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Kuwait Times



ANNIVERSARY 55th
Kuwait Times

THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 2017

RAJAB 18, 1438 AH

No: 17199



150 Fiis

LEAK SHOWS NSA PENETRATED MIDEAST BANKING NETWORKS

FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS IN KUWAIT TARGETED FOR ESPIONAGE



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PHILIPPINES DEPORTS KUWAITI IS SUSPECT

MANILA: A Kuwaiti man suspected to be a member of the Islamic State group was yesterday deported by the Philippines to face charges at home, a justice department official said. Hussein Al-Dhafiri, one of the two suspected IS members arrested in the Philippines last month, was flown out of the country to Kuwait, undersecretary Erickson Balmes said.

A statement from the Kuwaiti embassy said Dhafiri was due to be tried in his home country. "Evidence obtained by Kuwait's state security agencies also showed that he is planning to carry out terroristic attacks in the State of Kuwait," the statement said. Dhafiri was arrested along with a Syrian woman

Rahaf Zina, also named as a member of the group. Zina and Dhafiri married after her high-ranking IS commander husband was killed in Syria, said Justice Secretary Vitaliano Aguirre. He earlier said the pair had entered the country as part of plans for "a bombing operation" in the Philippines or Kuwait.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has warned that IS members might make their way into the country by infiltrating its Muslim communities, concentrated in the south of the largely Catholic country. The Philippines has been battling with Muslim extremist groups for years in the remote southern region, some of whom have since pledged allegiance to IS. — AFP

PARIS: A new set of documents purportedly lifted from the US National Security Agency suggests that American spies have burrowed deep into the Middle East's financial network, apparently compromising the Dubai office of the anti-money laundering and financial services firm EastNets. TheShadowBrokers, which started the security experts last year by releasing some of the NSA's hacking tools, has resumed pouring secrets into the public domain, this time by publishing purported details of the NSA's operations against banks across the Arab world.

In a first for TheShadowBrokers, the data includes PowerPoint slides and purported target lists, suggesting that the group has access to a broader range of data than previously known. "This is by far the most brutal dump," said Comae Technologies founder Matt Suiche, who has closely followed the group's disclosures and initially helped confirm its connection to the NSA last year. In a blog post, he said it appeared that thousands of employee accounts and machines from the EastNets' offices had been compromised and that financial institutions in

Kuwait, Bahrain and the Palestinian territories had been targeted for espionage.

Calls and messages left with EastNets' offices in Dubai, London and New York were either not picked up or not immediately returned. The authenticity of yesterday's document dump could not immediately be determined but the group's previous releases have been corroborated by material leaked by former US intelligence contractor Edward Snowden and software patches issued by major US technology firms. The NSA did not immediately return emails seeking comment.

Because EastNets provides a host of Arab banks connectivity to the banking system's electronic backbone, known as SWIFT, compromising the company would give the NSA the ability to silently track financial transactions across the Middle East, Suiche said in a phone call. He said other documents in the release suggested an even wider effort to monitor the world's transactions. "I'll bet it's not the only SWIFT service bureau that's been compromised," he said. — AP



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March 12th, 2017 Till April 20th, 2017



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CROWN PRINCE RETURNS HOME

KUWAIT: Representative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah returned home Thursday after partaking in the 2017 King Abdulaziz camel festival. His Highness was received at Kuwait International Airport by Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Advisor at the Crown Prince Diwan Nasser Al-Roudhan, and Saudi Ambassador to the State of Kuwait Dr Abdulaziz Al-Fayez. His Highness the Crown Prince was accompanied by Sheikh Faisal Al-Saud Al-Sabah, Sheikh Jaber Duaij Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah, Sheikh Ali Nasser Al-Ali-Sabah, Sheikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Governor of Ahmadi area Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as Advisors at the Crown Prince Diwan Dr Humoud Mohammad Al-Otaibi and Sheikh Mubarak Al-Faisal Al-Saud Al-Sabah. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah returns home Thursday evening. —KUNA

IRAQ GRATEFUL FOR KUWAITI-FUNDED SCHOOL IN IRBIL

IRBIL: Iraq is grateful for the opening of a new school in Irbil as part of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society's (KRCS) "Kuwait is by your side" campaign, Iraqi Minister of Education Dr Muhammad Iqbal Al-Saidali said yesterday. The minister lauded KRCS for its ongoing efforts to aid Iraqis on all possible levels, saying that this was reflective of Kuwait's generous gestures towards the people of Irbil.

Meanwhile, Governor of Irbil Nawzad Hadi also took the chance to thank Kuwait for funding the construction of the school for the displaced, saying that the school, given the name Kathma, will stand as a structure displaying Kuwaitis' sincere wishes for the development of Iraq within the educational domain. Meanwhile, Kuwait General Console in Irbil, Dr Omar Al-Kanderi said that the Kathma School was the third institute funded by the KRCS. More of facilities of such kind will be opened soon, said the



IRBIL: Students celebrate during the opening ceremony of a Kuwaiti-funded school in Irbil, Iraq. —KUNA

diplomat, affirming that the society's efforts was in line with the Kuwaiti leadership and people's efforts to ease the pain of Iraqi displaced. —KUNA

IRAQI MARKET PROVIDES INCENTIVES TO KUWAITI INVESTORS: MINISTER

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti investors are welcomed to seek business within Iraq and they will have a slight advantage over other business personnel, an Iraqi official said yesterday. Kuwaiti companies and corporations have a strong presence in the regional and international markets, said Iraqi Minister of Planning and Commerce Suleiman Al-Jumaili. Iraq is interested in boosting economic and commercial ties with Kuwait, said the Iraqi official who affirmed that such cooperation would benefit both fellow Arab countries.

He commended his meetings with Kuwaiti top officials, saying that the gatherings reflected the strong ties linking the two countries. Speaking on the situation in Iraq, the minister said that the greatest challenge facing development in Iraq was the security threat posed by the so-called Islamic State (IS) and other terror groups. Once the Iraqi government and allies successfully cleanse Iraq from terror groups, the national market will focus on building and reinforcing Iraq's economy. —KUNA



Iraqi Minister of Planning and Commerce Suleiman Al-Jumaili

KRCS, IRC SIGN AGREEMENT TO REHABILITATE WOUNDED SYRIANS

BEIRUT: A new agreement, worth \$188,000, was signed between Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and the International Red Cross (IRC) to rehabilitate Syrian refugees in Lebanon who were wounded during the conflict in their country, a Kuwaiti official said yesterday.

KRCS representative in Lebanon Musa'ad Al-Enizi said that the agreement was part of the society's continuous efforts to help Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The agreement will also include other nationalities, said the Kuwaiti official who stressed that Syrian refugees will have the priority in receiving rehabilitation treatments.

Meanwhile, Head of the IRC delegation in Lebanon Fabrizio Carboni said that his organization was keen on bolstering efforts with KRCS to help all those who are in need including Syrian refugees in the country. The mission for the Syrian refugees will continue with other international partners to ease the pain of those who are suffering, said Carboni.

In other news, Al-Sayer Group's CEO Hamed Al-

Sayer said that Kuwait is always keen to provide a helping hand to people who are in need of aid worldwide. Speaking during a visit to Al-Rihaniyeh Syrian refugee camp in Akkar, the Kuwaiti official said that the visit, by officials from Al-Sayer group and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), was to assess efforts to provide electricity and warm water using portable and stationary solar panels. Sayer group's involvement is in line with the Kuwaiti leadership's policies to provide refugees, especially Syrians, with every bit of assistance that they need to overcome a bit of their suffering.

Sayer and UNEP Regional Director Iyad Abumoghli carried out the visit to Al-Rihaniyeh camp, which includes around 1,000 people who are living in 400 tents, mostly accommodating children, women, and the elderly.

Meanwhile, Abumoghli said that cooperation between Kuwait and UNEP was not new, affirming that both sides had worked previously on several programs in the region. The "annual and generous"

support and funding by Kuwait to UNEP ventures will always be appreciated by the international organization, said the official who hoped that both sides would be able to work together in the near future. A number of refugees at the camp said that were grateful for the assistance provided by the Kuwaiti group, saying that from darkness, the camp was transform into a place where light illuminated their paths and dwellings. The assistance also provided warm water that helped to bring a smile to the people who suffered from the lack basic human needs.

A statement by UNEP indicated that after suffering from long injustice and cold weather, the program - through the generous financial support of its main partner Kuwaiti Al-Sayer Group - has contributed to efforts to lighting up tents and walkways in the camp in addition to providing solar-powered water heaters. This initiative is the first of its kind in terms of using clean energy to cater to the basic needs of refugees in one of the largest camps in Akkar. —KUNA



KFAS, KNCC HOLD JOINT WORKSHOP

KUWAIT: As part of its efforts to develop research and creativity with the private sector, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (KFAS) recently held a joint specialized workshop with Kuwait National Cinema Company (KNCC) after contracting an international expert in customer service development.

The workshop focused on training participants with the aim of improving the services provided to cinema viewers in all theaters owned by the company, said KFAS Director Dr Adnan Shehabuddin. Meanwhile, KNCC Commercial Sector Director Salwa Al-Khouri said cooperation with KFAS comes as part of the company's development plans, adding that it provides a special training program in creativity designed to encourage effective creativity and enhance local manpower's potentials to develop the private sector.



KUWAIT: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met recently with a team from the Ministry of Education, led by Tariq Shehab, Head of the ministry's environment-friendly schools' project.

NAJMA AWARD WINNER ANNOUNCED

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently announced Wessam Qobaisi as the winner of its Najma Award of KD 100,000. The 2017 first quarter draw was held recently at CBK's headquarters in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. In this regard, CBK's Corporate

Credit General Manager Sahar Abdul Aziz Al-Rumaih received and congratulated the winner. A Najma account can be opened by depositing KD 500, which qualifies the customer for Kuwait's largest daily award of KD 7,000. Account holders receive an entry for every KD 25 deposited in their accounts, Rumaih said.





KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lieutenant General Mahmoud Al-Dousary received well-wishers who came over to the Interior Ministry's building to congratulate him on his promotion. — Photos by Joseph Shagra and Abdullatif Al-Sharaa

FIVE WOUNDED IN SHOOTING SPREE STOLEN CAR FOUND TWO YEARS LATER

KUWAIT: Several people from the same family suffered gunshot wounds following a shooting spree caused by family disputes. According to the police report, a citizen entered his relatives' house and started shooting, injuring five persons including a 12-year-old boy, before people who were in the diwaniya put the man under control and managed to take the pistol away from him. The man managed to escape before police arrived at the scene. The men at the scene handed the pistol over to police, as an investigation went on in search for the suspect who faces charges of attempted murder, possession of an unlicensed firearm and entering a house without permission.

Foul play

A homicide investigation went underway in the death of a woman in her thirties whose body was found recently at a house under construction in Jaber Al-Ali. Crime scene investigators found evidence of foul play at the place where the woman was found by the home owner who reported the incident to police. The body was taken to the forensics department to first have the victim's identity determined as detectives did not find any IDs on her. In a separate case, an Indian man's body was sent to the forensics department to determine the cause of his death, after his friend brought him in to the police station. A case was filed for investigations.

Domestic assault

Police responded to a call about a family dispute in Bayan. When they arrived to the scene, they found out

that a couple had engaged in a fight. The husband, a pilot, said that his wife beat him, but the woman denied his claims and alleged that he was the one who physically assaulted her. A case was filed for investigations. Meanwhile, police found a man and a woman exchanging insults over a dispute in Maidan Hawally. Police later let the couple go after the woman, a citizen, refused to lodge a complaint.

Suspected fraud

An investigation was launched to find out how a bank account was opened without its owner's knowledge. A security source said that a citizen told Khaitan police that he was an inmate at the Central Prison, and after he was released, he went to open an account. He was surprised however when he was told that there is an account already opened with his name, and that it has money deposited in it. He said that the bank employees told him that the account was opened in 2013, and is active.

Students hurt

Fireworks caused two students to suffer smoke inhalation in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, a few days after a similar incident happened at Daman bilingual school. In the latest incident, students used fireworks that caused thick smoke, causing two girls to suffocate as they were taken to Adan hospital for treatment. The incident happened during an activity students call 'Senior Prank Day' during which students carry out activities outside the school as a way to have good memories during their graduation year.

Stolen car found

Detectives managed to locate a vehicle two years after it was reported stolen, and arrested three persons involved in the case. The car was put up for sale by its original Kuwaiti owner two years ago, so a Syrian man approached him to buy it. He asked to test drive it, but when he did, he escaped with it. The owner reported the case at the time, and did not know a thing about it until detectives told him it was found in a Salmiya showroom with different license plates. The person who put the car up for sale was summoned, and he said that he bought it from a Syrian national for KD 10,000 and transferred its ownership officially at the traffic department. Detectives discovered that the new license plates are authentic and registered in the traffic department's database. Detectives kept investigating to find out how was the Syrian man was able to buy the car and register it with his name despite the fact that it was reported stolen. Detectives summoned the person who received KD 10,000 for the car, and he said under questioning that he met another Syrian national who offered to sell him the car for KD 2,500 without license plates, saying that it was wanted to authorities. The man agreed to buy it, then bought a similar car with the same model and color. He then took the license plates of the second car and put them on the first one then sold it again. The man told officers about the person he bought the car from; who was arrested and admitted of stealing the car two years ago. — *Translated from the Arabic press*



CUSTOMS OFFICERS ARREST PASSENGERS WITH DRUGS

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Customs officers at Kuwait International Airport arrested an Arab man with possession of 14 pieces of hashish which he had hidden in empty cigarette packs. The man was taken to the proper authorities to face charges. Meanwhile, Nuwaiseeb land border outlet officers caught a Saudi national with possession of illicit tablets kept in his car. Customs officers found the drugs after searching the man's car when they noticed that he was nervous upon his arrival. In other news, Jahra municipality branch inspectors carried out a campaign on commercial stores recently, during which they 27 citations.

Graduation

Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) celebrated the graduation of the sixteenth batch of specialized officers, and sixth batch of officers who graduated with General Secondary Certificate. The ceremony was held at the Regency Hotel under the patronage and presence of State Minister for Cabinet Affairs, Acting Information Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

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- The competition is open for all schools in Kuwait (Government and Private)
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- 10 winners from each category will receive valuable prizes.
- All participants will receive a certificate of appreciation.
- All schools participating in

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- Any school or individual interested to participate in this competition is welcome to visit the office of Kuwait Times and collect the drawing sheets.
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International

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 2017

British woman stabbed to death in Jerusalem

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Afghanistan women embrace a new empowerment: Divorce

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'Mother of all bombs' targets Islamic State

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JIDDAH: Children fly kites on the Red Sea beach, in Jiddah, Saudi Arabia. —AFP

SAUDI WOMAN'S FEAR: 'THEY WILL KILL ME'

DUBAI: Activists feared yesterday for the safety of a young Saudi woman they say was returned to the kingdom against her will, in a case highlighting tight restrictions on women. Dina Ali Lasloom, 24, intended to flee to Australia to escape a forced marriage, Human Rights Watch cited a Canadian witness as saying. The witness said Lasloom approached her while in transit at the airport in Manila, saying "airport officials had confiscated her passport and boarding pass" for a Sydney-bound flight.

The Canadian said she helped Lasloom film social media videos about her plight. In one of them she said: "If my family comes they will kill me," HRW said. Arranged marriages are the norm in Saudi Arabia, where a "guardianship" system requires a male family member, usually the father, husband or brother, to grant permission for a woman's study, travel and other activities. "Lasloom's whereabouts are currently unknown," HRW said in a statement from Manila.

The Canadian witness, who spent several hours with Lasloom at the airport in Manila, reported that two of Lasloom's uncles arrived, the New York-based watchdog said. It also quoted an airline security official as saying he heard Lasloom "screaming and begging for help" on Tuesday before security personnel and men who appeared to be Middle Eastern carried her "with duct tape on her mouth, feet and hands" at the airport. Asked about the HRW statement by AFP yesterday, the Philippine immigration department said it had held no one of Lasloom's name and no Saudi national. "There was no Saudi national by that name who presented herself," spokeswoman Antonette Mangrobang said.

'Guardianship' system blamed

"As far as immigration is concerned, we did not hold any Saudi national." The spokeswoman said that if Lasloom was a transiting passenger, then she would not have passed

through immigration and it would have been up to the airline to decide what happened to her. A Saudi activist said that Lasloom, who lived in Kuwait, "was brought back by force to Riyadh and is now in custody." A female medical student, Alaa, who went to the Riyadh airport to support Lasloom, was arrested when she tried to inquire about her whereabouts, the Saudi activist said. The activist worried that both women could be detained "for a long time". Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte was on a state visit to Saudi Arabia on Monday and Tuesday when the incident occurred.

