 billion euros) from Moscow which he accused of "stripping" his assets out of vindictiveness.

Pugachev, who has held French citizenship since 2009, also filed suit against Russia in Paris for extortion and organised fraud and a judicial investigation was opened in December 2014.

Last year, a Moscow court ordered him to pay 75.6 billion rubles (around \$1 billion) to the bank's former clients over his role in the lender's collapse. Pugachev immediately appealed to Russia's Supreme Court to quash the ruling, but he lost the appeal in January. — AFP



LAGOS: Motorcycles assembled at the new Yamaha factory in Lagos yesterday. CFAO Yamaha Nigeria Limited opened a new showroom, technical training centre and assembly line yesterday in Lagos after years of absence in the local market. — AFP

HONG KONG'S Q1 GDP CONTRACTS ON WEAK EXPORTS, SPENDING

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's economy shrank in the first quarter from the final quarter of 2015, hit by falling exports and weak consumer spending, with the risk that momentum will slow further. On the doorstep of the world's second-largest economy, Hong Kong has been buffeted by China's slowdown. A slump in visitors from the mainland, weak retail sales and falling asset prices have combined to put the economy on the verge of recession.

The trade-dependent economy contracted 0.4 percent in the first quarter, the first contraction in nearly two years. On an annual basis, growth was just 0.8 percent in the first quarter, its weakest pace in four years. It was worse than economists' expectations for 1.48 percent growth and less than half the pace of the fourth quarter.

"We think in the second quarter, or even the second half, there should be even more of a slowdown," said Kevin Lai, senior economist at Daiwa Capital Markets in Hong Kong. "I am also worried that the whole macro situation in Hong Kong looks like we are not any better than 1997 and 1998," he said referring to the period before the Asian Financial crisis.

Hong Kong's economy grew 2.4 percent in 2015, about half the pace of 2011, as China's slowdown and a weaker yuan curbed Chinese spending, while a volatile stock market also hit domestic consumption. A string of retailers from fashion to jewellery firms have posted grim performance figures, with retail sales contracting for the 12th successive month in March.

Hong Kong's tourist arrivals, which dropped 20.5 percent in February, slid 4.3 percent from a year earlier to 4.21 million in March. Mainland visitors, which accounted for 72 percent of the total, fell 6.9 percent to 3.02 million. Cracks are also widening in the city's real estate market, one of the most expensive in the world, and accounting for nearly a fifth of economic output. — Reuters

UN PAINTS BLEAK PICTURE OF STAGNATING WORLD ECONOMY

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations lowered its forecast for the world economy on Thursday, painting a bleak picture of stagnating growth with little prospect for a turnaround this year. The UN report on the World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2016 forecasts overall global growth of just 2.4 percent this year, the same as last year. It represents a significant drop from the 2.9 percent growth the UN forecast for this year in its report last December.

"The bleak state of the world economy clearly poses significant challenges for member states around the world," Assistant Secretary-General Lenni Montiel told a news conference launching the report.

He said forecasts for many countries in Africa and Latin America as well as for Russia and many of the former Soviet republics have been revised downward over the past few months. The report blames a host of factors for this year's lackluster economic prospects including persistent weak demand in the major economies which remains a drag on global growth, the low price of oil and other commodities which are hurting exporting countries, severe weather-related shocks especially severe drought related to El Nino, political challenges, and large capital outflows in many developing regions.

Dawn Holland, a senior economist in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, said the 2.4 percent growth predicted for this year is 1 percent lower than the average annual rate of growth of 3.4 percent in the decade leading up to the global financial crisis in 2008 and 2009. It reflects the weak global economy for most of the last decade, she said. For 2017, Montiel said, "the global economy is projected to expand by 2.8 percent, marking a very modest improvement - and possibly reflecting the downturn bottoming out in some emerging economies."

But he stressed that for the world economy to grow it needs increased investment and greater fiscal stimulus coordinated by the major economies who have relied for too long only on monetary stimulus like interest rates. Holland said so far there are no proposals for coordinated fiscal stimulus measures, but the issue will be discussed at the upcoming summit of the Group of Seven major industrial powers in Japan on May 26-27.

The report highlights the prolonged economic downturns in Brazil and Russia, both with significant regional spillovers. In Russia, GDP is forecast to contract by 1.9 percent in 2016 due to fiscal tightening, further declines in private consumption and investment, and continuing international sanctions, it said.

In Brazil, where President Dilma Rousseff is facing impeachment, the UN is projecting that the economy will contract by 3.4 percent this year, reflecting the deepening political crisis, rising inflation, a surging fiscal deficit and high interest rates. — AP



BEIJING: A white collar worker walks past construction workers eating their meals near the Chinese government propaganda slogan "China Dream" on a street in Beijing yesterday. China's economic growth slowed in the first quarter to 6.7 percent compared with the previous year, according to official data released yesterday. — AP

CHINA NEW LOANS DROP AS BAD DEBT WORRIES MOUNT

SHARP LOAN SLOWDOWN ADDS TO BEIJING'S WORRIES ABOUT DEBT

BEIJING: Chinese banks sharply cut back new lending in April after a record first-quarter credit spree, reinforcing views that the country's leaders have turned more cautious about the risks of over-stimulating the cooling economy. The government is trying to arrest a prolonged slowdown in the economy, which expanded 6.9 percent in 2015, the slowest pace in a quarter of a century. It has unleashed a flurry of fiscal, monetary and administrative measures since 2014.

March data showed improvement, but a report in the official People's Daily this week, quoting an "authoritative person", warned too much reliance on debt to kick-start activity could lead to a financial crisis or an economic recession. Banks made 555.6 billion yuan (\$85.21 billion) in net new yuan loans in April, much lower than expected and less than half the 1.37 trillion yuan seen in March, data showed on Friday.

"Banks may have sought to slow down the pace of lending after rapid rises in Q1 and March," said Li Huiyong, an economist at Shenyin & Wanguo Securities in Shanghai.

"Also, it could be related to (recent) government controls on the property sector and tighter lending rules," Li said, referring to recent attempts to curb sharp home price rises in big cities and limit credit to unprofitable business sectors. Broad M2 money supply grew 12.8 percent from a year earlier, the lowest since last June and slowing from March's 13.4 percent. Outstanding yuan loans grew 14.4 percent on-year. Analysts polled by Reuters had expected new loans of 900 billion yuan and predicted outstanding loans would rise by 14.8 percent. Money supply was forecast to rise by 13.5 percent.

In an encouraging sign, long-term loans accounted for 69 percent of April new loans, the same as in the first quarter. China's outstanding total social financing - the central bank's measure of broad credit - was up 13.1 percent year-on-year at the end of April, amounting to 145.59 trillion yuan. In March

it was 144.75 trillion yuan. Corporate bond financing also slowed sharply, reflecting heightened credit risks, economists at ANZ noted. Data earlier this week showed troubled loans at China's commercial banks reached 4.6 trillion yuan (\$706 billion) at end-March, a jump of 428 billion yuan from December. Bad debts in China have now risen for 18 consecutive quarters, reflecting the prolonged economic slowdown but also a legacy of the last big government stimulus binge during the global financial crisis.

Still, Premier Li Keqiang said the economy is operating steadily and he is confident that main economic growth targets will be reached this year, Xinhua news agency said on Friday.

HANG ON, NOT SO FAST

However, some analysts warned the credit numbers are not as soft as they look because they only include household and corporate loans, and do not reflect all government borrowing.

"They don't include all the new government debt issuance - a significant portion of which is being used to refinance existing local government financing vehicle debt," said Julian Evans-Pritchard, China economist at Capital Economics in Singapore. "That isn't captured in the total social financing figures and if you add it back in you see that broad financing was actually at a 26-month high in April." — Reuters

S KOREA KEEPS INTEREST RATE AT RECORD LOW

SEOUL: South Korea's central bank yesterday kept its record-low interest rate unchanged for an 11th straight month, despite a slowdown in economic growth. The Bank of Korea (BOK) has kept the benchmark inter-bank lending rate at 1.5 percent since June last year.

The latest decision came as Asia's fourth-largest economy struggles with growing jobless woes, mounting consumer debt and falling exports in the face of slowing global demand. Exports, which account for nearly half of the country's economy, fell 11 percent in April from a year ago - the 16th straight month of decline. Collective household debt stood at a record high of around \$1.0 trillion at the end of December, while the jobless rate among South Koreans aged under 30 was stuck above 10 percent in April.

The IMF last month slashed the coun-

try's growth prospects for this year to 2.7 percent from the previous 3.2 percent forecast, citing slowing demand in China - the South's top export market.

"The economic slowdown in China has shown signs of easing a bit, but economic growth in other emerging market economies has continued to slow, centring around natural resource-exporting countries," the BOK said in its rate statement yesterday. While forecasting a "modest improvement" in the domestic economy, the statement said the bank "judges the uncertainties surrounding the growth path to still be high." The government is pushing to streamline indebted and unprofitable companies, and analysts surveyed by Bloomberg News forecast the central bank may cut rates again before long to combat risks during the restructuring process. — AFP



BERLIN: Workers on a scaffolding at a building under construction in Berlin. The German economy, Europe's biggest, grew at its fastest rate in two years in the first three months of 2016, outpacing both the rest of the eurozone and the Group of Seven most industrialised countries, data showed yesterday. — AFP

GERMAN UNIONS, EMPLOYERS AGREE 4.8% WAGE HIKE

DEAL TO SET TONE FOR MOST OF WAGE TALKS IN EU

FRANKFURT: Unions and employers in Germany's powerful metalworking industry agreed a 4.8-percent pay hike yesterday in a deal that will set the tone for wage negotiations in most other key sectors of Europe's biggest economy. In a so-called pilot agreement for the regional state of North Rhine-Westphalia—which will serve as a benchmark for all 3.8 million workers in the sector nationwide—employees will receive a one-off payment of 150 euros (\$170) for the period from April to June 2016.

They will then see their pay rise by 2.8 percent on July 1 and again by 2.0 percent in April 2017, the mighty labour union IG Metall said in a statement. The wage agreement, struck in the early hours of yesterday, is valid for a period of 21 months. But it entails a clause allowing companies in financial

difficulty to delay the one-off payment and the second stage of the increase, IG Metall said.

The union insisted the pay increase would "strengthen consumer demand," which is currently one of the main pillars of economic recovery in Germany.

"At the same time, this is an agreement... which won't overstretch any firm," IG Metall said. The head of the employers' federation Gesamtmetall, Rainer Dulger, described the pay deal as "just about affordable for companies."

The previous wage agreement between the union and the employers' federation Gesamtmetall expired in March. Since then, both sides had been negotiating to reach a new deal for a sector that covers a wide range of engineering industries, from the automobile sector to machine-tools and the electronics and electrical goods industries.

Unions had staged a series of so-called "warning strikes", or limited walk-outs, recently in a bid to turn up the pressure on the employers. IG Metall had been demanding pay increases of five percent in view of the comfortable profit situation of many companies in the sector, while Gesamtmetall had offered of a pay rise of 2.1 percent over a two-year period.

Benchmark for other sectors

Wage negotiations in the metalworking industry act as a benchmark for most other sectors. But with consumer spending also becoming an increasingly important pillar of economic recovery in Germany, economists hope the rising wages will provide additional momentum to growth as households' purchasing power increases.

In the past, salaries in Germany have risen only moderately, helping to boost the competitiveness of German companies. But with many sectors of industry increasingly complaining about a shortage of qualified manpower, unions have used this as leverage to secure bigger pay increases.

At the end of April, workers in public administration won a 2.4-percent wage rise for this year. Hotel workers in the southern state of Bavaria secured a 3.0-percent pay rise at the start of May.

Wage negotiations are still underway in other sectors, such as the chemicals and construction industries. Economists at BayernLB said that this year's wage rounds cover as many as 11 million people. And on the basis of the deals reached so far, these workers could secure average pay increases of between two and three percent, compared with 2.5 percent last year. In theory, these deals could help push up sluggish inflation in the euro area, the BayernLB economists said. — AFP

CYPRUS ECONOMIC GROWTH HITS ONE-YEAR HIGH

NICOSIA: The economy of bailed-out eurozone member Cyprus has recorded its strongest quarterly growth in a year, official figures showed yesterday. Gross domestic product (GDP) grew 0.9 percent in the first quarter of 2016, compared with 0.4 percent during the October-December period, the country's statistical service said.

It was the fifth consecutive quarter of expansion and the highest rate since one percent growth was seen in the first quarter of 2015. On a year-on-year basis, GDP was up 2.7 percent.

The figures showed growth in manufacturing, construction, trade, hotels and restaurants, transport and technical activities. There was a contraction in financial services and household activities.

Cyprus has emerged from more than three years of economic slowdown after the government imposed harsh austerity measures in exchange for a European Union and International Monetary Fund bailout. In return for 10 billion euros (\$13 billion at the time), Cyprus agreed in March 2013 to wind down its second-largest bank, Laiki, and impose losses on depositors in under-capitalised top lender Bank of Cyprus.

In March this year, the Eurogroup of finance ministers praised Cyprus for its successful exit of the bailout program. Finance Minister Harris Georgiades said yesterday that he expected the Cyprus economy to grow by 2.2 percent in 2016 and the island should have a steady 2.5 percent growth rate by 2019. — AFP

HAPAG-LLOYD TEAMS UP WITH ASIAN COMPETITORS IN BATTLE FOR SCALE

LONDON/FRANKFURT: German container shipping firm Hapag-Lloyd has formed a new alliance with five Asian competitors in the latest tie-up by rivals battling to cut costs in the worst downturn the industry has ever seen. Container lines, which transport everything from bananas to iPhones, are struggling with the confluence of a glut of ships, a faltering global economy and weaker consumer demand.

By teaming up through vessel sharing arrangements, shipping lines aim to pool runs to various destinations and save on expenses to boost efficiencies. Dubbed "the Alliance" and due to start operating in April 2017 for a five-year period initially, Hapag-Lloyd will join with Japan's Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK), Kawasaki Kisen Kaisha ("K"-Line) and Mitsui OSK Line (MOL), South Korea's Hanjin Shipping and Taiwan's Yang Ming Marine Transport.

"Nowadays, you have to be in an alliance because you need these really big vessels to be competitive per unit cost," said Jan Tiedemann, an analyst with shipping consultancy Alphaliner.

"I am not sure if it's a marriage of partners who are deeply in love with one another, but they just have to join." Yesterday's announcement follows closely that of the "Ocean Alliance", announced in April, which comprises France's CMA CGM, newly merged China Cosco Shipping, Evergreen and OOCL (double O). The Ocean Alliance is also due to start operations in April 2017 subject to regulatory approval, and follows a partnership by Maersk and MSC, known as "M2", which started in early 2015.

Hapag-Lloyd said in a statement: "This agreement is a milestone and will enable the six partners of the Alliance to offer sailing frequencies and direct coverage in the market."

The company did not give details of the anticipated cost savings or of how power would be shared within the group. "The market must come to its senses. Many participants find their financial means exhausted because of the ruinous competition," said Bodo Knop, managing partner with logistics consultancy SRTS. "... some players will quite possibly leave the market altogether."

Asked about the new alliance, Maersk chief commercial officer Vincent Clerc said consolidation made sense. The Hapag-Lloyd formation will combine 3.5 million twenty foot equivalent units (TEU) of the global container fleet capacity, with more than 620 ships to East-West trading destinations. The Ocean Alliance involves a fleet of 350 container ships, also with an estimated capacity of 3.5 million TEU. These two partnerships would be larger in capacity than Maersk Line and MSC's, which has a fleet of 185 ships and capacity of 2.1 million TEU. The crisis in container shipping has taken its toll on lines across the sector. Hapag-Lloyd on Friday reported a net loss of 42.8 million euros in the first quarter of 2016. Last month South Korea's Hanjin Shipping said it would ask creditor banks to restructure its debt. — Reuters

GOLD GIVES UP GAINS AS DOLLAR STRENGTHENS

LONDON: Gold lost early gains yesterday as the dollar strengthened after strong US economic data suggested a brightening outlook for the economy. US retail sales jumped 1.3 percent last month, the largest gain since March 2015 and a bigger rise than the 0.8 percent expected by economists.

Strong economic data and the prospect of a rate hike in the next few months should weigh on gold, Citi strategist David Wilson said. Spot gold, which rose 1 percent in early trade, cut gains to \$1,266.46 an ounce, up just 0.2 percent by 1413 GMT. It had dropped 1.1 percent on Thursday.

That left gold down 1.7 percent this week, the biggest weekly decline since the week ended March 25. US gold for June delivery rose 0.3 percent to \$1,267.10 an ounce. The dollar hit a two-week high against a basket of currencies yesterday, posting its best fortnightly performance since February, making dollar-denominated assets such as gold more costly for holders of other currencies.

The US currency had already received a boost overnight after two US Federal Reserve officials said the central bank should raise rates if data points to an improving economy. "The move (in the gold price) this year has really been down to the shift in the US policy expectations," Deutsche Bank analyst Michael Hsueh said. "It's more about ... when we start to see a consistent improvement in US data that could push the pendulum the other way and push the dollar higher." Gold has gained 20 percent this year after a series of weak economic data in the United States and elsewhere eased expectations of a near-term increase in US interest rates. — Reuters

RYANAIR TO CUT INVESTMENT IN BRITAIN IF IT LEAVES EU

DUBLIN: Ryanair would withdraw some investment if Britain opts to leave the EU and air fares could fall in the short term due to the "extreme volatility" such a vote would generate, chief executive Michael O'Leary said yesterday. The Irish low-cost airline, Europe's largest by passenger numbers, flies 40 million of its 100 million-plus passengers a year to and from the United Kingdom and has its largest hub at London's Stansted Airport. It was the liberalisation of Europe's skies two decades ago that allowed airlines to fly unrestricted between countries and which helped low-cost airlines such as Ryanair and easyJet to grow rapidly. O'Leary is one of the most vocal business leaders urging voters to back continued European Union membership in a June 23 referendum. "After 9/11, after every crisis Ryanair is selling cheaper fares, we keep people flying. So the fact is it would have a downward effect on our pricing for six to 12 months, but we will keep people flying," O'Leary told reporters.

"The longer-term effect though is we will invest less in the UK, we will certainly switch some of our existing UK investment into other European counties because we want to continue to invest in the European Union and it will be bad for air travel and British tourism." James Stamp, UK head of transport at KPMG, said one of the concerns over a potential Brexit was that it could put people off investing in bases and airlines in the UK while the UK renegotiates trade and traffic agreements. In addition, EU laws on free movement of labour give low-cost airlines greater flexibility in moving around staff and aircraft.

"However, change brings opportunity and low cost airlines have always been able to capitalise on that," Stamp added. For example, O'Leary said a Brexit may put some downward pressure on aircraft prices and there is always an opportunity for Ryanair to stock up in such a downturn, though its current supply of Boeing planes covers it to 2023.

TICKET PRICES

Rival airline boss Carolyn McCall of Britain's easyJet has also backed EU membership, saying it helps keep fares down. "Consumers have benefited greatly from deregulation and from lower prices and from a massive expansion of routes," McCall said earlier this week after easyJet reported results. British air fares could rise sharply in the longer term if a vote to leave threatened Britain's access to EU air services agreements, O'Leary said. However, he said the "Remain" campaign should be cautious about "apocalyptic scenarios". While extraordinary volatility would undoubtedly follow for six to 12 months after a Brexit, fundamental economics would then take over and sterling would recover, O'Leary said.—Reuters

'MASSIVE' YEN HEADWIND HITS JAPANESE CARMAKER

FX TURNAROUND WILL MEAN BELT-TIGHTENING

TOKYO: Japan's three leading automakers expect a stronger yen will cost them around \$14 billion in lost operating profit this year alone - just as they need to invest more in everything from cleaner fuel to driver-less cars. After three years of supernormal profits on the back of a weaker currency, Toyota Motor, Nissan Motor and Honda Motor now face a reality check as the yen has turned around.

While the recent years' currency boon has filled automakers' coffers - Toyota alone has around \$10 billion in cash - a squeeze on margins will put them under pressure to focus their investments, analysts say. "How to respond to yen rises while securing profits and continuing future investments: this balance is important," Toyota Executive Vice President Takahiko Ijichi said this week. The US dollar climbed roughly 60 percent against the yen between late-2011 and mid-2015, a huge windfall for Japan's car makers, but so far this year it is down roughly 9 percent against the Japanese currency.

Toyota, the world's largest automaker, has forecast a 40 percent drop in operating profits this year because of the stronger yen - a 935 billion yen (\$8.6 billion) hit for a company that exported nearly half its Japanese production last year. Honda forecast a 303 billion yen hit to its operating profit, while Nissan expects a "massive impact" of 255 billion yen on its operating profit.

Even automakers that have invested more in local production outside Japan expect some currency pain. Suzuki Motor Corp, which through its Maruti Suzuki venture has almost 50 percent market share in India, expects annual net profit to fall by a fifth. This is all money that could be invested in cleaner alternative propulsion systems, technology to link cars to data services and the development of autonomous driving.

In the United States, for example, General Motors has invested \$500 million in ride-sharing service Lyft to develop an on-demand network of autonomous vehicles. It also

bought Cruise Automation, a San Francisco start-up focused on developing driver-less cars. Toyota has said it would set up a research and development company to focus on artificial intelligence in Silicon Valley, in a departure from its cautious stance on automated driving.

WINNOWING COSTS

Japan's 'big three' automakers are, however, verging on the conservative with their assumed yen rate of 105 to the dollar, which is more downbeat than a Reuters poll of foreign exchange analysts, which forecast the yen easing to 115 per dollar by next April.

And that is already having an impact. Toyota forecast its smallest rise - just over 2 percent - in R&D spending in four years, to 1.1 trillion yen in 2017. "We're seeing a double whammy of yen strength combined with Japan Inc's tendency to give very conservative guidance," said Stefan Worrall, director of Japan equity sales at Credit Suisse.

"So you have to acknowledge some uncertainty over how much capex will actually be impacted by the stronger yen because we're unsure just how much exaggeration we're seeing in dim earnings forecasts." Nissan, whose development capacities may be boosted by a proposed tie-up with Mitsubishi Motors, has ramped up production of its Rogue crossover SUV in Japan, a model that has been selling well in the United States. That made sense when the yen was weak, less so now.

But capacity constraints mean Nissan has little hope of altering its plans to increase Japan production. "We're not using it as a strategy, we're using it as an opportunity. We have capacity available in Japan and no capacity available in North America," said CEO Carlos Ghosn.

He called the stronger yen a "massive headwind". In the short term, companies will look to rein in costs, analysts say - and that could be bad news for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's efforts to stimulate a stalled economic recovery, as salaries will likely be a prime target. — Reuters

US STOCKS MOSTLY SLIDE AS RETAIL SUFFERING CONTINUES

NEW YORK: US stocks were mixed yesterday as investors wrap up a turbulent week on Wall Street. Department store companies continued to report plunging first-quarter sales, but the government reported that overall retail sales improved in April.

KEEPING SCORE: The Dow Jones industrial average gave up 45 points, or 0.3 percent, to 17,676 as of 10:03 a.m. Eastern time. The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell four points, or 0.2 percent, to 2,059. The Nasdaq composite index rose two points, or 0.1 percent, to 4,739. The Dow is down slightly this week and the S&P 500 and Nasdaq are both slightly higher. Utilities and consumer stocks are down the most and technology stocks are up the most, a reverse from a day earlier.

RETAIL WRECKAGE: Nordstrom slashed its annual projections and said a key measure of sales fell for the first time in almost seven years. Nordstrom's stock tumbled \$6.59, or 14.6 percent, to \$38.64.

J.C. Penney's sales fell short of analyst estimates, sending its stock down 29 cents, or 3.7 percent, to \$7.51. Dillard's lost \$2.74, or 4.5 percent, to \$57.90 after it also posted disappointing profit and sales. This week Macy's and Kohl's have also posted weak results, while Gap reported weak April sales and also cut its projections.

SILVER LINING: The Commerce Department said total retail sales in the US grew 1.3 percent

in April, much more than analysts expected. The government's figures include spending on cars as well as shopping at department stores, and it said auto sales rose 3.2 percent and online purchases increased 2.1 percent. Clothiers, restaurants, sporting goods stores, grocers and gas stations saw better sales. So did department stores.

BURGER BOUNTY: Shake Shack's profit and sales beat estimates, in part because consumers snapped up its new fried chicken sandwich. The burger chain raised its estimates for sales and said it will open more stores than it previously planned. The stock gained \$2.14, or 6.2 percent, to \$36.40.

FEELING CHIPPER: Graphics chip and processor maker Nvidia surpassed Wall Street forecasts in the first quarter, and its stock jumped \$4.40, or 12.4 percent, to \$39.97.

OVERSEAS: Germany's DAX rose 0.9 percent and the CAC-40 in France gained 0.6 percent. The FTSE 100 in Britain was 0.2 percent higher. Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 index lost 1.4 percent and South Korea's Kospi shed 0.5 percent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 1 percent.

BONDS, CURRENCIES: US government bond prices rose. The yield on the 10-year US Treasury note dipped to 1.74 percent from 1.76 percent. The euro fell to \$1.1298 from \$1.1373 and the dollar inched up to 109.13 yen from 109.14 yen. — AP



TOKYO: A woman and man walk past an electronic stock board showing Japan's Nikkei 225 index at a securities firm in Tokyo yesterday. Most Asian stock markets headed lower yesterday as investors evaluated the latest set of corporate earnings and awaited a slew of US and Chinese economic data. — AP

US PRODUCER PRICES RISE IN APRIL

WASHINGTON: Prices charged by US manufacturers, farmers and other producers rose for the first time since January, lifted by higher costs for gas, steel and medicines.

The Labor Department said yesterday that the producer price index, which measures price changes before they reach the consumer, increased 0.2 percent in April. That followed small declines in February and March. Producer prices were unchanged from a year ago. That suggests inflation at the consumer level is likely to remain low.

Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, producer prices ticked up 0.1 percent last month and 0.9 percent from a year ago. The figures suggest that overall inflation remains tame. Sluggish economic growth, modest wage increases, and sharp competition among retailers have kept inflation low since the Great Recession ended in 2009.

Wholesale gas prices jumped 5.5 percent in April, while food costs slipped 0.3 percent. The cost of some types of steel jumped 22.1 percent, while pharmaceutical prices rose 1 percent.

Many Americans feel squeezed by rising costs for more expensive items such as health care and a college education, but those categories actually make up a relatively small part of the government's inflation measures. And rising rents and home prices have made housing less affordable, but the government has struggled to accurately measure those costs.

Consumers are already seeing few price increases for most goods and services. In March, consumer prices ticked up 0.1 percent from the previous month, in part because gas costs rose. In the past year, consumer prices have increased just 0.9 percent. Excluding the volatile food and energy categories, they are up 2.2 percent. The Federal Reserve would like to see inflation closer to 2 percent as a hedge against deflation, a destabilizing drop in wages and prices.

Yet the Fed's preferred inflation gauge is up just 0.8 percent in the past year. That suggests the central bank will be cautious as it raises the short-term interest rate it controls. It lifted that rate for the first time in nine years in December, but has stood pat since. Many economists now expect the Fed will raise rates just once or twice this year, in part because of low inflation.

US businesses in March posted the biggest increases in inventories and sales since June, good news for economic growth. The Commerce Department says business inventories rose 0.4 percent from February. Sales rose 0.3 percent.

The March increases ended months of falling sales and inventories. Falling inventories have been a big drag on the US economy. They trimmed economic growth by 0.3 percentage point from January through March, reducing the first-quarter increase to a lackluster 0.5 percent annual rate. Inventories have pulled economic growth lower for three straight quarters. So March's rising inventories could provide a boost to second-quarter growth, expected to come in at around 2 percent. Manufacturers and wholesalers reported higher sales and bigger inventories in March. —AP



NEW YORK: Shoppers visit a JC Penney store in New York. The Texas-based retailer reports financial results yesterday. — AP

US RETAIL SALES SHOW SOLID GAIN STORE CHAINS SHOW STRAINS ACROSS NATION

WASHINGTON: Americans stepped up their online shopping and bought more autos in April, suggesting that consumers may be spending more than indicated by a slump among major retailers.