The Berlin-based European Saudi Organization for Human Rights said that "the seriousness of what Dina Ali is facing" stems from the guardianship system. "Women's rights are... the most prominent human rights problem in Saudi Arabia," the group said. The Saudi embassy in the Philippines said on Twitter that "the information that has been

circulating over social media is untrue." It described the incident as a family matter and said: "The citizen has now returned with her family to the homeland."

Human Rights Watch called on Saudi Arabia to reveal whether Lasloom is with her family or is being held by the state at a shelter. "Lasloom is at serious risk of harm if returned to her family. She also faces possible criminal charges" for alleged parental disobedience and harming the reputation of the state with her public cries for help, the watchdog said. It called on the Philippine government to also investigate and hold accountable "any of their officials who failed to protect Dina Ali Lasloom", as required by international law. Madawi Al-Rasheed, a visiting professor at the London School of Economics Middle East Centre, wrote on Twitter that Lasloom's case is "a classic... in which state and family cooperate against women in KSA" (the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). —AFP



QARAQOSH: Iraqi Christian residents from Qaraqosh (also known as Hamdaniya), some 30 kilometers east of Mosul, take part in a parade as Christians celebrate the first Palm Sunday event in the town since Iraqi forces recaptured it from Islamic State (IS) group jihadists. —AFP

IRAQ'S CHRISTIANS RETURN TO RANSACKED TOWN WITH FEAR

SUNNI MILITANT GRAFFITI REMOVED, SHIITE SLOGANS APPEAR

QARAQOSH: With Islamic State expelled, Iraqi Christians are trickling back to the ransacked town of Qaraqosh, beset by anxiety for their security and yet hopeful they can live in friendship with Muslims of all persuasions. The town, about 20 km from the battlefield with Islamic State in the northern city of Mosul, shows why Christians have mixed feelings about the future of their ancient community. In the desecrated churches of Qaraqosh, Christians are busy removing graffiti daubed by the Sunni Muslim militants during two and a half years of control - only for new slogans to have appeared, scrawled by Shiite members of the Iraqi forces fighting street to street with the jihadists in Mosul.

But nearby a shopkeeper is doing a brisk trade selling Dutch beer, Greek ouzo and several whisky brands to Christians, Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds alike, with this kind of commerce perhaps offering a glimpse of how Iraq's fractured communities could again live together peacefully. Encouraged by security checkpoints and patrols by a volunteer force, up to 10 Christian families have returned to what used to be the minority's biggest community in Iraq until Islamic State seized it in 2014.

Iraqi forces pushed the group out of Qaraqosh in October, part of a six-month offensive to retake Mosul. But residents are worried that the Shiite slogans signal a new kind of sectarian division. "Oh Hussein" is daubed in red on the wall of a church torched earlier by Islamic State, praising the hero of Shiite Muslims who was martyred 1,300 years ago. "We are afraid of this, of tensions," said Girgis Youssif, a church worker. "We want to live in peace and demand security," said Youssif, who returned after fleeing to Erbil, about 60 km away in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Shi'ites in the Iraqi government forces and paramilitary groups, mostly from further

south in the country, have scribbled such slogans on buildings all over Mosul too. Soldiers have also hoisted the flag of Ali in the city and on their on military vehicles. Shiites regard Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed, and the prophet's grandson Hussein as his true successors. Two Shiite flags also fly over Qaraqosh. Most Sunnis, who are the dominant community in Mosul, have shrugged off the Shiite slogans as the work of a handful of religious zealots but Christians take them as a signal that their future remains uncertain. "Of course we are afraid of such signs," said Matti Yashou Hatti, a photographer who still lives in Erbil with his family. "We need international protection."

Those families who have returned to Qaraqosh - once home to 50,000 people - are trying to revive Christian life dating back two millennia. However, most stay only two or three days at a time to refurbish their looted and burnt homes. "We want to come back but there is no water and power," said Mazam Nesin, a Christian who works for a volunteer force based in Qaraqosh but has left his family behind in Erbil. By contrast, displaced Muslims have been flocking back to markets in eastern Mosul since Islamic State's ejection from that part of the city, despite the battle raging in the Old City across the Tigris river which is the militants' last stronghold.

Alcohol shop

Numbers of Christians in Iraq have fallen from 1.5 million to a few hundred thousand since the violence which followed the 2003 toppling of Saddam Hussein. Many Baghdad residents who could not afford to go abroad went to Qaraqosh and other northern towns where security used to be better than in the capital, rocked by sectarian warfare after the US-led invasion.

But with the arrival of Islamic State, residents abandoned their homes with some applying for asylum in Europe. Germany alone took in 130,000 Iraqis, among them many Christians, in 2015 and 2016. But most ended up in Erbil with relatives or in homes paid for by aid agencies. Supermarkets and restaurants remain closed in Qaraqosh, with windows smashed and burnt furniture strewn across floors. One of the few businesses to have reopened is Steve Ibrahim's alcohol shop in the town centre; in the absence of cafes it has become a meeting point for local people. "Business has been good so far. Everybody comes here to stock up," said Ibrahim, who has just reopened the store with his father.

They lost everything when Islamic State, known by its enemies as Daesh, wrecked their business. Now they have invested about \$400 to refurbish the shop - new tiles shine on the walls - and customers are coming from beyond the town and from across the communities. "I sell drinks to Christians and Muslims alike," he said. "Many people come from Mosul or other towns." Many of Ibrahim's customers ignore Islam's forbidding of alcohol consumption. While he was talking, a Sunni Muslim from eastern Mosul drove up to buy a bottle of whisky and four cans of beer, packed in a black plastic bag to hide his purchase from the eyes of more religiously observant Muslims.

"You couldn't drink during Daesh. I am glad this shop is open again," said the man who gave his name only as Mohammed, shaking hands with Christians enjoying an afternoon beer. "I still only drink at home." Later a Shiite from a village south of Mosul arrived to pick up drinks. "I come here twice a week. It's the only shop in the area," he said, asking not to be named, before driving off. —Reuters

IS OUSTER CLEARS THE WAY FOR SOCCER COMEBACK IN MOSUL

MOSUL: It was a grim time for football: Jihadists observed matches, jerseys from foreign teams were banned and even whistling was prohibited when the Islamic State group held Iraq's Mosul. Play was halted for prayers, which occur five times a day, and shorts that exposed players' knees were also banned by IS. Now, eastern Mosul has been recaptured from the jihadists and efforts are underway to rehabilitate football pitches, even as the battle for the city's west continues on the other side of the Tigris River.

"When we were playing, they were watching us and some of them carried weapons, and they prevented us from wearing foreign teams' uniforms," says Osama Ali Hamid, a 26-year-old player wearing the jersey of Germany's Borussia Dortmund club. "If one of us arrived wearing a shirt with the logo of a foreign team, they'd remove the team's logo with scissors," Hamid said. Excitement dominated a recent match in eastern Mosul, at which young men gathered around a pitch that has been covered in new artificial turf to cheer on their comrades. "Now we are playing without Daesh monitoring," says Laith Ali, 23, using an Arabic acronym for IS. "They imposed rules on us." But now, the young men can keep playing even when the call to prayer sounds from the minarets of the city's mosques. Football is wildly popular in Mosul, as it is in other areas across Iraq-indeed, the sport has been one of the few consistent unifiers in a long-divided country.

Battlefields, not playing fields

The Mosul Club was one of the best-known football clubs in the country, and was preparing to return to the Iraqi league in 2014, when IS seized the northern city, preventing the players from going to qualifying matches outside. The club's buildings and facilities are located on the eastern side of Mosul, but the main stadium is in west Mosul, which Iraqi forces are still battling to retake from IS. In 2012, work began to build a new stadium on the same spot with a planned capacity of more than 20,000, but like the Mosul club's Iraqi league aspirations, these plans were also thwarted by the IS assault in 2014.

Mohammed Abdulkarim al-Mimaari, the head of the Youth and Sports Department in Nineveh province, of which Mosul is the capital, says that 12 football pitches in the city have been restored. In Mosul, the department is holding a sports event on the first day of each month, dubbing it "Sports Day," spokesman Omar Shamseddin said. IS members "were playing with us in the beginning, they were treating us well. They are Iraqis from the local community," says player Hamid. But that did not last: they later "began saying in their sermons in the mosques that the battlefields are better than the playing fields". "They even prohibited whistling" during matches based on the belief that it would cause "devils" to gather, says 25-year-old player Mustafah Nour. Violating the prohibition resulted in two or three days in jail, he says. "But now, we play freely," Hamid says. —AFP

BRITISH WOMAN STABBED TO DEATH IN JERUSALEM

JERUSALEM: A 23-year-old British female tourist was stabbed to death in Jerusalem yesterday and her attacker arrested, police said. The attack took place on the tram close to the Old City, where Christian commemorations were under way for Good Friday as Jews marked the week-long Passover holiday. Israel's domestic security agency Shin Bet said the suspected attacker was a 57-year-old Palestinian resident of east Jerusalem. Police had been on high alert for Passover when tens of thousands of Jews pray at the Western Wall inside the Old City and some visit the flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound above it. The compound, which is the third holiest site in Islam and the holiest site to Jews, who refer to it as the Temple Mount, is the source of constant tensions.

Jews are allowed to visit but not pray at the site. Palestinian fears that Israel will seek to change those rules have been the source of repeated violence. A wave of unrest which erupted in October 2015 has claimed the lives of 260 Palestinians, 41 Israelis, two Americans, one Jordanian, an Eritrean, a Sudanese and a Briton, according to an AFP count. Most of the Palestinians killed were carrying out knife, gun or car-ramming attacks, the Israeli authorities say. Others were shot dead during protests or clashes, while some were killed in Israeli air strikes on the Gaza Strip. The violence has greatly subsided in recent months. —AFP

FIVE WAYS THE REFERENDUM COULD CHANGE TURKEY

ISTANBUL: Turkey votes tomorrow in a referendum on expanding the powers of the presidency under Recep Tayyip Erdogan. But the outcome could more broadly influence all aspects of the country's future. Coming 94 years after the foundation of modern Turkey by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the referendum is a landmark vote that may affect relations with the West, a peace process with Kurds and dynamics inside society. Here are five ways the referendum could shape Turkey:

Enhanced or weakened powers?

If he wins the referendum, Erdogan will enjoy enhanced powers, be able to appoint ministers and have an entire bureaucracy centralized within his presidential palace. Opponents worry that the new system will lack the "checks and balances" that mark the US system, moving the presidency toward one man rule. The new system would be implemented from November

2019 when presidential and legislative elections would be held simultaneously. With the clock wound back under the new system Erdogan, who became president in 2014, could take two more terms, allowing him to stay in power until 2029 rather than 2024, currently.

The executive presidency system "amasses unprecedented power in the hands of one man," said Alan Makovsky, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. Erdogan in combative speeches has not countenanced the prospect of a 'No' vote and not given the slightest indication he would consider his future. But given the advantages of the 'Yes' campaign a 'No' would be a massive blow to his status as Turkey's all-powerful leader.

EU integration or disintegration?

Relations between Turkey, a longstanding candidate to join the European Union, and its EU partners plunged

to bitter lows during the referendum campaign as the president lashed out at Europe for what he said was behavior reminiscent of Nazi Germany. Erdogan has said Turkey's membership bid would be "on the table" after the referendum and in every single campaign speech said he would sign any bill restoring capital punishment, a move that would automatically end its bid to join the bloc.

"The tactics of constantly bullying the EU... for domestic political purposes have now reached their limits," said Marc Pierini, visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe. In the event of an easy 'Yes' victory, Erdogan could have the confidence to take a decisive move away from EU integration and show Turkey can forge alternative strategic alliances, including with Russia. One alternative to full membership could be a strengthened customs union, but it is unclear if that would be palatable for Erdogan. —AFP

AFGHANISTAN WOMEN EMBRACE A NEW EMPOWERMENT: DIVORCE

JALALABAD: When Nadia's heroin addict husband began assaulting her with a metal rod, she did something unthinkable for many women in Afghanistan—she left him. Domestic abuse is endemic in the deeply patriarchal country, but for the first time a growing number of Afghan women are embracing divorce as a new kind of empowerment. Divorce is Islamically deemed as halal (a permissible act) - but the worst sort, still a greater taboo than the abuse itself in a culture that remains unforgiving to women who part with their husbands. "He is a drug addict and an alcoholic. I cannot live with him anymore,"

Nadia said of her husband of two years as she sobbed quietly behind the billowing folds of her burqa. Her father, sat next to her, also welled up with tears. Tribal elders from Nadia's community attempted to intervene, cajoling her to go back to her abuser. Instead, she became the first woman in her family to ask for divorce. "God has given rights to women—divorce is one of them," said Nadia, who is seeking legal separation with the help of Legal Aid Grant Facility (LAGF), part of a UNDP project established in 2014.

Her husband has since left home, his whereabouts are unclear. National statistics are hard to come by, but in a sign of the upward trend LAGF says it has handled a 12 percent increase in divorce cases across Afghanistan over a period of three years. "Divorced Afghan women who have the chance to start a new life are becoming models for other women, showing that an unhappy or abusive marriage does not have to be a life sentence," Heather Barr, a Human Rights Watch researcher said.

Great shame

Afghanistan has been a battleground for women's rights since the misogynistic Taliban were ousted from power in 2001, but divorce cases illustrate how gender parity remains a distant dream. It is relatively easy for men to initiate divorce, often just by verbally relaying the decision to their wives. But women must go to court, and can only seek separation based on specific complaints such as abuse or abandonment. Retaining a lawyer is no easy task even for those who can afford one: death threats against those representing women in divorce cases are not uncommon. "Divorce is one of the clearest examples of discrimination still written into law in Afghanistan," Barr said. "Given the difficulty in finding a lawyer, corruption and misogyny in the courts, and the low rate of literacy among women, the result is that for many women divorce is all but impossible." Some like 22-year-old Nafisa are stuck in limbo as her husband refuses to divorce her. After being engaged for 11 years, he married her in absentia. Based in London, he authorized an Islamic guardian to solemnize their marriage ceremony in Jalalabad. But he has since refused to return to Afghanistan or take her with him, prompting Nafisa to leave her father-in-law's house and demand divorce. Nafisa's male relatives refused to let her talk to AFP, with her uncle only saying that the acrimonious divorce proceedings in court had brought great shame to the family and made her remarriage prospects difficult.

Compromise

It is partly for this reason that divorce is strongly discouraged. Divorced women living independently are rare in Afghan society, and are often viewed with suspicion and become targets of abuse. Mediation is often the last hope to prevent the split—and women are almost always encouraged to compromise. AFP sat through one mediation session in Kabul at the organization Women for Afghan Women, where 24-year-old Zahra met with her estranged husband and mother-in-law. —AFP



ISTANBUL: Supporters of the 'NO' vote wave flags and sing songs during campaigning in Istanbul, ahead of the upcoming referendum. —AP

STABILITY OR AUTOCRACY?

TURKEY DIVIDED OVER KEY REFERENDUM

ANKARA: Turkey is heading toward a historic referendum on a new political system that could change the course of its history - and it has the country divided right down the middle. For supporters, change will bring much-needed stability. Others fear it could lead Turkey down the path of an autocratic, one-man rule by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Voters will decide on Sunday whether to approve constitutional changes that would replace the parliamentary system with a presidential one, scrapping the office of the prime minister and handing over its powers to the president.

Erdogan, who has fronted the campaign for a "yes" vote, says the proposed "Turkish style" presidential system will banish weak governments, establish an efficient state and bring prosperity to the country. A "yes" vote would allow a set of 18 constitutional reforms that grants the president the power to appoint government ministers and senior officials, appoint half of the members in the country's highest judicial body, declare states of emergency and issue decrees.

Critics argue that will allow Erdogan - who has been in power either as prime minister or president since 2003 - to rule at least until 2029 with few checks and balances in a system where the separation of powers will be less clear-cut. "The 18 articles foresee a very loose separation of powers," said Ahmet Kasim Han, an associate professor of international relations at Kadir Has University in Istanbul. That "unduly invests the weight of the decisions and the power of the executive on the president," he said. Polls suggest a neck-and-neck race for Sunday's vote.

"It's going to be a very close call and both 'yes' and 'no' are equally probable as outcomes," Han said. The referendum comes amid troubled times for Turkey, which has been plagued by a string of bombings, renewed violence between the government forces and Kurdish rebels and a failed coup attempt in July that resulted in a state of emergency that remains in place. The emergency powers have permitted a wide-

spread government crackdown that has targeted the followers of US-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen - whom Turkey blames for the coup and other government opponents.

Some 100,000 people - including judges and teachers - have been dismissed, and more than 40,000 people, including journalists and opposition pro-Kurdish legislators, have been arrested. Hundreds of news outlets and non-governmental organizations have been shut down. The country is also dealing with the war in neighboring Syria which led to an influx of some 3 million refugees. Turkey has sent troops into Syria to help opposition Syrian forces clear a border area from the threat posed by Islamic State militants.

Meanwhile, Turkey is drifting further apart from Europe, following Erdogan's recent outbursts slamming the governments in the Netherlands and Germany as "Nazis" over their restrictions on Turkish ministers' attempts to court Turkish expatriate votes. For Erdogan, 63, a presidential system has been a long-time dream. A prime minister for 11 years since 2003, he was elected president in 2014 for a five-year term and took a far more active role in politics than his predecessors, ruling behind the scenes despite the current constitution that requires him to be neutral. Erdogan argues that as Turkey's first president to be directly elected by the people - instead of the parliament - he has a wider mandate than previous presidents. If approved, the reforms would in effect legalize his de facto rule.

The amendments were approved by parliament in January, but fell short of the majority required to directly come into effect without a national vote. Erdogan remains popular in Turkey's conservative and religious heartlands, where he is seen as a strong leader who stands up against Europe, terror threats and coup-plotters. Many believe he has improved services and health care, and given a voice to pious Muslims who at times felt marginalized by more secular governments. —AP



NICE: In this file photo, police officers stand by medical personnel attending a person on the ground in Nice, southern France, next to the lorry that had been driven into crowds of revelers. With the scars and threat of extremist violence looming over France's presidential election, voters will cast ballots under a state of emergency that is becoming a part of the fabric of French life. — AP

FEARS, SCARS OF EXTREMISM LOOM OVER FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL VOTE

FAR-RIGHT LEADER VOWS TO RID MUSLIMS OF EXTREMISTS

PARIS: The scars of extremist violence run deep in today's France, and the threat of new attacks hangs heavy over the upcoming presidential election. Voters will cast ballots under a state of emergency that is increasingly stitched into the fabric of French life. Yet terrorism is not the No 1 campaign issue for France's two-round presidential election on April 23 and May 7; jobs are. Georges Salines wants to make sure the next president doesn't forget how extremist attacks have damaged France. His daughter Lola was killed when Islamic State fighters stormed Paris' Bataclan theater in November 2015, the deadliest of several attacks to hammer this country since French voters last chose a leader in 2012.

"Mr or Madame President, this question of terrorism is very important, very difficult and we request a comprehensive approach," he says. "You have to act all the time, from the time when the person is in danger of becoming a terrorist to the aftermath of an attack ... you have to act at the international level, the national level, at the local level of the families and even individuals." Lola, a 28-year-old who edited children's books, played the ukulele and adored roller derby, went to the Bataclan for a concert on Nov 13, 2015, and never came home. In the chaos of the attack's ensuing hours, her father and brother launched a desperate search for her on social media.

Extremist attacks

Today, she rests in Paris' Pere-Lachaise cemetery. Extremist attacks on France have claimed more than 230 other lives since 2015. They include cartoonists at the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo, shoppers at a kosher market, children watching holiday fireworks on the French Riviera, an elderly priest celebrating Mass in Normandy, young people dancing to music. "These are tragedies of enormous importance. And behind one victim, there are many, many other indirect casualties, because we all grieve and suffer the loss of our loved ones," Dr Salines said in his medical office.

He now heads an association, called November 13 - Fraternity and Truth, that has sent a letter to France's 11 presidential candidates asking them to lay out their counterterrorism plans. Those candidates will all compete in the April 23 first-round vote, with the top two vote-getters moving on to the presidential runoff on May 7. Already two attackers have tried to target Paris sites during this presidential campaign - one at the Louvre Museum, the other at Orly Airport. Other, more deadly attacks have hit countries around Europe in recent months.

Far-right leader

Across the political spectrum, the French candidates are pledging more military spending and more robust intelligence -

promises that resonate with an electorate that has gradually shifted to the right on security issues. Far-right leader Marine Le Pen has been the most outspoken, blaming a surge in immigration and lax attitudes toward Islamic fundamentalism for France's recent attacks. She vowed in a speech Monday to crack down on criminals who risk turning to jihad and to rid France's Muslim population of fundamentalists who intimidate peaceful believers. She would add 50,000 soldiers to France's 200,000-strong military and buy more jets, ships and armored vehicles. Independent centrist Emmanuel Macron - whom polls consider the front-runner in the unpredictable race - wants an international initiative to press US social media giants to halt the spread of "Islamist propaganda" and to force internet firms to provide data encryption keys to police when needed in a counterterrorism investigation.

30,000 fake accounts

Facebook said it has targeted 30,000 fake accounts linked to France ahead of the country's presidential election, as part of a worldwide effort against misinformation. It said it has "taken action" against the French accounts, removing sites with the highest traffic. Le Pen, Macron and conservative presidential candidate Francois Fillon all want to boost France's defense spending - and some candidates are talking about reviving the military draft. France's military is on the front line of the fight against Islamic extremism, with operations in Syria, Iraq and Africa's Sahel region, as well as on its own territory.

While tough-on-security rhetoric has become more common among French politicians, French voters aren't necessarily looking for a great protector. Said Frederic Michael, a pollster for Opinion Way. "Unlike in the US, the idea of having a strong leader, a protector of the country, is not among the traits that is most desired for the president of the country. We want him first of all to be honest, and then we want him to be competent, and then to have the stature of a president," Michael said. Fighting extremism will be a top challenge for France's next president, and a complex one, partly because the problem is homegrown.

There are more jihadis from France in the Islamic State group than from any other Western country, including many young French-born men with family origins in France's former colonies in North Africa. Facing dim job prospects and discrimination in poor French suburbs, they are easily wooed by charismatic recruiters online. But violence in France and elsewhere in recent years has shown that there's no single profile of a potential attacker. Some jihadis worked in groups, others worked alone. Their motivations and methods are so varied that authorities admit they can't protect everything all the time. Cracking down too hard is also controversial. — AP

FRANCE'S PRESIDENTIAL RACE TIGHTENS FURTHER

PARIS: France's presidential race looked tighter than it has all year yesterday, nine days before voting starts, as one poll put all four main candidates within touching distance of the two-person run-off round. The Ipsos-Sopra Sterna poll for daily Le Monde showed centrist Emmanuel Macron and far-right leader Marine Le Pen tied on 22 percent each in the April 23 first round, with the far-left's Jean-Luc Melenchon and conservative Francois Fillon on 20 and 19 percent respectively. That 3 percentage point gap among the top four was within the poll's margin of error, suggesting the election is wide open.

Were he to qualify for the second round on May 7, Macron is still seen winning whoever his opponent is, but the most striking trend of the past days has been Melenchon's sharp rise in first round voting intentions since performing well in two TV debates in late March and early April. A second poll published on Friday showed a bigger, six-point gap separating the four main players in a first-round field of 11 candidates. The daily survey by Opinionway had Macron as leader on 23 percent and Melenchon the laggard on 17. Melenchon's progress is, however, worrying investors in view of his hostility to the European Union and plans to repeal pro-business labor reforms. Opinion polls show that, should he reach the second round, he could win against Fillon or Le Pen.

Polls have consistently shown that Le Pen, who is also hostile to the EU and wants to dump the euro currency, would not win the presidency whoever she faced in the run-off. French judges investigating her alleged misuse of EU funds to pay for party assistants have asked for her parliamentary immunity to be lifted, though her legal woes have not been as harmful to her in the polls as the allegations of nepotism that have plagued Fillon's campaign. The Le Monde poll was conducted on April 12 and 13 among 1,509 people. — Reuters

LIBYAN RIVALS CLASH IN NEGLECTED SOUTH

TRIPOLI: Libya's southern desert, long neglected by central authorities, risks becoming an arena for score-settling between rival governments vying for clout across the war-torn country, analysts say. Clashes erupted last week as forces loyal to Libya's eastern authorities battled to seize a key southern airbase from militias that back a United Nations-endorsed unity government.

The offensive by the self-proclaimed Libyan National Army (LNA) commanded by military strongman Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar threatened to trigger a broader conflict with forces allied to the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA). The unity government, the rival administration in eastern Libya and their respective backers are battling for influence in the North African country which has been wracked by chaos since the fall of dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

So far tensions between the two sides had been mainly limited to the country's north. But last week, the LNA launched an offensive on the Tamenhant airbase on the outskirts of the city of Sebha. The most important airbase in the south, it is a base for the "Third Force", one of several powerful pro-GNA militias from the western city of Misrata. Haftar's LNA "wants to achieve a victory in the southern region of Fezzan to boost its position & GNA is mobilizing to prevent that", analyst Mohamed Eljarh of the Atlantic Council tweeted.

Potential for clashes

The UN-backed government, which both Haftar and Libya's eastern-based parliament have refused to recognize, has announced a counter-offensive against the LNA. World powers this week sounded the alarm over the clashes, and in a joint statement, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council called for de-escalation. "We underline the difference between acts against the terrorist threat and acts that can lead to further deterioration of the situation in Libya," they said.

To date, the unity government had largely avoided displaying open hostility towards Haftar, who is accused of wanting to establish a military dictatorship in Libya. But "local armed groups and tribes could be caught into this fight and things could spiral out of control," said Mattia Toaldo, a Libya specialist at the European Council on Foreign Relations. — AFP

'MOTHER OF ALL BOMBS' KILLS 36 ISLAMIC STATE MILITANTS

ACHIN: The top US military commander in Afghanistan said yesterday that the decision to deploy one of the largest conventional bombs ever used in combat was purely tactical, and made as part of the campaign against Islamic State-linked fighters. As many as 36 suspected Islamic State militants were killed in the strike on Thursday evening in the eastern province of Nangarhar, Afghan defense officials said, adding there were no civilian casualties.

Amaq, the news agency affiliated with Islamic State in the Middle East, carried a statement denying that the group had suffered casualties in the attack, citing an unidentified source who had been in contact. The statements could not be independently

verified, and yesterday Afghan and foreign troops in the vicinity were not allowing reporters or locals to approach the scene of the blast. The strike came as US President Donald Trump prepares to dispatch his first high-level delegation to Kabul, amid uncertainty about his plans for the nearly 9,000 American troops stationed in Afghanistan.

Nicknamed "the mother of all bombs," the weapon was dropped from an MC-130 aircraft in the Achin district of Nangarhar, bordering Pakistan. Nicholson said he was in constant communication with officials in Washington, but the decision to use the 21,600-pound (9,797-kg) GBU-43 bomb was based on his assessment of military needs and not broader political considerations. "This was the first

time that we encountered an extensive obstacle to our progress," he said of a joint Afghan-US operation that has been targeting Islamic State since March. "It was the right time to use it tactically against the right target on the battlefield."

Afghan and US forces were at the scene of the strike and reported that the "weapon achieved its intended purpose," Nicholson said. Afghan Defense Ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri said no civilians were harmed in the massive blast that targeted a network of caves and tunnels that had been heavily mined. "No civilian has been hurt and only the base, which Daesh used to launch attacks in other parts of the province, was destroyed," Waziri said in a statement. —Reuters

'MOTHER OF ALL BOMBS' TARGETS ISLAMIC STATE

KABUL: The United States dropped a 21,600-pound GBU-43 bomb, one of the largest non-nuclear devices used in combat, on a suspected Islamic State target in Afghanistan on Thursday. Here are some details about the bomb, based on information from the US military, independent security think-tanks and media reports.

Exploding above the ground

Described by the US Air Force as its "largest non-nuclear conventional weapon", the 9,840 kg Massive Ordnance Air Blast Bomb (MOAB) - also dubbed the Mother of All Bombs - is packed with 11 tons of high explosives. The MOAB is not a bunker buster built for deep penetration, but is designed to explode just above the ground, flattening surfaces structures, destroying mines and killing enemy troops within a radius of up to around 150 meters. MOAB is also envisaged as a psychological weapon deployed to shock enemy combatants with its power. The Russian military says it has tested a more powerful device, dubbed the "Father of all Bombs", although there are no reports of it having been used in action.

'Flattener'

Designed in 2003 for use against Iraqi forces, the MOAB succeeded the Vietnam War-era, 15,000 pound BLU-82 "Daisy Cutter". Daisy Cutters were primarily dropped to clear landing zones for helicopters operating in the Southeast Asian jungle. They could flatten a 60-metre wide patch of jungle and destroy mines and other booby traps without leaving a crater. They were also used to stun North Vietnamese or Viet Cong units lying in wait for American troops. Both the MOAB and Daisy Cutter are dropped from C-130 transport aircraft, with a parachute dragging a pallet holding the bomb out of the back. Apart from producing a bigger bang than the Daisy Cutter, MOAB is equipped with a GPS guidance system. The Daisy Cutter was used in the first Gulf War in 1991 and later in Afghanistan, including in the hunt for Osama bin Laden during the Battle of Tora Bora. It was taken out of service in 2008.

British heritage

The US Air Force's big air blast bombs and its heavy bunker busters trace their origins back to "earthquake bombs" of World War Two designed by the British. Also known as "Tallboy" and "Grand Slam", the devices penetrated deep into the ground with hardened steel casings before exploding. The British Royal Air Force used them to attack strategic German targets. The larger 22,000-pound Grand Slam became the US military's T-14, spawning a generation of bunker busters. The US Air Force also modified the 12,000-pound Tallboy to create the T-10 for use against Imperial Japanese forces in the Pacific. It was put into storage unused when the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended the war. —Reuters



CHECHNYA: People protest outside the Russian Embassy in London, following reports of the torture and murder of gay men in Chechnya. The United Nations' High Commissioner for Human Rights called upon the Russian government in a statement "to put an end to the persecution of people perceived to be gay or bisexual. —AP

NEWSPAPER FEARS FOR STAFF AFTER CHECHEN CLERICS VOW VENGEANCE

CLERICS ADOPTED RESOLUTION PROMISING REVENGE

MOSCOW: Russia's most famous campaigning newspaper said yesterday it had appealed to the Kremlin to protect its staff after Chechen clerics said the paper faced "retribution" for alleging that gay men in Chechnya were being tortured and killed. Novaya Gazeta published an article this month which said authorities in the majority Muslim southern Russian republic had rounded up over 100 gay men or men suspected of being gay and tortured them. It said at least three of them had been killed.

Kremlin critics saw the report as further evidence that Moscow allows authorities in Chechnya to run the region - which has been consumed by two wars since the Soviet collapse - as a feudal fiefdom in exchange for separatist and radical Islamist sentiment being brutally suppressed. Chechnya's Moscow-backed president Ramzan Kadyrov denies allegations human rights are routinely flouted. His spokesman Alvi Karimov called Novaya's report "an absolute lie", saying there were no gay men in Chechnya to be persecuted. "Nobody can detain or harass anyone who is simply not present in the republic," Karimov told the Interfax news agency.

Novaya's report also caused outrage among Chechnya's Muslim clerics, who adopted a resolution saying it had insulted the dignity and Islamic faith of Chechen men and society. "We promise that retribution will catch up with the hate-mongers wherever and whoever they are and with no statute of limitations," the resolution read. Dmitry Muratov, Novaya's

editor, said yesterday that the resolution was an incitement to violence and that he was worried about his staff's safety. "This resolution is encouraging religious fanatics to retaliate against our journalists," he said in a statement, calling on the authorities to protect journalists and stop anyone whipping up hatred against them.

Two of Novaya's reporters specializing in Chechnya - Anna Politkovskaya and Natalya Estermirova - have been murdered in the last decade. Neither case has been fully solved. Set up with financial help from ex-Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev in 1993, Novaya Gazeta is well-known in Russia for its investigations into official corruption, its reporting on Chechnya, criticism of the authorities and coverage of the opposition in a media landscape where most big-circulation newspapers are loyal to the Kremlin.

The Kremlin said it was following the situation closely and that anyone who thought Novaya's report was false should contest it through the courts. "We are against any actions that could pose a threat to the safety or lives of journalists," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. Peskov said that reports about gay men being tortured in Chechnya could not be regarded as reliable at this stage however, and that the Kremlin was not aware of the police receiving any complaints on the subject. Novaya said Russian investigators had so far ignored a request it sent to the authorities to investigate the contents of its report. —Reuters

WITH TOO FEW PRIESTS, PORTUGUESE WOMEN STEP UP

REGUENGOS DE MONSARAZ: Facing a shortage of Roman Catholic priests, women churchgoers have stepped in to lead Sunday services in villages in southeastern Portugal, a sign the ageing communities are open to change. In the tiny church of Carrapatelo, a village overlooking the vineyards of the Reguengos de Monsaraz region, Claudia Rocha stands before a dozen mostly elderly female churchgoers wearing a black dress and sneakers. Her leather jacket and smartphone sit on the front-row bench as the 31-year-old leads what the church terms "Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest" with ease.