In a reassuring signal, the Commerce Department said yesterday that retail sales climbed a seasonally adjusted 1.3 percent last month after a drop in March led by declining car sales.

But autos recovered in April, with sales jumping 3.2 percent. Sales growth was uniformly strong, online and off: Online purchases advanced 2.1 percent. Clothiers, restaurants, sporting goods stores, grocers, gas stations and even the embattled department store sector posted higher sales. Only building materials stores suffered a monthly decline, though their annual sales growth was solid.

Over the past 12 months, total retail sales have risen 3 percent. April's sales gains paint a healthier picture of retail spending than did a slew of troubling reports released this week by Macy's, Nordstrom, Kohl's and JC Penney. Their gloomy figures had raised fears that consumers were pulling back at a time of meager economic growth, and retail stocks fell sharply in response.

But yesterday's government sales data offered at least a tentative hint that consumers may not be retrenching so much as shifting their purchases toward online retailers such as Amazon.com and thereby sapping traffic from the large retailers that anchor America's major malls.

At the same time, Ken Perkins of Retail Metrics, a research firm, notes that Americans' incomes are rising only tepidly despite an improving job market. A result is that women may be less likely to step up spending on clothing at a time when Amazon has intensified price competition. "My gut says that women don't have the money outside replenishing items," Perkins says. "And the Amazon effect is gaining momentum." Indeed, spending at non-store retailers - which include online and catalogs - has climbed a robust 10.2 percent from a year ago, according to the government. By contrast, sales at both department stores and electronics outlets have fallen over the past 12 months.

Shoppers such as Morgan Province of Herndon, Virginia, say

they're tightening spending for a variety of reasons. Province says she's saving for a summer move, and her tax refund was "unusually small" this year. She says that when she does buy, she's spending more online. She's now going to Amazon.com every two weeks, compared with every six or eight weeks a year ago.

"It's more convenient," Province says "It's more affordable, and there are more options." John Blackledge, an analyst at Cowen & Co., says he expects Amazon.com to replace Macy's Inc. as the No. 1 apparel retailer by next year. Macy's dropped its report with a clunk on Wednesday. It slashed its profits and sales outlook, and other major outlets, including Nordstrom and Kohl's, also reported dismal sales figures.

In response to their falling revenue, some stores have announced plans to try to boost profitability. Nordstrom said it's cutting back on inventory and reducing expenses. Macy's plans to speed up launches for exclusive fashions, in addition to cutting expenses and plow the savings into adding sales help online and in the stores.

"Clearly, our industry is in something of a rough patch," says Karen Hoguet, chief financial officer at Macy's. Yet Hoguet views the declines as puzzling given a recent hiring streak that has held unemployment to a healthy 5 percent.

"We're frankly scratching our heads," she added "We see the same economic data you all see and it would point to customer that would be spending more."

Many analysts examining the decline point to a confluence of factors that aren't new but may be accelerating. Shoppers are spending less on clothing in order to devote more their incomes to experiences like dining out. And when shoppers do spend on clothing, they're more likely to spend it at TJ Maxx and other off-price chains that compete by offering discounts.

"The big companies are suffering not necessarily from weak demand but weak pricing," says Jack Kleinhenz, chief economist at the National Retail Federation. "There is no pricing power and we've been in a deflationary mode, so consumers are getting great deals when they are spending." — AP

POLAND AWAITS MOODY'S REPORT AMID CONCERN OVER NEW POLICIES

WARSAW: Poland is bracing for a possible credit downgrade by ratings agency Moody's yesterday amid international concerns over the new government's move to erode the independence of key institutions and increase spending.

Poland has been one of Europe's most dynamic economies for years, with growth expected at around 3.5 percent this year despite a slight contraction in the first quarter. But investor confidence has been shaken by the government's new policies. Standard & Poor's already downgraded Poland by one notch earlier this year, something the government slammed as unfair considering the nation's relatively high growth, and investors are bracing for either a downgrade by Moody's or a change in the country's outlook. From 2007 to 2015 the country was run by a pro-market party, Civic Platform, which oversaw eight years of strong economic expansion. It lost elections last year

amid frustration that too many Poles were left out of that success story, with many still struggling on very low wages. The new ruling party, Law and Justice, won power promising to help the poor and families and has already begun paying child benefits. It has promised other measures that aim to help struggling Poles, but which investors fear will unbalance state finances. Among those measures are plans to lower the retirement age and to convert Swiss franc loans into zlotys to the benefit of the mortgage holders. arcin Mrowiec, economist at Bank Pekao SA, said investors are mostly nervous about the Swiss franc conversion plan since it has the potential to destabilize some banks, perhaps even the whole banking system, if the costs to the banks are great.

Piotr Buras, head of the Warsaw office of the European Council on Foreign Relations, argues, however, that investors are above all

spooked by legal instability in the country due to an ongoing crisis concerning the Constitutional Tribunal. "The institutional revolution we are experiencing these days has tremendous consequences for how the Polish economy and its prospects are seen in the world," Buras said. The Central Statistical Office said the economy contracted 0.1 percent quarter-on-quarter and that yearly growth was at 3 percent. Mrowiec said that several factors contributed to the slowdown: uncertainty over the government's fiscal plans; changes in management at state-run enterprises, which resulted in a temporary slowdown in investments; and a gap between two spending periods by the European Union, whose cash infusions have been a key source of Poland's growth over the past 12 years. "The first quarter looks a bit less rosy but it was to be expected," Mrowiec said. "We expect the following quarters to be stronger." — AP

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**A bloodbath of shows axed for
new shows to debut next season**

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MADRID: Picture taken from the Almudena cathedral shows a huge smoke column caused by a fire in an uncontrolled dump near the town of Sesena yesterday. A huge waste ground near Madrid where millions of tyres have been dumped was on fire today, releasing a thick black cloud of toxic fumes that officials worry could harm residents nearby.—AFP

Clooney thinks he'll spend his 60th birthday 'hiding' in his bedroom 'crying'



The 'Monuments Men' star may have only just turned 55 but he has admitted thoughts of his next big milestone, despite being five years away, are already plaguing his mind.

Speaking to 'Entertainment Tonight' he said: "[I'll probably celebrate it] by mostly hiding in my room and crying because the next one is 60 ... The thing is, age has never been an issue-turning 50 didn't bother me, turning 55 didn't bother me. None of it bothered. But I think 60 is going to kind of..."

However, although he's not looking forward to hitting the sixth decade of his life, George is adamant his wife Amal Clooney will no doubt pull out all the stops to ensure he gets an extra special gift following her decision to buy him a giant lawn mower for his 55th birthday last Friday (06.05.16).

He said recently: "We have a beautiful front lawn at our house in England and I used to mow lawns when I was a kid. So she bought me this giant riding lawn mower that is sitting at the

house right now and I'm very excited about putting that to work when I'm home."

The couple have been married for 20 months after the Hollywood hunk popped the question in April 2014. But the romantic proposal didn't go according to plan as George was constantly worried he'd put his hip out as he got down on one knee and presented the lawyer with her ring.

He said recently: "I got down on my knee and said, 'I couldn't imagine spending the rest of my life without you.' And she kept looking at the ring and she was looking at me and she was like 'Oh my God.' And we now know because there is a playlist, so we know how long it actually took, and it's like 25 minutes, 25 minutes! "Finally I literally said, 'Look, I hope the answer's yes, but I need an answer. I'm 52 and I could throw out my hip pretty soon'. And she said, 'Oh, yes' and it worked out really well."

Mel B revealed that the Spice Girls met up to plan their 20th anniversary

The 40-year-old singer - also known as Scary Spice - is back in the UK and has met up with Geri Horner and Emma Bunton for a catch up with talk inevitably turning to their future plans.

During an interview on UK TV show 'Lorraine' on Wednesday, Mel - who lives in Los Angeles - spilled: "I landed yesterday and I met up with a few of my 'spicies' and we were doing a big time reminisce. It's nice that we're all still friends and we're supportive of each other 20 years on ... I have such fun memories of all that stuff."

When quizzed on whether a reunion was part of their chat, Mel added: "We definitely want to do something because it's a celebration of us still doing our thing 20 years on and us being a part of each other, so we'll see what happens. We're all just kind of in talks right now - I had a nice cup of tea with Geri and Emma last night, which was lovely."

The arrival of 2016 marks 20 years since the girl group released their debut single 'Wannabe' and first album 'Spice'. There's been much speculation and teasing from the band members that they will reform to celebrate the landmark date. However, Mel C and Victoria Beckham - aka Sporty Spice and Posh Spice - have reportedly ruled themselves out of returning to the stage.

Mel C wants to concentrate on her solo career and is done with the Spice Girls as a live entity, while Victoria feels she is just too busy with her fashion business to play concerts again. Other than a tour, there has been talk of a TV special to commemorate the band's anniversary.



Sharon Osbourne found out about husband's affair through emails

The 63-year-old TV star was left heartbroken two weeks ago when she traced her husband's digital footsteps on his computer and discovered he'd allegedly been sleeping with hairdresser Michelle Pugh behind her back for a while.

A source told UsWeekly.com: "Sharon found out about the affair by searching through Ozzy's emails. She was upset that he was supporting this woman!" After she found out about her spouse's alleged infidelity, Sharon - who has grown-up children Kelly, 31, Aimee, 32 and Jack, 30, with Ozzy - bombarded Michelle's place of work, believed to be the posh Míche Salon in Beverly Hills, with phone calls and subsequently had her fired.

The insider explained: "She and [daughter] Kelly both called the salon repeatedly for about two weeks before the news broke, trying to get in touch with Michelle. They were really angry. Sharon is the reason Michelle was let go."

Sharon confirmed she'd split from the Black Sabbath rocker, whom she married in 1982, on her chat show 'The Talk' on Tuesday as she thanked fans for their support. She said: "I'm 63 years of age, and I can't keep living like this ... I've been avoiding looking at any pictures or reading anything. I know what's going on. I don't need to read about or see about it. It's like putting salt in a wound. I don't need to ... He's back, and now I'm out of the house."

Meanwhile, the infidelity claims sparked rumors the 67-year-old rocker, who has battled with drugs and alcohol addictions in the past, had fallen off the wagon again. However, although he refused to deny reports he'd cheated on his wife, he quickly poured cold water on relapse reports. He said: "I have been sober for three and a quarter years. I have not touched drugs or alcohol in that time. Any reports that I am not sober are completely inaccurate."



Tom Parker wants Ed Sheeran or Gary Barlow to sing at his wedding

The 'Glad You Came' hitmaker is in the middle of planning his nuptials to fiancée Kelsey Hardwick and he would love for either of the pop superstars - who are famous for performing at wedding receptions - to serenade him and his special lady.

Talking to BANG Showbiz, Tom said: "I've got someone in mind that I would like to sing for the wedding and I think I would be able to get them down to sing, a really famous singer, I can't tell you who it is. There's a really famous singer who sings at people's weddings and stuff. I think I'm going to try get that person to sing, and a certain song because it's literally our favorite song. It could be two people, because two people do it quite often. It's either Ed Sheeran or Gary Barlow, isn't it?"

Tom and Kelsey want to tie the knot in 2017 and has been drawing up a star-studded guest list which includes David and Victoria Beckham - whom he met when The Wanted performed at their

son Romeo's 10th birthday - and 'The Only Way Is Essex' star James 'Arg' Argent. And the 27-year-old pop star cannot wait to walk down the aisle with the love of his life Kelsey. He said: "I can't wait to get married. We're going to do it next summer so it's not that long. But I really want to just do it!"

Tom took a break from wedding planning to attend a party held at The Hoxton Hotel in Shoreditch, London, hosted by Belvedere Vodka to launch their new summer cocktail the Belvedere Spritz. The famous hunk enjoyed cocktails, which included Classic Spritz, Cucumber Spritz, Herbal Spritz and Citrus Spritz, at the Belvedere Balance Bar. Other celebrities in attendance included Camilla Al Fayed, Yasmin Mills and Camilla Rutherford.

Gene Simmons has apologized for branding Prince's death 'pathetic'

The Kiss front man caused controversy over his remarks about the 'Purple Rain' hit maker - whose death last month is believed to be connected with an addiction to painkillers - after claiming the 57-year-old star made a "choice" to "slowly" kill himself with "drugs and alcohol" but has now said sorry for his comments.

The 'Crazy Crazy Nights' singer - who has son Nick, 27, and daughter Sophie, 23, with his wife Shannon Tweed - admitted even his family were furious with what he had said, but was speaking from his own experiences of being around drug addicts, though he has now accepted his comments were "wrong".

In a statement on Twitter, he posted: "I just got such s*** from my family for my big mouth again. I apologize - I have a long history of getting very angry at what drugs do to the families/friends of the addicts. I get angry at drug users because of my experience being around them coming up in the rock scene. In my experience they've made my life, and the lives of their loved ones, difficult. I was raised in a culture/crowd where drug addicts were written off as losers, and since that's the narrative I grew up with, it's been hard to change with the times.

"Needless to say, I didn't express myself properly here - I don't shy away from controversy, and angry critics really don't bother

me at all. If I think I'm right, I'll throw up a finger and dig my heels in and laugh. "But this time, I was not. So, my apologies. (sic)"

The 66-year-old rocker's bandmate, guitarist-and-singer Paul Stanley, 64, has also apologized on behalf of Gene and said the comments were "cold" and "clueless" and "embarrassed" him. Taking to his Twitter account on Tuesday, he wrote: "Embarrassed by cold clueless statements re Prince's death. Without all the facts better to say nothing. My apologies (sic)"

Gene caused controversy when he insisted Prince's death was not as "tragic" as David Bowie's passing from cancer in January, insisting the 'Raspberry Beret' hit maker's stemmed from a "choice" he had made. He said: "Bowie was the most tragic of all because it was real sickness. All the other ones were a choice."

Asked if he thought Prince's death was tragic, he added: "His drugs killed him. What do you think, he died from a cold? I think Prince was heads, hands and feet above all the rest of them. I thought he left [Michael] Jackson in the dust. Prince was way beyond that. But how pathetic that he killed himself. Don't kid yourself, that's what he did. Slowly, I'll grant you ... but that's what drugs and alcohol is: a slow death."



Johnny McDaid 'always loved' Courteney Cox

The Snow Patrol rocker and the 'Cougar Town' actress ended their relationship last December, 18 months after they got engaged, but recently sparked speculation they had reconciled, and they confirmed they were back together by walking the red carpet together at the BMI Pop Awards at the Beverly Wilshire Four Seasons Hotel in Beverly Hills on Tuesday night.

Asked if they were making their reconciliation official, Courteney, 51, smiled, while her 39-year-old partner said: "Just look at us. I love her. I've always loved her." However, the couple remained tight-lipped when it came to confirming whether or not they are still engaged.

Asked if the wedding is back on, Johnny laughed to E! News: "Let us win an award first." The couple first sparked speculation they had reunited when they were spotted in Malibu on Easter Sunday along with the actress' 11-year-old daughter Coco looking "very happy" as they enjoyed lunch and a spot of shopping.

After the pictures surfaced, a representative for the former 'Friends' star - who has Coco with ex-husband David Arquette - said: "They really care about each other and they are spending time together." And it was later claimed Coco had been instrumental in her mother's reunion with the 'Run' hit maker.

A source previously said: "Coco begged them to give things a second chance. "Coco was gutted when her mum split from Johnny so she's been playing Cupid ever since. "She got them together over Easter to talk things out and they realized there's still a lot of love between them. It seems they are ready to compromise more."

Courteney and Johnny started dating in late 2013 after being introduced by their mutual friend Ed Sheeran, who had been living in the actress' house while working in the US.





In this image released by CBS, Melissa Benoist, left, and Jeff Branson appear in a scene from "Supergirl." The CW said on Thursday that it's picking up the series from CBS, where it debuted last year. — AP

A bloodbath of shows axed for new shows to debut next season

It wasn't quite the Red Wedding, but Thursday brought viewers news of more than a dozen prime-time shows being axed to make room for new programs next season.

ABC took the sword to seven series (including country music drama "Nashville" and veteran whodunit "Castle") while Fox is sacrificing five freshman shows, including comedies starring aging pretty boys Rob Lowe and John Stamos. Meanwhile, CBS is deleting "CSI: Cyber" after this, its sophomore season, thus laying to rest the "CSI" dynasty that encompassed four series during a 16-year span.

The official body count - as well as new programming blood for the 2016-2017 season - will be rolled out next week at the networks' "upfront" sessions for advertisers.

But through a combination of network leaks and networks jumping the gun, a flood of announcements got early exposure Thursday.

Perhaps the sourest note came from ABC with word that it's canceling "Nashville" after four seasons. Never a ratings hit, that series enjoyed a loyal following, especially in Music City, where the show was filmed.

The network's decision drew an immediate lament from Nashville's mayor, Megan Barry, who in a statement called the news "incredibly disappointing." She said the state of Tennessee and Nashville were prepared to support production in the city for a fifth season.

"Castle," which debuted in 2009, was still a reliable ratings performer. It was announced last month that co-star Stana Katic was exiting, but Nathan Fillion, who plays Castle, had tweeted in vain that he hoped the show would continue for years despite her departure.

In addition, sophomore series "Agent Carter" and "Galavant" won't be back. Freshman series "Blood & Oil" and "The Family" have also been yanked, as is "The Muppets," for which a wealth of long-time affection for Miss Piggy and its other characters failed to translate into viewership.

The cancellations follow a recent shake-up in the network's executive ranks, with ABC Entertainment Group President Paul Lee replaced by Channing Dungey.

Fox is dumping comedies "Grandfathered" (starring Stamos) and "The Grinder" (starring Lowe) as well as midseason entries "Bordertown," "Minority Report" and "Cooper Barrett's Guide to Surviving Life." But the news wasn't all grim.

At ABC, "Scandal" producer Shonda Rhimes is collaborating with William Shakespeare on a period drama about the aftermath of the deaths of young lovers Romeo and Juliet.

"Still Star-Crossed" will become Rhimes' fifth series at ABC. Along with "Scandal," her

ShondaLand company produces "Grey's Anatomy," "How to Get Away with Murder" and "The Catch." "The Catch," which hasn't made the ratings splash of Rhimes' other shows since its recent premiere, will return for a second season, ABC said. "Supergirl" is landing at CW for its second season after debuting last year on CBS. It's a good fit for CW, currently home to three other superhero shows: "The Flash," "Arrow" and "DC's Legends of Tomorrow."

All are from prolific producer Greg Berlanti, who has placed yet another show at CW for next season, "Riverdale."

Based on the Archie Comics characters, "Riverdale" was described by the network as a present-day "surprising and subversive take" on Archie, Betty, Veronica and their friends. Lili Reinhart, Cole Sprouse and Luke Perry are among the stars.

Other upcoming new series were announced Thursday: "Conviction," ABC. A lawyer and former first daughter (Hayley Atwell) takes a job with the New York district attorney's office to avoid jail time for drugs and political damage for her mother's Senate campaign.

"Notorious," ABC. A provocative look at the sexy and dangerous interplay of criminal law and the media. "Imaginary Mary," ABC. Jenna Elfman plays a fiercely independent career woman whose life is turned upside down when she meets the love of her life - a divorced father with three kids.

"Downward Dog," ABC. Based on the web series, the comedy looks at the life of a struggling millennial (Allison Tolman) from the perspective of her philosophical dog, Martin.

An as-yet untitled comedy from ABC about an unapologetically plump wife and mother (Katy Mixon) whose flawed family lives in a wealthy town populated by so-called "perfect" children.

"Time After Time," ABC. Based on the novel and movie, with writer H.G. Wells (Freddie Stroma) traveling through time to modern Manhattan in search of Jack the Ripper. "Frequency," CW, inspired by the 2000 Dennis Quaid-Jim Caviezel film. A police detective gets in touch with her late father via a ham radio and work together on an unsolved murder case. Riley Smith is among the stars.

"No Tomorrow," CW, follows a cautious woman and a freewheeling man who fall in love and decide to pursue their dreams because of a belief that the apocalypse is near. The cast includes Tori Anderson and Josh Sasse. "Chicago Justice," NBC. Producer Dick Wolf expands his Windy City-based franchise with a drama about state prosecutors and investigators. It joins "Chicago Med," "Chicago Fire" and "Chicago P.D."

World's oldest person dies at the age of 116

Susannah Mushatt Jones, the world's oldest person, has died in New York at age 116. Robert Young, a senior consultant for the Los Angeles-based Gerontology Research Group, said Jones died Thursday night at a public housing facility for seniors in Brooklyn where she had lived for more than three decades. He said she had been ill for the past 10 days.

Jones was born in a small farm town near Montgomery, Alabama, in 1899. She was one of 11 siblings and attended a special school for young black girls. When she graduated from high school in 1922, Jones worked full time helping family members pick crops. She left after a year to begin working as a nanny, heading north to New Jersey and eventually making her way to New York.

"She adored kids," Lois Judge said of her aunt in a 2015 interview with The Associated Press. Jones never had any children of her own and was married for only a few years. Family members said last year that they credited her long life to love of family and generosity to oth-

ers. Judge said at the time that she believed it helped that her aunt grew up on a rural farm, where she ate fresh fruits and vegetables that she picked herself.

After she moved to New York, Jones worked with a group of her fellow high school graduates to start a scholarship fund for young African-American women to go to college. She also was active in her public housing building's tenant patrol until she was 106. Jones became Guinness World Records' official oldest person when 117-year-old Misao Okawa died in Tokyo last year. "Ms. Jones was the very last American from the 1800s," said Young, whose group tracks and maintains a database of the world's longest-living people.

Young said 116-year-old Emma Morano, of Verbania, Italy, just a few months younger than Jones, is now the unofficial world's oldest person. — AP



BROOKLYN: Lois Judge, left, helps her aunt Susannah Mushatt Jones, during breakfast in Jones' room at the Vandalia Avenue Houses. — AP

Medical malpractice lawsuit in Joan Rivers' death settled

Melissa Rivers has settled a medical malpractice lawsuit she filed against a New York clinic where her mother, comedian Joan Rivers, had an endoscopy and later died.

The case was filed in January 2015. Melissa Rivers' attorneys confirmed Thursday it had been settled. Rivers says the settlement will ensure those to blame for her mother's death "have accepted responsibility for their actions."

Joan Rivers died in September 2014 at age 81. A medical examiner found she died of brain damage due to lack of oxygen after she stopped breathing during an endoscopy days earlier. Melissa Rivers' attorneys won't reveal the terms of the settlement. They say they want people to focus on Joan Rivers' legacy. The Yorkville Endoscopy clinic hasn't responded to a request for comment. — AP



Legendary Comedian Joan Rivers



NEW YORK: People observe the artwork 'Untitled' made by artist Jean-Michel Basquiat during a press preview of Christie's forthcoming evening auctions of the Contemporary, Impressionist, Modern and Post-War Art. — AFP

Japanese billionaire mystery buyer of Basquiat painting

A Japanese billionaire is the mystery art collector behind the \$57.3 million purchase of a huge self-portrait by Jean-Michel Basquiat at auction earlier this week, his art foundation said Thursday. "Jean-Michel Basquiat is coming to Japan," businessman Yusaku Maezawa wrote on his Instagram account, posing in front of the painting.

Maezawa, who made his fortune in the clothing trade, bought seven works of art in two days for a total of \$97.8 million. Maezawa on Tuesday purchased Basquiat's massive seven by 16 foot (two-and-a-half by five meter) untitled self-portrait from 1982, painted in Italy.

The young Haitian-American artist, who pictured himself in the work with a demonic image among eye-popping colors, died

in 1988 of a drug overdose at age 27. In addition to the Basquiat, Maezawa acquired four other pieces of contemporary art at Christie's late Tuesday, according to a statement by his Tokyo-based Contemporary Art Foundation. They were sold for a total of \$81.3 million.

On Wednesday, he purchased a work by Romanian painter Adrian Ghenie for \$2.59 million, more than 10 times its low-end estimate, and another by American Christopher Wool for \$13.91 million, at Sotheby's, the auction house said. His foundation said Maezawa is planning to open a private museum in several years in Chiba, Japan where he grew up, and has been collecting works of art for the last 10 years to fill it. — AFP

Calvin Klein ad causes stir

A new Calvin Klein underwear ad has caused a stir in America because it features a photo taken from underneath a woman's skirt, focused on her crotch.

The photo is of a model named Klara Kristin, 23, who wears a cream-colored skirt and looks down at the floor-level camera. The ad campaign is called "I flash in #mycalvins." The photo triggered an outpouring of disgust and reproach on social media and elsewhere.

"Calvin Klein is marketing to perverts," a headline in the New York Post screamed. "@CalvinKlein, your ad sexualizes young girls. We're #NotBuyingIt," tweeted the account Miss Representation, part of the Representation Project, which says it works to fight stereotypes and social injustice.

The National Center on Sexual Exploitation said the ad depicted a form of sexual harassment, namely 'up-skirting'—the practice of taking shots up a woman's skirt without her knowledge or consent. The center launched a petition calling on the fashion house to "stop normalizing and glamorizing sexual harassment."

But as of Thursday afternoon, the photo remained on the Calvin Klein Twitter feed. Calvin Klein ad campaigns are often sexy, and sometimes feature models who look androgynous and are very young.

In 1981, the American actress Brooke Shields, then 16, posed in tight Calvin Klein jeans with her legs spread. She looks at the camera and says, "You want to know what comes between me and my Calvins? Nothing." — AFP

'This is impossible:' New York man wins his 2nd \$1M lottery

A construction worker who won \$1 million in a lottery scratch-off game four years ago has defied enormous odds by hitting a \$1 million jackpot again. But don't call him lucky.

After Bruce Magistro hit the jackpot the first time in 2012, his wife, Yvonne, lost a three-year battle with cancer. Much of the prize money went to pay for her medical bills. "She passed away two years ago today," Magistro's son, Nick Mayers, said Wednesday. He said he was sure the second jackpot was her way of sending help back to the family. "This is definitely a gift, from her to him," Mayers said. State lottery officials introduced Magistro at a news conference at the Long Island gas station where he bought the second winning ticket April 11.

Magistro said he plays the lottery every day and plunked down \$20 at Mike's Super Citgo in West Babylon for a set of 10 Win for Life scratch-offs. "This is impossible," Magistro said he thought as he scratched off a lottery ticket and realized he won \$1 million. "I just couldn't believe I hit it two times." He now plans to share his winnings with his three children and his fiancée. Magistro won \$1 million on a different lottery scratch-off game he played at the same gas station in 2012. The latest win came the first time he had played the Win for Life game, which will pay him \$1,000 each week - with a minimum of \$1 million - for the rest of his life.

Lottery representative Yolanda Vega, who had presented Magistro with a ceremonial check for his first win, said even then she felt he could win a second time. "He was so positive and outgoing that I knew he'd win again," she said. "There was something about Bruce that I felt. There was this energy coming from his core."

State gaming officials said the odds Magistro beat to get the Win for Life grand prize were 1 in 7,745,600, and they were 1 in 2,520,000 when he won the Extreme Cash scratch-off in



BABYLON, NEW YORK: Bruce Magistro holds up a cheque while talking to reporters about winning \$1 million in the New York Lottery for a second time during a news conference on Wednesday. — AP

2012. But beating those kinds of odds twice aren't unheard of. A North Carolina woman with breast cancer won \$1 million in a lottery game in February and then scored a \$250,000 prize last month. In 2012, a man in suburban Chicago won \$1 million from a "Merry Millionaire" scratch-off game after winning the same amount nine years earlier.

Magistro said he plans to use the money to pay his bills and go on a vacation, though he hasn't decided where just yet. "Hopefully I'll win again," he joked. "Third time's a charm." — AP



NEW YORK: Actor Alec Baldwin leaving criminal court after testifying at his stalker's trial, having run-ins with photographers, and being suspended from his ultimately short-lived MSNBC show because of his behavior during one of the encounters, Baldwin wrote a New York magazine cover story in 2014 decrying the constant tabloid coverage of his comings and goings. — AP

NYC too close for celebs' comfort? Writer nixes a move

When famed writer Ta-Nehisi Coates backed away from moving into a Brooklyn brownstone, he gave voice to celebrities' qualms about city living.

The National Book Award winner wrote this week that media coverage of his \$2.1 million home purchase slammed the door on his planned move, saying he was concerned for his family's safety and uneasy about the idea of fans showing up on his stoop after the address was published. "Within a day of reading these articles, my wife and I knew that we could never live" there, he wrote in an essay at TheAtlantic.com.

Coates, whose "Between the World and Me" offers a searing assessment of being black in America, isn't the first prominent person to try to shield his address or to rue the up-close-and-personal nature of New York. But in a city where spotting celebrities can be easier than snagging a cab, the idea of a writer lamenting lost privacy to the point of abandoning a low-key Brooklyn neighborhood seemed to draw a new - to some, puzzling - line. "In New York, a lot of 'celebrity' people live among non-celebrities," notes Ainslie Binder, a 20-year resident of Prospect-Lefferts Gardens, the neighborhood where Coates bought the brownstone. She'd been pleased to think a best-selling author would burnish the area's growing reputation as a hotspot for writers and other creative people.

In a community where residents stage an annual house tour and plant sidewalk flower barrels together, Coates would be treated "just like everybody else," she said. The nation's biggest city has long been home to the famous and rich, living in settings from Central Park-facing apartments to Brooklyn townhouses. Even in the see-it-tweet-it era, many New Yorkers pride themselves on understated reactions to encountering off-duty stars on the streets, in cafes and elsewhere.

Still, tabloids and widely-read real-estate media regularly delight in reporting who bought where, to the consternation of high-profile buyers. "Privacy is a huge concern," says Jared Seligman, a broker with Douglas Elliman Real Estate's Sports and Entertainment division, which caters to celebrity clients. Whether the stumbling block is a building board that won't allow purchases in corporate names or simply a passer-by who

sees a celeb walking from limo to lobby, "in New York, it's very hard to make a move without going onto the radar." Not that luminaries don't try. Doormen are prevalent, and famously discreet, in high-end buildings. And some notables put a premium on homes or buildings with internal garages or courtyards, so they can drive in unseen, said John Burger, a Brown Harris Stevens Residential Sales broker who specializes in super-high-end Manhattan properties.

Fears about being on the public's map aren't unfounded in a city that, by nature, can't match the seclusion of a gated estate. Celebrities ranging from Uma Thurman to Alec Baldwin have had stalkers show up at their Manhattan homes. A man described by police as emotionally disturbed was detained outside Taylor Swift's building just this Tuesday (she wasn't there, and the man was taken to a hospital for a psychiatric evaluation).

A Madonna fan, meanwhile, scrawled messages of adoration on the sidewalk near a Manhattan building where she lived for a time. The Material Girl later moved to a townhouse with an unusual privacy feature - its own garage.

And some celebs simply grow weary of having the nation's biggest city as a sometimes nosy neighbor. After testifying at his stalker's trial, having run-ins with photographers, and being suspended from his ultimately short-lived MSNBC show because of his behavior during one of the encounters, Baldwin wrote a New York magazine cover story in 2014 decrying the constant tabloid coverage of his comings and goings. "I just can't live in New York anymore," the longtime New Yorker wrote, saying he was beginning to crave instead the gates, cars and ability to shut out the public that Los Angeles offers.

At one time, "to be a New Yorker meant you gave everybody five feet," he wrote. "And now we don't leave each other alone." Yet even for Baldwin, New York evidently has its pluses. He still lives here. — AP

Cannes comic apologizes for rape joke at Woody Allen premiere

A French comedian who made a rape joke in the presence of Woody Allen on the opening night of the Cannes film festival apologized yesterday for the barbed gag.

The comment by popular French actor Laurent Lafitte came as allegations that Allen had sexually abused his daughter returned to haunt the 80-year-old veteran US director. Allen, whose film "Cafe Society" had its premiere Wednesday, was seated in the front row at the opening ceremony when Lafitte referred to rape charges in a gag that drew gasps from the audience. "It is a pleasure to see you in France, because you have shot many films in Europe in recent years, and yet in the United States you haven't even been convicted for rape," Lafitte said.

It was not clear if the comment was directed at Allen or fellow director Roman Polanski who has been living in Europe to escape charges he raped a 13-year-old girl in the United States. Lafitte took to Twitter yesterday to express his regrets after his gag made global headlines. "I wanted to be funny, impertinent and quirky, I acknowledge that what I said was inappropriate or could be misinterpreted," he said, in remarks confirmed to AFP by Lafitte's spokeswoman Apolline Thomasset. "I'm deeply sorry for all those that I offended."

Joke about 'American puritanism'

Allegations had resurfaced Wednesday that Allen sexually abused his daughter Dylan Farrow, now 30, in the early 1990s. His estranged son Ronan Farrow published a column in trade magazine The Hollywood Reporter lashing out at the media for failing to ask hard questions about the allegations.

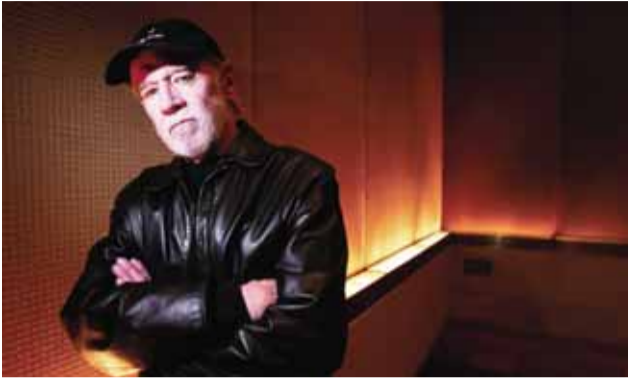
Ronan said his mother Mia Farrow decided not to press charges at the time due to Dylan's "fragility". Lafitte had earlier told The Hollywood Reporter that the punch line had been misconstrued. "When I wrote this joke, it was more a joke about Europe and why one of the greatest American directors spent years in Europe, (while Allen) didn't have to because he wasn't accused of rape in his own country, compared to Roman Polanski," he said. "It was (meant) as a joke about American puritanism and the fact that it is surprising that an American director wants to do so many movies in Europe. I didn't know about the other stuff."

Lafitte said festival director Thierry Fremaux had approached Allen at the after party to ask if he was offended by the joke "but he said he was not". "He said, 'I thought that guy was funny.' It's a storm in a tea cup, and it's a shame, because I tried as much as I could to write something funny every 20 seconds," Lafitte said. "In a show lasting 45 minutes, this is the only thing that will remain."

Allen told Variety magazine Thursday: "It would take a lot to offend me." "I'm a comic myself and I feel they should be free to make whatever jokes they want." — AFP



CANNES, FRANCE: French actor and Master of Ceremony Laurent Lafitte speaks on stage on Tuesday during the opening ceremony for the 69th Cannes Film Festival. — AFP



NEW YORK: Actor and comedian George Carlin posing for a photo in a New York hotel. The National Comedy Center currently being built in Jamestown has acquired Carlin's archives. This is the first major donation to the center, which is scheduled to open in 2017. — AP

Items belonging to George Carlin to get new home in New York

Items belonging to late comedian George Carlin will have a new home in New York. The National Comedy Center currently being built in Jamestown has acquired Carlin's archives. His daughter, Kelly Carlin, says she's excited that her father's files, journals, awards, arrest records and hours of video and audio recordings will have a permanent home.

George Carlin died in 2008 at the age of 71. He constantly pushed the envelope with his jokes, especially with a routine called "The Seven Words You Can Never Say On TV." This is the first major donation to the center, which is scheduled to open in 2017. In the meantime, some of it has been posted on the center's website. — AP

Egypt's turmoil comes to Cannes in claustrophobic new movie

A powerful Egyptian film, shot entirely inside a police van crammed with secular revolutionaries and Muslim Brotherhood supporters as riots rage in Cairo, has brought the country's post-Arab Spring woes to the Cannes film festival.

Director Mohamed Diab, 38, told AFP yesterday he was afraid of the blowback from back home where authorities are accused of an increasing crackdown on critical voices. "More and more artists are going to jail. Definitely I fear it. I don't know what is going to happen," said Diab, in the French Riviera town that has become the capital of world cinema for 12 days.

His movie opened the sidebar Un Certain Regard competition in Cannes. "In Egypt now any individual can see the film, think it's provocative and just file a lawsuit against you and he can put you in jail." Diab, whose last film "Cairo 678" portrayed sexual harassment on the streets of the Egyptian capital, said he was so "paranoid" filming his latest work, "Clash" that he stopped talking to his revolutionary friends or mentioning politics on social media.

The movie is set in 2013, just after the Egyptian military toppled the deeply unpopular Muslim Brotherhood government of Mohamed Morsi two years after a street revolution ousted president Hosni Mubarak.

In the chaos, military police throw reporters, Morsi supporters and those celebrating his toppling (who are technically on their side) into the back of the van where the entire film takes place to claustrophobic effect.

Whether trying to avoid getting their only cellphone confiscated, sharing water or staying alive as bullets fly and mobs rage outside, the cross-section of Egyptian society has to work together

to survive in a very enclosed space. "I wanted to show everyone's point of view, not only mine. So the car has like 25 people inside it, and everyone of them represents a lot of people that I saw. Real people," said Diab. "It's just like craziness, it's just like doomsday, the end of the world, and people see it through the eyes of people stuck inside a car who go through all that action and craziness and mayhem," said Diab.

'Golden age has passed'

He said that filming "Clash" in parallel with the real-time chaos in Cairo caused "unbelievable mayhem" with some actors fighting in real life or passers-by fleeing as they thought they had happened upon real scenes of violence.

Five years after the revolution ousted Mubarak, Egypt is under a government accused of cracking down on activists, bloggers, lawyers and journalists. Hundreds of pro-Morsi supporters have been killed and thousands imprisoned. "I remember... the people gathering on one goal and everyone was accepting the other," he said, describing the "utopia" of the first heady days of the 2011 revolution. "Now after five years it's the opposite, every group hates the other group."

Diab, who took part in the revolution and then protested against Morsi, said his film gives no easy answers. "No-one is good and no one is bad, we're all shades of grey." His film sums up the situation in one line: "The golden age of the revolution has passed." — AFP



A screen shot from Mohammed Diab's movie 'Clash'. — AFP



TV Personality Michael Strahan

Michael Strahan on 'Live with Kelly and Michael' Final Show: 'It's Bittersweet'

Kelly Ripa and Michael Strahan were all smiles and hugging yesterday at the start of Strahan's final outing as co-host of "Live with Kelly and Michael." The pair spoke briefly about Strahan's departure after nearly four years on "Live" for a permanent slot on "Good Morning America." Strahan said showed some emotion but also sought to downplay the melodrama of the situation that was magnified by Ripa's angry response to having been kept in the dark about the decision to shift Strahan until moments before the news was made public.

Related The Morning Show Wars, Kelly Ripa and TV's Disposable Spring "It's bittersweet," Strahan said. "This is a moment I didn't anticipate being here. (But) it's here we're going to enjoy it. I'm not dying. I'm still in the family. I'm still available to come back if I'm ever called to co host...I'm not going anywhere."

Ripa held Strahan's hand and draped her arm around his neck after they sat down at the desk. But she also opened the show with the quip: "Don't take this as a bad sign-it's Friday the 13th." The episode featured retrospective clips of Strahan's tenure, which began in 2012 when he succeeded Regis Philbin as Ripa's regular co-host on the syndicated morning show distributed by Disney/ABC TV.

The "Live" flap began April 19 when Ripa was informed of Strahan's move in the fall to "GMA" after the close of that day's installment. Ripa sat out the next three episodes of "Live" in protest for what she saw as disrespectful treatment from ABC brass, who eventually apologized to her.

With Strahan bowing out, "Live" will begin the process of auditioning co-hosts for Ripa. ABC's late-night host Jimmy Kimmel is set to fill the chair on Monday, followed by "Empire's" Jussie Smollett, Cedric the Entertainer, ABC News' David Muir and actor Daniel Dae Kim. Others lined up for the coming weeks include Fred Savage, Seal and "What What Happens Live" host Andy Cohen.

Yesterday's show closed with more hugs, kisses, parting gifts (including a bronzed pair of size 16 stiletto heels that Strahan wore for a Halloween episode) and Ripa and Strahan toasting each other with champagne. The clear message: No hard feelings between Ripa and Strahan, who ironically just won the Daytime Emmy for entertainment talk show hosts earlier this month.

"We couldn't be prouder of you. You have given us so much joy in the mornings," Ripa said. "We've achieved so much together. I look forward to watching you every morning and seeing what else you achieve."

Strahan showed a little emotion as he thanked the audience and "Live's" producers and crew. He noted that he didn't entirely know what to expect four years ago when he extended his TV career from the sports arena to entertainment.

"Thank you to everybody," he said. "You guys have let me into your homes, every day. It's been so overwhelming with the response we've had over the last four years that you guys love this show." As the outro music swelled and the credits rolled, Strahan embraced Ripa. "Kelly, you are the best," he said. "I love you baby." — Reuters

'The Good Wife' Spinoff to Star Christine Baranski



Respected actress Christine Baranski

Sources say CBS is in final negotiations to set up a spinoff of "The Good Wife" focusing on Christine Baranski's Diane Lockhart character that would air on CBS All Access.

Actress Cush Jumbo, who joined the "Good Wife" cast in the show's seventh and final season, is also expected to star in the spinoff. Sources cautioned that the deal is still in negotiations for a straight-to-series order and may not come to fruition. "Good Wife" co-creators/exec producers Robert and Michelle King would likely co-write the project with another "Good Wife" alum. The pair would be exec producers but not serve as showrunners.

Word that CBS is serious talks for a spinoff surfaced less than a week after "Good Wife" wrapped its Emmy-winning run on May 8. The series closer generated much discussion about the fate of its central characters and the denouement between Baranski's Lockhart and Julianna Margulies' Alicia Florrick. Jumbo, a British actress known for her work on stage and in the UK series "Torchwood," signed on at the start of the final season, playing a sharp, no-nonsense attorney who became a friend and confidant of Florrick.

If the project comes to fruition, it would be a significant piece of business for CBS on two fronts. It would extend the "Good Wife" aura that has been a source of prestige for the Eye, and it would mark the second high-profile original series to be developed for the CBS All Access SVOD service.

CBS already has a new rendition of "Star Trek" set to beam up on All Access in January. A "Good Wife" spinoff with Baranski would be another marquee property to help drive subscriptions to the service, which sells for \$6 a month. Sending the spinoff to All Access rather than the mothership network is a sign of CBS' determination to invest in All Access as a distinct programming platform. CBS Corp. chairman-CEO Leslie Moonves has said the goal is to have three to four original series airing on CBS All Access every year.

Discussions for Baranski's "Good Wife" spinoff are believed to have in the works for some time. Throughout pilot season, Baranski was the first choice for many lead roles in dramas and comedies across multiple broadcast networks, though she turned down all the offers, even one particular project that was extremely high-profile. Her team likely had the spinoff in mind when nixing offers for the newly-available star.

In addition to the "Good Wife" spinoff, the Kings have an off-beat horror dramedy, "BrainDead," set to bow on June 13. The series stars Mary Elizabeth Winstead as a young woman who gets a job on Capitol Hill only to discover that zombies are eating the brains of many in Congress. — Reuters

Pablo Neruda movie recounts poet's dramatic bid for freedom

The poems that won Pablo Neruda the Nobel prize for literature may never have been seen if the writer had not been such a good horseman. A new film, "Neruda" - shown yesterday at the Cannes film festival - tells of the period in the Chilean icon's drama-packed life when he nearly drowned in a river while fleeing on horseback from anti-communist police.

Neruda's life has already been the subject of one hit movie, "The Postman," in 1994. Set on an Italian island, it told the story of a young fisherman who becomes Neruda's personal mailman and through him learns about poetry, love and politics.

The new movie, by Chilean director Pablo Larraín stars Gael García Bernal as a dogged police inspector who led the hunt for Neruda. The pro-democracy campaigner went on the run in 1948 after the Chilean government outlawed the communist party, of which the poet was a member.

Neruda first went underground and became a fugitive as he tried to lead leftist opposition to the government, but eventually he had to flee the country. Neruda crossed the Andes mountains on horseback en route to Argentina with local people who knew the land and almost drowned in the Currigüe river in southern Chile. He recalled this brush with death when he gave a speech accepting the Nobel prize for literature in 1971. He said he rode a horse that was struggling to keep its head above water plunging them both in the torrent.



Nobel prize for literature receiver poet Pablo Neruda.

Rising star

"Then we made it across. And as soon as we got to the other side, the peasants who were accompanying me asked with a smile, 'Were you very afraid?'" Neruda recalled. "It thought that my last hour had come, I said. 'We were behind with the lassos at the ready,' they replied."

The episode turned Neruda into a global symbol of the fight for freedom. Shortly thereafter, Neruda would publish "Canto General", an epic collection of more than 300 poems in which he depicts Latin America's history as a continuous fight against oppression. Director Larraín is one of the rising stars of Latin American cinema, who is now shooting Hollywood star Natalie Portman in a biopic of former US first lady Jackie Kennedy, "Jackie". His brother Juan de Dios Larraín, who produced "Neruda", described that film as part police procedural, part dark comedy, part adventure flick. The action "never stops," he told AFP. He added: "We owe the poet several movies. This is another one of them." He said it would be impossible to capture in just one movie all the facets of Neruda's life-political activist, diplomat, world renowned writer and more.

Other chapters deserve a movie, too, argued Fernando Saez, president of the Neruda Foundation, including his busy love life, his life as a collector of ship figureheads and sea shells, and his last days after the 1973 military coup that brought General Augusto Pinochet to power.

Neruda was preparing to flee to Mexico to lead the opposition to Pinochet but he died in a hospital just days after the coup. The official cause was prostate cancer. But to this day it is argued that he was poisoned by the Pinochet regime.

Just days ago his remains were re-buried-for the third time-after undergoing three years of tests to determine the cause of death. Results are pending. Despite his worldwide fame as a writer, many aspects of Neruda's life are unknown to many people, said Saez. "Neruda's stature created a myth, and these movies help bring him closer as a human being," he added. — AFP



STOCKHOLM: Sergey Lazarev representing Russia performs the song "You Are The Only One" during the first semi-final of the Eurovision Song Contest 2016 on Tuesday. — AFP

Russia's Eurovision dream rests with gay-friendly star

Russia's Eurovision hopes this year rest with Sergey Lazarev, a former child star with a hipster quiff who has spoken out against his country's climate of homophobia and says he welcomes the support of gay fans. Lazarev came to fame as a squeaky-voiced pre-teen with a group called Neposedy (Scamps) at the age of 12. He went on to form a boyband called Smash!! before going solo in 2004. Tonight in Stockholm he will face off against 25 other hopefuls in the grand final as Eurovision marks its 60th birthday.

Lazarev has been chasing the Eurovision dream since 2008, when he lost in the national heat to rival teen idol Dima Bilan-who went on to win the contest. Lazarev has performed many of his songs in English, and Russian state television says he is the country's first contestant to speak the language confidently enough to give interviews. Unlike many Russian pop stars who like to mime, he's a confident live performer unafraid of taking on a daunting schedule to satisfy his army of teenage fans. In March alone he performed solo concerts in 16 different cities around his vast homeland-including far-flung Vladivostok.

At a rehearsal for his energetic Eurovision routine earlier this week, Lazarev took a dramatic tumble on stage, prompting fears he could fail to pull it off in Saturday's grand final in Stockholm. But the

33-year-old sailed through the semi-final and is among the favourites to win the competition, along with Ukraine's Jamala-bringing a familiar geopolitical edge to the annual celebration of glamour, sparkle and showmanship.

Brave stand on gay rights

Eurovision has long enjoyed a huge cult following in the gay community and Lazarev has given his backing to same-sex rights-a brave gesture for a singer who depends on access to Russian state television shows for his public profile. This month he told Sweden's QX gay magazine that he was happy for fans to wave rainbow flags at his performance, saying he respects his gay fans and they respect him. He appeared at a British gay pride event in 2008, at a time when Moscow's then-mayor openly called such demonstrations "Satanic." After Russia's parliament in 2013 initially backed a highly controversial bill-later signed into law by President Vladimir Putin-banning homosexual "propaganda" to minors, Lazarev wrote a protest message on Facebook. "It's terribly frightening and stupid when Russia's ruling structure does not unite the country but instead pits its citizens against each other, whatever their ethnic group or orientation," he wrote. —AFP

CBS Officially Greenlights **Kevin James** Comedy 'Kevin Can Wait'



Comedian Kevin James

CBS has given an official series order to Kevin James' new comedy "Kevin Can Wait." The previously untitled project from CBS Television Studios and Sony Pictures Television had already received a production commitment for the 2016-17 season from the network.

The multi-camera comedy stars James as a newly retired police officer looking forward to spending carefree, quality time with his wife and three kids, only to discover he faces tougher challenges at home than he ever did on the streets. Erinn Hayes is set to star as James' character's wife, with Taylor Spreitler, Mary-Charles Jones, James Digiacomio, Ryan Cartwright, Leonard Earl Howze, Lenny Venito and Gary Valentine rounding out the cast.

Comedy vet Bruce Helford will serve as show runner and exec producer with Rock Reuben, James, Jeff Sussman and Andy

Fickman. The series is being produced through James' overall deal with Sony Pictures TV.

In a statement last fall when CBS issued its production commitment, CBS Entertainment president Glenn Geller said, "We're beyond thrilled to be back in business with Kevin James! He's an incredibly talented star on every screen and every stage, who appeals to a broad audience. We can't wait to start working with Kevin and the amazing comedy talents of Bruce Helford and Rock Reuben on this exciting new project."

The pickup further brings into focus CBS' programming lineup for the upcoming season. Also on Thursday, CBS canceled drama "CSI: Cyber." The network renewed freshman comedy "Life in Pieces" on Wednesday. — Reuters

Funny or Die Aims for Emmys With **Johnny Depp's Donald Trump Biopic**

Actor Johnny Depp may have fallen short of an Oscar nomination for his raved performance as James "Whitey" Bulger in last year's "Black Mass," but he has a shot at TV awards recognition for a biopic of a completely different sort.

Funny or Die will be submitting parody film "Donald Trump's The Art of the Deal: The Movie" for Emmy consideration, Variety has learned, marking the web production company's first-ever submission in longform content categories for a project that premiered on its website. In the 50-minute film—which was released online on Feb. 10 to coincide with the New Hampshire primary, but pulled within two weeks (it will be released again soon).

Depp stars as the now-presumptive Republican presidential nominee in a project "based" on his 1988 autobiography, "The Art of the Deal." It was directed by "Drunk History" creator Jeremy Konner and written by Joe Randazzo (The Onion, "@midnight"). Funny or Die also submitted original music and lyrics from Kenny Loggins (who performed and co-wrote the film's title track), as well as Depp's makeup team and bids for writing and directing.

The movie comes complete with its own faux background, laid out by Ron Howard in bookends: In 1988, Trump wrote, directed and starred in a made-for-TV movie based on his bestselling book "The Art of the Deal." But the film never aired because, as legend has it, it was preempted by a Monday Night Football game and Trump furiously refused to release it.

Alfred Molina, Patton Oswalt, Henry Winkler and '80s alien icon ALF all make cameo appearances.

Depp's Trump impression is on point in the film, and he also harnesses the name-calling businessman/politician's trademark petulance. Whether he can generate serious consideration, well, that could be a tall order. His category is pretty stacked this year, with competition from Ian McKellen and Anthony Hopkins ("The Dresser"), Bryan Cranston ("All the Way"), Benedict Cumberbatch ("Sherlock"), Idris Elba ("Luther"), etc., not to mention limited series candidates like Oscar Isaac ("Show Me a Hero"), Courtney B. Vance and Cuba Gooding Jr. ("The People v. O.J. Simpson") and Tom Hiddleston ("The Night Manager").

Funny or Die did get a surprise nomination for Kristen Wiig for the IFC miniseries spoof "The Spoils of Babylon" two years ago, while Bill Murray is another oddity in the mix after picking up a SAG nomination for Netflix's "A Very Murray Christmas" earlier this year, so this kind of thing isn't unheard of.

Funny or Die Editor-in-Chief Owen Burke has said the idea with "The Art of the Deal" was to move quickly with the project because all involved assumed Trump would fade away from the presidential landscape. Three months later, here we are. — Reuters



Notorious Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar.

True Story of **Pablo Escobar** is Too Hard to Believe

The first Emmy campaign for Netflix's "Narcos" has officially set sail. Wagner Moura and Boyd Holbrook reunited with director-producer Jose Padilha and executive producer Eric Newman for a special screening and panel discussion, moderated by Variety's Debra Birnbaum, Wednesday at Paramount Studios in Hollywood.

The series, created by Chris Brancato, Carlo Bernard and Doug Miro, offered a fact based glimpse into the '80s cocaine trade, chronicling the escapades of notorious drug lord Pablo Escobar (Moura) and the DEA agents (Holbrook and Pedro Pascal) hot on his heels.

Set and filmed in Colombia, the series adopts a documentary-like style, frequently cutting to archival video clips and voiceover narration provided by Holbrook's character. According to Padilha, the historic footage was included to uphold the accuracy of the inaugural season. "The true story of Pablo Escobar is too hard to believe," Padilha told Variety before the event. "If I told it exactly the way it was, people would think we were making it up. This was so much so, that I had to cut to stock footage many times so people would actually say, 'Oh wait, this happened?'"

The cast and creators prepped for production with an immense amount of research, which entailed interviewing various Colombian political figures, drug dealers and journalists who could offer insight on the kingpin's reign. "We really wanted to embrace the Colombian contribution to bringing down Escobar. They did incredibly brave things and died at an alarming rate," Newman explained during the panel. "The journalists who covered the story were killed at a rate that, as a society, we wouldn't know what to do with."

Moura added, "We wanted to be as respectful as we could to Colombian history." Moura, who is a Brazilian native, didn't speak Spanish before ultimately landing the role. He revealed that he traveled to the Colombian set location ahead of the "Narcos" cast and crew to familiarize himself with the language. "You know what he did?" Padilha asked, addressing the audience. "Three months before we even scouted Colombia, [he] went to Medellin on his own, enlisted into a university where Pablo Escobar went and stayed there speaking Spanish for three months. When we got there, he knew how to speak Spanish; that's what it takes." — Reuters



Actor Johnny Depp's portrayal of Donald Trump on Funny or die.



BEIJING: A mobile device displaying the Didi Chuxing app is posed near the Apple store logo in Beijing yesterday. Apple Inc has invested \$1 billion in Chinese ride-hailing service Didi Chuxing, the main competitor in China for Uber Technologies Ltd. — AP

APPLE INVESTS \$1BN IN CHINESE RIDE-HAILING SERVICE DIDI CHUXING

CEO SAYS DEAL WILL HELP COMPANY BETTER UNDERSTAND CHINA

BEIJING: Apple Inc said on Thursday it has invested \$1 billion in Chinese ride-hailing service Didi Chuxing, a move that Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook said would help the company better understand the critical Chinese market. The tech giant's rare investment gives it a stake in two burgeoning waves of technology - the sharing economy and car technology - as the iPhone business that propelled it to record profitability shows signs of maturing.

Apple is trying to reinvigorate sales in China, where it has come under greater pressure from regulators, and Cook is traveling to the country this month.

The move aligns Apple with Uber Technologies Inc's chief rival in China, as automakers and technology companies forge new alliances and make cross investments. General Motors, for example, recently bought autonomous driving technology company Cruise Automation and has also taken a stake in US ride-sharing company Lyft.

Cook said in an interview that he saw opportunities for Apple and Didi Chuxing to collaborate in the future. "We are making the investment for a number of strategic reasons, including a chance to learn more about certain segments of the China market," he said. "Of course, we believe it will deliver a strong return for our invested capital over time as well."

Didi Chuxing, formerly known as Didi Kuaidi, said in a statement that this was the single largest investment it has ever received. The company, which previously raised several billion dollars, dominates the ride-sharing market in China. The company said it completes more than 11 million rides a day, with more than 87 percent of the market for private car-hailing in China.