After prayers and church hymns, she makes comments on the day's biblical reading, a form of preaching. At the end, Rocha hands out communion wafers representing the body of Christ that were blessed by the priest beforehand, but wine is not part of the ceremony. "This church would be closed if I wasn't here. Who cares if I am a woman, a deacon or a priest?"

What matters is having someone from the community who maintains our connection with the priest, even when he isn't here," she said.

No misgivings

A divorced social worker without children, she is one of 16 laypeople—eight men and eight women—chosen by Father Manuel Jose Marques to help ensure regular attendance at the seven parishes he presides over. "It might seem strange and new, but we haven't invented anything here. It's a tool that has long been set out in the Church's guidelines, for cases when it's absolutely necessary," says the 57-year-old priest.

The practice of Sunday services being led by laypeople in a priest's absence take place in a number of countries, including Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland and the US. It began in the 1980s, when services were prepared with a priest or ordained clergy member, resembling

mass but without the rite of consecrating bread for communion or the Eucharistic prayer. The Vatican and many clergy members have refused to encourage the practice, fearing a trivialisation of the tradition of Mass. Father Manuel had no such misgivings.

To him, the need to set up Sunday services without a priest became apparent as soon as he took on his seven parishes around 16 years ago. Before, there had been three priests for the seven parishes in Reguengos de Monsaraz, a town in the region of Alentejo between Evora and the Spanish border. He assembled a group of 16 volunteers aged between 24 and 65 from varied backgrounds. "These are people who have experience with faith and welcoming Christ, and who know how to talk about it," he says, noting he makes no distinction between men and women. Lay women step in, too, in other rural parts of Portugal, whose population of 10 million is overwhelmingly Catholic but only counts around 3,500 priests for 4,400 congregations. —AFP



North Korean soldiers take part in a demonstration at an undisclosed location in North Korea. —AP

US ASSESSING MILITARY OPTIONS; NORTH KOREA NUKE TEST LOOMS

WASHINGTON WARNS ITS PATIENCE IS OVER

PYONGYANG: North Korea denounced the United States yesterday for bringing "huge nuclear strategic assets" to the Korean peninsula as a US aircraft carrier group headed for the region amid concerns the North may conduct a sixth nuclear weapon test. Tension has risen since the US Navy fired 59 Tomahawk missiles at a Syrian airfield last week in response to a deadly gas attack, raising concerns about US President Donald Trump's plans for North Korea, which has conducted missile and nuclear tests in defiance of UN and unilateral sanctions.

The United States has warned that its policy of "strategic patience" is over. US Vice President Mike Pence travels to South Korea on Sunday on a long-planned 10-day trip to Asia. A spokesman for the North Korean Foreign Ministry's Institute for Disarmament and Peace issued a statement condemning the United States for the attack on Syria, while also calling for "peace by strength".

"The US introduces into the Korean peninsula,

the world's biggest hotspot, huge nuclear strategic assets, seriously threatening peace and security of the peninsula and pushing the situation there to the brink of a war," the North's KCNA news agency said yesterday, citing the statement. "This has created a dangerous situation in which a thermo-nuclear war may break out any moment on the peninsula and posed serious threat to the world peace and security, to say nothing of those in Northeast Asia," it said.

North Korea, still technically at war with the South after their 1950-53 conflict ended in a truce, not a treaty, has on occasion conducted missile or nuclear tests to coincide with big political events and often threatens the United States, South Korea and Japan. Today, it marks the "Day of the Sun", the 105th anniversary of the birth of state founder Kim Il Sung. The dollar fell yesterday against a basket of currencies, on track for a losing week as tension over North Korea underpinned the perceived safe-haven Japanese yen.

'Opportunity to talk'

China, North Korea's sole major ally and neighbor, which nevertheless opposes Pyongyang's weapons program, has called for talks leading to a peaceful resolution and the denuclearization of the peninsula. "Military force cannot resolve the issue," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters in Beijing on Thursday. "Amid tensions we will also find a kind of opportunity to return to talks." While Trump has put North Korea on notice that he will not tolerate any more provocation, US officials have said his administration is focusing its strategy on tougher economic sanctions. Trump said on Thursday Pyongyang was a problem that "will be taken care of" and that he believed Chinese President Xi Jinping would "work very hard" to help resolve the challenge. Trump has also said the United States is prepared to tackle the crisis without China, if necessary. He diverted the nuclear-powered USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier and its strike group towards the Korean peninsula last weekend in a show of force. —Reuters

JAPANESE COURT UPHOLDS 'BLACK WIDOW' SENTENCE

TOKYO: A Japanese "black widow" convicted of murdering three boyfriends she had met online and dated for their money faces execution after Japan's Supreme Court yesterday dismissed her final appeal. Kanae Kijima, 42, who has married twice since she was detained in 2009, killed three men in the space of eight months through carbon monoxide poisoning, by burning charcoal briquettes after giving them sleeping tablets.

A spokesman for Japan's top court confirmed it had ruled against an appeal lodged by Kijima. Her legal team has claimed her innocence, saying the three men were likely to have committed suicide, according to public broadcaster NHK. The death penalty has overwhelming public support in Japan, despite repeated protests from European governments and human rights groups. Executions are by hanging, however it can take years before they are carried out.

The case has been closely followed in Japan and major media flashed news of the top court decision across television screens. Kijima writes a blog from the detention centre where she has been held, detailing her life inside, the food and talking about men she likes. In the latest post on Thursday, she wrote to her readers: "I hope to see you again somewhere someday." Kijima's first victim, 53-year-old Takao Terada was found dead in Tokyo in January 2009. Kenzo Ando, 80, died in his home in Chiba prefecture in May 2009, and three months later 41-year-old Yoshiyuki Oide was found poisoned in a rented car, also from briquette fumes.

Kijima was convicted without the witness testimony or confession often relied upon in Japanese prosecutions. Instead prosecutors rested their case on layers of circumstantial evidence, such as Kijima's purchases of sleeping pills and coal briquettes, in addition to the fact that she had met with each man shortly before he died. She was also found guilty of seven other lesser crimes, including fraud and theft. In another "black widow" case, Chisako Kakehi, 70, is awaiting trial in June for allegedly killing several men. —AFP

CATHOLICS IN THE PHILIPPINES RE-ENACT CRUCIFIXION

MANILA: Catholics in the Philippines re-enacted the crucifixion of Jesus Christ in a gory display of devotion on Good Friday, with actors costumed as Roman soldiers hammering nails of stainless steel through their hands and feet into wooden crosses. Nine Filipinos were nailed to crosses in three villages in the

province of Pampanga, 80 km north of the capital, Manila, drawing hundreds of tourists despite the Catholic Church's disapproval of what it sees as a form of folk religion. Ruben Enaje, who was nailed to a cross for the 31st consecutive time, said praying for those killed by criminals and drug addicts in the country

was his key motivation to participate this year. "I am praying for the victims, the victims of drug addicts," said Enaje. "These drug addicts can waste their life, but we should also still pray for them because they've done wrong." More than 8,000 suspected drug addicts and dealers have been killed since President

Rodrigo Duterte launched a bloody war on drugs in June. More than 2,600 of the deaths were in police operations, but many others were in mysterious circumstances. Enaje said he wished good health for the brash Philippine leader to "do what he thinks needs to be done in the country". —Reuters

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US, MEXICO HUNT CORRUPT, DRUG-PUSHING OFFICIALS

MEXICO CITY: Crooked cops, greedy governors and pusher-prosecutors: Corruption and drug crime reach to high places in Mexico, which is getting a jolt from US efforts to hunt down top suspects. Analysts say officials have been getting away for decades with corruption in a country dominated by big, powerful drug gangs. "There is a systemic problem of corruption among the local and state-level authorities," said Alejandro Hope, a former Mexican intelligence agent who is now a security consultant. In the latest high-profile case grabbing headlines this week, the former Tamaulipas state governor Tomas Yarrington was arrested in Italy on Sunday. In 2000 he posed smiling with the then-governor of Texas and future US president, George W Bush.

Expelled in December from Mexico's governing Institutional Revolutionary Party, Yarrington is wanted on charges of drug-related crimes by both Mexico and the United

States. Mexican authorities offered \$800,000 for Yarrington's capture. But analysts say what most speeded up his arrest was pressure from up north. "His detention has happened because the United States wanted it to, not so much because the Mexican government made a decisive decision," says Hope. Opposition lawmaker Jorge Lopez Martin of the National Action Party called for Yarrington to be judged in the United States and not Mexico, "so that there can be no room for impunity."

Impunity -

An "impunity index" study last year by the University of the Americas Puebla found that fewer than five percent of crimes reported in Mexico end up being punished. "There is so much corruption, so much impunity, the judicial system is so easily corrupted and the penal system is so useless that it not only allows the drug trade but actually encourages many peo-

ple to commit crimes," said Jose Antonio Crespo, a political analyst at the Economic Research and Teaching Center. "They know that the likelihood of being punished is minimal and that with a bit of luck they can buy off the judge and escape." Police in California last month arrested the chief public attorney of the western Mexican state of Nayarit, Edgar Veytia, accused of trafficking cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine. "They grabbed him there. Over here no one knew about it," Crespo said. "Often it is the United States that puts an end to impunity. Here, they turn a blind eye."

Drugs

Federal authorities have vowed to crack down on crime, but corruption makes that difficult. The Federal Police last week acknowledged apparent wrongdoing by a senior agent in its drug squad: Ivan Reyes Arzate, who was serving as a liaison with US police.

Reyes turned himself in to police in Chicago after learning that he was being investigated for warning drug gangs when they were infiltrated or spied on. The force's commissioner Manelich Castilla vowed to crack down on dodgy officers. "There will be no place in the Federal Police for those who betray the ideals of this institution and the ideals of the country," he told a news conference. "They will be pursued and punished."

Embezzlement

Mexicans know the cost of drug crime, which has killed thousands. But corruption angers them even more, Hope says. One recent case involved the fugitive former governor of the violence-stricken eastern state of Veracruz, Javier Duarte. He was found to have left behind a store of artworks, antiques, luxury goods and even school and medical supplies apparently intended for social programs. — AFP



MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (center) Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem (left) and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif arrive to attend a news conference following their talks focused on Syria in Moscow yesterday. — AP

RUSSIA, IRAN AND SYRIA ISSUE WARNING TO US

RUSSIA BLAMES REBELS FOR CHEMICAL ATTACK

MOSCOW: Russia, Syria and Iran strongly warned the United States yesterday against launching new strikes on Syria and called for an international probe into last week's chemical attack there. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who hosted his Iranian and Syrian counterparts at a trilateral meeting in Moscow, denounced last week's US attack on Syria as a "flagrant violation" of international law and warned that any further such action would entail "grave consequences not only for regional but global security." Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem said the meeting sent a "strong message" to Washington. Iran's Mohammad Javad Zarif emphasized that the participants warned that any unilateral action by the US is unacceptable.

The US has blamed the Syrian government for launching a deadly chemical attack in Khan Sheikhoun that killed over 80 people on April 4, and responded by striking a Syrian air base. Russia has alleged that the victims were killed by toxic agents released from a rebel chemical arsenal and warned against putting the

blame on Damascus until an independent inquiry has been conducted. Moscow vetoed a Western draft UN resolution Wednesday, saying it failed to mention the need to inspect the area of the attack.

Lavrov yesterday accused the US and its allies of what he described as attempts to stymie an international probe into the attack. He expressed strong skepticism about a preliminary investigation conducted by the UN chemical weapons watchdog, saying that its experts have failed to visit the site and it has remained unclear to Russia where the samples have been taken and how they have been analyzed.

In Russia's view, the probe conducted by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons should be widened to include experts from many nations, he said. "If our US colleagues and some European nations believe that their version is right, they have no reason to fear the creation of such an independent group," Lavrov added. "The investigation into this high-profile incident must be transparent and leave no doubt that someone is trying to hide something."

Lavrov said the US strike on the Syrian base has undermined peace efforts in Syria and reflected Washington's focus on ousting Syrian President Bashar Assad's government. "Such attempts won't succeed," Lavrov said. The three ministers also discussed the beefing up of US forces on Jordan's border with Syria. Moallem said. He added that Russia, Iran and Syria have "common procedures against any aggression," but wouldn't offer any specifics.

Lavrov that Moscow has asked Washington about the purpose of the buildup and received assurances they were there to cut supply lines between the Islamic State group factions in Syria and Iraq. "We will keep monitoring the issue, since the only possible reason for using military force on the territory of Syria is to fight terrorism," Lavrov said. Russia has staunchly backed Assad's government throughout a civil war that has dragged into a seventh year. It has conducted an air campaign in Syria since September 2015, saving Assad from imminent collapse and helping reverse military fortunes. — AP

TRUMP FLIPFLOPS ON NATO, CHINA, RUSSIA, SYRIA, TRADE

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump has long been seen as mercurial, but maybe never quite so much as this past week. The US president in recent days abandoned a series of campaign promises and strident world views that were held for months and, in some cases, years. From China to Syria, trade to the dollar, a rapid succession of 180 degree reversals has left Washington, foreign capitals and Trump's own fans with a nasty case of political whiplash.

Just 87 days ago Trump declared NATO "obsolete." On Wednesday he proclaimed "it's no longer obsolete," a seemingly miraculous rediscovery of purpose for the usually slow-moving alliance. After talks and a slice of chocolate cake at Mar-a-Lago, China's Xi Jinping was no longer responsible for the "rape" of the US economy. Instead, Xi was a leader with whom Trump enjoyed good "chemistry" and "bonding." Others were not so lucky-falling on the wrong side of Trump's list of good guys and bad guys.

Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad went from tolerated leader to political dead man walking, after Trump saw images of toddlers suffocating from a suspected sarin attack blamed on Damascus. "That's a butcher. That's a butcher," Trump said, adding there was no place for Assad in Syria's future politics. "There is a moral affront and there is maybe a personal anger, even a humiliation for Trump," said Hussein Ibish of the Arab Gulf States Institute. Russian President Vladimir Putin's refusal to end his support for Assad has resulted in another dramatic about face.

It was "certainly possible" Putin knew about the sarin attack, Trump said. "Right now, we're not getting along with Russia at all. We may be at an all-time low in terms of relationship with Russia," Trump said pensively. He may have omitted the Cuban Missile Crisis and much of the Cold War, but it was an unmistakable message and a far cry from the praise Putin got from Trump during the campaign. Almost simultaneously, Trump also reversed his opposition to the Export-Import Bank, said he might renominate Fed chair Janet Yellen after all and proclaimed the dollar too strong. And his budget guru quietly declared that a promise to eliminate the deficit was just "hyperbole."

The Trump doctrine?

For White House spin doctors, these were not policy U-turns at all, but evidence Trump is bending the world to his will. "If you look at what's happened, it's those entities or individuals in some cases, or issues, evolving towards the president's position," said White House press secretary Sean Spicer. On issues like NATO turning its attention to terrorism to China abandoning currency manipulation-from the White House perspective, things are just getting better in the Age of Trump.

In reality, China stopped weakening the yuan years ago and NATO has been fighting jihadist groups for the better part of a decade. Part of the explanation for Trump's reversal may come from inside the White House, where radicals like Steve Bannon, Mike Flynn and KT McFarland have been sacked or notably sidelined. —AFP

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ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE, Maryland: US President Donald Trump waves as he boards Air Force One on Thursday en route to Palm Beach International Airport in West Palm Beach, Florida. — AP

WHY TRUMP OFFERING OUTSTRETCHED HAND

PRESIDENT LEARNS GO-IT-ALONE POLICIES DON'T WORK

WASHINGTON: What happened to Donald Trump the "America First" trade warrior? This week, Trump abandoned a campaign vow to label China a currency manipulator. Two weeks ago, his administration proposed a mild rewrite of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which he'd previously branded a job-killing "disaster". And his threat to slap harsh tariffs on Chinese goods has given way to a bid to mend fences with Beijing.

This hardly resembles the candidate Trump who sold himself as a pugnacious outsider, hell-bent on upending decades of US support for ever-freer trade to safeguard American jobs from nations that play unfairly. The recent climb-downs suggest a new president learning that go-it-alone trade policies don't easily work. "The president is beginning to adjust his policies to economic reality," says Joshua Meltzer, a specialist in international trade and a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

His spokesman, Sean Spicer, has defended Trump's shift on trade issues, explaining that his major promise was to deliver results - not cling to any one policy stance. "The president's tough talk on a variety of subjects was to get results for the American people," Spicer said. Nowhere has Trump's shifting trade policy been clearer - or more jarring - than his reversal on China's handling of its currency. On the campaign trail, Trump told voters that on his first day in the White House, he would label China a currency manipulator, a public shaming that could trigger trade sanctions. Not since 1994 has the United States desig-

nated China a currency manipulator. That self-imposed deadline came and went. As recently as April 2, in an interview with the Financial Times newspaper, Trump had accused China of keeping its currency artificially low to give its exporters an unfair price advantage in world markets. The charge exasperated economists, who overwhelmingly say that while China did manipulate its currency several years ago, it has not done so anytime recently. Far from undercutting its currency - the yuan - China has instead been spending its foreign reserves to prop up the yuan at a time when many Chinese are pulling money from the country to invest overseas.