Though Didi Chuxing is valued at upwards of \$20 billion, according to a person familiar with its ongoing funding round, the company has been losing billions in a costly battle with Uber for market share in China.

"CONFIDENCE IN CHINA"

Analysts say the deal offers a glimpse of how Apple may diversify its business as sales of the iPhone level off. Apple has emphasized its burgeoning revenue from services such as Apple Music and mobile payment Apple Pay, a strategy that the ride-sharing investment appears to reinforce, said analyst Patrick Moorhead of Moor Insights & Strategy.

"After all the hints about the service business and what they would like to do in the future, it's all starting to fit together," he said. Investors are eagerly watching to see whether Apple will enter the automotive business. Apple has hired a wide range of automotive experts, and the company is exploring building a self-driving car, sources have told Reuters.

Cook said Apple remained focused on the in-car experience with its CarPlay system, which links smartphones to vehicle infotainment systems. "That is what we do today in the car business, so we will have to see what the future holds," he said. Although Apple's sales in China have slumped amid slowing economic growth there, Cook stressed he remained confident in the market.

"(The deal) reflects our excitement about their growing business ... and also our continued confidence in the long term in China's economy," Cook said.

Apple has enjoyed warmer relations with the Chinese government than some American tech companies, but regulators recently shut down its online book and film services, triggering concerns among investors. The true value of Apple's investment in Didi might be in shoring up that relationship, said analyst Ben Bajarin of Creative Strategies.

"This is as much about sending signals about their seriousness in that country as it is about helping Didi build a ride-sharing platform," he said. Didi Chuxing is a poster child for Chinese technology, a critical sector in Beijing's goal to shift the economy towards higher-value services. — Reuters



SHANGHAI: A taxi driver waits at a newly-installed Didi Station, a road-side stop for taxis booked by the Chinese car-hailing app Didi Kuaidi, which has since changed its name to Didi Chuxing, in Shanghai. — AP

HEAD OF ANTI-FAKES GROUP CLOSELY TIED TO ALIBABA, OWNS STOCK

SHANGHAI: When an influential anti-counterfeiting group allowed Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba to join its ranks in April, the group said it was a collaborative move that would help stem the sale of fake goods for top companies such as Apple, Nike and Procter & Gamble.

Instead, the decision has sparked an angry revolt among some members of the International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition, who consider Alibaba the world's largest marketplace for fakes. The ensuing drama has led to outraged letters, anonymous memos, and high-profile defections. Now, an investigation by The Associated Press has found that the IACC's president owns Alibaba stock, has close ties to a key Alibaba vice president and uses family members to run his coalition.

"It's crossed the line ethically," said Deborah Greaves, a partner at Brutzkus Gubner law firm who served on the coalition's board from 2011 to 2013. She said she didn't know that IACC chief Robert Barchiesi had stock in Alibaba until informed by the AP, calling it "really problematic." "Everything the IACC does that makes Alibaba look better potentially drives up the price of the stock," said Greaves, whose firm is still a member of the group. "As a board member, I would never have bought stock in Alibaba."

The storm has bared the deep loathing some harbor for a company heralded as one of communist China's greatest capitalist success stories. At issue is the independence of a small but influential coalition that lobbies US officials and testifies before Congress. Alibaba's membership could help shape the global fight against counterfeits, which damage companies' bottom lines, result in harmful products consumers purchase unknowingly, and feed a vast underground money-laundering industry that supports criminal syndicates.

In recent weeks Gucci America, Michael Kors and Tiffany have quit the Washington D.C.-based coalition, which has more than 250 members. The AP found several ties between the group's president and Alibaba:

- The president of the coalition, Barchiesi, has owned Alibaba stock since its 2014 listing in New York. The IACC said in a statement that the holdings represent "a small percentage of his investment portfolio."

- Matthew Bassiur, who took over as vice president of global intellectual property enforcement at Alibaba in January, hired Barchiesi's son, Robert Barchiesi II, to work at Apple back in 2011. Alibaba said that hire was made on merit. Apple declined to comment.

- Bassiur is a founding board member of the ICE Foundation, which has been run by Barchiesi's other son, James Barchiesi, since 2013. That same year, the ICE Foundation board voted to award a contract for "fiscal and operational management" to a private company also run by James Barchiesi. The ICE Foundation, which supports U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement employees, has received grants of \$10,000 from the anti-counterfeiting coalition every year since 2012, tax filings show.

Some members have welcomed Alibaba. "I thought that was a good step forward," said Brad Buckles, an anti-piracy executive at the Recording Industry Association of America. "Bring them in so that you can complain to them. At the end of the day, if none of it works, you can kick them out."

Jennifer Kuperman, head of international corporate affairs at Alibaba, said Bassiur's expertise would help the company "further instill trust in our marketplaces." "We are highly confident in his abilities and proud to have him at Alibaba in this critical global role," she said. Critics, however, fear Alibaba will use IACC membership to gain legitimacy while papering over fundamental flaws in how it does business. Gucci and other brands owned by France's Kering Group allege in US court filings that Alibaba knowingly profits from the sale of fakes. Alibaba has dismissed the case as "wasteful litigation."

Brands "are concerned that Alibaba will tout its membership as part of a propaganda campaign to falsely persuade regulators, prosecutors, consumers and investors that it is fighting counterfeiting when in fact it is perhaps the world's largest counterfeiting bazaar," said Geoffrey Potter, lead anti-counterfeiting lawyer at New York's Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler.

Michael Kors' general counsel has called Alibaba "our most dangerous and damaging adversary." For some, the admission of Alibaba, coupled with the personal ties that link it to the coalition, threaten the common sense of purpose that once bound the group. — AP

FACEBOOK DELIVERS THE SCOOP ON HOW IT DELIVERS THE NEWS

NEW YORK: Will "Trending topics" become a "trending" topic on Facebook? The social media giant on Thursday pulled back the curtain on how its Trending Topics feature works, a reaction to a report in the tech blog Gizmodo that claimed Facebook downplays conservative news subjects. Facebook denies that report, which relied upon a single anonymous individual with self-described conservative leanings.

In its own blog post, the company said a series of checks and balances - involving both software formulas and humans - ensures that stories displayed in the "trending topics" section aren't biased. The post linked to a 28-page internal document Facebook uses to determine trending topics, after the Guardian published a similar document that was leaked to it. Justin Osofsky, vice president of global operations, said the guidelines ensure that stories in trending topics represent "the most important popular stories, regardless of where they fall on the ideological spectrum." "The guidelines do not permit reviewers to add or suppress

political perspectives," he said in a statement. Facebook hasn't said how many people are responsible for the trending topics team. A Guardian report on Thursday said the team was as few as 12 people, citing leaked documents, but Facebook didn't comment on that number.

Trending topics were introduced in 2014 and appear in a separate section to the right of the Facebook newsfeed. According to Facebook, potential trending topics are first determined by a software formula, or algorithm, that identifies topics that have spiked in popularity on the site. Next, a team of trending topic staffers review potential topics and confirm the topic is tied to a current news event; write a topic description with information corroborated by at least three of 1,000 news outlets; apply a category label to the topic; and check to see whether the topic is covered by most or all of ten major media outlets (including The New York Times, Fox News, BuzzFeed and others). Stories covered by those outlets gain an importance level that may make them more likely to be seen. — AP



A man walks past a mural in an office on the Facebook campus in Menlo Park, California. Yesterday, Facebook pulled back the curtain on how its Trending Topics feature works, a reaction to a report that suggested Facebook downplays conservative news subjects. — AP

BANGLADESH BANK HEIST SIMILAR TO SONY HACK

NEW YORK/DHAKA: Investigators probing the cyber heist of \$81 million from the Bangladesh central bank connected it yesterday to the hack at Sony Corp's film studio in 2014, while global financial network SWIFT disclosed a previously unreported attack on a commercial bank.

SWIFT did not say which commercial bank it was or whether it had lost money, but cyber-security firm BAE Systems said a Vietnamese bank, which it did not name, had been a target. It was not clear if they were referring to the same attack and there was no immediate comment from authorities in Hanoi. SWIFT, the linchpin of the global financial system, said forensic experts believed the second case showed that the Bangladesh heist was not a single occurrence, but part of a wider campaign targeting banks.

In both cases, SWIFT said, insiders or cyber attackers had succeeded in penetrating the targeted banks' systems, obtaining user credentials and submitting fraudulent SWIFT messages that correspond with transfers of money. The cooperative has maintained that its core messaging service has not been compromised. But confirmation of a second attack on a bank will likely increase scrutiny on the security of a network used by 11,000 financial institutions globally. In Bangladesh, cyber-security experts hired by the central bank said in a report that hackers were still inside the bank's network, monitoring the investigation into one of the biggest cyber heists in the world. Reuters reviewed parts of the report, but the source who shared the document declined to provide access to its full contents, saying the release of some details could hamper a multinational effort to catch the criminals.

Asked about the report, a Bangladesh Bank spokesman said: "We have engaged forensic experts to investigate the whole thing, including this." He did not elaborate. Investigators have determined that one team of hackers, dubbed Group Zero in the report, was responsible for the heist and remained inside the network. Group Zero may be seeking to monitor the ongoing cyber investigations or cause other damage, but is unlikely to be able to order fraudulent fund transfers, the investigators wrote.

"NATION-STATE ACTOR"

Two other groups are also inside the bank's network, which is linked to the SWIFT international transaction system, the report found. One of the two is a "nation-state actor" engaged in stealing information in attacks that are stealthy but "not known to be destructive", it said. A spokeswoman for SWIFT said she was unable to comment. The report said investigators knew little about a third group of hackers found inside the network, referred to as Group Two, except that they were using mostly commodity, or off-the-shelf, hacking tools.

The report, which was submitted earlier this month, did not further identify any of the groups. BAE Systems, Europe's largest weapons maker, which also has a large cyber-security business, said it had uncovered evidence linking malicious software used in the Bangladesh heist to the high-profile attack on Sony's Hollywood studio in 2014 and other cases. — Reuters

VENTURE CAPITALISTS RAISE MORE MONEY, GIVE LESS AWAY

SAN FRANCISCO: Venture capitalists are raising money at the fastest rate in a decade, raking in about \$13 billion in the first quarter of 2016. But much of that cash won't flow into new startups anytime soon. Rather, venture firms are bracing for a downturn and boosting reserves to keep companies they have already backed from going bust, said venture capitalists and limited partners.

"They are squirrels trying to pack their cheeks full of nuts," said Ben Narasin, a partner at Canvas Ventures. "Everyone has been waiting for winter to start for a long time." The paradox of rising venture fundraising and falling venture investing is the latest sign of a tectonic shift in the tech startup realm. The extraordinary growth of so-called "unicorn" companies such as Uber and Airbnb - now valued at tens of billions of dollars, based on venture investments - has left many high-value startups with no "exit strategy," in Silicon Valley parlance.

Burned by previous busts, Wall Street has lost its appetite for initial public offerings from money-losing companies. No venture-backed tech startup has gone public this year, and the few that did last year - including enterprise storage company Pure Storage, and cloud storage and file-sharing firm Box - have seen their share prices steadily sink. High valuations have also scared off potential acquirers.

Scale Venture Partners exemplifies the cautious approach taking hold in the VC industry. It chose to do one fewer investment from its last fundraising round and to increase its reserves by more than 10 percent. "We will have to support our companies longer," said Rory O'Driscoll, a partner at the firm, which raised a \$335 million fund in January. Accel Partners has reduced its pace of new investments since the middle of last year, while increasing its follow-on funding for portfolio companies, according to an analysis by venture capital database CB Insights.

The venture firm raised \$2 billion in March, but it won't tap into the new fund until late fall, said managing director Richard Wong. Total US venture investment fell to

\$12.1 billion in the first quarter - down 30 percent from the most recent peak of \$17.3 billion in the second quarter of last year.

Chris Douvos, managing director of Venture Investment Associates, an investor in early-stage venture funds, says the funds he backs are increasing their reserves by 10 percent to 25 percent over what they had in previous funds. The \$13 billion raised by VCs is the third-largest quarter for fundraising since the dot-com peak in 2000, according to Thomson Reuters data. There is now \$382 billion of dry powder - cash available to spend - held by both venture capital and private equity firms that invest in technology companies, according to investment banking and consulting firm Bulger Partners.

"It's fast, and it's a lot of dollars this year," said Beezer Clarkson, managing director at Sapphire Ventures, which invests in early-stage venture funds.

Many VCs believe that more reserves will be needed for the big cash infusions that startups often need after establishing themselves but before turning a profit.

Vcs are also seeing mutual funds retreat from late-stage startup financing deals. Mutual funds led just eight deals in the fourth quarter of last year, down from 26 in the second quarter, according to the research firm CB Insights. The confluence of trends means that money-losing startups likely will struggle more for venture capital. That, in turn, could lead to more companies failing or cutting staff, cooling the red-hot market for tech talent. It could also strengthen the hand of dominant tech companies, who may face fewer disruptive rivals and attract employees tired of volatile startup life, according to tech recruiters.

CASH BURN

Until recently, many venture capitalists have had a land-grab mentality, even with more obscure startups such as Magic Leap - an augmented reality company that raised about \$800 million in February - or Social Finance, a startup in the highly scrutinized fintech sector that raised \$1 billion in September. Investors competed fiercely

to finance hot companies they believed could be the next Google or Facebook. Higher prices for smaller stakes drove up valuations in companies, including many who burned cash quickly in a quest for growth. Many venture capitalists say they overpaid by 20 to 30 percent, and now have to keep those companies afloat.

Over the past six months, however, nervous whispers about a tech bubble have sparked rising skepticism of venture-dependent startups with stratospheric price tags. The same venture capitalists who jostled in bidding wars for the next great deal just six months ago are now fending off appeals. Canvas Ventures, Norwest Venture Partners and Accel Partners among Silicon Valley's more prominent firms - say they are getting more calls from peers asking them to join a late-stage round for companies running out of cash. "We get a lot more 'special opportunities, just for you,'" said Wong, of Accel Partners. "We get the phone calls, along with everyone else."

PAPER GAINS

For now, venture capitalists have little problem raising money, despite their new hesitance to spend it and the inability of many startups to turn profits or go public. That's in part because many VC firms are currently showing huge paper gains in the value of their portfolios. Many firms are raising as much as possible now, in case valuations drop in so-called "down rounds," when later stage investors pay less for company stakes than earlier ones, and the returns on their investments plummet, according to limited partners. Signs of falling returns are already emerging. Cambridge Associates, an investment advisor, measured a -0.4 percent return on the US Venture Capital Index for the third quarter of last year, the first down quarter since 2011. First Round Capital, an early-stage venture firm, warned its limited partners in a letter a year ago that the seed-stage venture capital deals will see much lower returns in the next several years. — Reuters



03:55 Soul Plane
05:25 Pieces Of Dreams
07:05 The Kentuckian
08:50 Inspector Clouseau
10:25 The Indian Fighter
11:55 Clifford
13:25 Kid Galahad
15:00 Late For Dinner
16:35 It Runs In The Family
18:00 The Norseman
19:30 The People That Time Forgot
21:00 Fear The Walking Dead
22:00 Talking Dead: Fear Edition
23:00 Fear The Walking Dead
00:00 Breaking Bad
01:00 Who Is Cletis Tout?
02:30 Vigilante Force



03:25 Shamwari: A Wild Life
03:50 Shamwari: A Wild Life
04:15 Gator Boys
05:02 Treehouse Masters
05:49 River Monsters (Best Of Series 1-5)
06:36 Call Of The Wildman
07:00 Call Of The Wildman
07:25 Treehouse Masters
08:15 Treehouse Masters
09:10 Treehouse Masters
10:05 Treehouse Masters
11:00 Dog TV
11:55 Ten Deadliest Snakes
12:50 Gangland Killers

13:45 Biggest And Baddest
14:40 Africa's Trees Of Life
15:35 Animal Cops South Africa
16:30 Shamwari: A Wild Life
17:00 Shamwari: A Wild Life
17:25 Gangland Killers
18:20 Rugged Justice
19:15 Gator Boys
20:10 Village Vets
20:40 Village Vets
21:05 Austin Stevens: Snakemaster
22:00 Rugged Justice
22:55 Ten Deadliest Snakes
23:50 Gator Boys
00:45 Gator Boys
01:40 Gangland Killers
02:35 Biggest And Baddest



03:40 Stella
04:30 Doctors
08:30 Eastenders
10:30 New Tricks
13:15 Casualty
14:10 Doctors

15:10 Death In Paradise
18:00 Doctors
18:30 Eastenders
19:00 Gates
19:20 Father Brown
20:05 Call The Midwife: Christmas
Special 2015
21:00 The Musketeers
21:55 Wallander
23:30 Eastenders
00:00 Doctors
00:30 Father Brown
01:15 Call The Midwife: Christmas

Special 2015
02:05 The Musketeers
Comedy Central
03:00 Kumail Nanjani: Beta Male
03:50 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
06:20 Nathan For You
09:45 Lip Sync Battle
12:15 Workaholics
16:30 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
17:25 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
18:15 Hungry Investors
20:15 Lip Sync Battle
20:37 Lip Sync Battle
21:30 South Park
22:00 Underground With Dave Attell
22:30 Inside Amy Schumer
23:00 Tattoo Disasters
23:30 Tattoo Disasters
00:00 JB Smoove: That's How I Dooz It
00:50 Underground With Dave Attell
01:15 South Park
02:05 Underground With Dave Attell
02:30 South Park



03:00 Hatton Garden Heist: One Last Job
04:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
05:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
06:00 The FBI Files
09:00 Homicide Hunter
10:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
11:00 The First 48

12:00 The First 48
13:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
14:00 Forensic Squad
15:00 Gangs Of Britain...
16:00 I Killed My BFF
17:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
18:00 Forensic Squad
19:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
20:00 Private Crimes
20:30 Private Crimes
21:00 Hatton Garden Heist: One Last Job
22:00 Killer Kids
23:00 Homicide Hunter
00:00 Evil Up Close
01:00 The Ghost Inside My Child
02:00 Killer Kids



03:40 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Fast N' Loud
10:10 Gold Rush
11:00 Curse Of The Frozen Gold
11:50 Alaska: Battle On The Bay
12:40 Storage Wars Canada
14:45 Property Wars
16:50 Edge Of Alaska
17:40 Ice Lake Rebels
18:30 You Have Been Warned
19:20 The Pop Illusionist
20:10 Superhuman Science
21:00 Edge Of Alaska
21:50 Ice Lake Rebels
22:40 Railroad Alaska
23:30 What Happened Next?
00:45 Edge Of Alaska
Discovery Family
03:00 Destroyed In Seconds
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 How It's Made
05:30 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
06:20 Mythbusters
07:00 Doki
08:40 Bad Dog
12:50 Storm Chasers 2010
13:40 Storm Chasers
17:00 Ultimate Survival
18:40 Wildest Africa
19:30 Troy
20:20 The Willis Family
21:10 NASA's Greatest Missions
22:00 Destroyed In Seconds
00:30 Storm Chasers 2010
01:20 Storm Chasers
02:10 Through The Wormhole



03:00 Evil Stepmothers
03:48 Evil Kin
04:36 Blood Relatives
05:24 Nowhere To Hide
06:12 I Was Murdered
07:00 Dr G: Medical Examiner
07:50 Blood Relatives
12:00 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
16:10 Suspicion
17:00 California Investigator
17:25 California Investigator
17:50 Southern Fried Homicide
18:40 Murder Comes To Town
19:30 Swamp Murders
20:20 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
21:10 Suspicion
22:00 I'd Kill For You
22:50 Alaska Haunting
23:40 The Haunted
00:30 Evil Kin



03:05 How It's Made
03:29 Mythbusters
04:16 How It's Made
05:03 How The Universe Works
05:50 Kings Of Construction
06:37 How Do They Do It?
07:23 How It's Made
11:08 How Do They Do It?
11:30 How Do They Do It?
11:53 Food Factory
14:10 Food Factory USA
14:57 Mythbusters
18:05 How The Universe Works
21:15 Secret Space Escapes
22:00 How Do They Do It?
22:45 How It's Made
01:08 Through The Wormhole With Morgan Freeman
01:55 Through The Wormhole



03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Hank Zipzer
04:35 Binny And The Ghost
05:00 Violetta
05:45 The Hive
05:50 Mouk
06:00 Lolirock
06:25 Sofia The First
06:50 Gravity Falls
07:15 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
07:40 Hank Zipzer
08:05 Shake It Up
08:30 Shake It Up
08:55 Hannah Montana
09:20 Hannah Montana
09:45 H2O: Just Add Water
10:10 H2O: Just Add Water
10:35 Starstruck
12:05 Violetta Recipes
12:15 Disney Mickey Mouse Jessie
12:20 Jessie
12:45 Girl Meets World
13:10 Alex And Co
13:35 Best Friends Whenever
14:00 Gravity Falls
14:25 Descendants Wicked World
14:30 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
17:25 I Didn't Do It
17:50 Violetta Recipes
18:00 Cloud 9
19:30 Evermoor Chronicles
19:55 Evermoor Chronicles
20:20 Best Friends Whenever
20:45 Good Luck Charlie
21:10 Good Luck Charlie
21:35 H2O: Just Add Water
22:00 Binny And The Ghost
22:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
22:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:10 Hank Zipzer
23:35 Binny And The Ghost
00:00 Violetta
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Hank Zipzer
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:30 Violetta



03:10 Henry Hugglemonster
03:20 Calimero
03:35 Zou
03:45 Loopdidoo
04:00 Art Attack
04:25 Henry Hugglemonster
04:35 Calimero
04:50 Zou
05:00 Loopdidoo
05:15 Art Attack
05:35 Henry Hugglemonster
05:50 Calimero
06:00 Zou
06:20 Loopdidoo
06:35 Art Attack
07:00 The Hive
07:10 Zou
07:25 Loopdidoo
07:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
08:05 Sofia The First
08:30 Goldie & Bear
08:45 Miles From Tomorrow
09:10 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
09:20 Doc McStuffins
09:35 Doc McStuffins
10:00 Sofia The First
10:30 Goldie & Bear
11:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
11:25 The Lion Guard
11:50 Miles From Tomorrow
12:15 Henry Hugglemonster
12:30 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
13:00 Sofia The First
13:25 Goldie & Bear
13:50 Doc McStuffins
14:15 The Lion Guard
14:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
15:10 Miles From Tomorrow
15:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
16:00 Sofia The First
16:25 Jungle Cubs
16:50 Aladdin

17:15 The Lion Guard
17:40 Goldie & Bear
18:05 Miles From Tomorrow
18:30 Sofia The First
19:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:30 The Lion Guard
20:00 Goldie & Bear
20:30 Sofia The First
21:00 Jungle Cubs
21:25 Aladdin
21:50 Gummi Bears
22:20 Lilo And Stitch
22:50 Zou
23:05 Henry Hugglemonster
23:20 Calimero
23:35 Zou
23:50 Loopdidoo
00:05 Art Attack
00:30 Henry Hugglemonster
00:45 Calimero
01:00 Zou
01:15 Loopdidoo
01:30 Art Attack
01:55 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Calimero
02:20 Zou
02:30 Loopdidoo
02:45 Art Attack



06:00 Booster
06:10 Super Matrak
06:35 Super Matrak
07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
07:25 K.C. Undercover
07:50 Supa Strikas
08:15 Supa Strikas
08:40 Lab Rats
09:10 Kirby Buckets
09:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
10:00 Supa Strikas
10:25 Lab Rats: Space Colony
11:20 Lab Rats
11:45 Lab Rats
12:10 Lab Rats
12:35 Lab Rats
13:00 Skyrunners
14:30 Phineas And Ferb
14:45 Kickin' It
15:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
15:15 Rocket Monkeys
15:40 Guardians Of The Galaxy
16:05 Mighty Med
16:30 Star Wars Rebels
16:55 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
17:25 K.C. Undercover
17:50 Supa Strikas
18:15 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
18:40 K.C. Undercover
19:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
19:10 Annedroids
19:35 Star Wars Rebels
20:00 Mighty Med
20:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
20:55 K.C. Undercover
21:20 Supa Strikas
21:45 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
22:10 Mighty Med
22:40 Disney Mickey Mouse



03:15 Kourtney And Kim Take Miami
04:10 Kourtney And Kim Take Miami
05:05 Kourtney And Kim Take Miami
06:00 Fashion Bloggers
06:25 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
07:20 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
08:20 E! News
09:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
13:05 E! News
14:05 Christina Milian Turned Up
15:00 WAGS
16:00 Botched
17:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
18:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
19:00 E! News
20:00 Fashion Police
21:00 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
22:00 WAGS
23:00 E! News
00:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:50 New Money



12 ROUNDS ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

- food network**
- Food Network HD
 - 03:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 - 04:00 Man Fire Food
 - 04:30 Man Fire Food
 - 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
 - 06:00 Chopped
 - 07:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 - 07:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 - 08:00 Chopped
 - 09:00 Amazing Wedding Cakes
 - 10:00 The Pioneer Woman
 - 10:30 The Pioneer Woman
 - 11:00 Siba's Table
 - 11:30 Siba's Table
 - 12:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
 - 12:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
 - 13:00 Chopped
 - 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 - 17:00 Chopped
 - 18:00 Siba's Table
 - 19:00 Private Chef
 - 20:00 Chopped
 - 21:00 Cutthroat Kitchen
 - 22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 - 23:00 Private Chef
 - 00:00 Chopped
 - 01:00 Cutthroat Kitchen
 - 02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives

- 03:00 Insane Cinema: Harvey Spannos
- 04:00 The 808
- 04:30 World Of X Games 2014
- 05:30 Icons Of Aloha
- 06:00 Fuel TV's Skate Arabia
- 07:00 Moments
- 07:30 16 Below - Generation 2
- 08:00 Insane Cinema: Harvey Spannos
- 09:00 Standard Snowboard Show
- 09:30 Nuclear Cowboyz 2012
- 10:00 Punk Payback With Bas Rutten
- 10:30 Spot's Tampa Am
- 11:00 Fuel TV Presents Mission: Caribbean
- 11:30 Red Bull Union Jacked
- 12:00 Punk Payback With Bas Rutten
- 12:30 The Gypsy Tour
- 13:00 Insane Cinema: Harvey Spannos
- 14:00 The Crew
- 14:30 Bikes & Broken Bones
- 16:00 Surfing For Peace
- 16:30 Moments
- 17:00 Insane Cinema: Harvey Spannos
- 18:00 Nuclear Cowboyz: Behind The Scenes
- 18:30 16 Below - Generation 2
- 19:00 Street League Of Skateboarding 2015
- 20:30 Vans Get-N Classic, Vol. 2
- 21:00 Blue Carpet Special
- 21:30 Moments
- 22:00 Pull
- 22:30 Pull
- 23:00 Fuel TV's Skate Arabia
- 00:00 World Of X Games 2014
- 01:00 Moments
- 01:30 Choose Your Fate
- 02:30 Vans Get-N Classic, Vol. 2

- OSN FIRST HD COMEDY**
- 03:00 Fresh Off The Boat
 - 03:30 Black-Ish
 - 04:00 Living With Fran
 - 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 - 05:30 Better With You
 - 06:00 My Name Is Earl
 - 06:30 Community
 - 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
 - 08:00 Living With Fran
 - 08:30 Better With You
 - 09:00 Fresh Off The Boat
 - 09:30 2 Broke Girls
 - 10:00 The Simpsons
 - 10:30 Community
 - 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 - 12:00 My Name Is Earl
 - 12:30 Living With Fran
 - 13:00 Better With You
 - 13:30 Community
 - 14:00 Black-Ish
 - 14:30 2 Broke Girls
 - 15:00 The Simpsons
 - 15:30 Parks And Recreation
 - 16:00 Suburgatory