"It's absurd to call China a currency manipulator at the moment," says Adam Posen, an economist who leads the Peterson Institute for International Economics, which advocates free trade. The US Treasury Department had faced an April 15 deadline to submit a report to Congress declaring whether or not China was a currency manipulator. It was clear, under the department's standards, that China was not guilty. In an interview Wednesday, Trump bowed to reality. "They're not currency manipulators," he told The Wall Street Journal.

Softer tone

In similar fashion, Trump had vowed to force Mexico and Canada to rewrite NAFTA to better protect American workers - and to abandon the 23-year-old deal if he didn't get what he wanted. Yet when a draft of his administration's plan for NAFTA leaked last

month, it appeared to keep much of the agreement intact. Likewise, during the campaign Trump spoke of slapping a 45 percent tariff on Chinese imports. Even before he took office, though, his aides were already downplaying the tariff threat.

In fact, the president's trade stance on China has taken an even softer tone since he met last week with President Xi Jinping. Trump is seeking China's help in dealing with an increasingly belligerent and dangerous North Korean regime. "I think he wants to help us on North Korea," Trump said of Xi, praising China for rejecting shipments of North Korean coal, a move that puts financial pressure on the repressive regime in Pyongyang. Asked whether the administration's decision on China's currency was part of an agreement over North Korea, Trump said Wednesday, "We're going to see about that."

Regardless, the president appears to have decided that "needlessly antagonizing China over an issue that doesn't exist is not a particularly fruitful strategy," Brookings' Meltzer said. Trump has also flip-flopped on the US Export-Import Bank, which helps exporters by making and guaranteeing loans and providing insurance. As a candidate, Trump attacked the agency as useless, and many conservatives have called it a hub of crony capitalism.

But Trump told the Journal that he'd learned that the Export-Import Bank serves small businesses and helps US firms compete with foreign companies that receive help from their governments. Trump also noted that the bank "actually makes money" for taxpayers.

It's possible that Trump could still turn more confrontational on trade. He's already withdrawn from an ambitious Asia-Pacific trade pact negotiated by the Obama administration. And his nominee to be US trade representative, Robert Lighthizer, has advocated more aggressive use of trade laws to fight unfair foreign competition, especially from China.

Still, free-trade advocates would feel far more encouraged if the administration worked within existing trade pacts rather than tearing them up. Trump's confrontational talk about America's trade partners had played well on the campaign trail, especially in Midwestern and Southern towns that lost jobs to Chinese and Mexican competitors. But plenty of other Americans have a vital stake in preserving cordial trade relations. US farmers, for example, have mostly benefited from NAFTA: Their exports to Mexico, for instance, have risen nearly five-fold since the deal took effect in 1994.

And American auto manufacturers have spent two decades building complex supply chains that ferry components and finished cars back and forth across the US-Mexico border. A NAFTA overhaul would likely disrupt their operations. Posen of the Peterson Institute says Trump might be starting to recognize that trade is part of America's enormously complicated relationship with the rest of the world. Posen says he is reminded of some advice the fictional President Josiah "Jed" Bartlet offered on chess and geopolitics on television's "The West Wing": "Look at the whole board." — AP

NETFLIX SCORECARD TO TEST METTLE OF TECH RALLY

WALL ST WEEK AHEAD

SAN FRANCISCO: The longevity of the technology stocks rally is on the line next week as Netflix Inc kicks off the earnings season for a sector that has mushroomed to account for more than a fifth of the US stock market's value. Surges in Apple, Facebook and other Silicon Valley heavyweights have pushed the S&P 500 technology index 10 percent higher this year, more than double the broader S&P 500 index's 4 percent gain. The tech sector's aggregate value now tops \$4.4 trillion, 30 percent higher than No. 2 financials, and even rivals the size of the Federal Reserve's massive balance sheet.

The next test for these companies is whether their profit growth is sufficient to justify their outsized share price gains. Enter

Netflix, which reports after the bell on Monday. The video streaming pioneer is expected by analysts to quintuple its earnings per share. But with its stock surging 43 percent in the past six months and now trading at 109 times expected earnings, Netflix's valuation is based more on sentiment than on fundamentals, many investors believe.

"The market's reaction to whatever the news is from Netflix will be telling," said Stephen Massocca, Senior Vice President at Wedbush Securities in San Francisco. "If the slightest little negative leads to a 15-point decline, that tells you things are elevated and the market is only going to reward the most excellent of news."

Momentum in many tech stocks has been

driven by ambitious expectations for earnings. Tech profits are seen climbing 14.7 percent for the first quarter, according to Thomson Reuters I/B/E/S. That would account for nearly a third of the 10.4 percent earnings growth predicted across the S&P 500. "It's great for everybody to feel good, but if nobody is buying stuff and the companies are reporting disappointing sales and that affects their margins, then you'll be starting to say - wait a second," said Thomas Martin, a portfolio manager at GLOBALT Investments.

Along with the S&P 500, tech shares have flatlined for weeks as Wall Street reassesses whether President Donald Trump will be able to push corporate tax cuts through Congress. Still, so far in April investors have

poured \$122 million into the US-listed Technology Select Sector SPDR Fund, bringing total flows into the fund this year to \$1.4 billion, according to ETF.com, which tracks fund flows.

Inside the tech rally, chip makers have been notable outperformers, with the Philadelphia Semiconductor index up 40 percent in the past year. Semiconductor companies are expected to boost EPS by 46 percent in the first quarter, helped by the growing use of chips in cars and mobile gadgets. One of the biggest - Qualcomm Inc - reports on Wednesday. While shares of the mobile chip-maker have been bogged down by a legal battle with Apple, its sales are seen rising by 6 percent and EPS by 14 percent. — Reuters

US INFLATION, RETAIL SALES DIP IN MARCH

CONSUMER PRICES FALL 0.3%

WASHINGTON: US retail sales fell for a second straight month in March and consumer prices dropped for the first time in just over a year, supporting views that the economy lost significant momentum in the first quarter. But with the labor market near full employment, the decline in sales and consumer prices reported by the government yesterday is likely temporary and probably does not change expectations that the Federal Reserve will raise interest rates again in June.

"For the Fed, the underlying momentum is more important in terms of policy decisions, and that looks to be strong, supported by a tightening labor market, rising incomes and high consumer confidence," said Gregory Daco, head of US macroeconomics at Oxford Economics in New York. The Commerce Department said retail sales dropped 0.2 percent last month after a 0.3 percent decrease in February, which was the first and biggest decline in nearly a year. Compared to March last year retail sales increased 5.2 percent.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast retail sales slipping 0.1 percent last month. Excluding automobiles, gasoline, building materials and food services, retail sales rebounded 0.5 percent after falling 0.2 percent in February. These so-called core retail sales correspond most closely with the consumer spending component of gross domestic product. Despite last month's increase in core retail sales, consumer spending likely braked sharply in the first quarter after growing at a brisk 3.5 percent annualized rate in the final three months of 2016.

The apparent slowdown in consumption is partly blamed on the late disbursement of income tax refunds by the government as it sought to combat fraud. The Atlanta Fed is forecasting GDP rising at a 0.6 percent rate in the first quarter. This would be the weakest performance in three years and follows a 2.1 percent growth pace in the fourth



PITTSBURGH: This Feb 8, 2017 photo shows the sale price for a pair of men's boots at a J C Penney store. — AP

quarter. With job growth averaging 178,000 per month in the first quarter, the anticipated slowdown in GDP likely understates the health of the economy. In addition, first-quarter GDP tends to be weaker because of calculation problems that the government has acknowledged and is working to resolve. Retail sales last month were dragged down by receipts at auto dealerships, which fell 1.2 percent, decreasing for a third straight month. Sales at service stations dropped 1.0 percent, reflecting lower gasoline prices. There were also decreases in sales at building material stores, likely as bad weather halted work at construction sites.

Pockets of Strength

But there were some areas of strength. Sales at electronics and appliances stores recorded their biggest rise since June 2015 and receipts at clothing stores increased by the most in a year. Retailers have been hurt by declining mall traffic and increased competition from online retailers, led by

Amazon.com. That has forced retailers like J C Penney Co Inc, Abercrombie & Fitch and Macy's Inc to scale back on brick-and-mortar operations.

The dollar was little moved by the data. US stocks and Treasuries markets are closed for the Good Friday holiday. In a separate report, the Labor Department said its Consumer Price Index dropped 0.3 percent in March, the first decline since February 2016, as declining costs for gasoline and mobile phone services offset rising rents and food prices. The CPI nudging up 0.1 percent in February. In the 12 months through March, the CPI rose 2.4 percent, slowing from February's 2.7 percent increase.

The so-called core CPI, which strips out food and energy costs, fell 0.1 percent, the first and largest decrease since January 2010, after rising 0.2 percent in February. As a result, the year-on-year increase slowed to 2.0 percent. That was the smallest advance since November 2015 and followed a 2.2 percent increase in February. — Reuters

BRIBE DEPARTMENT: HOW ODEBRECHT ORGANIZED GRAFT

SAO PAULO: A secret communications system was used to discuss and arrange the payments of bribes. A detailed spreadsheet mapped out who got what, all veiled under a system of codenames. And overseeing it all, there was an entire department at the Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht whose only purpose was to ensure the graft ran smoothly. Though deals were often sealed over dinners and coffees, there was nothing casual about the massive corruption scheme that Brazilian prosecutors are investigating involving bribes and kickbacks paid to hundreds of politicians in exchange for state contracts, beneficial legislation and other favors.

The Supreme Court opened investigations into about 100 politicians this week, based on testimony provided by current and former executives at Odebrecht. Their testimony describes how bribery and kickbacks were simply part of doing business. "There was a rule: Either we don't contribute to anyone, or we contribute to everyone," explained Emilio Odebrecht, chairman of the board, referring to payments to politicians.

Odebrecht appears to have opted for the latter. Court documents released this week and prosecutors' statements offer a peek into the highly organized way the company managed millions of dollars in bribes. The scheme was overseen by the blandly named Division of Structured Operations, which investigators refer to as simply "the bribe department." It had its own hierarchy and its own accountants. It also used its own off-the-books communications system, called Drousys, to communicate about the bribes both internally and externally.

The payments were detailed in spreadsheets, held in the Drousys system, according to testimony and the judge's decision released this week. On those spreadsheets, politicians who received bribes and the intermediaries who delivered them were referred to by nicknames. The man who is now President Michel Temer's chief of staff, Eliseu Padilha, was called "cousin". Former Rio de Janeiro Mayor Eduardo Paes was "little nervous one". Others were "decrepit", "Viagra", "little boy of the forest" and "Dracula". One congressman even protested on his Facebook page when his nickname - "totally ugly" - was reported in the Brazilian press last year.

The employees at Odebrecht may have had some fun with the nicknames, but their revelations so far show that they took corruption very seriously. Prosecutors are investigating the testimony and deciding whether to bring charges. The politicians have denied wrongdoing, with many saying the funds they received from Odebrecht were legal campaign contributions. — AP

UKRAINE'S ANTI-GRAFT FIGHT TARGETS TELECOMS

KIEV: One of Ukraine's richest men vowed yesterday to defend his ownership of a major telecoms company after its shares were impounded by a court following a probe into graft under the deposed Russian-backed regime. Prosecutor General Yuriy Lutsenko announced Thursday that a Kiev court had "frozen" the shares of tycoon Rinat Akhmetov in the Ukrtelecom company and its subsidiary TriMob. The decision was issued after a nearly two-year investigation into Ukrtelecom's privatisation under ousted president Viktor Yanukovich in March 2011.

Ukrainian media quoted Lutsenko as say-

ing that Yanukovich's government gave Ukrtelecom for a nominal sum to a shell company based in Cyprus that was purchased by Akhmetov in October 2013. Akhmetov's main holding company said in a statement to Interfax-Ukraine that it would defend its interests in Ukrtelecom and demand an "objective and independent investigation" of the case. The billionaire has played a dominant role in Ukrainian politics for more than a decade and twice served in parliament as a member of Yanukovich's now-disbanded Party of Regions.

Ukrtelecom held an effective monopoly

over telephone land lines and was an early pioneer in cell phone services prior to its privatization. Ukraine's February 2014 pro-EU revolution left Akhmetov and other oligarchs who critics say grew fabulously wealthy thanks to close government connections on the back foot. Akhmetov soon turned into an early target of an anti-graft campaign launched by post-revolt President Petro Poroshenko. He defended his interests furiously and the initial vigor of Ukraine's drive to clean up business and politics slowed down.

But world lenders to Ukraine consistently

point to the problem as one of the biggest stumbling blocks on the post-Soviet country's path toward a Western-style economy that sees sustainable growth. Ukraine drew praise in December 2016 for taking over the country's largest private bank PrivatBank from another influential tycoon named Igor Kolomoyskiy. The central bank later reported that 97 percent of the bank's corporate loans went to Kolomoyskiy and another shareholder. It added that the deposits of half of Ukraine's population of about 40 million would have been jeopardized had PrivatBank gone under. — AFP

MAINE GOV: PRINTED LEGAL NOTICES PROP UP DYING INDUSTRY

AUGUSTA, Maine: Maine's Republican governor said that laws requiring legal notices to be published in newspapers props up a "dying, antiquated industry," in the latest chapter of his antipathy toward the press. Gov Paul LePage is no fan of Maine newspapers and has said journalists use words to destroy people and make his remarks seem racist. The governor who once apologized for remarking to a boy that he'd like to shoot his Bangor Daily News cartoonist father has most recently called for governmental oversight of newspapers and retreated to interviews on talk radio shows and conservative websites.

Legislators on Thursday overrode LePage's veto of a bill that requires the continued posting of newspaper legal notices on a publicly accessible website. The Democratic-controlled House overrode the veto with a 121-22 vote, while the Republican-controlled Senate voted 32-0. The bill, which has now become law, does not address existing requirements that legal notices be printed in newspapers.

But the governor says he couldn't support the bill because lawmakers must explore eliminating such a "mandate," which he calls a "taxpayer subsidy of the worst sort." "It serves to blur the line between a free press and one dependent on the state for revenue," he said. In New Jersey, Republican Gov. Chris Christie said he'll make such a change a priority this year. Christie said the change would save taxpayers and residents \$80 million, but the state's newspapers have disputed that math. Lobbying efforts from publishers have stopped similar efforts in other states.

LePage also said the Legislature should explore maintaining adequate notice to the public through online notices, and said it's good policy given the "ubiquity of the internet in our modern life". Right now, the Maine Press Association operates an online website that lets the public view newspaper legal notices from all the state's approved daily and weekly newspapers. Democratic Rep. Roland Danny Martin, the bill's sponsor, said total traffic to the website last year grew by nearly 9 percent over 2015.

Gary Gagne of the Maine Daily Newspaper Network testified in support of the Maine bill in February and said that public notices serve as "one of the few regular and official communication channels that exist between levels of government and citizens". "Newspapers, in print and online, act as an independent third party to publish, post, and archive public notice information so that it is available to the largest audience of citizens possible," he said. — AP

TRUMP AND YELLEN MAY NOT BE AN ODD COUPLE AFTER ALL

PRESIDENT DOES NOT RULE OUT REAPPOINTMENT

WASHINGTON: At first glance, US President Donald Trump and Federal Reserve chair Janet Yellen may have little in common. Yellen is an academic economist and veteran of Democratic administrations who is committed to an open global economy, while Trump is a real estate mogul with an electoral base suspicious of the economic order Yellen helped to create. Yet the two may have interests in common now that Trump is president and both want to get as many Americans working as possible.

Since her appointment as Fed chair in February 2014, Yellen has kept interest rates low and she currently pledges to raise them only slowly even though unemployment, at 4.5 percent, is at its lowest in nearly ten years. Meanwhile, Trump's election campaign promises to cut taxes, spend money on infrastructure and deregulate banking, have helped propel a surge in the US Conference Board's consumer confidence index to its highest level since the internet stocks crash 16 years ago.

Former Fed staff and colleagues who know Yellen said Trump's surprising remarks this week in a Wall Street Journal interview, in which he did not rule out Yellen's reappointment to a new four year term next year, are not as outlandish as they may appear now that the president has a vested interest in keeping markets and the economy on an even keel. And the same staff and colleagues say Yellen may well accept reappointment, despite Trump's criticism of her during last year's election campaign.