STAR WARS- EPISODE VI - RETURN OF THE JEDI ON OSN MOVIES PREMIERE HD

- 16:30 My Name Is Earl
- 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 18:00 Galavant
- 18:30 Dr. Ken
- 19:00 Last Man Standing
- 19:30 Crowded
- 20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 21:00 Parks And Recreation
- 21:30 Suburgatory
- 22:00 Saturday Night Live
- 23:00 Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll
- 23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 00:30 Parks And Recreation
- 01:00 Suburgatory
- 01:30 Saturday Night Live
- 02:30 Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll

- OSN FIRST MORE**
- 03:00 Game Of Thrones
 - 04:00 After The Thrones
 - 04:30 Curb Your Enthusiasm
 - 05:00 Confirmation
 - 07:00 God Is The Bigger Elvis
 - 08:00 Lucky Louie
 - 08:30 Flight Of The Conchords
 - 09:00 Veep
 - 09:30 The Leisure Class
 - 11:00 American Splendor
 - 12:45 For Neda
 - 14:00 Lucky Louie
 - 14:30 Flight Of The Conchords
 - 15:00 Veep
 - 15:30 My Zinc Bed
 - 17:00 American Splendor
 - 19:00 Allegiance
 - 20:00 The Sopranos
 - 21:00 True Detective
 - 22:00 Ballers
 - 22:30 Funny Or Die Presents

- 23:00 The Wire
- 00:00 D.L. Hughley: Going Home
- 01:00 The Sopranos
- 02:00 True Detective

- OSN FIRST HD**
- 03:00 Sleepy Hollow
 - 04:00 Good Morning America
 - 06:00 The Fosters
 - 07:00 C.S.I.
 - 08:00 Prison Break
 - 09:00 Minority Report
 - 10:00 Shark Tank
 - 11:00 C.S.I.
 - 12:00 Survivor: Kaoh Rong
 - 13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 - 14:00 C.S.I.
 - 15:00 Live Good Morning America
 - 16:00 Survivor: Kaoh Rong
 - 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 - 18:00 Prison Break
 - 19:00 Grey's Anatomy
 - 20:00 Unforgettable
 - 21:00 Criminal Minds
 - 22:00 The Blacklist
 - 23:00 Agent X
 - 00:00 Unforgettable
 - 01:00 Criminal Minds
 - 02:00 The Blacklist

- OSN MOVIES HD ACTION**
- 03:45 The League Of Extraordinary Gentlemen
 - 05:45 Safe House
 - 07:45 12 Rounds
 - 09:45 Battleship
 - 12:00 The Package
 - 14:00 Safe House

- 16:00 Batman Unlimited: Animal Instincts
- 17:30 Battleship
- 19:45 The A-Team
- 22:00 Pearl Harbor
- 01:15 The Purge

- OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY**
- 04:00 Spy Hard
 - 06:00 Mr. Destiny
 - 08:00 At Middleton
 - 10:00 Spy Hard
 - 12:00 The Bounty Hunter
 - 14:00 Three Men And A Baby
 - 16:00 At Middleton
 - 18:00 Pitch Perfect
 - 20:00 We'll Never Have Paris
 - 22:00 Role Models
 - 00:00 Identity Thief
 - 02:00 Pitch Perfect

- OSN MOVIES DRAMA+2**
- 03:00 United Passions
 - 05:00 Begin Again
 - 07:00 Fast Girls
 - 09:00 Snitch
 - 11:00 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The Strike
 - 13:00 Fast Girls
 - 15:00 A Valentine's Date
 - 17:00 Viktor
 - 19:00 Atlas Shrugged Part 2: The Strike
 - 21:00 Frank
 - 23:00 The Kings Of Summer
 - 01:00 The Rover

- OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY**
- 04:45 Pirates Of The Caribbean 2: Dead Man's Chest
 - 07:15 Finding Nemo
 - 09:00 Alexander And The Terrible... Very Bad Day
 - 10:30 Atlantis: The Lost Empire
 - 12:30 The Chronicles Of Narnia: Prince Caspian
 - 15:00 How To Train Your Dragon 2
 - 17:00 Eragon
 - 19:00 Pirates Of The Caribbean: At World's End
 - 21:45 Pirates Of The Caribbean: On Stranger Tides
 - 00:15 How To Train Your Dragon 2
 - 02:00 Pirates Of The Caribbean: At World's End

- OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL**
- 04:30 The Sixth Sense
 - 06:30 God Help The Girl
 - 08:30 Paradise
 - 10:30 When A Man Loves A Woman
 - 12:45 Upside Down
 - 14:30 Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom
 - 17:00 Paradise
 - 19:00 To Write Love On Her Arms
 - 21:00 Wall Street
 - 23:30 Twice Born
 - 02:00 Mandela: Long Walk To Freedom

- OSN MOVIES HD**
- 04:45 Tomorrowland
 - 07:00 Miss You Already
 - 09:00 Interstellar
 - 12:00 Into The Woods
 - 14:15 The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies
 - 16:45 Tommy Cooper: Not Like That, Like This
 - 18:30 Unbroken
 - 21:00 5 Flights Up
 - 23:00 Bad Words
 - 01:00 Project Almanac

- OSN MOVIES HD KIDS**
- 04:15 Hatching
 - 06:00 Evolution Man
 - 08:00 Goat Story 2
 - 10:00 The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie
 - 11:30 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
 - 13:00 K-9 Adventures: Legend Of The Lost Gold
 - 14:30 Bolts And Blip
 - 16:00 Scooby-Doo! Moon Monster Madness
 - 18:00 The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie
 - 20:00 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
 - 22:00 Bolts And Blip
 - 23:30 Scooby-Doo! Moon Monster Madness
 - 01:00 Goat Story 2
 - 02:45 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants

- OSN MOVIES HD PREMIERE**
- 03:45 Middle Of Nowhere
 - 05:45 Song For Marion
 - 07:30 For Greater Glory
 - 10:00 Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope
 - 12:15 Star Wars: Episode v - The Empire Strikes Back
 - 14:30 Star Wars: Episode VI - Return Of The Jedi
 - 17:00 Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace
 - 19:30 Star Wars: Episode II - Attack Of The Clones
 - 22:00 Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge Of The Sith
 - 00:30 Focus
 - 02:45 For Greater Glory

- STAR MOVIES HD**
- 04:45 Seabiscuit
 - 07:00 Six Days, Seven Nights
 - 08:45 Monsters University
 - 10:30 The Limits Of Control
 - 12:15 I Am Number Four
 - 14:15 Starship Troopers
 - 16:30 Coyote Ugly
 - 18:15 The Village
 - 20:00 Ladder 49
 - 22:00 Unbreakable
 - 23:45 The Hurricane
 - 02:15 Grave Encounters

- STAR WORLD HD**
- 03:00 The Listener
 - 04:00 Fit For Fashion
 - 05:00 Melissa & Joey
 - 05:30 Melissa & Joey
 - 06:00 Cougar Town
 - 06:30 Cougar Town
 - 07:00 Making Mr.Right
 - 08:00 Grey's Anatomy
 - 09:00 Grey's Anatomy
 - 10:00 The Listener
 - 11:00 The Listener
 - 12:00 Fit For Fashion
 - 13:00 Melissa & Joey
 - 13:30 Cougar Town
 - 14:00 The Secret Life Of The American Teenager
 - 15:00 Castle
 - 16:00 Lost
 - 17:00 Scrubs
 - 17:30 Happy Endings
 - 18:00 The Walking Dead
 - 19:00 The Walking Dead
 - 20:00 The Walking Dead
 - 21:00 Scrubs
 - 21:30 Happy Endings
 - 22:00 Private Practice
 - 23:00 Private Practice
 - 00:00 Making Mr.Right
 - 01:00 Lost
 - 02:00 The Walking Dead

- sundance CHANNEL**
- 04:00 The Lebanese Rocket Society
 - 05:35 Cairo Drive
 - 07:00 Hopscotch
 - 08:45 Francine
 - 10:00 The Beautiful Game
 - 11:25 Stolen Summer
 - 13:00 Choking Man
 - 14:25 Hopscotch
 - 16:10 Blue Blood
 - 17:45 The Beautiful Game
 - 19:10 Mister John
 - 20:45 Francine
 - 22:00 Frida
 - 00:00 Stolen Summer
 - 01:30 Houston

- TLC HD**
- 03:30 Two In A Million: Tiniest Torso
 - 04:20 Randy To The Rescue
 - 06:00 Say Yes To The Dress, Äi Bridesmaids
 - 06:25 Say Yes To The Dress, Äi Bridesmaids
 - 06:50 Cake Boss
 - 07:12 Cake Boss
 - 07:35 Love At First Swipe
 - 08:00 Love At First Swipe
 - 08:22 Bakery Boss
 - 09:10 Bakery Boss
 - 09:57 Two In A Million: Tiniest Torso
 - 10:45 My 600lb Life
 - 11:35 Something Borrowed, Something New
 - 12:00 Something Borrowed, Something New
 - 13:35 Our Little Family
 - 14:25 Oprah's Lifeclass
 - 15:15 Cake Boss
 - 15:40 Cake Boss
 - 16:05 Cake Boss
 - 16:30 Cake Boss
 - 16:54 Cake Boss
 - 17:17 Two In A Million: Tiniest Torso
 - 18:05 Belief
 - 18:55 Cake Boss
 - 19:20 My 600lb Life
 - 20:10 Baby Changes Everything
 - 21:00 Ask Oprah's All Stars
 - 21:50 Belief
 - 22:40 Monsters Inside Me



BHAVANITES TAKE PART IN BEACH CLEAN-UP DRIVE

Under the aegis of the American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) Kuwait Chapter's 'Community Outreach Program', sixty students, accompanied by two teachers of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan (IES) proved their social commitment by partaking in a beach clean-up campaign at Mahboula beach on April 16, 2016. The campaign aimed at connecting the community to our daily lives by providing volunteer help and educating the students regarding health, safety and environment for a better tomorrow.

After the process of registration, the organizers provided safety gears, T shirts and caps to the students for the clean-up program. Prior to the work, the students were briefed on safety tips and the value of rendering such a service. Collection of trash was the most important activity of the program, for which the students hardly showed any reluctance. The teachers in charge

and the organizers led the students from the front and it was really an awe-inspiring program for the students. They were so keen to discharge their duties, for they had learnt the importance of being responsible and committed towards the society they lived in. The program was yet another learning platform for the students.

Life, being a school by itself, lets the students learn from their experiences. Lessons on environmental protection and societal service were implemented in its practical form by the students through the campaign. They were also able to know more about team work and importance of cleanliness. Since life skills play a key role in the progress of an individual, education, which is not confined to the classrooms, will have greater results. The clean-up campaign was supported by Ahmadi Governorate and corporates.



EMOTIONS, SHADOWS OF LIFE: CELEBRATION OF RELATIONSHIPS BY IISM CHILDREN

The kindergarten wing of India International School, Mangaf (IISM) celebrated its Graduation Day recently. The little Masters of Ceremony Dutta and Maryam Qazi faced the congregation of parents and guests boldly and stole the heart of the excited audience.

The theme of the evening was 'Emotions, shadows of life' which was quite discernible as each and every items presented by the students depicted the various shadows of emotions. Vibrant music of the celebration dance, breathtaking colors and highly coordinated movements set the tone and mood. Adorned in bright and shiny costumes the children performed Enchanted

Fairy Land, Fantasy Disney World, Odyssey of Emotions, Beauty of Relations and Dazzling Bollywood.

The cultural extravaganza was interspersed with the most important event of the day. The graduation of UKG students to Grade I. It was a proud moment for both the students and their parents when they paused for the photo, adorned in traditional convocation gowns and caps. The guests of honor Dr Mohammed SA Al Rafai, Chairman, Child Union Kuwait, Bushara, Inspector, Ministry of Private Education and Udad, Child Union, Kuwait graced the moment by joining the graduates in the photo session.

The events of the auspicious evening began with the recita-

tion of the holy Quran by Mostafa Ibrahim and its translation by Rida Fathima. School principal F M Basheer Ahmed welcomed the guests and parents on this occasion and highlighted the importance of the day.

The event was graced by the chief guest of the ceremony congratulated the students on their graduation and their impressive show. The guests of honor blessed the students. Moosa Koya, the director of the school also congratulated the Children. The parents expressed their appreciation for the well-organized extremely colorful show put up by the children. The stupendous celebration came to an end with vote of thanks proposed by KG head Nilofar Qazi.



ADAK UNVEILS ITS LOGO, KICKS OFF MEMBERSHIP DISTRIBUTION

Alappuzha District Association Kuwait (ADAK) unveiled its logo and inaugurated the membership distribution in its first general meeting held on 4th May 2016, at the Red Flame Hall, Salmiya. The meeting chaired by Acting President Krishnakumar started off with a prayer song wonderfully rendered by Amalendu. Vijay Karayil, Soorya Kuwait Chapter President inaugurated the function by the traditional lamp lighting along acting president Krishnakumar, vice-presidents Christopher Daniel, Binu Chempalayam, general secretary Vipin Mangattu and treasurer Shibu Cherian.

Karayil unveiled the logo of the association in the presence of its members. In his inaugural address, Karayil appreciated the organizers in forming the association and wished all success to its future socio-welfare activities. Subsequently, vice president Christopher Daniel inaugurated the distribution of membership by giving the first copy to Soji Varghese.

Sunny Manarkadu, editor of Sathyam online, advisory board members M S Nair, Ajaykumar, vice-presidents Christopher Daniel, Binu Chempalayam, Manoj Channapetta, felicitated the occasion. General Secretary Vipin Mangattu welcomed the audience, while Shibu Cherian proposed vote of thanks. Compeering by Joel throughout the program was outstanding.



KNES CONDUCTS FIELD TRIP TO PARIS

Learning beyond the confines of the classroom! This is something we at Kuwait National English School (KNES) take very seriously and the educational trip to France is further evidence of this ideologue. Our tour of Paris was a great educational and cultural experience. The students from Kuwait national English School saw the Mona Lisa at the Louvre, Relived their childhood at Disneyland Paris, visited incredible sights in Paris, enjoyed a River Cruise on the Seine and got to see the all-pervading symbol of Paris, The Eiffel Tower.

The tour started with a visit to the majestic Eiffel Tower, once considered the tallest structure in the world. Built in 1889, the Eiffel Tower stands 324 meters above the City of Light. It is a magnificent monument that impresses as one of the world's greatest engineering wonders. Students were thrilled to have a tour of the first and second levels. In the afternoon, the team proceeded for Seine River Cruise to see the illuminated buildings and bridges of Paris.

Following the cruise, the team headed for The Louvre Museum, the world's greatest art museum. The most famous

works from antiquity Michelangelo's Slaves, Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa and works by Raphael, Botticelli, and Titian. On the final day the students were free for a full day trip to Disneyland.

These are but a few of the many memories that they will take with them from this trip of a lifetime. Fascinating historical details, the magnificence and majesty of landmarks like the Notre Dame and Montemarte churches and a shopping spree at the Champs Elysees were some of the other great takeaways from this awesome trip. Students grasped intricate details of the French art and architecture of bygone days.



DROUGHT-HIT INDIAN KIDS TO GET FREE MEALS

NEW DELHI: India's top court yesterday ordered state governments to provide free meals to schoolchildren even during the summer break as the country reels from the impact of one of the worst droughts on record. Free lunches are offered to some 120 million students throughout India in what is the world's largest school feeding program, but not during holidays.

However, with some 330 million people—a quarter of the Indian population—suffering from severe drought, households have seen their incomes dip sharply owing to poor harvests.

Farmer suicides are high and some have migrated to cities and towns to work as daily wage laborers to earn money. Acting on a petition, the Supreme Court ordered that children affected by drought should be provided free meals six days a week under the government scheme with either an egg or milk added to the menu.

"Children affected by the drought should be provided one egg or 200 gms (0.2 litre) of milk per day six days a week under the mid-day meal scheme," Justice Madan B Lokur said in a written judgment. "In addition to this,

the mid-day meal scheme should continue during the summer vacation period in schools so that children are not deprived of their meals." Poor rains have prompted extreme measures including water restrictions, armed guards at reservoirs and water trains sent to the worst-affected regions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has met recently with at least three state chief ministers over the drought, as the government comes under intense pressure to ease the crisis.

The free meal scheme, which started nationally in 2001, is aimed at entic-

ing poor and vulnerable children to attend class instead of languishing at home hungry or helping their parents labor. The 2015 global hunger index (GHI) report ranked India at 20th spot, with a World Bank estimate saying it has the highest rate of malnutrition among children, almost double that of sub-Saharan Africa. Petitioner Yogendra Yadav called the court's verdict historic and urged governments to act swiftly on the order. "Great day for judiciary as it stood up for last man. Sad that courts had to order what govts should have," he tweeted. — AFP



SAN FRANCISCO: Beekeeper Spencer Marshall checks a number of hives on a garden deck outside the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. — AP

BEEES BUZZING ON ROOFTOPS AT 7 SAN FRANCISCO HOTELS

THE LATEST IN A SERIES OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

SAN FRANCISCO: At the Clift Hotel in San Francisco, there are more than 370 rooms inside and 100,000 bees buzzing above in rooftop hives outside. Yes, honeybees. Aware of the well-publicized environmental threats to honeybees that have reduced numbers worldwide, seven San Francisco hotels have built hives on their rooftops. The sustainability effort also benefits the hotels as the bees produce honey for cocktails, food and spa treatments.

It's the latest in a series of environmental programs at hotels that includes low-flow toilets and aggressive recycling programs. "This is not about making money, it's really about raising awareness about sustainability," said Melissa Farrar, spokeswoman at the Fairmont in San Francisco. "There's not one solution so we wanted to do our part to help. It's part of the bigger effort for helping the planet." Farrar said the four hives on the rooftop garden support about 250,000 bees and produce about 1,000 pounds of honey each year.

In this foodie city, the honey is used in such things as the Clift's Purple Haze drink with gin-infused lavender, honey syrup and lavender bitters, and their compressed watermelon salad with lavender-infused honey and goat cheese. Honey is used in beer at the Fairmont Hotel, and the jars of the product are sold in the gift shop. At the W, they make honey ice cream. The bee hives at hotels are not new, but the effort is growing every year. Fairmont's first beehives were built in 2008 at the company's hotels in Toronto and in Vancouver in an effort to help combat Colony Collapse Disorder. Since then, dozens have been installed at Fairmonts from Seattle to China and Africa.

At the Clift, high above the city on the rooftop garden, 10 hives are buzzing with activity. Most guests don't even know they are there. But the fruits of their labor are evident in the cocktails and food. You won't find the squeezable honey bear container in Chef Thomas Weibull's kitchen. "Since we are chefs in California, we like to use a lot of

things that are local," he said, talking about his pork adobo appetizer with a honey glaze. "Ninety five percent of our products are local and sustainable." The bees produced more than 70 pounds of honey last year and are on track to do much more this year. The colony is expected to grow to 800,000 by next year, said General Manager Michael Pace.

His interest in bee hotels started last year when he took on the job of chairman of the Sustainability Committee for the Hotel Council of San Francisco. He spearheaded a larger effort between numerous local hotels to put bees on their rooftops as well. There are now seven hotels from Nob Hill to Fisherman's Wharf with rooftop hives. At six of the hotels, the man who tends the hives is Roger Garrison, a waiter at the W San Francisco turned bee keeper. At the W, Garrison, who seems to like serving bees as much as people, configured the boxy hives like miniature skyscrapers to mimic the city grid below, with the gold dome of City Hall in the distance. — AP

S AFRICAN COURT ALLOWS CLASS ACTION OVER MINERS' SILICOSIS

JOHANNESBURG: Hundreds of thousands of South African gold miners can pursue a multi-million-dollar class action against mining companies over an often-fatal respiratory disease contracted at work, a judge ruled yesterday. The decision opens the way for up to 500,000 current and former miners to sue about 30 companies for damages after suffering silicosis from dangerous underground working conditions dating back decades. Many miners caught silicosis, which has no known cure, from inhaling silica dust while drilling rock. The dust lodges in the lungs and causes permanent scars.

Symptoms include persistent coughing and shortness of breath, and the disease regularly leads to tuberculosis and death. "We hold the view that in the context of this case, class action is the only realistic option," Judge Phineas Mojapelo told the High Court in Johannesburg. "It is the only avenue to realize the right of access to the courts provided by the constitution." A group of about 60 former miners brought the case, which is set to expand to involve thousands of elderly men from the poorest rural areas of South Africa as well as Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi and Mozambique.

They accuse 32 mining companies—including Harmony Gold, Anglo American, AngloGold Ashanti and Gold Fields—of knowingly and systematically failing to protect workers against silicosis. The judge said the number of people involved in the class action could range from 17,000 to 500,000. Speaking on the steps of the High Court, former miner Vuyani Bwadube, who contracted silicosis after 16 years working for Harmony Gold, said there was "no turning back".

"Today's judgment is most welcome... The companies do not have time for us. Even today they don't care," he said. "Today I am thankful to our leaders and our supporters in this case. We are moving forward now. We are going to win this case." "It's a historic day for goldmine workers on whose back this country's wealth was built," said miners' lawyer Charles Abrahams. "It sends out a very important signal... that our courts are very serious about our constitutional democracy and also protecting the rights of the most vulnerable."

The price of gold

The mining companies issued a statement saying they were studying the court's decision. "It should be noted that the finding does not represent a view on the merits of the cases brought by claimants," it said. "There are issues related to compensation and medical care for occupational lung disease that need to be addressed through engagement between stakeholders."

Gold Fields earlier called the miners' case a "generic attack" against the industry and Harmony Gold said any class action would be "unimaginably cumbersome, costly, time-consuming and thus inconvenient". The class action will be the biggest ever in South Africa, though many miners have already died from respiratory diseases allegedly caused by their jobs. The judge yesterday said mining work dating back to 1965 was covered by his ruling, and that the families of dead workers could join the suit. Some studies have found silicosis prevalence in South African gold mines at between 22 and 36 percent of all workers—among the highest rates in the world.

In 2011, the Constitutional Court paved the way for the class action by ruling that mineworkers who had often accepted paltry compensation for their ill-health could still sue. The mining companies may seek an out-of-court settlement to avoid protracted litigation and have said they are interested in setting up a "legacy fund" to distribute money. — AFP

HUMBLE TOFU POWERING INDONESIAN HOMES WITH CLEAN ENERGY

KALISARI: In a dark and steamy room in Indonesia's tofu heartland three men sweat over bubbling cauldrons, churning creamy beancurd with wooden paddles before draining it by hand and slicing it into silky cubes. Tofu has been cooked this way for generations but today, innovative villagers on Java island are producing something extra from the simple soybean cheap, renewable energy, piped directly into their homes. Around 150 small tofu businesses in Kalisari village, many run from the family home, are benefiting from a pioneering green scheme that converts wastewater from their production floors into a clean-burning biogas.

Where families once relied on sporadic deliveries of tanked gas or wood for stoves, tofu producers like Waroh can access this cleaner fuel anytime with the flick of a switch. "The advantages are huge, because we produce the gas with waste," Waroh, who like many Indonesians goes by one name said as he boiled tea over a steady blue flame coming from his kitchen stove. Experts say harnessing power from unconventional sources like tofu holds enormous potential in Indonesia, a vast energy-hungry nation heavily reliant on fossil fuels.

Renewable energy accounts for just a fraction of the power generated across Indonesia, a sprawling archipelago of more than 17,000 islands with around 250 million people. But the government has committed to curbing Indonesia's greenhouse gases-it is one of the world's top emitters-and wants a quarter of the country's energy to be derived from renewables by 2025. Small-scale projects alone won't meet this target, but they are making a contribution. While most renewable energy projects use traditional sources of power such as solar or wind, the Kalisari initiative is among a handful taking a more original approach. Other projects



KALISARI, Indonesia: A woman fries tofu in the village of Kalisari, Banyumas, in Central Java. — AFP

include generating energy from sorghum production, and also from pig waste.

Huge potential

In Kalisari, villagers sometimes wait weeks for LPG gas tanks to arrive. Delays due to poor logistics and bad roads are common in Indonesia, especially on overcrowded Java. "One month you had it, another one you didn't. Thanks to this biogas, things are a lot easier for people here," Waroh said, as he ground soybeans through an ancient, spluttering machine. An enormous amount of water is required to make tofu-roughly 33 liters for every kilogram of spongy beancurd. Sour-smelling acetic acid is added to make the tofu clump together and when drained, it's this liquid wastewater that's treated with bacteria

in tanks to produce biogas. The gas is piped directly to household stoves, which have been modified to handle the renewable fuel. Long term, the local government hopes the gas will power lights across the village.

It also cuts costs - it is three times cheaper for villagers to pay for unlimited biogas than to purchase refillable LPG tanks. The government's technology agency, which spearheaded the Kalisari pilot project, predicted that if rolled out across the country, more than 56,000 tons of fossil fuels could be substituted every year by biogas created from tofu waste water. The optimism is shared by Dutch development organization Hivos, which has set up around 20,000 "digesters" across Indonesia that convert waste products like animal manure into biogas. — AFP

TYRE FIRE NEAR MADRID RELEASES TOXIC CLOUD

MADRID: A huge waste ground near Madrid where millions of tyres have been dumped was on fire yesterday, releasing a thick black cloud of toxic fumes that officials worry could harm nearby residents. The government of the Castilla-La Mancha region where the dump is located, dozens of kilometres south of the Spanish capital, said it had activated an emergency action plan as it believes the fire may last for days.

Firefighters and helicopters were working to extinguish the blaze, which produced a "toxic cloud... that could affect part of the (nearby) town of Sesena," with its 20,000 residents, the regional government added in a statement. The dump stretches over some 10 hectares (25 acres), the equivalent of 10 rugby fields, straddling the Castilla-La Mancha and Madrid regions. By late morning, three-quarters of the site had burnt, the Spanish capital's emergency services said on their Twitter account.

Authorities have urged residents nearby to close their doors and windows, and to try and stay away from the cloud of smoke, but no evacuations have yet been deemed necessary. "No problem has been detected in any (air quality) measuring station," the emergency services said in a bid to ease health concerns, adding there were no injuries. "Everything points to the fact that this disaster was deliberate," Sesena Mayor Carlos Velazquez told Spanish radio, pointing out that the area had been rained on for several days, which makes an accidental ignition unlikely.

The massive pile of tyres started to form in the 1990s when a company began using the site as a temporary depot for old tyres due to be recycled. But over the years these started to accumulate, resulting in three-metre (10-foot) high piles. Environmentalists have for years warned that the dump poses a health hazard, and the town of Sesena has lived in fear of the rubber heap catching fire. These types of blazes are notoriously difficult to put out and have been known to go on for months and even years, as tyres often continue to burn inside even if they are extinguished from the outside, and easily reignite.