Many in Trump's Republican party have called for tighter monetary policy and a less activist Fed, but "the president would not really find that useful," said former Fed vice chair Donald Kohn. If Trump fills three existing Federal Reserve board vacancies with people Yellen thinks she could work with, "it would be really difficult to turn down" a reappointment when her term as chair expires in February 2018. "If she continues to do well, he'd be nuts to ditch her for an unknown quantity," said University of California, Berkeley, economics professor Andrew Rose, a long-time colleague and co-author with Yellen of an oft-cited study of labor markets.

Yellen took over from Ben Bernanke as Fed chair in February 2014 with the US economic recovery from the 2008 financial crisis still on shaky ground, and she has made no secret she puts a priority on growth in jobs and wages and a broad recovery in US household wealth. In a slow return to more



WASHINGTON: Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen speaks at the National Community Reinvestment Coalition annual conference on March 28, 2017. — AP

normal monetary policy, Yellen has stopped the purchase of additional financial securities by the Fed and in December 2015 began raising short term interest rates for the first time in 10 years.

So far those policy shifts have been engineered with little apparent impact on job growth, and so mesh with Trump's core election campaign promises to restore employment and earnings. The slow rise in interest rates in the past year has also happened while US stock prices have risen to record highs, though Trump has claimed the credit for himself.

Precedent for Fed Chair to Stay on

There is precedent for Trump to stick with a former president's Fed chair appointment. Paul Volcker, Alan Greenspan and Ben Bernanke, the three previous Fed chairs, served at least two four year terms and were nominated by both Democratic and Republican presidents. However it may be a more difficult step for Trump. During last year's election campaign, Trump accused Yellen of accepting orders from then President Obama to keep interest rates low for political reasons, and he said he would replace her as Fed chair because she is not a Republican party member.

In a particularly biting moment last year, in a campaign video advertisement, he labelled her as among the "global special interests" who had ruined life for middle America. The Fed on Thursday said it had no response to Trump's comments published on Wednesday on Yellen and on whether Yellen would consider a second term.

Much Could Still Go Wrong

Some of Trump's advisers and some Republican lawmakers want a more conservative Fed in which the chair has less power and would see a Yellen reappointment as yet another step away from his promise to "drain the swamp" of the Washington establishment. There are also three current vacancies on the Fed's seven member Board of Governors, and unorthodox new members could make it difficult for Yellen to manage policy or accept another four year term.

But if the choice is her consensus style or someone unproven in their ability to manage public and market expectations, "he'd be wise to reappoint her," said Joseph Gagnon, a former Fed staffer and Berkeley colleague of Yellen's currently at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. "I don't see what is in his interests to appoint someone who is going to jack up interest rates." — Reuters

US CRACKDOWN HEATS UP FOR BORDER CROSSERS, TECHIES

WASHINGTON: Encouraged by a sharp downturn in illegal border crossers, the US administration is ramping up a crackdown on undocumented immigrants, taking aim at both Central American laborers and Indian tech workers in Silicon Valley. Police, prosecutors and judges have been ordered to take a harder line against all illegal immigrants, detaining anyone without papers and vigorously prosecuting more of them. Hiring standards for immigration agents are being eased to quickly beef up their ranks, more facilities to hold detained immigrants are being built, and more judges are being added to handle cases.

And officials have been directed to round up illegal immigrants, even those in the country for decades, at places that used to be safe - courthouses, town halls, and cities offering them sanctuary. Meanwhile designs are underway for construction of a wall along the entire 2,000-mile US-Mexico border that President Donald Trump promised. It won't be a full physical barrier all the way along, but strategically erected wall sections inter-

persed with stretches of technology-dependent surveillance. "For those that continue to seek improper and illegal entry into this country, be forewarned: This is a new era. This is the Trump era," Attorney General Jeff Sessions told border patrol agents on Tuesday.

Border-crossers down

Trump came into office promising to expel the estimated 11 million people living in the United States illegally, who he says steal American jobs and fuel crime. Most are from Mexico, and many of them have been here for decades, raising families, owning homes and businesses. Three months into the Trump administration, the number of illegal border-crossers has plunged to a four decade low, according to the Customs and Border Protection agency (CBP). Apprehensions of illegal border crossers in March dropped to 16,600, down 30 percent from February and 64 percent from a year ago. It is too early to see any pickup in deportations, which take longer to process. But Tom Jawetz, vice president in charge of

immigration policy at the Center for American Progress think tank, says there is a clear change in immigration enforcement.

Sessions this week ordered CBP and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to detain anyone who crosses the US-Mexico border without legal documents and present them to a judge. In the past, most were just delivered back over the border. He also ordered prosecutors to lodge felony charges when someone is caught sneaking in for a second time. Those who transport and harbor illegal immigrants risk jail, as does anyone caught using false papers, common among illegal immigrants. "The lawlessness, the abdication of the duty to enforce our immigration laws and the catch-and-release practices of old are over," Sessions declared.

Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly has authorized CBP and ICE agents to go after illegal immigrants in places they once felt safe. An increasing number have been rounded up in public offices applying for licenses, reporting crimes, even meeting immigration officials to legalize their resi-

dence. California Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye protested in a letter to Sessions and Kelly that such areas were supposed to be protected and accused ICE of "stalking" people who "pose no risk to public safety." But the two officials said the arrests will continue, criticizing any policies that offer sanctuary to illegal aliens.

Legal immigration also pressured

With some Republicans in Congress calling for a 50 percent cut in legal immigration, Trump has also ordered a tightening in that area. He ordered a temporary halt to refugee arrivals and is fighting courts to implement a halt on arrivals from six mostly Muslim countries. Visa applicants in many countries say they are facing longer waits.

Sessions and Kelly warned technology companies bringing in skilled workers under the H-1B visa program that the government will take a tougher line with any company abusing that program. Previous permissions for H-1B workers' spouses to also work could be eliminated. — AFP

CREDIT SUISSE EXECS TAKE BONUS CUTS OF 40% AFTER OUTCRY

GENEVA: Credit Suisse's chief and other top executives offered yesterday to have their bonuses slashed by 40 percent, following investor concern over the size of their proposed compensation packages. Credit Suisse chief Tidjane Thiam and the bank's executive board proposed that the "long-term incentive awards for 2017 and short-term incentive awards for 2016 ... be reduced by 40 percent each," according to a statement.

The board of directors would also leave its compensation unchanged at the same level as 2015 and 2016, and would not accept a proposed incremental increase, it added. "My highest priority is to see through the turnaround of Credit Suisse which is under way," Thiam said in a letter to shareholders published yesterday. "I hope that this decision will alleviate some of the concerns expressed by some shareholders and will allow the executive team to continue to focus on the task at hand," he added.

The move came after Credit Suisse's compensation committee last month proposed handing Thiam and the bank's 12 other executive directors 26 million Swiss francs (\$26 million) in short-term bonuses for 2016 and up to 52 million francs in long-term bonuses. Ahead of its annual meeting on April 28, Switzerland's second largest bank has also asked investors to give chief executive Tidjane Thiam nearly 12 million francs in total for his first full year on the job in 2016, after short and long-term bonuses were added to his 3.7-million-franc salary. The compensation committee had also proposed boosting compensation to the board of directors to 12.5 million Swiss francs this year.

Several investor advisory groups have voiced outrage over the proposed bonuses, pointing to the bank's \$2.7-billion net loss in 2016 following a massive \$5.28-billion settlement with US authorities over its role in the sub-prime crisis. Ethos, which advises major Swiss pension funds and other tax-exempt institutions, described the proposed bonuses as "excessive", insisting that Credit Suisse's "executive management should not have received a bonus in 2016 given the disappointing results of the bank".

Amid market turbulence and legal woes, the bank's stock price plunged more than 30 percent last year. And as it dramatically reorganized its operations, it slashed 7,250 jobs over the course of 2016, with nearly the same number of jobs expected to go this year. In a separate letter to shareholders yesterday, chairman of the Credit Suisse board Urs Rohner stressed the board's "high degree of satisfaction with the performance of the CEO and the Executive Board in 2016." But he added that "in light of the current environment and sentiment towards compensation, the board of directors understands the decision made by the CEO and the executive team ... (and) accepts these voluntary and personal decisions with great respect." — AFP

US BUSINESS WARY OF SKIN-DEEP RESULTS FROM TRUMP-XI TALKS

SOME WORRY GEOPOLITICS COULD OVERSHADOW INTERESTS

BEIJING: The 100-day trade talks announced after a Sino-American presidential summit last week will aim to deal with decades of thorny trade issues, leaving some US business leaders wary that the short timeline might yield superficial results. Business executives are also worried that President Donald Trump's focus on curtailing North Korea's nuclear and missile programs could undercut US commercial interests in China.

Days after Trump's meeting with President Xi Jinping, Trump tweeted that Beijing would get a better trade deal with Washington if it helped resolve the US problem with Pyongyang. The US business community should not be used as a "bargaining chip", said James Zimmerman, a Beijing-based lawyer and the former chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China. "Trump's 'far better trade deal' linkage to North Korea is amateurish, illogical horse trading, at best," Zimmerman said.

The White House has said US and Chinese officials are still at the early stages of "fleshing out" a pledge by Trump and Xi to develop the 100-day plan to reduce the US trade deficit with China, which last year reached \$347 billion. It was among the limited set of public outcomes from their first meeting in Florida. While Trump has promised to aggressively address trade imbalances and open the Chinese market to more American goods and services, William Zarit, the Chamber's current chairman, said the talks need to address the "structural impediments" US companies face in China. "We'd rather be talking than having a trade war. But remember we've been talking for 20 years and haven't gotten very far," Zarit said.

The White House has said that issues including opening up China's financial services sector and getting US beef exports into China were up for talks. "We are pleased to hear the issue has been elevated to the highest levels of both



PALM BEACH, Florida: In this April 6, 2017, file photo, US President Donald Trump shakes hands with Chinese President Xi Jinping as he arrives before dinner at Mar-a-Lago resort. — AP

governments and that there is commitment to resolve the US beef access issue in an expedited fashion," CEO of the US Meat Export Federation Philip Seng said.

Others remain sceptical. "Beef should have been done 10 years ago. The fact that that has been going on for so long is emblematic of the imbalance in the way we negotiate and deal with each other," said James McGregor, Chairman of APCO Worldwide in Greater China. China has purchased hardly any American beef since it conditionally lifted an import ban last year that was imposed in 2003 due to a case of mad cow disease in Washington state.

Despite initial media reports suggesting Xi may have offered access for US beef as a concession to stave off rising trade tensions, China's Premier Li Keqiang this week appeared to link progress on the issue to US restrictions on imports of some Chinese poultry products for food safety reasons. "China is willing to import market-competitive US beef that meets quality and health standards," Li told a US Congressional delegation in Beijing on Monday, according to the state-run Beijing News.

"Chinese chicken is also very competitive in the international market. We hope the United States can quickly lift the ban on Chinese chicken imports. Only in this way can we better embody fair trade," Li said.

Politically Fraught

While individual companies are hesitant to criticize China for fear of backlash, critics from US business groups accuse Beijing of unfairly subsidizing domestic firms and restricting foreign investment into much of the world's second-biggest economy.

A 50-percent ownership cap for foreign life insurers, for example, despite China's 2001 World Trade Organization commitments to lift it, has helped limit their market share to about 6 percent. Beijing has repeatedly promised to open up financial services more widely to foreign firms, but has given few details on implementation. Jacob Parker, vice president of China operations at the US-China Business Council, said concerns persist that China would make commitments but not follow through or take only incremental steps. — Reuters

BRITTLE ECONOMY RISK FOR ERDOGAN AHEAD OF POLL

ANKARA: At rallies ahead of Sunday's referendum on expanding his powers, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is fond of reciting the economic achievements of his one-and-a-half decades in power. High growth rates of up to nine percent, a stream of foreign investment, ambitious infrastructure projects and precious stability that followed the near financial meltdown of its 2000-01 crisis. "We did this," the president says proudly.

But the country's referendum on whether to agree a presidential system is taking place against the background of the first sustained signs of weakness in the Turkish economy. What has so far proved a pillar of strength for Erdogan and the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) could prove to be an Achilles heel, economists say. Atila Yesilada, Turkey specialist at Global Source Partners, said the weakness had added to uncertainty among some of the AKP's traditional electorate. "AKP's base is Islamist and conservative, but they are also small business owners" and current economic policy is "not good for business", the analyst told AFP.

A Turkish economist who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity said the weak economy was "already hurting" Erdogan and the 'Yes' campaign. The economist said "winning this referendum should have been very easy" for the AKP given that in November 2015 parliamentary polls it and its allies in the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) won a combined 62 percent of the vote. "That the polls are still extremely tight shows - at least to some extent - the impact the weak economy has," the economist added.

Tourism under strain

Last month inflation hit 11.3 percent - a level unmatched since Oct 2008 - while unemployment was 10.9 percent in 2016. Youth unemployment was even worse at 19.6 percent. The Turkish lira has lost nearly four percent of its value against the US dollar since the start of the year, the worst performing emerging markets currency so far. Yet the Turkish economy is still showing signs of the resilience that became its trademark over past years.

The Istanbul stock market has rallied

this year, climbing 15.3 percent since January and reached two-month highs on Tuesday. In 2016, a year marked by the failed July 15 coup, the Turkish economy grew by a robust 2.9 percent, beating analysts' expectations. The presence of almost three million Syrian refugees and aggressive measures by the government to raise consumption have also helped provide a boost.

However growth is already much lower than the rates seen before 2011 and clouded by uncertainty over a complex restatement of the GDP statistics that has bewildered some observers. The government has blamed the weak economy on investors' 'wait-and-see' attitude ahead of the vote and reassured citizens that growth will improve. The tourism industry, with revenues that account for almost five percent of Turkey's GDP, has come under heavy strain with many visitors staying away.

After bitter tensions with the European Union in the referendum campaign and doubts over the future of Turkey's EU bid, there is also concern over the future of European investment.

Yesilada warned that "all our indicators show that EU companies are becoming extremely cold towards Turkey".

'Reform appetite on the wane'

A victory for the 'Yes' vote would give a brief boost to the markets, with investors reassured by at least an appearance of stability. "If there is a 'Yes' outcome I think there would be a brief rally. In case of a 'No' there will be a sharp sell-off in particular on the stock exchange," said Yesilada. But a 'Yes' vote would do nothing to dismiss concerns over the government's willingness to embrace economic reforms to tackle a litany of looming problems.

These include Turkey's gaping current account deficit, chronically low savings rates, widespread informal work and, in the long term, the education system. The Turkish economist said a "Yes" vote would "exacerbate" the problems that Turkey faces over the medium and long term. Only one proven economic reformer - Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek - is still in the government and his position has long been in question. — AFP

News

in brief

Dubai Al-Habtoor Group to build 350-m tower in Albania

TIRANA: Albania's parliament has given its approval for negotiations with a Dubai company to build a 350-m-tall tower in the capital, Tirana. The parliament's vote Thursday didn't make it clear when the government would start negotiations with Al-Habtoor Investment LLC, on the \$250-million Tirana Iconic Tower project. As currently envisioned, the 25,000-sq-m tower would occupy an extension of the capital's main boulevard and house businesses and possibly Tirana City Hall. The builders would be exempt from tax payments for 15 years as an incentive. Al-Habtoor Investment is a subsidiary of a subsidiary of the Al-Habtoor Group, a conglomerate with interests in the hospitality, automotive, real estate, education and publishing sectors.

McDonald's CEO received compensation worth \$15.4m

NEW YORK: McDonald's CEO Steve Easterbrook received compensation of \$15.4 million last year as he worked to refresh the company's image and cut costs amid growing competition and changing tastes. Easterbrook's pay package included a salary of \$1.3 million, stock and options worth \$9 million, and incentive pay of \$4.6 million. He also got perks such as contributions to a retirement plan and a car allowance. Easterbrook became chief executive in March 2015. For that year, his pay package was \$7.9 million. McDonald's Corp has announced a series of changes under Easterbrook, including the rollout of an all-day breakfast menu in the US and plans to use fresh beef patties in Quarter Pounders. Customer visits to established US locations fell last year, though people on average spent more per visit.

Hands-off police approach for overbooked flights

NEWARK: Police at airports in the New York City metropolitan area are taking a hands-off approach when it comes to removing passengers from overbooked flights. Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police Superintendent Michael Fedorko on Thursday issued a new policy after a passenger was dragged from an oversold United Airlines flight Sunday evening at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport. The policy says officers will not assist in the physical removal of passengers to accommodate the airline's request. Officers are to examine each instance on a case-by-case basis. The police department oversees Kennedy, LaGuardia and Newark airports.

JAPAN'S FRUGAL HOUSEHOLDS
NO RESPITE FOR BOJ, RETAILERS
TOP RETAILERS CUT PRICES TO ATTRACT SHOPPERS

TOKYO: Naruhito Nogami, a 37-year-old systems engineer in Tokyo, drives to discount stores on weekends to bulk buy cheap groceries, even though he earns enough to make ends meet and the prospects for Japan's economic recovery are brighter. "I do have money, but I'm frugal anyway. Everyone is like that. That's just the way it is," he says.

Kazuko Sato, a 50-year-old animation artist, also frequents discount chain Daiso, where most items ranging from groceries and bath towels to kitchenware sell for just 100 yen (\$0.91). "I look for things here first, and if they aren't here then I go to the supermarket," she says, cradling a basket in the stationery aisle. "My job and salary are unstable so I need to be careful about my spending."

People like them have prompted some companies to embark on sweeping price cuts, showing how tough it will be to eradicate Japan's deflationary malaise despite the improving economy. It also highlights a new paradox facing the Bank of Japan: A disparity between solid growth and stubbornly weak inflation. Top retailer Aeon Co is cutting prices for over 250 grocery items this month to lure cost-savvy shoppers, and Seiyu, operated by Wal-Mart Stores, cut prices on more than 200 products from February.

"It's unthinkable for us to raise prices at this stage," Fast Retailing Co CEO Tadashi Yanai said after the owner of clothing brand Uniqlo reported flat revenue on Thursday. To be sure, many retailers say they are protecting their bottom line by offering not just discounts but high-end products. "It's not just prices consumers are looking at. They are just being selective," said Takaharu Iwasaki, president of supermarket chain operator Life Corp.

But central bank policymakers are



TOKYO: People stand in front of an electronic stock board of a securities firm showing Tokyo's Nikkei 225 that fell 65.24 points to 18,361.60 yesterday. — AP

struggling to explain why inflation and wages remain so low even as Japan's economy enjoys its third-longest recovery since World War Two. "It's a new conundrum for us," one official said. "It just shows how sticky Japan's deflationary mindset is."

Demographics Drag

Japan's economy has sustained a modest recovery cycle that kicked off when Prime Minister Shinzo Abe took power in late 2012 and launched his "Abenomics" package of aggressive monetary, fiscal stimulus measures and structural reforms. A recent rebound in overseas demand has helped boost exports and output, pushing up business confidence to its highest in a year and a half, with companies upbeat on their spending plans.

Encouraged by recent positive data, the BOJ is expected to offer a more upbeat view of the economy at this

month's rate review than it did last month, people familiar with the matter said. The benefits of the recovery have yet to reach households, though, despite four years of heavy money printing by the central bank and fiscal spending packages. Real wages have been largely flat despite job losses hitting a 22-year low, as firms remain wary of raising wages.

Core consumer inflation remained stuck at 0.2 percent in February, well below the BOJ's ambitious 2 percent target, as companies hold back on price rises for fear of scaring away cost-sensitive households. Japan's demographics are a key factor working against consumption. Nearly 30 percent of the population will be aged 65 or above in 2020, according to a government estimate. Living off pensions, elderly households are unaffected by any wage hikes and tend to withhold spending, analysts say. — Reuters



BANGKOK: In this April 7, 2017 photo, people eat noodles at a street food shop during lunch on Thonglor road. — AP

BANGKOK SIDEWALKS GET LESS SPICY AS FOOD CARTS REMOVED

POOR BEAR BRUNT OF JUNTA-BACKED CAMPAIGNS

BANGKOK: Efforts by authorities in military-ruled Thailand to impose order on the chaotic capital city have a fresh target: cheap and tasty pad thai. The latest crackdown by Bangkok city officials is going after the vendors whose carts sell everything from Thailand's signature noodles to spicy tom yum goong soup have become institutions on the capital's hot and humid sidewalks. The stalls with their metal folding tables and rickety plastic stools serve as a gastronomic go-to for budget-conscious locals and adventurous tourists alike.

"Street food is a big part of daily life," said Nont Nontiskul, 29, a stockbroker who has lived in the city's trendy Thonglor area for more than a decade. "Even people who eat at pricy restaurants every day can't avoid street food. It's faster, tastes better, and costs less than half the price."

Officials see street food as an illegal nuisance and have warned hawkers in Thonglor to clear out by Monday. They've said the evictions soon will expand to other neighborhoods. Officials have been emboldened by the military junta that has ruled the country since a 2014 coup and has stressed the need to clean up Thai society, whether it is corrupt politicians or crowded footpaths.

That has led to sometimes ham-fisted crackdowns on everything from street markets to beach umbrellas to overpriced lottery tickets. Observers say the poor, many of whom were supporters of the ousted government and its populist policies, have borne the brunt of many of the junta-backed campaigns and that the clean sidewalk effort will hit the vendors and their working-class customers hardest.

Thai crackdowns on corruption, prostitution, pollution, road safety and what-have-you - even those by the junta - are notoriously ephemeral, but officials are talking tough. Boontham Huiprasert, a Bangkok district chief tasked with clearing out the sidewalks under his jurisdiction, said street food vendors are being evicted to fight traffic congestion and the accumulations of garbage. About 90 Thonglor vendors and their carts will have to leave by Monday, after which the crackdowns will expand to neighboring streets, Boontham said. Violators could be fined up to 2,000 baht (\$57). "Just don't sell on the sidewalks," Boontham said. "People who sell stuff on the sidewalks, they don't pay rent. There are so many out there now, so we have to organize society."

Payoffs

In fact, the food sellers say they do pay rent in the form of small monthly under-the-table payments to city officials. It's an open secret that Bangkok's sprawling shadow economy is made possible by payoffs to powerful figures, often with ties to police or the military. Boontham said he was unaware of any payoffs and that it was not official practice.

Suchin Wannasutr has been selling khao kha moo - stewed pork leg - for 40 baht (\$1.15) a plate on Thonglor's sidewalks for more than 20 years. The 47-year-old said he has been diligent about keeping up his monthly payoffs of 1,000 baht (\$28.60), which is the same sum neighboring vendors say they have been charged. He is now preparing to open a real restaurant, about 1.5 km away from his sidewalk spot. He will share the rent of 35,000 baht (\$1,000) a month with three fellow street vendors. "I have to stay in the area because I have regular customers here," Suchin said. "I'm doing whatever I can just to send my kid through school. Once she graduates, I will move out of Bangkok. It's tough here."

Critics say the government needs to do more to help vendors and to help preserve some of the unique chaos that gives Bangkok its soul, which is rapidly being lost to government regulations and redevelopment for condos, shopping malls and office towers. If the campaign against street food sticks, tourists will no longer stumble upon fried worms, grilled pork intestines or the legendarily smelly fruit durian. And it's unlikely the hip bars and fancy restaurants will be handing out food in plastic bags sealed tight with a knotted rubber band.

"I feel like I am losing my job and I have no idea what to do next," said 39-year old Ubolwattana Mingkwan, who sells coffee for 30 baht (85 cents) a cup. "I can't afford to pay Thonglor's rent prices." "I've asked city officials for help and understanding," she said. "All they say now is 'No, no, no.' They said they've already received their orders." — AP

STRONG US DOLLAR A THREAT TO TRUMP CAMPAIGN PLEDGES

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump takes credit for revitalizing the US economy even though he has not yet been in office for 100 days. But the new president's boasts of breathing life into the world's biggest markets may come with an unwelcome corollary: A rising dollar and the Trump campaign promises it threatens. Trump acknowledged as much this week in a Wall Street Journal interview. "I think our dollar is getting too strong and partially that's my fault because people have confidence in me," he said. "That will hurt ultimately."

Since his shock rise to the White House, major indicators have continued to portray an economy in increasingly good health. Consumer sentiment and Wall Street have both hit successive records, boosted by Trump's promises of tax cuts, infrastructure spending and slashed regulation. As a result, investors have pumped cash into American equities markets, driving up a dollar which had already been on the rise. It is up more than six percent against a basket of six major currencies in the last year. "The dollar is high because the US economy is a stronger performer right now than any other advanced economy," said Barry Bosworth, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

Contradicting a core message

Trump cannot claim credit for all of this. By hiking its benchmark interest rates twice since December, the Federal Reserve has also bolstered the dollar by tightening the flow of credit and enticing investors with the prospect of higher returns. To be sure, a strong dollar is not all bad: It lowers import prices while also supporting access to lower-cost credit by supporting the inbound flow of cash.

On the other hand, it hurts American exports and directly threatens Trump's campaign pledge to correct the US trade deficit, particularly in the manufacturing sector, which has withered from Chinese and Mexican competition. "There's a contradiction that goes back to one of the core messages of his campaign," said Nathan Sheets, who served as undersecretary for international affairs at the US Treasury under former president Barack Obama.

Eswar Prasad, a professor at Cornell University, said Trump was acknowledging he had arrived at a certain impasse. "Mr Trump seems to recognize the economic reality that a stronger dollar will make it harder to achieve some of his policy objectives," he said. Since the mid-1990s, the United States has consistently defended a strong dollar policy, saying it stood for a robust, attractive economy.

But with one eye on the colossal US trade deficit, Trump sees things a little differently. "Look, there are some very good things about a strong dollar, but usually speaking the best thing about it is that it sounds good," he told The Journal. Still, Trump has only narrow room to maneuver. His remarks on the dollar sparked a selloff against the euro but such a strategy is unsustainable. "Comments by presidents and finance ministers about exchange rate have a very short life expectancy," said Bosworth of Brookings. — AFP

ABK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 50TH WEEKLY DRAWS

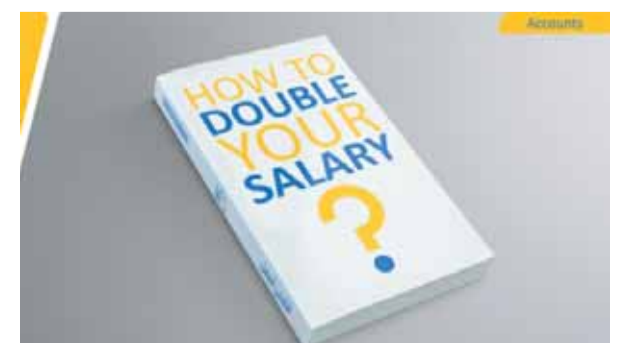
KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held its 50th 'Double Your Salary' weekly draw on April 11, 2017 at the Bank's Head Office in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce, announcing the names of the winners for this week. The promotion includes weekly draws, with two winners per draw. The campaign will run until June 27, 2017.

The winners of this week were:

- 1) Yousef Ali Hasan Al-Qedheeb, Salmiya Branch
- 2) Jassim Ahmad Jassim Al-Shatti, Salmiya Branch

New customers who transfer their salary to ABK receive KD 100 and will automatically be entered into the weekly draws to double their salaries. Existing customers who are already transferring their salary to ABK are entered into a separate draw. The next 'Double Your Salary' draw will be held on 18th April, 2017 where two new lucky winners will

be announced. All winners will be contacted personally and a weekly announcement will be made through the media with the winners' names.



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Years On

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 2017

Robbie the Meerkat guards an Easter treat of eggs filled with vegetables, at London Zoo, Thursday, April 13, 2017. — AP

Instead of dyeing Easter eggs, try decoupage

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Archbishop Joseph Jules Zerey of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church blesses foreign students of the Bethlehem Icon Center as they present the works executed during their course, in the biblical West Bank city of Bethlehem.

Ancient sacred art resurrected in city of Jesus birth



Foreign students of the Bethlehem Icon Center work on their painting during their course, in the biblical West Bank city of Bethlehem. — AFP photos



A painting depicting Jesus as "Christ Pantocrator" is seen in the ceiling of the chapel of the Bethlehem Icon Center in the biblical West Bank city of Bethlehem.

Down a Bethlehem alleyway, sunlight illuminates a golden icon of the Virgin Mary and Jesus, signaling the revival of an ancient art being practiced in the workshop inside. The building near the Church of the Nativity—the site where Christians believe Jesus was born—houses a group of enthusiasts specializing in the sacred art of iconography. They are doing so some 2,000 years after Christian iconography began in nearby Jerusalem—also where Christians believe Jesus was resurrected after his crucifixion, to be commemorated tomorrow for Easter. They work in both silence and in prayer, with their art a far cry from the cheap mass-produced icons sold in souvenir shops to tourists and pilgrims.

"Icons are not commercial objects for us, but holy images that we honor," said Nicola Juha, who heads the Bethlehem Icon Centre. He explains that icons like theirs are used by worshippers who, for example, light candles before them and pray. According to tradition, Luke the Evangelist painted the first Christian icon in 60 AD. Ian Knowles, far from his native Britain, now teaches the same art to not only Palestinian Christians, but also those from countries including Canada and Poland. Watching the meticulous brushstrokes of his students, he said he left home to spend two weeks in the region and was still there nine years later.

One of his pieces, "Our Lady of Palestine", depicts Mary shedding a tear over symbols of the Holy Land—Jerusalem, Mount Carmel and Mount Nebo. In a nearby chapel with a blue ceiling and a Nativity scene, around a dozen students

recite prayers, their nearly finished icons in hand. Archbishop Joseph Jules Zerey of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church, which sponsors the iconography center, blesses each one, holding an olive branch with holy oil.

'A beautiful synthesis'

Each icon is unique and produced to order. Animal-hair brushes are selected in Jerusalem or even London, and the pigments come directly from the Holy Land. Hand-ground stones for yellow are from Jericho and roses used to paint faces are from Jerusalem, Juha said in the small woodworking shop where panels for the icons are carved. Rose Codneler, who has used a holiday from her work at a women's shelter in Britain to spend Easter week in Bethlehem, said the uniqueness of the icons appeals to her.

For the 33-year-old Christian, spending days painstakingly painting Christ's face is "a way of getting deeper into the characters of the Bible and the story of the Bible". "Icons have always fascinated me, and more and more so in the last few years, because they are a kind of beautiful synthesis of God, prayer and also ecology in the way that the pigments are all taken from nature," she said. Knowles's class is provided periodically to visiting pilgrims for around \$265 (250 euros) and all year round to some 30 Palestinian Christians. Juha says the center has succeeded in "reviving an old, long-forgotten Palestinian tradition in Bethlehem, which is so important both in religious and geographic terms".



Foreign students of the Bethlehem Icon Center present the works executed during their course to be blessed by an archbishop.



Archbishop Joseph Jules Zerey (right) of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church blesses foreign students of the Bethlehem Icon Center.



Foreign students of the Bethlehem Icon Center present the works executed during their course to be blessed by an archbishop.

'Iconography as a profession'

Bethlehem is part of the West Bank, the Palestinian territory that has been occupied by Israel for 50 years and which struggles with unemployment and poverty. Knowles points out that obtaining the best materials from Jerusalem is impossible for many Palestinians since they are barred from crossing over from the West Bank. Wearing a paint-stained apron, he says the center is also a way of serving the local Christian communities.

Christians have gone from 20 percent of the Palestinian population to slightly more than one percent over the course of 50 years. "I wanted to do something which could really help to rebuild the iconography as a proper tradition and a constituent part of the Christian community here," he said. "I think people know the Christian population in Bethlehem has been

devastated over the last 50 years." Knowles said that "culturally, the Christian community is a bit on its own, so it seems to me that it was an important thing that I could offer-to teach iconography as a profession rather just as a hobby".

This year, 36 Palestinians have registered, paying fees of around 25 euros. A partnership has also been formed with The Prince's School of Traditional Arts in London, allowing 10 Bethlehem students to earn a British diploma in iconography recognized worldwide. The center has already achieved one particular point of pride: Knowles and three of his students have produced two icons for Lichfield Cathedral in Britain and are to complete a third next summer. — AFP



Ian Knowles (center), British director of the Bethlehem Icon Center advises foreign students of the Bethlehem Icon Center.



In this Nov 24, 1986, file photo, creator of the "Muppets" Jim Henson poses for a photo with Kermit the Frog in Los Angeles, Calif. — AP photos



File photo shows Kermit the Frog, left, and Miss Piggy arrive at the World Premiere of "Muppets Most Wanted," in Los Angeles.



In this Feb 6, 1984, file photo, Jim Henson with his "Muppets" pose for a photo at Henson's 69th Street office in New York.

MUSEUM ASKS FANS OF KERMIT, ELMO TO HELP PAY FOR EXHIBIT

A museum is asking fans of Jim Henson's Muppets to help pay for an exhibition featuring original puppets of beloved characters like Elmo, Miss Piggy and Kermit the Frog. The Museum of the Moving Image launched a Kickstarter campaign on Tuesday seeking \$40,000 to help preserve the puppets for posterity. "Jim Henson's work has meant so much to so many people, myself included," actor Neil Patrick Harris says in a video on the Kickstarter page. "His humor and inventiveness have inspired people to find their own creative voices."