Emiliano Garcia-Page, President of Castilla-La Mancha, warned that the fire could last "for several days." The black cloud emanating from the blaze appeared to be moving south over the day, sparing Madrid and its international airport, according to Vicente Garcia, a spokesman for environmental group Ecologists in Action. But he criticized authorities in Madrid and Castilla-La Mancha for years of inaction. At the end of 2015, both regions decided to organize a call for bids to empty the dump and destroy the tyres, but that has yet to start. — AFP

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Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (12/05/2016 TO 18/05/2016)

Screen	Movie	Time	Screen	Movie	Time
SHARQIA-1	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	12:45 PM	CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	6:15 PM
	THE JUNGLE BOOK	3:00 PM		CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	9:15 PM
	THE JUNGLE BOOK	5:15 PM		CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	12:15 AM
SHARQIA-2	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	7:30 PM	MARINA-1	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	12:30 PM
	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	9:45 PM		Ely Ekhtashou Matou	2:45 PM
	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	12:05 AM		THE JUNGLE BOOK	5:00 PM
SHARQIA-3	CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	12:00 PM	THE JUNGLE BOOK	7:15 PM	
	CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	3:00 PM	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	9:30 PM	
	CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	6:00 PM	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	11:45 PM	
MUHALAB-1	CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	9:00 PM	MARINA-2	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	11:30 AM
	CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	12:05 AM		THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	1:30 PM
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	11:30 AM		THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	3:45 PM
MUHALAB-2	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	1:45 PM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	6:00 PM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	4:00 PM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	8:15 PM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	6:15 PM	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	10:30 PM	
MUHALAB-3	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	8:30 PM	MARINA-3	CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	11:30 AM
	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	10:30 PM		CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	2:30 PM
	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	12:30 AM		CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	5:30 PM
FANAR-1	CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	11:30 AM	CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	8:30 PM	
	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	1:45 PM	CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	11:30 PM	
	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	4:00 PM	AVENUES-1	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	1:15 PM
FANAR-2	THE JUNGLE BOOK	6:15 PM	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	3:15 PM	
	THE JUNGLE BOOK	8:30 PM	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	5:15 PM	
	THE JUNGLE BOOK	10:45 PM	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	7:15 PM	
FANAR-3	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	1:00 AM	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	9:15 PM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	1:00 PM	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	11:15 PM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	3:30 PM	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	1:15 AM	
FANAR-4	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	5:45 PM	AVENUES-2	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	1:15 AM
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	8:00 PM		NO THU+FRI	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	10:15 PM		CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	1:15 AM
FANAR-5	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	12:15 AM	AVENUES-3	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	12:00 PM
	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	3:15 PM		Ely Ekhtashou Matou	2:15 PM
	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	12:30 AM		Ely Ekhtashou Matou	4:30 PM
FANAR-1	HASAN WA BOQLOZ	1:30 PM	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	6:45 PM	
	FRI		Ely Ekhtashou Matou	9:00 PM	
	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	3:30 PM	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	11:15 PM	
FANAR-2	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	5:45 PM	CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR	1:30 AM	
	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	8:00 PM	THU+FRI		
	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	10:15 PM	TERM LIFE	12:45 AM	
FANAR-3	Ely Ekhtashou Matou	12:30 AM	360°- 1	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 PM
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM		THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	2:45 PM
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM		THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	5:00 PM
FANAR-4	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	7:15 PM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	9:30 PM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	11:45 PM	
FANAR-5	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	360°- 2	FAN- Hindi	1:00 PM
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM		FAN- Hindi	4:00 PM
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM		HASAN WA BOQLOZ	7:00 PM
FANAR-1	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	HASAN WA BOQLOZ	9:00 PM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	HASAN WA BOQLOZ	11:00 PM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	JU ON: THE GRUDGE 4	1:00 AM	
FANAR-2	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	360°- 3	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE- 3D	1:45 PM
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM		THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE- 3D	4:00 PM
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM		THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE- 3D	6:15 PM
FANAR-3	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE- 3D	8:30 PM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE- 3D	10:45 PM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE- 3D	1:15 AM	
FANAR-4	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE- 3D	1:15 AM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE- 3D	1:15 AM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE- 3D	1:15 AM	
FANAR-5	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE- 3D	1:15 AM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE- 3D	1:15 AM	
	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE	12:30 AM	THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE- 3D	1:15 AM	

A major Educational Institution announces its need to employ both male and female

1. Special needs teachers (preferably native English speakers),
2. PE teachers,
3. Art teacher,
4. Social Worker & Psychologist (must be bilingual - Arabic and English)

The position requires applications from qualified and experienced persons only. All the above applicants must have SP Ed exp.

Please send your CV to the following e-mail:

faboom_79@live.com

TUITION

Indian teacher required to provide tuition to two children in grades I and II in Rumaithiya. Tel: 97832060
11-5-2016

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Irene Elias Sequeira, holder of Indian Passport No. G3662883, Sai Kripa Chawl R 2 Tembi Pada Lokmanya Nagar Bhandup W Mumbai, converted to Islam and hereby change my name as Ayesha.
(C 5170)
11-5-2016

I Mohammad Waleed Mujahid S/O Mujahid Ali resi-

dent of Kuwait appeared in SSC Annual/Supplementary Examination 2016 under Roll No. 948717 and Registration No. 1677121036 announced in daily newspaper that my actual Name is Mohammed Waleed Mujahid whereas on my SSC result certificate mistakenly written as Mohammed Waleed Muhajid, hence it is requested that the same may be corrected as Mohammad Waleed Mujahid. **(C 5169)**

Prayer timings

Fajr:	03:27
Shorook	04:56
Duhr:	11:44
Asr:	15:20
Maghrib:	16:33
Isha:	20:00

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



Flight Schedule

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

In case you are not travelling, your proper cancellation of bookings will help other passengers use seats

Arrival Flights on Saturday 14/5/2016

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	501	Alexandria	00:05
THY	772	Istanbul	00:10
MSC	415	Sohag	00:10
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55
KKK	6506	Istanbul	00:55
DLH	635	Doha	01:00
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15
JZR	539	Cairo	01:20
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30
JZR	125	Bahrain	01:40
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:40
RJA	642	Amman	01:45
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45
JZR	553	Alexandria	01:50
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15
UAE	853	Dubai	02:25
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05
FDB	067	Dubai	03:15
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:15
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15
QTR	1076	Doha	03:25
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:30
KAC	544	Cairo	03:40
KAC	514	Tehran	03:50
QTR	8301	Doha	04:10
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10
THY	770	Istanbul	05:15
PAL	668	Manila/Dubai	06:25
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	06:30
BAW	157	London	06:40
JZR	529	Asyut	06:55
FDB	5061	Dubai	07:15
JZR	503	Luxor	07:25
KAC	382	Delhi	07:30
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	07:35
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:40
KAC	204	Lahore	07:40
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:15
KAC	344	Chennai	08:15
KAC	362	Colombo	08:20
KAC	352	Kochi	08:20
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25
KAC	284	Dhaka	09:00
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40
SYR	341	Damascus	10:30
UAE	873	Dubai	10:40
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40
JZR	359	Mashhad	10:50
IRM	1188	Mashhad	11:10
JZR	325	Al Najaf	11:20
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:30
IRC	6511	ABD	11:40
JZR	165	Dubai	11:50
IAW	157	Al Najaf	11:55
NIA	151	Cairo	12:20
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30
JZR	241	Amman	12:30
SAW	701	Damascus	12:35
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00
THY	766	Istanbul	13:10
FDB	8053	Dubai	13:25
IRC	526	Mashhad	13:35
TBM	6313	Mashhad	13:45
FBA	831	Al Najaf	13:50
BON	101	Sarajevo	13:55
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:00
KAC	672	Dubai	14:00
QTR	1078	Doha	14:05
MSR	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	14:15
FDB	057	Dubai	14:20
GFA	221	Bahrain	14:20
JZR	779	Jeddah	14:25
KAC	512	Mashhad	14:30
KAC	540	Sharm el-Sheikh	14:50
KAC	788	Jeddah	15:00
KNE	529	Jeddah	15:05
KNE	683	Madinah	15:05
OMA	645	Muscat	15:10
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:10
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:35
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
RJA	640	Amman	16:00
FDB	051	Dubai	16:10
QTR	1072	Doha	16:15
JZR	257	Beirut	16:25
KAC	118	New York	16:30
KNE	531	Jeddah	16:35
JZR	787	Riyadh	16:45
NIA	251	Alexandria	16:50
KAC	562	Amman	16:55
KAC	680	Muscat	16:55
IRA	669	Mashhad	17:10
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
JZR	357	Mashhad	17:30
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
KAC	792	Madinah	17:45
JZR	777	Jeddah	17:50

QTR	1080	Doha	17:55
SVA	500	Jeddah	17:55
KAC	176	Geneva/Frankfurt	18:20
KAC	502	Beirut	18:35
KAC	786	Jeddah	18:35
KAC	774	Riyadh	18:35
FDB	8061	Dubai	18:50
KAC	742	Dammam	18:50
CLX	856	Luxembourg	18:50
KAC	618	Doha	18:55
KAC	542	Cairo	18:55
KAC	104	London	19:00
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:05
UAE	875	Dubai	19:05
FDB	063	Dubai	19:10
KAC	614	Bahrain	19:10
ABY	123	Sharjah	19:15
JZR	535	Cairo	19:30
JAI	572	Mumbai	19:35
KAC	674	Dubai	19:45
FDB	059	Dubai	19:50
JZR	177	Dubai	19:50
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:05
KNE	381	Taif	20:10
ABY	121	Sharjah	20:10
MEA	402	Beirut	20:15
OMA	647	Muscat	20:20
MSR	618	Alexandria	20:30
QTR	1088	Doha	20:35
FDB	5053	Dubai	20:55
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:05
UAE	859	Dubai	21:15
ALK	229	Colombo	21:20
KLM	415	Amsterdam	21:25
KAC	676	Dubai	21:35
JZR	189	Dubai	21:45
QTR	1082	Doha	21:55
GFA	219	Bahrain	22:00
KAC	564	Amman	22:05
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:10
AIC	987	Chennai/Hyderabad	22:25
ABY	129	Sharjah	22:30
KNE	533	Jeddah	22:45
JZR	185	Dubai	22:55
THY	764	Istanbul	22:55
MSC	403	Asyut	23:10
JAI	574	Mumbai	23:20
JZR	125	Bahrain	23:25
JZR	513	Sharm el-Sheikh	23:30
MSR	614	Cairo	23:30
FDB	071	Dubai	23:35
JAD	301	Amman	23:45

Departure Flights on Saturday 14/5/2016

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
BBC	044	Dhaka	00:10
JZR	528	Asyut	00:10
JAI	573	Mumbai	00:25
MSR	615	Cairo	00:30
FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
PIA	240	Sialkot	00:40
KLM	413	Amsterdam	00:55
MSC	502	Alexandria	01:05
MSC	416	Sohag	01:05
JZR	502	Luxor	01:15
THY	773	Istanbul	01:40
DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:00
SAI	442	Lahore	02:30
THY	765	Istanbul	02:45
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	02:45
PGT	859	Istanbul	02:55
UAE	854	Dubai	03:45
OMA	644	Muscat	04:00
KKK	6505	Istanbul	04:05
FDB	068	Dubai	04:05
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:10
MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
PGT	861	Istanbul	04:30
QTR	1077	Doha	04:35
JZR	358	Mashhad	05:00
QTR	8302	Doha	06:10
RJA	643	Amman	06:25
QTR	1087	Doha	06:30
THY	771	Istanbul	06:45
GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
JZR	240	Amman	06:55
FDB	070	Dubai	07:05
JZR	164	Dubai	07:15
FDB	5062	Dubai	07:55
JZR	324	Al Najaf	07:55
BAW	156	London	08:25
FDB	054	Dubai	08:30
KAC	511	Mashhad	08:40
KAC	539	Sharm el-Sheikh	08:50
JZR	778	Jeddah	08:50
JZR	256	Beirut	09:05
KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
KAC	787	Jeddah	09:30
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
UAE	856	Dubai	09:50
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:00
KAC	101	London/New York	10:00
QTR	1071	Doha	10:35
FDB	056	Dubai	10:40

KAC	501	Beirut	11:00
KAC	561	Amman	11:20
KAC	165	Rome/Paris	11:25
KAC	679	Muscat	11:25
SYR	342	Damascus	11:30
GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
JZR	356	Mashhad	11:40
KAC	541	Cairo	12:05
UAE	874	Dubai	12:10
RBG	554	Alexandria	12:10
JZR	776	Jeddah	12:15
IRM	1189	Mashhad	12:20
IRC	6512	ABD	12:40
JZR	534	Cairo	12:40
IAW	158	Al Najaf	12:55
KAC	785	Jeddah	13:00
KAC	791	Madinah	13:00
FDB	076	Dubai	13:10
NIA	152	Cairo	13:20
JZR	786	Riyadh	13:20
MSC	402	Alexandria	13:30
SAW	702	Damascus	13:35
MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
FDB	8054	Dubai	14:05
THY	767	Istanbul	14:10
IRC	527	Mashhad	14:35
TBM	6314	Mashhad	14:40
PAL	669	Dubai/Manila	14:45
KNE	382	Taif	14:55
MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	15:00
KAC	773	Riyadh	15:00
GFA	222	Bahrain	15:05
FDB	058	Dubai	15:05
KAC	673	Dubai	15:05
FBA	832	Al Najaf	15:10
QTR	1079	Doha	15:15
KAC	617	Doha	15:15
JZR	176	Dubai	15:15
KAC	741	Dammam	15:30
KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
KNE	684	Madinah	16:00
KAC	613	Bahrain	16:00
BON	102	Sarajevo	16:05
OMA	646	Muscat	16:10
ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15
ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC	563	Amman	16:30
RJA	641	Amman	16:55
FDB	052	Dubai	17:00
KAC	675	Dubai	17:00
JZR	188	Dubai	17:10
JZR	512	Sharm el-Sheikh	17:15
QTR	1073	Doha	17:25
KNE	532	Jeddah	17:25
UAE	858	Dubai	17:40
NIA	252	Alexandria	17:50
IRA	666	Esfahan	18:10
SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
JZR	184	Dubai	18:20
JZR	538	Cairo	18:30
QTR	1081	Doha	19:05
SVA	505	Jeddah	19:25
FDB	8062	Dubai	19:30
KAC	285	Dhaka	19:40
GFA	218	Bahrain	19:50
FDB	064	Dubai	19:50
ABY	124	Sharjah	19:55
KAC	361	Colombo	19:55
CLX	856	Hong Kong	20:20
JZR	266	Beirut	20:20
FDB	060	Dubai	20:30
UAE	876	Dubai	20:35
JAI	571	Mumbai	20:35
JZR	124	Bahrain	20:35
KAC	331	Trivandrum	20:45
DLH	634	Doha	20:50
ABY	122	Sharjah	20:50
KAC	353	BLR	20:55
KAC	543	Cairo	21:00
KAC	351	Kochi	21:00
KNE	232	Riyadh	21:10
MEA	403	Beirut	21:15
OMA	648	Muscat	21:15
MSR	607	Luxor	21:30
QTR	1089	Doha	21:45
DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
FDB	5054	Dubai	21:55
ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	21:55
ALK	230	Colombo	22:20
UAE	860	Dubai	22:25
KLM	415	Dammam/Amsterdam	22:25
KAC	381	Delhi	22:25
KAC	301	Mumbai	22:30
JZR	238	Amman	22:30
KAC	345	Ahmedabad	22:55
GFA	220	Bahrain	23:00
KAC	205	Islamabad	23:00
ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
ABY	120	Sharjah	23:10
KAC	155	Istanbul	23:15
QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
KAC	411	Bangkok/Manila	23:25
KNE	534	Jeddah	23:35
JZR	554	Alexandria	23:45

Word Search Puzzles

St. Patrick's Day

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 34 letters spell a secret message.

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

- BEER
- BELFAST
- BISHOP
- CABBAGE
- CELEBRATION
- CELTIC CROSS
- CHRISTIAN
- CLOVER
- CORK
- CORNED BEEF
- DANCING
- DUBLIN
- EVENTS
- FEAST DAY
- FESTIVAL
- GREEN
- GUINNESS
- HERITAGE
- HISTORY
- HOLIDAY
- HOLY DAY
- IRELAND
- IRISH
- LEPRECHAUN
- LIMERICK
- MARCH
- MISSIONARY
- MUSIC
- PARADE
- PATRON SAINT
- POTATOES
- SEVENTEENTH
- SHAMROCK
- SNAKES
- SODA BREAD
- TRADITION
- YEARLY

Yesterday's Solution

Pet Dog

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

- BARK
- BATH
- BONE
- BOWLS
- CANINE
- CHASE
- CHEW TOY
- COLLAR
- COMPANION
- FAITHFUL
- FEED
- FETCH
- FOOD
- FRIEND
- GROOM
- GROWL
- GUARD
- HAIR
- HARNES
- HOUSE
- ID TAG
- JUMP
- KENNEL
- LEASH
- LICK
- LOYAL
- OWNER
- PANT
- PAWS
- PLAY
- PUPPY
- ROLL OVER
- SHAMPOO
- SLEEP
- TRAIN
- TREATS
- TRIM NAILS
- WAG TAIL
- WALK
- WATER

The hidden message is: DOGS LOVE YOU UNCONDITIONALLY

CROSSWORD 1253

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18			19				20			21			
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70				71	72		73	74		75			
76				77					78		79		
80				81							82		

ACROSS

1. (Judaism) Sacred chest where the ancient Hebrews kept the two tablets containing the Ten Commandments.
4. A member of the Iroquoian people formerly living between Lake Chaplain and the Saint Lawrence River.
12. A slight amount or degree of difference.
15. (used as a combining form) Recent or new.
16. Large and often sumptuous tent.
17. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
18. Food that is discarded (as from a kitchen).
20. Caused to show discomposure.
22. A criminal who takes property belonging to someone else with the intention of keeping it or selling it.
24. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
25. An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
26. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
28. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
34. A vigorous blow.
37. Designer drug designed to have the effects of amphetamines (it floods the brain with serotonin) but to avoid the drug laws.
39. Swift timid long-eared mammal larger than a rabbit having a divided upper lip and long hind legs.
40. (in golf) The standard number of strokes set for each hole on a golf course, or for the entire course.
41. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
42. Spoken with emphasis.
44. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
47. Small cubes with 1 to 6 spots on the faces.
48. Rock that in its molten form (as magma) issues from volcanos.
49. A barn for cows.
51. Of or relating to a member of the Buddhist people inhabiting the Mekong river in Laos and Thailand.
53. An anxiety disorder characterized by chronic free-floating anxiety and such symptoms as tension or sweating or trembling of light-headedness or irritability etc that has lasted for more than six months.
54. A former copper coin of Pakistan.
55. A republic in southern Europe on the Italian Peninsula.
58. The place where some action occurs.
60. Of superior grade.

DOWN

63. Building material used as siding or roofing.
70. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
71. A port city in southwestern Turkey on the Gulf of Antalya.
75. Love intensely.
76. Any of various coarse shrubby plants of the genus Iva with small greenish flowers.
77. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
79. (Roman mythology) God of love.
80. A young woman making her debut into society.
81. Either of two flat triangular bones one on each side of the shoulder in human beings.
82. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on land.
1. An acute but unspecific feeling of anxiety.
2. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
3. An Asian peninsula (off Manchuria) separating the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan.
4. A translucent mineral consisting of hydrated silica of variable color.
5. Small genus of Asian evergreen trees having columnar crowns and distinguished by leaves lacking a midrib.
6. (sports) With hand brought forward and down from above shoulder level.
7. A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.
8. A metric unit of volume equal to one tenth of a liter.
9. An officer who acts as military assistant to a more senior officer.
10. A state of southwestern India.
11. (zoology) Relating to frogs and toads.
12. French filmmaker (1908-1982).
13. Assist or encourage, usually in some wrongdoing.
14. An informal term for a father.
19. A pale rose-colored variety of the ruby spinel.
21. Small arctic whale the male having a long spiral ivory tusk.
23. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
27. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
29. A case or sheath especially a pollen sac or moss capsule.
30. A social unit living together.
31. Animal food for browsing or grazing.
32. Capital of Armenia.
33. A period of 10 years.
35. American Revolutionary leader from Virginia whose objections led to the drafting of the Bill of Rights (1725-1792).
36. (Welsh) Lord of Annwn (the other world).
38. A master's degree in education.
43. Seed of a pea plant.
45. Having the wind against the forward side of the sails.
46. The Palestinian uprising (beginning in 1987) against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
50. The former capital and 2nd largest city of Brazil.
52. Port city on southern Honshu on Osaka Bay.
56. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
57. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
59. Constituting or relating to a tail.
61. A large number or amount.
62. A state in midwestern United States.
64. A person who possesses great material wealth.
65. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
66. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
67. Acute ulceration of the mucous membranes of the mouth or genitals.
68. Extremely robust.
69. A student who studies excessively.
72. The last (12th) month of the year.
73. Fleshy folds of tissue as those surrounding the mouth.
74. A hospital unit staffed and equipped to provide intensive care.
78. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.

Daily SuDoku

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	8		6				4
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very hard

Yesterday's Solution

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8	6	4	7	1	2	3	9	5
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easy

Yesterday's Solution

C	O	S		C	E	R	A	M	I	C	S		D	A	M
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A	B	A			D	E	S	M	O	D	U	S		N	A
J	O	T			A	T	A	B	R	I	N	E		C	I
A	N	E			M	A	H	A	R	A	J	A		A	N

YANKEES OVERPOWER ROYALS 7-3

NEW YORK: Chase Headley, Starlin Castro and Didi Gregorius hit early home runs and the New York Yankees beat Kansas City 7-3 Thursday night, sending the World Series champion Royals to their 12th loss in 16 games. Kansas City dropped three of four at Yankee Stadium. Nathan Eovaldi (3-2) worked around eight hits in five innings, and overcame getting struck on the leg by Lorenzo Cain's hard one-hopper at the outset. Relievers Kirby Yates and Dellin Betances each followed with a perfect inning to hold a 5-3 lead. After the Yankees scored twice more, Andrew Miller worked a 1-2-3 eighth and Chasen Shreve threw a scoreless ninth. Ian Kennedy (4-3) lost in his first game back in the Bronx since the Yankees traded him after the 2009 season.

DODGERS 5, METS 0

Clayton Kershaw tossed his second complete-game shutout this month, Yasmani Grandal hit a three-run homer and Chase Utley added a solo shot to help Los Angeles beat New York for a split of the four-game series. Making his 250th career start, Kershaw (5-1) struck out 13 and walked one to win his third straight. He only gave up three hits. It was the left-hander's fifth straight start with double-digit strikeouts, a club record. The Dodgers jumped on Bartolo Colon (3-2) with four runs in the first inning. Their first run came on Justin Turner's RBI single before Grandal homered off a 2-0 pitch into the right-field pavilion, making it 4-0 on his third homer of the season. Chase Utley added a two-out homer in the second for a 5-0 lead.

RED SOX 11, ASTROS 1

David Price struck out 12, Mookie Betts had a three-run homer and Xander Bogaerts had a two-run shot to help Boston beat Houston for a season-high fifth straight win. Jackie Bradley Jr singled twice and extended his hitting streak to 18 games, tying the longest streak in the major leagues this season. Bogaerts had three RBIs. Thursday was supposed to be all about the first matchup between reigning Cy Young Award winner Dallas Keuchel and Price, last year's runner-up. Boston's bats ensured Price (5-1) easily took this one. He rallied after a slow start and allowed a season-low one run over 6 2/3 innings, lowering his ERA to 6.00. Keuchel (2-5) gave up 10 hits and eight runs. He has allowed five or more earned runs in four of his last five starts, something he did only three times last year.

GIANTS 4, DIAMONDBACKS 2

Johnny Cueto pitched seven strong innings, Zack Greinke had another rough outing at home for Arizona and San Francisco opened a four-game series with a victory. Joe Panik hit a two-run homer off Greinke, who fell to 1-3 in five home starts. Cueto (5-1) allowed two runs and eight hits, striking out nine and walking two in a matchup of two of the highest-priced free agent pitchers last off-season. Cueto signed a six-year, \$130 million contract, which was dwarfed by Greinke's six-year, \$206.5 million deal. Greinke (3-3) gave up four runs and eight hits in six innings, raising his ERA to 5.26 in eight starts. Greinke led the majors with a 1.66 ERA last season.

ORIOLES 7, TIGERS 5

Jonathan Schoop hit a tiebreaking two-run triple in the seventh inning, and Baltimore rallied from a five-run deficit to beat Detroit for a fifth straight victory. Schoop's triple was the only extra-base hit in the seventh-inning rally that included five singles. Baltimore trailed 5-

0 in the sixth. Detroit starter Mike Pelfrey allowed two runs in 5 1/3 innings, but the collapse of the Detroit bullpen left the right-hander winless in 15 starts since Aug. 12. Alex Wilson gave up three runs in the seventh and Justin Wilson (0-1) yielded the last two. Vance Worley (2-0) worked two innings, and Zach Britton got three outs for his ninth save in nine chances.

PADRES 3, BREWERS 0

James Shields had a season-high nine strikeouts in seven innings to lead San Diego. Shields (2-5) allowed seven hits and one walk. Brandon Maurer pitched the eighth inning and Ryan Buchter pitched the ninth for his first major league save. Melvin Upton Jr homered for the fourth time and had three hits, two RBIs and two runs for the Padres one day after San Diego swept a doubleheader at the Chicago Cubs. Milwaukee's Jimmy Nelson (4-3) pitched a season-high eight innings and gave up two earned runs on five hits but lost for the second time in his last seven starts.

PHILLIES 7, BRAVES 4, 10 INNINGS

Cameron Rupp hit a three-run double with two outs in the 10th inning and Philadelphia beat Atlanta. Odubel Herrera matched his career high with four hits, including a triple off Jason Grilli (1-2) leading off the 10th. Andrew Bailey (2-0) got the final out of the ninth, and Jeanmar Gomez pitched the 10th for his major league-leading 13th save in 14 tries. Atlanta dropped to a big league-worst 8-25, including 2-17 at home. Rookie Aaron Blair allowed four runs - three earned - and six hits in 3 2/3 innings, he shortest of his four starts with Atlanta.

CARDINALS 12, ANGELS 10

Matt Holliday homered twice in two innings off Jered Weaver, Matt Carpenter homered as well and St Louis held off a late rally to beat Los Angeles and complete a three-game sweep. Holliday matched his career high with four hits to pace an 18-hit outburst by the Cardinals. Matt Adams and Yadier Molina added three hits apiece, and every Cardinals starter had a hit. The Angels



PHOENIX: Nick Ahmed #13 of the Arizona Diamondbacks turns a double play while jumping over Denard Span #2 of the San Francisco Giants during the first inning at Chase Field on May 12, 2016. — AFP

scored three runs in the ninth and had the bases loaded with one out, but Kevin Siegrist struck out Carlos Perez and got Shane Robinson to pop out to end the threat. Jered Weaver (3-2) gave up nine hits and eight runs

allowed in four-plus innings for the Angels, who have lost six straight and 10 of their last 12. Adam Wainwright (2-3) got the win despite allowing 11 hits and seven runs, six earned, in five innings. — AP

RUSSIAN GOVT SLAMS SOCHI DOPING CLAIMS AS 'SLANDER'

MOSCOW: The Kremlin yesterday rubbished claims of a vast state-run doping program during the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi vaunted as a triumph for Vladimir Putin's Russia. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov dismissed the allegations that dozens of Russian athletes including at least 15 medalists took performance-enhancing drugs during the showpiece games when Russia boasted of its efforts to clean up sport.

"These look like absolutely unsubstantiated claims," Peskov told journalists in response to the claims by Grigory Rodchenkov, the former head of Russia's anti-doping laboratory, the latest doping accusations to rock Russian sport. "It just looks like, you know, let's say, the slander of a defector," Peskov said, using Cold War rhetoric used to refer to Soviet citizens who fled to the West. Rodchenkov, fearing for his safety and currently living at a secret location in Los Angeles, made the sensational claims to the New York Times on Thursday.

He headed Russia's anti-doping laborato-

ry from 2006 to November 2015 when he resigned after the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accused the laboratory of being part of a state-sponsored doping program. In his first interview, Rodchenkov described a massive, tightly-organized doping operation involving Russia's FSB security service and the sports ministry. "I would not rely on such unsubstantiated claims," Peskov said when asked to comment on alleged involvement by the ministry and the security service. The claims come as a huge blow to Russia, which spent billions turning Sochi from a rundown resort to a gleaming showcase for the games.

Putin personally backed Russia's bid, even giving an emotional speech in English to the International Olympic Committee.

After dire results at the previous winter games in Vancouver, Russia topped the medals table at Sochi with 13 golds in an apparent turnaround for its sporting fortunes. "The results show that the difficult period in the history of Russia sport is over," Putin said

after the games. "Everything that was done and invested in our sport has not been in vain," he boasted. Russia has always insisted that the Sochi games were clean. WADA in its damning report on Russia last year said that FSB security service officers were present at the anti-doping laboratory in Sochi.

The International Olympic Committee said in November that there was no reason to doubt the anti-doping results in Sochi, however. WADA has previously focused on Russia's allegedly facilitating drug cheats at the London Olympics in 2012. Russian sports minister Vitaly Mutko has condemned the latest allegations as "absurd," calling them "a continuation of the information attack on Russian sport". Kremlin spokesman Peskov on Friday denied that Mutko risked dismissal. "No, quite the opposite.... we generally side with his point of view," Peskov said. Asked if Russian athletes would be able to compete at the Rio Olympics this summer, he said Mutko would need to answer this, but added: "We hope that all will be well." — AFP

ATHLETICS: BOLT READY FOR 2016 DEBUT

GEORGE TOWN: Usain Bolt will take the first long strides on his road to Rio today when he makes his 2016 track debut with less than three months to go before the Olympics. The Jamaican sprint king is planning a successful defense of his 100m, 200m and 4x100m crowns in Brazil, an unprecedented "triple-triple" in what he has said will be his final Olympic games.

The 29-year-old superstar has not competed since winning three gold medals at last August's World Championships in Beijing and is hoping to use this weekend's Cayman Invitational to gauge the state of his race fitness. Bolt, the world record holder over 100m and 200m, runs in the 100m today at the Truman Bodden Sports Complex.

"When I left Jamaica everything was good," Bolt said at the Truman Bodden Sports Complex on Thursday. "This is my first race, so you never know what to expect, because race fitness is different from training."

Bolt however believes he is ready to hit the ground running, revealing that training partner Yohan Blake has been in blistering form this year. "The way I feel I should run a good time, because I train with (Yohan) Blake, who ran a good time (9.93) already this season," Bolt said. Bolt's competition today includes training partner Kemar Bailey-Cole and the Cayman Islands' Kemar Hyman, both of whom have gone below 10 seconds for the 100m. Bolt will also run in Ostrava later this month, where

he is scheduled to face US decathlon king Ashton Eaton over 100m. "These upcoming races will determine where I am preparing for Rio," Bolt said. "I just have to hope that everything fall into place and when I get back to Jamaica in training, I will know what I need to work on."

Although his qualification for the Olympics is likely to be a formality, Bolt said the Jamaican track and field trials were a priority. "We always focus on trials (Jamaica Olympic Trials) first," he said before reiterating his determination to scoop another treble of golds in Rio, where he is also hoping to become the first man to duck under 19 seconds for the 200m. "I am going to Rio for the three gold medals. That's always the aim and

as I said earlier in the season, I would love to break 19 seconds," he said. Elsewhere today, America's 2011 World champion and Olympic Games silver medalist Carmelita Jeter headlines the women's 100m, which also has USA 200m champion Jenna Prandini and Jamaican Kerron Stewart. Prandini is also in the women's 200m with compatriot Miki Barber. American Kori Carter is the biggest name in the women's 400m hurdles while Kendra Harrison of USA will start favorite over Phylcia George of Canada and Virginia Crawford in the women's sprint hurdles. Trinidad and Tobago's Machel Cedenio will try to better his personal best of 44.34 clocked here last year in the men's 400m. — AFP



FLORIDA: Britain's Prince Harry, Patron of the Invictus Games Foundation, poses with players of the United Kingdom men's wheelchair basketball team after the medal ceremony, on the final day of the 2016 Invictus Games in Orlando. The United Kingdom finished second behind the United States in the final, winning the Silver medal. The Netherlands finished third. — AFP

INVICTUS GAMES END IN STYLE

ORLANDO: The Invictus Games closed four days of inspirational athletic performances in spectacular fashion Thursday night in Orlando. The Paralympic-style event for wounded and sick military members and veterans wrapped up with a star-studded concert including performances from Grammy-nominated hip-hop artist Flo Rida, country music group Rascal Flatts, pop star Rachel Platten, "American Idol" winner Phillip Phillips and "The Voice" Season 9 winner Jordan Smith. But the closing ceremonies belonged to the 454 participants from 14 nations who came to Disney's ESPN Wide World of Sports to compete in the name of their countries.

"The competition has been fierce with performances of the highest international standard across a number of events," said Prince Harry, who created the Invictus Games to aid wounded service

members and veterans from around the world. "But what inspired me was the courage to make it to the starting line, to take to the field or to dive into that pool motivated by the goal of giving it your all medal or no medal." During the Games, thousands who came in person and millions watching around world saw competition in 10 sports including wheelchair basketball, sitting volleyball, wheelchair rugby, indoor rowing, and track and field.

"What an amazing night," said Dr. Jill Biden, who was part of the presidential delegation at the Invictus Games. "It's been an honor to be here with you the past couple of days. Congratulations to our competitors, all of their families and friends who have supported them on the road to Invictus. "For the past four days, the world has watched as some of the finest athletes and warriors in the world carried their countries flags in

competition against others who truly understand the meaning of

duty, loyalty and sacrifice," she said. "It has been a truly humbling experience for me to be a part of the Invictus Games."

The Invictus Games were created by Prince Harry as a way to inspire and motivate wounded soldiers on their path to recovery. The first Invictus Games were held in London last year and the 2017 Games will be held in Toronto, which had a delegation on hand to accept the I Am flag. "Thank you to Prince Harry and Ken Fisher (chairman and CEO of the Invictus Games) for bringing the Invictus Games to the United States," Biden said. "I am so proud of all of the competitors. The spirit of the wounded warriors, the competitive drive and dedication defines what it means to be resilient." —AP

OLYMPIC POWERHOUSE KENYA TOLD HOW TO FIX DOPING LAW

NAIROBI: Kenya has been told what it needs to do to fall in line with the code of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), its sports minister said yesterday, a day after it was judged non-compliant and placed at risk of missing the Rio Olympics. Kenya passed an act of parliament in April to criminalize doping, but WADA said on Thursday it needed to make changes to ensure compliance with the code, which sets a framework for consistent rules and policies around the world. The WADA ruling meant Kenya, for decades a leading power in middle- and long-distance running, could be in danger of exclusion from the Aug. 5-21 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

Sports Minister Hassan Wario said WADA had written to him and "attached the areas of the act which they want to be rewritten or rectified for us to regain full compliance as soon as possible." "Meaning that as soon as parliament reviews those highlighted bits of the legislation we are fully compliant. No ban was mentioned in the body of the letter," Wario said a statement. Earlier, the presidential office said President Uhuru Kenyatta met the minister and other top officials "over WADA compliance issues". It was not immediately clear if the minister's statement was issued before or after that meeting.

Kenyan athletes won two gold medals, four silvers and five bronze at the last Olympics in London. Up to 40 Kenyan athletes have failed doping tests since 2012, the biggest name among them being former three-time Boston City Marathon and Chicago Marathon champion, Rita Jeptoo, now serving a ban. WADA had given Kenya until May to enact the anti-doping law or be declared non-compliant. The president signed the new legislation into law on April 22. But WADA President Craig Reedie said on Thursday that it was not in line with the organization's requirements.

"We have been working with Kenya for a number of years and thought we had agreed that the draft legislation and rules were entirely compliant, and it would appear that during their parliamentary process changes were made that unfortunately weren't code-compliant, so we will be in touch with Kenya to try and resolve that at the earliest possible moment," he said. Kenyan running great Kipchoge Keino, who is chairman of the National Olympic Committee of Kenya, called WADA's move "very unfortunate" but said his government had not acted quickly enough against doping. — Reuters

WOMEN BOXERS PUNCH THROUGH SOCIAL TABOOS IN SUDAN

KHARTOUM: Sweat drips from Arafat Abkar's brow as she dodges blows in an open-air arena in Khartoum's searing summer heat. Wearing only shorts and a t-shirt, the 22-year-old draws crowds in a country where Muslim mores mean women's boxing is a rare spectacle. "When I train, more spectators watch because women's boxing is new and unfamiliar in Sudan," Abkar said proudly at the private Nile Club in the south of the city. Sudan is ruled by Islamic law, which requires women to dress modestly. So, when she's in the street, Abkar follows the fashion by wearing loose, flowing garments and covering her hair.

In the ring, however, her bare head and defined muscles mark her out for criticism and ridicule. That is a price Abkar is willing to pay. "People mock

women who box. They think it's not feminine but they're wrong ... I don't think this sport will stop me getting married. So far, we've faced no objections from anyone, governmental or otherwise," she said. Most families are not so supportive and another girl at the club said she boxed in secret as her family would object to her taking part in what they see as a man's sport.

Women's boxing was unheard of in Sudan until four years ago, when Sahar Mohamed took up the sport and represented her country at the All Africa Games last year. She was defeated on points in the Middleweight category by Yannick Azangue of Cameroon. Since then, the Sudan Amateur Boxing Federation has sought to encourage women to join the sport despite social challenges. "Four years

ago, I was the first Sudanese girl to box and I faced big pressures from my family and people but I'll continue as this is my life's dream," said Mohamed at a state-run youth centre in Khartoum, where she trains.

Nearby, two women were training alongside men, shouting as they jumped from foot to foot and punched each other with worn gloves. The equipment is worn and basic, but the centre is busy, the atmosphere buzzing with young people practicing everything from martial arts to soccer. "People watch satellite channels and look on the internet and that has changed the culture and given new courage to women in the past few years to pick up boxing gloves," Mohamed Yousef, head of the Sudanese national box-

ing team, said. "The Sudan Boxing Federation asked us put more emphasis on girls to encourage them to continue in the sport."

Ali al-Aqraa, 78, a retired Sudanese boxing champion and the first to begin training women said a lack of funds, not enthusiasm, was the biggest hurdle. Abkar was Sudan's weight-lifting champion and represented her country abroad before taking up boxing last year. She is one of four women on the boxing team at the Nile Club, where she trains three times a week. "What pushed me to box was watching American champion Laila Ali," she said, referring to the daughter of boxing legend Mohamed Ali. "As I train night and day her image is in my mind. I hope to become a world champion like her." — Reuters



SAN JOSE: Joe Pavelski #8 of the San Jose Sharks scores a goal past Shea Weber #6 and goalie Pekka Rinne #35 of the Nashville Predators in the first period of Game Seven of the Western Conference Second Round on May 12, 2016. — AFP

SHARKS THRASH PREDATORS

LOS ANGELES: The San Jose Sharks advanced to the Western Conference final after routing the Nashville Predators 5-0 in Game 7 of their semifinal series at SAP Center on Thursday. The victory saw the Sharks advance to a matchup against the St. Louis Blues in the best-of-seven West final that will send the winner on to play for the Stanley Cup. Game 1 will be on Sunday in St. Louis. The Sharks will be making their fourth appearance in the West finals, and first since going back-to-back in 2010 and 2011. San Jose are seeking their first conference crown. The Blues and Sharks have met four times in the postseason, only in the first round, with each team winning twice. San Jose won two of three regular-season meetings this year. Leading by three going into the final period, the Sharks took advan-

tage of defenseman Mattias Ekholm's cross-check of Tommy Wingels at the horn of the second period.

Center Joe Thornton tapped home a rebound left on a Logan Couture shot when San Jose broke on 4-on-1 after intercepting a Mike Fisher drop pass just inside the San Jose blue line. Thornton's third goal of the postseason came 32 seconds into the third. Patrick Marleau capped a 2-on-1 break with Couture to score his fourth of the playoffs at 3:54 after Nashville defenseman Shea Weber got caught on a pinch. Marleau's 64th career playoff goal chased starting Nashville goalie Pekka Rinne, who broke his stick on the crossbar after the goal. San Jose goalie Martin Jones stopped all 20 shots Nashville produced for his first career playoff shutout. The Sharks scored the

only two goals of an opening period they dominated from start to finish.

Joe Pavelski potted his ninth goal of the playoffs with a one-timer from 10 feet on the power play after taking a pass from Marleau, who was behind the net. Joel Ward made it 2-0 when he picked Nashville defenseman Roman Josi's pocket at the visitors' blue line. Rinne was unable to stop a half-speed shot following a stickhandling move at 16:51. Couture scored his seventh goal of the playoffs and fifth of the series just 36 seconds into the second period to give the hosts a 3-0 lead they would nurse throughout the middle period. Couture pounced when the puck slipped off the stick of Weber, and the speedy center broke in alone to beat Rinne with a low shot inside the near post. — Reuters

HIGHLANDERS SLAY CRUSADERS

WELLINGTON: Unheralded Matt Faddes upstaged his illustrious teammate Waisake Naholo in an Otago Highlanders scoring spree when they beat Super Rugby competition leaders Canterbury Crusaders 34-26 in Dunedin yesterday. The bonus point five-tries-to-two win completed a remarkable double for the defending champions Highlanders, who last week beat the Waikato Chiefs who had been top of the table for most of the season. Faddes and All Blacks wing Naholo both scored two tries in the relentless running spectacle and it was outside centre Faddes, a former sevens star and one of the fastest players in New Zealand, who set the pace.

His ability to slice through the Crusaders' midfield produced his first try and set up Naholo's second, and Faddes then broke the game open when he scored again with a 50-metre solo effort soon after half-time. With the Highlanders coming into form late in the season there is now a New Zealand log-jam at the head of the table with the Crusaders, Chiefs and Highlanders separated only by points differential. The Highlanders spent most of the first quarter scrambling in defence as the Crusaders effectively used the inside pass to have tight forwards Owen Franks, Wyatt Crockett and Luke Romano lead a procession through the inside channels.

But they were denied two tries by the television match official when Kieran Read and Romano attacked the line, and Highlanders captain Ben Smith sensed the momentum switch once they had weathered that opening storm. "They were probably a bit unlucky not to score a couple of tries, but I'm really proud of the way we reacted to that and managed to get back into the game," Smith said. "We knew we had to keep attacking. They're a quality team and we had to get points on the board and on the back end of that we had to do a lot of defending and I think if paid off quite nicely." The Crusaders had to rely on penalties to take a 9-3 lead before the Highlanders, surviving on scraps of possession, burst into life with three tries in the second quarter.

A well-weighted Lima Sopoaga cross kick put Naholo over in the corner for the first try and they then twice used the wrap-around move from a line-out for Faddes to score his first and send Naholo in for his second. Faddes extended the Highlanders' lead to 27-12 early in the second half when he stepped inside Matt Todd on the halfway line and raced 50 meters unopposed to touchdown. The frenetic final 30 minutes were filled with outrageous off-loads, power running and brutal tackles. The Crusaders eventually found their way over the line with a try to Jordan Taufua only for the Highlanders to reply with a try to Liam Squire before Israel Dagg finished off the scoring with the Crusaders second try on full-time. — AFP

AUSTRALIA'S TOMIC SNUBS RIO OLYMPICS

SYDNEY: Troubled tennis star Bernard Tomic said yesterday he will not be available to represent Australia at this year's Rio Olympics, citing a busy playing schedule. It follows Tomic and fiery compatriot Nick Kyrgios being warned that their on-court behavior could threaten their places on the Australian team for the Games in August. World number 22 Tomic will instead play a low-ranking ATP Tour event in Mexico, which is on at the same time.

"With a heavy sense of regret, I have made the difficult decision to not play with the Australian tennis team as they pursue an Olympic medal in Rio," he said in a statement. "I have always proudly represented my country in Davis Cup and given my all when wearing the green and gold, but on

the basis of my extremely busy playing schedule and my own personal circumstances, I am regrettably unable to commit to this year's tournament.

"I make this decision based on what is best for my tennis career," he added. The announcement comes after widespread criticism of Tomic's recent on-court attitude and concern over his behavior by the Australian Olympic Committee. He made headlines last week when he turned his racquet the wrong way to face a match point in the Madrid Masters first round against Fabio Fognini. Tomic later told his post-match news conference: "I don't care about that match point. Would you care if you were 23 and worth over \$10 million?"

It prompted Australia's Olympic chef de

mission Kitty Chiller to call his behavior in Madrid "appalling". "Every athlete is under the microscope now," Chiller said after the Australian Olympic Committee's annual meeting last weekend. "There's a few athletes that are on watch and those two names (Tomic and Kyrgios) are among them." Tomic then lasted just eight minutes in his opening clash at the ongoing Rome Masters, retiring after a medical timeout when leading Frenchman Benoit Paire 2-1, saying he had been "feeling bad all night". Tomic has a catalogue of lax commitment in matches, which has earned him the nickname "Tomic the Tank Engine," and he was savaged in the Australian press this week.

Australian Davis Cup captain Lleyton

Hewitt, who skipped the 2004 Athens Olympics to focus on the US Open that year, said Tomic would not have taken his decision lightly. "Scheduling can always be difficult in these circumstances," Hewitt told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. "Bernie has always made himself available to play for Australia in the Davis Cup and he is very passionate about playing for his country." Tomic's decision follows two of the country's leading golfers, Adam Scott and Marc Leishman, also opting to give Rio a miss. Leishman pulled out this month over fears about the Zika virus and its possible impact on his ill wife, while Scott, like Tomic, said he was skipping the event due to a busy schedule. — AFP

UKRAINE'S KARATE KIDS STRIKE BLOW AT DOWN'S SYNDROME STEREOTYPES

KIEV: Little Vova Tkachuk has difficulty speaking because of Down's syndrome but still loves practicing devastating elbow strikes on the gym floor. The six-year-old boy has bravely overcome the inherent genetic disease and become one of Ukraine's latest karate kids—a vibrant group of children challenging stereotypes that have held on for generations in the conservative ex-Soviet state. "He still does not speak very well, but he gestures that he wants to go to karate," Vova's mother Maryna says, while helping him pull a white sports shirt over his head before he sets off to the exercise mat. "Every morning he wakes up and knows that he has a workout in the evening and it makes him happy."

Vova is getting psyched up for his third karate class in an average Kiev secondary school gym packed with tumbling and screaming children who are running around before their coach arrives. The shy, ginger-haired boy looks excited and waves to the other children—who wave back and in a gesture that visibly moves his mother. This is practically the only place in Ukraine where a boy like Vova can interact with kids who do not have mental and physical development problems caused by the addition of an extra chromosome at the time the child is conceived.

Parents like Maryna believe that taking part in social activities with other children is essential for their kids' healthy and happy growth. Mixed groups like these have a murky legal status in Ukraine due to a bureaucratic system that has been in place since communist times. Both parents and coaches need to procure a myriad of permits from various health and other oversight institutions before allowing Down's kids to join sports groups. This laborious and energy-sapping process takes so much time and effort that Down's kids' parents and the director of the Kiev school visited by AFP decided to ignore the rules and simply open the classes to the handicapped kids. But it also asked that its location and last names of the instructors be kept private to avoid potential problems with the law.

Breaking the isolation

Vova is one of six Down's children in this particular karate group. His coach Nataliya opened the first one in 2013 as an experiment to see if any social progress can be made. The kids spent the first two years working out in separate sections while getting used to each other and comfortable with how each group behaves and performs. Nataliya liked what she saw and made the radical decision to create mixed groups in 2015. "Children



KIEV: Ten-year-old Denys Nazarenko (left) who has a Down syndrome takes part in local karate championship in Kiev. — AFP

like these are isolated in Ukraine," says the pioneering 48-year-old instructor. "They know how to coexist with other people only through their parents or special schools, where they are surrounded by kids with the same syndrome," Nataliya says. "But the other children are like their senior comrades, they are very helpful. These (special) kids

have to learn to be together with everyone else." The success of her novel approach has exceeded even her own expectations. Children with the syndrome made physical progress and developed a keen interest for sports.

Many have joined off-site trainings and perform in competitions almost at the same level with

the other children. Vova's mother says she is not worried about her son's performance in these mixed sessions but is always nervous about how the other parents might react. "Unfortunately, very few people in our country know what this syndrome really is or understand that these children are very friendly".

A child isn't a toy

Lyudmyla Nazarenko says she had spent ages looking for a sports activity for 10-year-old Denys—another Down's syndrome member of the school's karate class. "I have a hyperactive child. He lacked an outlet for all his energy when he was in the kindergarten," Nazarenko says. "I would have sent him to a sports class earlier, but there was none. And we are always ready to go wherever they take us". Coach Nataliya stresses that there are no problems with her classes except for the red tape standing in the way. "Unfortunately, our legislation lags behind civil society," she sighs.

A child must bring a stack of permits to join the group while the school prepares its own separate set of documentation. Ukraine has special classes for handicapped children that bars them from attending mixed classes—even if the doctor says that the child is healthy enough to do sports. "Ultimately, his parents and I are the ones who assume all the responsibility", the coach says. But Denys' mother is certain that all this effort is worth the trouble. She says her son has become much calmer and more thoughtful and attentive since joining the karate class. "The point is not just to dress a child in the outfit, parade him before everyone and applaud", coach Nataliya says. "The child is not a toy". — AFP

CHELSEA'S TERRY PONDERES ONE-YEAR DEAL

LONDON: Chelsea captain John Terry has been offered a new one-year deal, the English Premier League club said yesterday. The 35-year-old centre-half, who has spent his entire senior club career with the west London side, is out of contract at the end of the season. In January, Terry—who has made more than 700 Chelsea appearances since his debut in October 1998—said he would not be extending his time at Stamford Bridge. However, Chelsea countered that a new offer was possible. And yesterday a Chelsea spokesperson said: "(Director) Marina Granovskaia and (chairman) Bruce Buck met with John and his agent this week and offered him a one-year contract extension.

"With it coming so late in the season, this is a big decision for John and his family and it is something that they are now considering." There had been speculation that last week's loss at Sunderland, where former England defender Terry was sent off, marked the end of his Blues' career as he is now banned from tomorrow's final game of the season at home to Leicester City—Chelsea's successors as Premier League champions. The timing of Chelsea's statement also appeared to reflect a desire on the part of club officials to avoid interim manager Guus Hiddink's final pre-match press conference on Friday being dominated by questions over Terry's future.

Antonio Conte will replace veteran Dutch boss Hiddink once his time in charge of Italy at the European Championship in France is finished. "It's good to have big players in a club who are big personalities," Hiddink said. "I'm always in favor, generally, that players, ex-players—I'm not talking about John now—are having a lot of influence in the culture of the club. "Maybe, I don't know when, in the future, it's also for John." Terry first became involved in Chelsea's youth set-up as a 14-year-old and Hiddink added: "Twenty, 21 years at the club is huge. "That's why they become legends. You must cherish those legends for the future as well." — AFP

IBRAHIMOVIC ANNOUNCES DEPARTURE FROM PSG

PARIS: Zlatan Ibrahimovic confirmed yesterday that he will leave Paris Saint-Germain at the end of this season, but the French champions said the Swedish star will eventually return in a "management" role. "My last game tomorrow at Parc des Princes. I came like a king, left like a legend," wrote Ibrahimovic on Twitter, ending speculation that he could extend his contract with PSG beyond this season. Ibrahimovic, whose existing deal expires on June 30, will make his final home appearance for the club in their last Ligue 1 game of the season against Nantes today. However, he will then run out in a PSG shirt one more time when they face Marseille in the French Cup final on May 21 at the Stade de France. "After discussions between Paris Saint-Germain and the agent of Zlatan Ibrahimovic, the club and the player have mutually decided not to renew his contract," PSG said. "They have also agreed that once his playing career is over, Ibra will join the management of the club in a position of responsibility." In the meantime, Ibrahimovic will make his French swansong as a player when he turns out for Sweden at Euro 2016 in June.

There has been widespread speculation about the 34-year-old for-

mer Ajax, Juventus, Inter Milan, Barcelona and AC Milan star's next destination. He has been linked with a move to the English Premier League, while his agent recently suggested he could return to AC Milan and Major League Soccer is another potential destination. One report in Italy earlier yesterday said he was "90 percent" likely to continue his career with LA Galaxy. Ibrahimovic, who last weekend was crowned France's player of the year for a record third time, has enjoyed enormous domestic success with PSG since moving to the French capital from Milan in 2012, winning the Ligue 1 title in each of his four seasons. If Paris win the French Cup next week, they will have completed a clean sweep of the domestic honors for the second year running and Ibrahimovic will have won 12 trophies with the club. "I am very proud of the last four years. I have loved every day I have spent here," Ibrahimovic said. "PSG has become a star club internationally and I have played a major part in that transformation. "The time has now come for me to take a different path. "This is not a farewell but simply a goodbye for now. I came here like a king and leave as a legend. But I will come back!"

Record goal-scorer

Ibrahimovic scored his 36th league goal of the season in Wednesday's 1-1 draw at Bordeaux, leaving him just one away from equaling Argentine striker Carlos Bianchi's PSG record of 37 in a top-flight campaign, set back in 1978. He has 46 in all competitions and has 152 goals in total as a PSG player in 178 appearances, having overtaken Portuguese great Pauleta as the club's all-time leading scorer back in October. Ibrahimovic has also become the club's all-time leading scorer in the league and in Europe, but he never really managed to reproduce his brilliant domestic form in the Champions League.

The Swede performed poorly in PSG's quarter-final exit to Manchester City last month, missing a penalty in the 2-2 first-leg draw at the Parc des Princes before Paris went out 3-2 on aggregate. "It is a bit of a sad moment. A page is turning. We are never really prepared. We are witnessing the final moments of the greatest player to have played in Ligue 1 in recent years," lamented PSG coach Laurent Blanc. In Paris speculation will now turn to who PSG will sign to replace their talisman.—AFP

French League Preview

MONACO HOPING TO HOLD ON TO CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SPOT

PARIS: Monaco must avoid a slip-up on the final day of the French season today or risk losing out on a Champions League berth at the expense of local rivals Nice. The principality club have been in the top three since December but have stumbled in recent weeks and a 6-1 trouncing at Lyon last weekend effectively ended their hopes of finishing second and sealing automatic Champions League qualification. Monaco host mid-table Montpellier at the Stade Louis II knowing that a three-point deficit to second-placed Lyon coupled with a far inferior goal difference means they must instead focus on making sure of third spot, which carries with it a berth in the Champions League third qualifying round. Leonardo Jardim's side, quarter-finalists in Europe's elite club competition last season, must win to be sure of a podium place. Otherwise, Nice, two points back in fourth with a better goal difference, can capitalize by beating Guingamp in Brittany. "In the last match we took a big blow. We lost, that's the way it is, but we have re-mobilized and got back down to work," said Jardim, who insisted third place is where his team belong. "Lyon finished second

last year and are second now. Paris are first again. We would be doing the same as last year by coming third."

Jardim, who has this week seen injured midfielder Joao Moutinho return to training, denied his future at the club depends on securing third spot. "For me, I will be here at the end of June to prepare next season. I have always had the full backing of those in charge," he said. Nice have to win to stand a chance of overtaking their Cote d'Azur neighbors but coach Claude Puel hinted that his club would be better off going into the Europa League. "It is important to hold on to fourth place but we need to keep going right to the end in case our neighbors stumble," said Puel. "We are not going to focus on third place. If the chance presents itself we will say then how we feel about it."

Nice are likely to lose their star player Hatem Ben Arfa, linked to Barcelona, while Puel himself is soon out of contract and is said to be a contender to become the next Bordeaux coach. A young side would surely struggle to reach the Champions League group stage, and if they did come third it could make life awkward for on-loan striker Valere Germain, another outstanding performer who is due to return to parent club Monaco. Nice won 7-2 in Guingamp last season but have won just one of their last 11 away league games. A point would almost certainly secure fourth spot, with Saint-Etienne hosting Lille in a straight fight for the final Europa League berth.

Miracle escape?

Sixth-placed Lille must win at the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard, otherwise they will only qualify for Europe if champions Paris Saint-Germain beat Marseille in the French Cup final. At the bottom, Toulouse will secure a miraculous escape from relegation with a win at Angers. They were 10 points from safety 10 games from the end of the season but climbed out of the bottom three with a win at home to Troyes last weekend. "I believe more than ever," coach Pascal Dupraz told La Depeche as he hopes his players keep their cool. "When you buy a new car, you are afraid of bumping it, so you get nervous and that is when you are most at risk of banging it. But you are used to driving. My players are the same: they know what to do." If they slip up, either Gazelec Ajaccio or Reims could capitalize—Gazelec visit Lorient while Reims entertain Lyon. PSG will receive the Ligue 1 trophy after their final game against Nantes at the Parc des Princes.—AFP

French Ligue 1 table

PARIS: French Ligue 1 table ahead of the final day of the season today (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Paris Saint-Germain	37	29	6	2	98	19	93	—	champions
Lyon	37	19	8	10	66	39	65		
Monaco	37	16	14	7	55	50	62		
Nice	37	17	9	11	55	39	60		
Saint-Etienne	37	17	7	13	42	36	58		
Lille	37	14	15	8	38	27	57		
Rennes	37	13	13	11	51	52	52		
Caen	37	15	6	16	38	52	51		
Angers	37	13	11	13	38	35	50		
Bordeaux	37	12	14	11	50	56	50		
Montpellier	37	14	7	16	49	45	49		
Nantes	37	12	12	13	33	40	48		
Marseille	37	10	17	10	47	41	47		
Bastia	37	13	8	16	34	41	47		
Guingamp	37	11	11	15	45	53	44		
Lorient	37	10	13	14	46	58	43		
Toulouse	37	8	13	16	42	53	37		
Gazelec Ajaccio	37	8	13	16	37	57	37		
Reims	37	9	9	19	40	56	36		
Troyes	37	3	8	26	27	82	17	—	relegated

Italian League Preview

FROSINONE 'KEY' AS ROMA BATTLE NAPOLI FOR SECOND

ROME: It is a picturesque town 100 km south of Rome and notorious for high levels of pollution, but little Frosinone play the Serie A kingmakers today when Roma battle Napoli for runners-up spot and a sure Champions League place. Despite Juventus securing a record-equalling fifth successive crown last month, there is still plenty at stake in Italy's top flight with Champions League and Europa League places up for grabs on the final weekend of action.

Frosinone have already been relegated along with Verona to Serie B, and for the sceptics there is arguably one more reason to believe they won't rise to the occasion at Napoli's San Paolo stadium today. Frosinone coach Roberto Stellone once played for Napoli and on Thursday admitted: "I will always support Napoli. What an atmosphere at the San Paolo!" Yet Napoli, sitting second with a two-point lead on Roma in third, are already firmly in the driving seat and heading towards an estimated 30m euros jackpot generated by qualifying directly to the competition's group stages.

If Maurizio Sarri's men needed extra motivation ahead of an expected sell-out at the imposing San Paolo, they need look no further than Gonzalo Higuain. The Argentine striker is only two goals short of equalling AC Milan and Sweden striker Gunnar Nordahl's 1950 record of 35 goals in a 20-team, three-points-for-a-win season. A hat-trick would see Higuain make history, and help soothe the pain of coming so close to a first scudetto since the heyday of Diego Maradona in 1990. Napoli are supposedly under a strict media boycott following disagreements with sections of the Italian press began last month, shortly before Higuain was handed a three-match ban for pushing the referee in a 3-1 loss at Udinese.

'Big effort'

But Spanish 'keeper Pepe Reina broke the silence to underline the importance of their Champions League "dream". "We're only one win away from achieving our dream," said Reina. "We need one more big effort so we can repay the fans who have been at our side throughout the season." Napoli finished third last year, but failed to qualify for Europe's premier club competition after a play-off defeat to Athletic Bilbao. This summer, it could be Roma's turn to taste that chastening experience.

The Giallorossi will be without influential midfielder Diego Perotti for today's clash with AC Milan at the San Siro, where the hosts need to win to have any chance of European football

after the summer. Roma's Greek defender Kostas Manolas said: "We know it will be difficult against Milan, because they need points. But we are a top side and, as usual, we're going there to win. "Napoli have an easier game than us, but we'll fight to finish second." Seven-time European champions Milan have sunk so low they are now battling Sassuolo for a sixth place finish and a chance to qualify for the Europa League. Although Milan can secure a place in Europe's second-tier competition with victory over Juventus in the May 21 final of the Italian Cup, they are not favourites. If holders Juve retain the Cup, the competition's Europa League spot will go to the sixth place finishers and Sassuolo, who host Inter Milan today, are one point ahead of Milan, in seventh. A third team will be relegated tomorrow, and Carpi's bid to beat the drop has been compounded by a bizarre war of words that started when Palermo chief Maurizio Zamparini made premature declarations last week.—AFP

Italian Serie A table

MILAN: Italian Serie A table ahead of final round of fixtures (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Juventus	37	28	4	5	70	2088	—	champions
Napoli	37	24	7	6	76	32	79	
Roma	37	22	11	4	80	40	77	
Inter Milan	37	20	7	10	49	35	67	
Fiorentina	37	17	10	10	56	40	61	
Sassuolo	37	15	13	9	46	39	58	
AC Milan	37	15	12	10	48	40	57	
Lazio	37	15	9	13	50	48	54	
Chievo	37	13	10	14	43	45	49	
Genoa	37	13	7	17	44	46	46	
Torino	37	12	9	16	51	53	45	
Empoli	37	11	10	16	38	48	43	
Atalanta	37	10	12	15	39	47	42	
Bologna	37	11	8	18	33	45	41	
Sampdoria	37	10	10	17	48	56	40	
Udinese	37	10	9	18	34	58	39	
Palermo	37	9	9	19	35	63	36	
Carpi	37	8	11	18	35	56	35	
Frosinone	37	8	7	22	35	72	31	—
relegated								
Verona	37	5	13	19	32	60	28	—
relegated								

Note: Top two qualify for Champions League, third place into Champions league play-offs, next two into Europa League.

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
SPANISH LEAGUE			
Deportivo v Real Madrid	18:00	beIN SPORTS 1 HD	
Granada v FC Barcelona	18:00	beIN SPORTS 3 HD	
Athletic de Bilbao v Sevilla	20:30	beIN SPORTS	
Atletico de Madrid v Celta	20:30	beIN SPORTS 8 HD	
GERMAN LEAGUE			
Werder Bremen v Eintracht	16:30	beIN SPORTS	
Borussia Dortmund v FC Koln	16:30	beIN SPORTS 9 HD	
Bayer 04 v Ingolstadt	16:30	beIN SPORTS	
Bayern Munich v Hannover	16:30	beIN SPORTS 5 HD	
VfL Wolfsburg v Stuttgart	16:30	beIN SPORTS	
FSV Mainz v Hertha Berlin	16:30	beIN SPORTS	
Augsburg v Hamburger SV	16:30	beIN SPORTS	
Hoffenheim v Schalke 04	16:30	beIN SPORTS	
Darmstadt v Monchengladbach	16:30	beIN SPORTS	
ITALIAN LEAGUE			
Juventus v UC Sampdoria	18:00	beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
AC Milan v AS Roma	21:45	beIN SPORTS 4 HD	
Sassuolo v Inter Milano	21:45	beIN SPORTS 13 HD EN	
Napoli v Frosinone Calcio	21:45	beIN SPORTS 1 HD	
FRENCH LEAGUE			
Paris Saint-Germain v Nantes	13:00	beIN SPORTS 6 HD	
AS Monaco v Montpellier	13:00	beIN SPORTS	
Troyes v Marseille	13:00	beIN SPORTS	
Stade Rennes v Bastia	13:00	beIN SPORTS	
Guingamp v OGC Nice	13:00	beIN SPORTS	
Lorient v GFC Ajaccio	13:00	beIN SPORTS	
Saint Etienne v Lille OSC	13:00	beIN SPORTS	
Caen v Girondins de Bordeaux	13:00	beIN SPORTS	
Angers v Toulouse FC	13:00	beIN SPORTS	
Stade de Reims v Lyonnais	13:00	beIN SPORTS	

Scottish Premier League Preview

OUTGOING CELTIC BOSS DEILA HAS NO REGRETS

GLASGOW: Outgoing Celtic manager Ronny Deila says he doesn't regret joining the Parkhead club, despite rueing some of his decisions from his time in charge. The 40-year-old will leave the club on Sunday after his side are presented with the Scottish Premiership championship trophy following their final game of the season against Motherwell. The Norwegian won two league titles and a League Cup during his two seasons in charge of the Glasgow giants but came in for criticism following poor European results and recent cup semi-final defeats to Ross County and Old Firm rivals Rangers.

"I would do a lot of things differently, but there are a lot of things I did really well," Deila said. "I have brought in a lot of my ideas and a lot of things have been positive for Celtic. "I have also learned a lot from Scottish football as it's always the give and take when you come to new environments - it's not just one way - and that's been very good for me. "I'm sitting here today much more mature, much more experienced - a better person and manager. "I will miss being part of a club like Celtic and all the games, the fans and the intensity that goes into it. I love it and hate it. You're afraid to lose but at the same time you

love to win. "You are really on a high all the time, and so alive."

Mixed feelings

Deila admits the match against Motherwell will hold mixed feelings for him, but says he is now looking forward to some time off in his native Norway. The former Stromsgodset boss says he won't rush back in to management. "It has to be something that excites me," Deila said. "It was like that when I came to Celtic. There was no thought in my head that I was not going to do this and I will never regret that decision. "It's been a long season and you can feel we're starting to get a bit tired and I'm looking forward to getting some vacation. It's a little bit sad but at the same time it's a good feeling.

"It's difficult to say what you feel, you need some time to reflect on what you have been through over the past two years before you can say that. "The best thing for me is to have some time off, to reflect what I have been through and recharge my batteries and then really get that hunger again in what I want to do." Celtic's Leigh Griffiths won't be able to add to his tally of 40 for the season against Motherwell due to suspension while club captain Scott Brown

Scottish Premiership table

GLASGOW: Scottish Premiership table ahead of the final round of fixtures this weekend (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Celtic	37	25	8	4	86	3183	—
champions							
Aberdeen	37	22	5	10	62	44	71
Hearts	37	18	10	9	57	38	64
St Johnstone	37	16	7	14	56	53	55
Motherwell	37	15	5	17	47	56	50
Ross County	37	13	6	18	51	61	45
Inverness CT	37	13	10	14	50	48	49
Dundee	37	11	15	11	53	53	48
Partick	37	12	9	16	39	48	45
Hamilton	37	11	9	17	40	61	42
Kilmarnock	37	9	9	19	39	60	36
Dundee Utd	37	7	7	23	41	6825	—
relegated							

NB - Dundee United deducted three points for fielding ineligible player

misses out due to injury. Elsewhere today, Inverness Caledonian Thistle and Dundee will battle it out for seventh spot - the only position in the table still to be decided. — AFP

MAN UNITED ON TRACK FOR OVER £500M REVENUE IN SINGLE YEAR

LONDON: Manchester United are in line to become the first British club to "exceed" half a billion pounds in revenue in a single year, even if participation in the lucrative Champions League next season still hangs in the balance, the club said yesterday. United head into their final Premier League game at home to Bournemouth tomorrow, in fifth place and two points behind local rivals Manchester City. Only the top four clubs in the English top flight are guaranteed a place in the Champions League and failure to do so will add to the pressure on United manager Louis van Gaal, whose future at Old Trafford is the subject of intense speculation.

But none of that stopped United, who face Crystal Palace in the FA Cup final at Wembley later this month, from announcing a record underlying pre-tax third quarter profits of £44.9 million (\$64.7 million, 57.04 million euros) yesterday. The Premier League side said in a statement that this represented an increase of 76.8 percent, while revenue for the same 2016 fiscal third quarter and nine months ended March 31 had risen to £123.4 million, up 29.9 percent. Commercial revenues rose 37.7 percent to £65.8 million, with total operating expenses up 3.2 percent to £102.2 million compared to the same quarter last year.

In a subsequent conference call with investors, United head of corporate finance Hemen Tseyayo said the club, one of world sport's biggest brands with a huge global fan base, expected revenues would "exceed" £500 million and possibly be as much as £510 million in 2016. As for what impact failing to qualify for the Champions League would have on

the club's 10-year £750 million deal with German sportswear giants Adidas signed in 2014, Tseyayo added there would be a 30 percent cut only if United missed out on a place in European club football's elite tournament two seasons running.

Any reduction would be spread over the remaining life of the deal. But with only investors, rather than reporters, posing questions, United executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward was not asked about what impact, if any, failure to qualify for the Champions League would have on van Gaal. Woodward also made no mention of the Dutchman in an earlier statement to accompany the financial results, where he expresses satisfaction with the club's performance on and off the field. "The conclusion to this year's season demonstrates once again why the Premier League is the most popular league in the most popular sport," Woodward said of a title race won by former 5,000/1 outsiders Leicester City.

"As we reflect on our season, we are delighted by the emergence of yet another crop of exciting young players that demonstrate once again our terrific track record of youth development," Woodward added. "We are looking forward to the FA Cup final on May 21 and hopefully winning this special trophy for a record-equalling 12th time." United's operating expenses rose to £102.2m - a 3.2 percent increase compared to the same quarter last year. In the conference call, Woodward attributed some of this increase to high transfer spending by van Gaal, which was necessary for squad "re-tooling". "Things will stabilise in the coming few years and then be lumpy thereafter," said Woodward. —AFP

RANIERI RETURNS TO CHELSEA WITH REPUTATION RESTORED

LEICESTER: Claudio Ranieri believes Leicester City's shock title triumph has restored his reputation in the minds of his critics ahead of an emotional return to former club Chelsea tomorrow. The 64-year-old's appointment last July was heavily criticized by pundits and former players alike but the Italian's side have since undergone an extraordinary transformation from relegation favorites to Premier League champions. Sacked at Chelsea by owner Roman Abramovich in 2004 after failing to deliver the title and replaced by Jose Mourinho, Ranieri insisted he didn't covet acclaim from his former employers following his achievements with Leicester.

"Now I have won the Premier League, maybe everyone looks more positively at what I did," Ranieri said Friday ahead of Leicester's match against last season's Premier League champions. "It changed not my mind but maybe other minds. I was so happy before because I know very well how I work and what I achieve before," he added. "It is not important for me to have credit, it was so important to bring another team (to the top), to show my passion to the team. I think life is full of opportunity, I think it is important to take the right opportunity." Ranieri said his return to west London, where he spent four moderately successful years at Stamford Bridge, would be an "emotional" occasion.

'Hollywood'

As Chelsea drew 2-2 with Tottenham Hotspur just under a fortnight ago, a result which confirmed Leicester had won the first top-tier title in the Midlands club's 132-year history, home supporters were heard chanting the affable Ranieri's name throughout. "It is amazing. I have been back there with Juventus in the Champions League but this time is different because this time it is with Leicester, another English club," said Ranieri. "It is emotional, I hope my old fans are happy. When I came here I said 'the last match is at Chelsea... wow'. Now I come back as a champion. It's a good story." Before the club's annual summer trip to Thailand, the homeland of Leicester owners Vichai and Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha, Ranieri will join an open-top bus parade through the city centre with crowds of 60,000 expected to pour onto the streets. "I expect a lot of people on the street to enjoy with us and we can say thank you to our fans. Everybody wants to stay with us because the fairytale was for everybody," said Ranieri. —AFP

FIFA CONGRESS SEEKS TO CLEAN UP MESS

MEXICO CITY: FIFA's new president Gianni Infantino will preside over world football's annual congress in Mexico City yesterday to push through reforms aimed at rehabilitating the scandal-tarred organization. Infantino—who was elected in February after his predecessor Sepp Blatter was brought down by the corruption crisis—wants to turn the page and put the focus back on football. "We will show to the world we are serious with the reforms, with our democratic process and football development," Infantino said Thursday at an opening ceremony for the congress.

In another attempt at restoring trust, the North and Central American and Caribbean football confederation (CONCACAF), which has been in the eye of the corruption storm, elected a new president on Thursday. Canadian football chief Victor Montagliani became CONCACAF's fourth president in five years after his three predecessors were ensnared in corruption allegations, with the last one arrested in December. FIFA's new council, meanwhile, decided on Tuesday to resume the process to select the host of the 2026 World Cup, which had been frozen since last year over claims of misdeeds in awarding the tournaments to Russia for 2018 and Qatar for 2022. But the scandals keep haunting world football. On Monday, Infantino's former boss, Michel Platini, said he will step down as head of European foot-

ball body UEFA after failing to overturn his ban from all football-related activity over allegations that he received a dubious \$2 million payment from FIFA. Infantino was Platini's number two. Earlier this month, FIFA banned for life top executive members Sergio Jadue of Chile and Luis Bedoya of Colombia over bribes they accepted for football television and marketing contracts.

'Calmer FIFA'

World football's governing body must now ratify reforms that were approved by a special congress in February, which renamed the disgraced executive committee as the FIFA Council and pruned its powers. The reforms came into force on April 27, 60 days after the vote, but Infantino must now make sure that the regional confederations and national associations at the heart of the corruption follow through. "Things are getting calmer at FIFA," said Fernando Sarney, Brazilian member of the Council. The governance reforms include term limits, transparency in salaries and more balanced executive powers.

But Infantino's promises of a new era at FIFA are not happening as fast as some want. The reforms give bigger powers to the secretary general, or number two, who would become a true counterweight to

the president. But Infantino has yet to name a deputy. He has vowed to pick someone this summer, but a decision could come later as council member Wolfgang Niersbach of Germany said no extraordinary meetings were planned before the fall. The former secretary general, Jerome Valcke of France, was sacked in January and banned from football for 12 years over misconduct in television deals and World Cup ticket sales.

Kosovo, Gibraltar bids

Germany's Markus Kattner, who is the acting secretary general, will present on Friday the state of the organization's finances, which posted a \$122 million loss last year. In other decisions, the congress faces prickly votes over the admission of Gibraltar and Kosovo that will take the world body to 211 members. The FIFA Council recommended on Tuesday that both be admitted, which would entitle them to participate in the 2018 World Cup qualifiers. The former Serbian province of Kosovo narrowly won a vote at the UEFA congress this month to get membership to the European body. FIFA's executive originally rejected Gibraltar's bid, but the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ordered that the congress take a vote on the British territory, which is also claimed by Spain. — AFP

Spanish League Preview

BARCA ON BRINK OF TITLE IN FINAL DAY SHOWDOWN

MADRID: Barcelona have the upper hand in a final day showdown with Real Madrid for the Spanish title today as they know a victory at Granada will ensure them a 24th La Liga crown. Madrid are a point behind and have to stretch their winning La Liga run to 12 games at Deportivo la Coruna and hope for a Barca slip up to land the title. The battle between the two richest clubs in the world has come down to the final day thanks to Barca's incredible slump of three consecutive league defeats in April, the first time in 13 years they had gone on such a run. However, the world champions have bounced back in style with four straight victories by a combined 21-0 scoreline to take them to the brink of a sixth Spanish title in eight seasons. "It is essential for us to keep a clean sheet because we know from middle to front we can make the difference," Barca striker Luis Suarez said on Thursday. "Mentally we have to be very strong and be aware of the fact that it is in our own hands. "We have 93 or 94 minutes to win one match and we have already won a lot this season."

Suarez has come up big when Barca most needed him with 11 goals in his last four games to get the Catalan giants back on track. Moreover, the Uruguayan is now well set to become the first player other than teammate Lionel Messi and Madrid rival Cristiano Ronaldo to win the Pichichi award for La Liga's top scorer in seven seasons. Suarez's 37 La Liga goals as part of a tally of 56 in all competitions this season is four more than Ronaldo.

However, the former Liverpool striker claimed that individual glory will mean nothing if it is not accompanied by his second La Liga title. "I am happy to help the team, but I don't care about the Pichichi or the golden boot if we are not champions and not able to achieve our objectives as a group." Crucially, Barca are facing a Granada side with nothing left to play for after they sealed their survival with a 4-1 win at Sevilla last weekend. "If I were a Barcelona player I would say the opponent doesn't matter. They have the team to be able to beat anyone, but we won't roll over," insisted Granada goalkeeper Andres Fernandez.

Bale back?

However, build-up to the final games has as ever in the final weeks of La Liga been dominated by whether teams going for the title or battling relegation should be allowed to pay bonuses to their rivals' opponents to win. "I am a player

that always goes out on the pitch motivated and to enjoy myself," added Fernandez. "For me the subject of bonuses is difficult. The league ought to take action." Despite a looming Champions League final against Atletico Madrid, Real are set to recall Gareth Bale and goalkeeper Keylor Navas from injury in A Coruna against a Deportivo side also with nothing to play for. "I don't think they will go out on the pitch relaxed," said Madrid defender Marcelo.

"Teams always play their best against Madrid and I am sure Deportivo will want to win." The situation at the bottom is just as tight with Getafe, Sporting Gijon and Rayo Vallecano battling to avoid joining Levante in being relegated. Getafe have matters in their own hands as victory at Real Betis on Sunday will secure their place in the top flight for a 13th consecutive season. Sporting are level on points with Getafe but are in the relegation zone due to their inferior head-to-head record and need to better the Madrid side's result when they host Villarreal. Rayo can only be saved by bettering both Getafe and Sporting's results at home to Levante.— AFP

Spanish La Liga table

MADRID: Spanish La Liga table before this weekend's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Barcelona	37	28	4	5	109	29	88
Real Madrid	37	27	6	4	108	34	87
Atletico Madrid	37	27	4	6	61	18	85
Villarreal	37	18	10	9	44	33	64
Celta Vigo	37	17	9	11	51	57	60
Athletic Bilbao	37	17	8	12	55	44	59
Sevilla	37	14	10	13	50	47	52
Malaga	37	11	12	14	34	34	45
Real Sociedad	37	12	9	16	44	48	45
Las Palmas	37	12	8	17	44	49	44
Valencia	37	11	11	15	46	47	44
Eibar	37	11	10	16	47	57	43
La Coruna	37	8	18	11	45	59	42
Real Betis	37	10	12	15	32	51	42
Espanyol	37	11	7	19	36	72	40
Granada	37	10	9	18	46	66	39
Getafe	37	9	9	19	36	65	36
Sporting Gijon	37	9	9	19	38	62	36
Rayo Vallecano	37	8	11	18	49	72	35
Levante	37	8	8	21	36	6732	-
relegated							

German League Preview

CHAMPIONS BAYERN SET TO GET STRONGER

BERLIN: Pep Guardiola's Bayern Munich will lift the Bundesliga trophy for an historic fourth consecutive time yesterday—with their rivals predicting they will get even stronger next season under Carlo Ancelotti. Bayern's home match against Hanover 96, who are already relegated, will be Guardiola's last at the Allianz Arena before he takes over at Manchester City next season.

It promises to be a festive occasion in Munich and Guardiola will be a prime candidate for the traditional 'beer shower' when the Bayern squad are presented with oversized glasses of beer to start the party after the final whistle. Under Guardiola, Bayern have dominated Germany's top flight over the last three seasons by starving their opponents of possession. His successor Ancelotti will inherit a star-studded squad which will be further boosted by new signings Germany defender Mats Hummels and 18-year-old Benfica midfielder Renato Sanches.

Bayern splashed out a reported 73 million euros (\$83 million) to sign the pair on Tuesday from Borussia Dortmund and Benfica respectively as they sent out a clear statement to their rivals both in Germany and across Europe. "One should never be resigned, but it's clear that with their new signings and with the team they already have, Bayern have taken a few more steps ahead of all the teams in the Bundesliga," said Wolfsburg's Germany winger Andre Schuerrle. Another victory over Hanover will give Bayern 28 wins from their 34 games this season. Guardiola has won 81 of his 101 top-flight fixtures in Germany giving him the highest winning percentage of any coach to have worked in the Bundesliga.

Vidal's fifth straight title

Midfielder Arturo Vidal will win his fifth consecutive league title after four with Juventus and now one with Bayern. Meanwhile, it could well be Mario Goetze's final home game having been told by Ancelotti to seek a transfer out of Munich, according to reports. Relegated Hanover last beat Bayern in the Bundesliga four years ago and this will be their last chance for at least another season. Some 7,000 Hanover fans are

expected to travel to Munich for the game despite their fate having been sealed. "We'll try to take something from Munich," said Hanover coach Daniel Stendel, whose side will be without injured Japan internationals Hiroshi Kiyotake and Hiroki Sakai.

Their Germany goalkeeper Ron-Robert Zieler has already said he will leave at the end of the season. Hummels will play his final home game for runners-up Dortmund when they host Cologne. The Germany centre-back was booed during their previous home match and he can expect more of the same at Signal Iduna Park. Dortmund have already started spending the reported 38 million euros they will receive for Hummels by signing France's young player of the year Ousmane Dembele from Rennes on Thursday. The 18-year-old is reported to cost 15 million euros and Liverpool were also chasing his signature. Dortmund will finish as the best ever second-placed side regardless of whether they add to their 77 points.—AFP

German Bundesliga table

BERLIN: German Bundesliga table before today's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Bayern Munich	33	27	4	2	77	1685	—
champions							
Dortmund	33	24	5	4	80	32	77
Bayer	33	17	6	10	53	38	57
Bor. M'bach	33	16	4	13	65	50	52
Mainz 05	33	14	7	12	46	42	49
Hertha Berlin	33	14	7	12	42	42	49
Schalke 04	33	14	7	12	47	48	49
VfL Wolfsburg	33	11	9	13	44	48	42
Cologne	33	10	12	11	36	40	42
Ingolstadt 04	33	10	10	13	31	39	40
Augsburg	33	9	11	13	41	49	38
Hamburg	33	10	8	15	37	45	38
Darmstadt 98	33	9	11	13	38	51	38
Hoffenheim	33	9	10	14	38	50	37
E Frankfurt	33	9	9	15	34	51	36
Bremen	33	9	8	16	49	65	35
VfB Stuttgart	33	9	6	18	49	72	33
Hanover 96	33	7	4	22	30	5925	—
relegated							

SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2016

Kuwait Times

Sports



Ukraine's karate kids strike blow at Down's syndrome stereotypes

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OKLAHOMA: Oklahoma City Thunder guard Andre Roberson (left) reaches for a ball held by San Antonio Spurs forward Kawhi Leonard in the third quarter of Game 6 of a second-round NBA basketball playoff series on Thursday, May 12, 2016. — AP

THUNDER STRIKE SAN ANTONIO SPURS

LOS ANGELES: Kevin Durant scored 37 points as the Oklahoma City Thunder completed a 4-2 series victory over the San Antonio Spurs to advance to a Western Conference finals showdown with the Golden State Warriors on Thursday. He left the game to a standing ovation after a superb personal contribution that also included nine rebounds and two assists. "We're not done yet," Durant said. "We have to keep improving. Keep getting better and get ready for the next series." The host Thunder punched their ticket to their fourth Western Conference finals in six years with a 113-99 victory in front of a crowd of 18,200 at Chesapeake Energy Arena.

The finals will be a chance for Oklahoma City to avenge their regular-season record against the Warriors, where they lost all three games. San Antonio, NBA finals champions as recently as 2014, were always struggling against a powerful Thunder team led by Durant and Russell Westbrook, who finished with 28 points. "We just came out with great intensity," said Westbrook, who had two back-to-back strong performances against the Spurs. "We knew how important this game

was." "They been a great team for years," he added. "Tonight was a tough game but we came out with the win."

Oklahoma City showed that when either Durant or Westbrook get in a groove, they are tough to beat and when both get going at the same time, it's almost impossible to stop them. "We know what we can do as a team," Westbrook said. "We are confident in ourselves." The Spurs had trailed by as much as 26 points at one stage in the game, but despite narrowing the gap in the fourth quarter, were always struggling to overhaul the deficit. The Thunder continued their rebounding dominance with a 50-40 advantage. They turned the ball over 12 times, while the Spurs gave the ball away just 10 times. Oklahoma City outshot San Antonio from the floor, 47 percent to 43 percent.

"Game one they just outplayed us," Durant said of the Spurs, who won the series opener by 32 points. "Game three, I think we gave the game away, and we didn't want to do that again. Russell (Westbrook) was huge last game. I think that propelled us into having a good game tonight. The semi-final

exit could conceivably mark the end of the road for at least two of San Antonio's long-serving veterans, with Tim Duncan, 40 and Manu Ginobili, 38, in the twilight of their NBA careers. The evergreen Duncan finished with 19 points, while Kawhi Leonard was the top scorer for the Spurs with 22.

Duncan turned 40 last month and hasn't made it clear whether he plans to return for another season. He has a player option on his contract. Although Duncan's minutes were reduced this year, he still came up with some turn back the clock moments and played a big role in helping lead the veteran Spurs squad to their best regular season in franchise history. Asked in the Spurs' dressing room what the future holds for him, Duncan said, "I will get to that when I get out of here." In order to reach the finals, Westbrook said, they must beat Golden State on their home court-which he believes they can accomplish. "Very confident we can beat them," he said. "They are a good team. They are the defending champs. We are going to go there to take care of business and try to move on." "It is time to knuckle down." — AFP