The Queens museum owns hundreds of Henson puppets and

other objects including costumes and props, all donated by Henson's family in 2013. Henson died in 1990. Museum staff members are working to conserve the items along with Jim Henson's Creature Shop, which was founded by Henson in 1979 and carries on his work, and fine-arts conservators.

Curator Barbara Miller said the museum has never turned to crowdfunding before but it made sense for the Muppet exhibit "because the community of fans is so active." "This is one element of an effort to cross the finish line for fundraising," Miller said. Donors will get perks including T-shirts, artisanal chocolate and

naming rights to a puppet pedestal. Museum officials are hoping to open the exhibit this summer. Besides the puppets, the exhibit will feature rarely seen video footage and photographs going back to Henson's early work in television in the 1950s. A traveling exhibition using objects from the collection will open May 20 at Seattle's Museum of Pop Culture. — AP



View of the biggest mural in the world with 5,742 square meters, by Brazilian mural artist Eduardo Kobra, in Itapevi, metropolitan area of Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Brazilian artist paints 'biggest' ever mural

Many painters struggle to get their work viewed but Brazilian street artist Eduardo Kobra won't have a problem—his most recent work is billed as the biggest in the world. The prolific Kobra takes as his canvas the sides of the Cacau Show factory on one of the main highways into Sao Paulo, and not just one side but wrapping around the corners. Still not quite finished, it shows the top half of an indigenous tribesman in a multicolored collage as he paddles through a great brown river of chocolate. The work connects the chocolate products inside the building to the traditions of far-off Amazonian cocoa farmers. Kobra already held the Guinness World Record for biggest spray paint mural in Rio de Janeiro and he says this one, at 61,354 square feet (5,700 square meters) is even bigger.

"People can pass by on the highway, even if they're going 100 kmh and they can still see what the message is on the wall," he told AFP. "The image shows one of the cocoa workers transporting cocoa in his boat. I've also turned the river into a river formed entirely of chocolate," he said. "It's the biggest mural I've ever

made," he said. "The mural above all is trying to show something of the workers and pay homage to them." Art is a little different when a large building is your sketchbook.

Kobra said he started off with as many as 10 different designs for the mural, all of them based on scenes from the Amazon's cocoa-rich regions. Once he settled on a design, he needed cranes to lift 12 platforms for his painting team who have joined him from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm over two months, with about two weeks left to go. Never mind brushes, palette and box of paints: they got through 4,000 spray cans and 300 gallons (1,080 liters) of enamel paint. Alexandre Costa, president of Cacau Show chocolate makers, said the work should remind people of what goes into every bar they unwrap. "I am really happy with the result of this work. It honors the cocoa workers. People who eat chocolate don't know what's behind this—the land where it's harvested and so on." — AFP



Brazilian mural artist Eduardo Kobra poses in front of his recent work "the biggest mural in the world".

Beijing park goes high tech to save toilet paper

A park in the Chinese capital, Beijing, has found a high-tech solution to stop people from using excessive amounts of toilet paper. The Temple of Heaven Park has equipped public washrooms with a paper dispenser that uses facial recognition technology to record each user and then roll out a strip of about 70 cm of paper for one trip to the bathroom.

The same user will have to wait for nine minutes before they can get another strip of toilet paper. "This machine was actually designed in order to stop people from wasting toilet paper,"

said Lei Zhenshan, a designer and sales executive for dispenser maker Shoulian Technology. "If the paper was put in an uncontrolled device, then people will waste it endlessly," he told Reuters Television.

This month, Chinese media reported that visitors to the park's washrooms were taking unnecessarily large amounts of toilet paper from dispensers. — Reuters



Photo shows two Easter eggs decorated with designs cut from paper napkins. — AP photos



Photo shows two Easter eggs made by covering Styrofoam forms with scraps of fabric.

Instead of dyeing Easter eggs, try decoupage

When it comes to Easter eggs, dipping them in dye is fine, but for a more decorative and longer-lasting result, try decoupage. I tried three DIY techniques for adding colors and patterns to eggs using decoupage glue - Mod Podge is a popular brand. One technique paired vintage book pages with plastic eggs, another used printed napkins with real eggs, and the third involved fabric and Styrofoam. All three methods were fairly messy given the glue, but at least I didn't end up with fingers dyed blue from food coloring. And unlike hard-boiled dyed Easter eggs, these will last for years to come. Here's what I found, with each method rated from 1 to 10, with 10 indicating the least expensive, easiest and best results:

Book pages-plastic eggs

This tutorial comes from a blog called "SewforSoul" and was published in "Reloved" magazine. While it was the most time-consuming technique I tried, it yielded the most impressive results. To make these eggs, small strips of plain paper are glued to plastic eggs to serve as a base layer that hides the colored plastic. Once that layer has dried, the egg is buffed by rubbing it with the back of a spoon to smooth out any rough edges. The eggs are then covered with small strips of paper torn from an old book, overlapping the strips at random until the egg is completely covered. More drying and buffing, and then additional designs cut from paper napkins are glued to the eggs. A wash of watered-down craft paint gives the eggs a distressed, antique look. The original version of this method featured black-and-white images, but I used napkins featuring colored illustrations of Peter Rabbit to brighten them up a bit. I loved the pastel, shabby chic result.

Napkins-real eggs

Craft maven Martha Stewart's website features multiple techniques for decoupage eggs, including one that involves

real eggs and decorative paper napkins. To try this method, pierce holes into either end of the egg and blow out the contents. Cut around designs from a paper napkin - I chose a floral pattern - and separate the layers to work with just one layer of tissue. Apply decoupage glue to the egg and adhere the designs, and then cover the entire egg with a coat of glue. This technique was inexpensive, especially if you scramble up the egg's contents for breakfast, and produced very pretty, elegant results. Real eggs are fragile, however - I cracked one open trying to enlarge one of the holes - so this method wouldn't be the best to do with young children.

Fabric-styrofoam eggs

I found this technique on Crafts 'n Coffee, a blog created by the company that makes Styrofoam brand foam craft products. The foam eggs I purchased were significantly more expensive than either the plastic or real eggs used in the other projects, and while I had scrap fabric on hand, purchasing the fabric would have made this even more pricey.

For this project, fabric is cut into 1-inch wide strips and then trimmed into triangle shapes. The eggs are covered with glue in sections, and the fabric is stuck on in a random, overlapping manner. A final coat of decoupage glue seals the edges. I found this method fairly fussy - bits of fabric kept peeling off as I manipulated the eggs - and I had trouble smoothing them down. The finished result was a bit too bumpy and rustic-looking for my taste. On the plus side, using Styrofoam means the eggs can easily be pierced and strung on baker's twine to make a garland. Because both the eggs and the fabric are fairly sturdy compared to the paper used in the other methods, or the real eggs, this would be an easier method for children to try. — AP



Photo shows plastic Easter eggs covered with strips of paper torn from book pages, while designs cut from paper napkins add a bit of color.



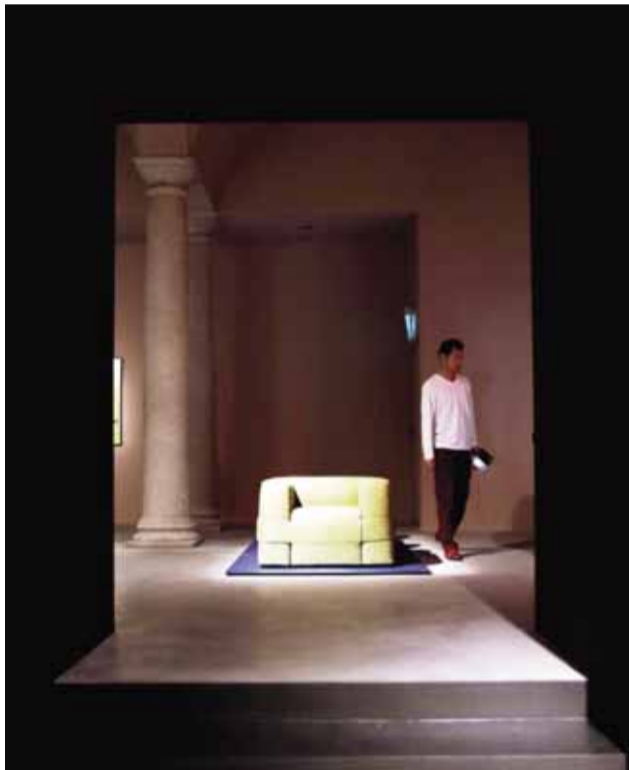
Photo shows a variety of decoupage Easter eggs.



A woman takes photo at a creation by Piuarch called "Flowerprint", part of the Design Fair exhibition in Milan, Italy. — AP photos



A man walks at the entrance of 'Giro Giro Tondo design for children' exhibition.



A man walks next to an armchair created by designer Mario Bellini for Cassina's furniture designers.

RETRO-MODERN IS THE DESIGN WORLD'S COMFORT FOOD AT MILAN

'95 percent of people in Milano will buy retro furniture'

Retro-modern is the design world's comfort food. As populism finds political traction, designers at the Milan Furniture Show looked to the past for inspiration, offering reassurance in the form of high-quality furnishings to help navigate an uncertain present. "When you are scared, you want something you know in life," said designer Philippe Starck, sitting on an updated Caprice cafe stool and coordinated Passion table for Cassina. "We cannot start from scratch. It is impossible. We cannot use the fantastic technology which is available because it is not what people want. When this cycle will finish, we will explode. We have drawers full of projects, boxes."

Among the designer's other pieces this year were series of Versailles lamps for Floss and Baccarat and two new chairs in the Generic line for Kartell. "Today, 95 percent of people in Milano will think they are buying modern furniture, and they will buy retro furniture," he told The Associated Press. Some highlights from the seven days of events that will end tomorrow:

Presidential opening

Milan design week, which combines the Milan Furniture Show with collateral Fuori Salone events throughout the city, is as much about ideas as about products, and the debate about which prevails is a constant. Italian President Sergio Mattarella opened the weeklong preview of furniture and lighting at the Rho fairgrounds, a first for the furniture fair representing an industry with more than 10 billion euros (\$10.6 billion) in exports last year.

"It is a great sign for Italy," said Claudio Luti, the furniture show's president, saying it signaled the government's support for the sector, which is comprised mostly of small- and medium-size companies that often view each other as competitors. "We cannot so easily form a system, and this is symbolic that we can work together when we travel around the world and not just go it alone."

Past revisited

Architect and designer Mario Bellini was some 50 years too early, by his own admission, with his 932 chair for Cassina, comprised of four cushions held together with a belt. Now he's back with the MB, an updated version that includes a leather-and-textile mix, and betting on success.

"This armchair was not lucky at the time, after which I believe I designed another 40 pieces of furniture for Cassina. But a few years ago we asked ourselves, why wouldn't we give justice to this innovation, and attempt to bring it back today in a world that has become a lot more sophisticated and a lot more capable to receive new messages," Bellini said.

Legacy battle

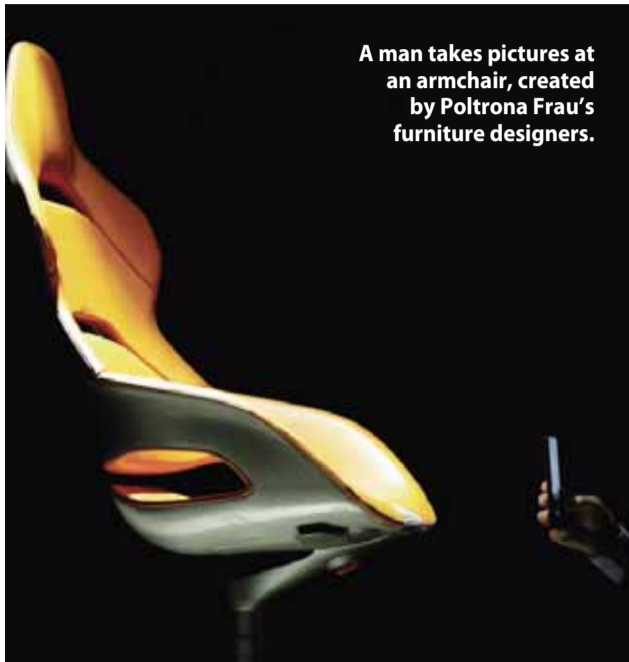
Dipping back into the archives has its risks.

Cassina and Molteni&C, both from the Brianza furniture district north of Milan, found themselves locked in a public relations and legal battle over rights to a classic chair designed by Italian architect Gio Ponti in the 1950s during this edition.

Cassina showed the chair Cassina 811, which had been out of production since 1964, at its showroom in downtown Milan. But Molteni&C, which also previewed its version, claimed it had obtained the rights from Ponti's heirs, and has taken its competitor to court. nCassina said the 811 is not on sale yet, and that it is "waiting to resolve the issues through legal channels in order to legitimately produce the armchair." It said the chair was "conceived, engineered and produced by Cassina ... in cooperation with Gio Ponti."



A woman takes a picture of a creation by Melissa's furniture designers.



A man takes pictures at an armchair, created by Poltrona Frau's furniture designers.

Racing dreams

For the desk jockey with Formula 1 aspirations, Poltrona Frau and Ferrari have combined their artisanal and technological prowess to create the Cockpit office chair. The sleek seat is made of carbon fiber and alutex, materials usually reserved for high-end sports cars, and features a leather-clad seat ergonomically inspired by a racing car cockpit. The fixtures to adjust the seat position are even inspired by Ferrari's steering column controls.

"In a supercar like a Ferrari, the seat is the key element to connect man to the car and to succeed in controlling the car in the most extreme situations," Flavio Manzoni, head of design at Ferrari, told AP. "We have transferred this knowhow both of ergonomics and the research of innovative materials, but also the shape and the very refined, timeless aesthetics, to an office chair."

With a range of \$11,000 for the Cockpit President and \$10,000 for the smaller Cockpit Executive, the office chair series can be seen as part of Ferrari CEO Sergio Marchionne's mission to transform the sportscar-maker into a luxury goods brand beyond the auto-sphere.

Young designers

She has a zucchini. She has a mouthpiece. Put them together for a zucchini clarinet. Chinese design student Jia Wu wants to encourage kids to practice their music AND eat their veggies. Jia designed a set of plastic mouthpieces and keys that can turn a red bell pepper into a harmonica or a zucchini into a flute or a clarinet.

Kids "are so engaged in creating their own musical instruments, they think they can learn to play flutes," she said. "The materials are everyday objects, vegetables and fruits, and also to encourage them to eat more healthy food. After making them, they ask their mom and dad, can I eat them, my musical instrument? And then they just cook it."

Jia, 26, who studies in Britain, was one of four young designers who won the Lexus Design Award sponsored by the Japanese luxury carmaker this year, and she hopes her connections with Chinese manufacturers will help make the concept a reality.



Creations called 'Player's Pflute' by Chinese designer Jia Wu, at the Lexus space.



A woman looks creations by Maarten Baas' furniture designers.

Idea exploration

Beyond the 200,000 square meters (2.1 million square feet) of products by 2,000 brands at the Rho fairgrounds, designers, entrepreneurs and industry players offered their visions, proposing updated retail formats, advances to make technology fit more seamlessly into the home and ways to help spread green through urban centers.

Japanese architect Oki Sato, founder and chief designer of Nendo, created a clock-making studio in collaboration with Swiss watchmaker Panerai to examine our relationship with time. The body of each analog clock was cut from a plastic tube in a thickness to represent the hour at which it was made, and then craftspeople added the hour designators and timepieces in a ritual lasting 10 minutes. "We are living in a digital age," Sato said, "but I think what is more important is that we need to feel the true value of time."

Experiences

Elsewhere in the city, the Piuarch Architecture Studio created a flower wall of 2,000 flowers and herbs hung on the front of its headquarters to examine the role of facades, while supporting the spreading of green with a pilot project on the roof planting vegetable gardens in shipping palettes. Airbnb hosted a series of Milan experiences, including a performance by a string quintet from La Scala's Philharmonic, to underscore its new service offering tours and other insider packages.

And Samsung rolled out "The Frame," a new television design that fades to a work of art rather than a black screen when off, in a bid to make big-screen TVs a more palpable design choice.

Children also got special consideration at this year's events with an exhibit dedicated to toys at the Triennale, and a series of exhibits and play spaces meant to engage them throughout the city. Kartell has expanded their children's line, launched last year, with a smiley face stacking storage system and transparent plastic dollhouse. — AP



Woman stands next to chairs called 'Mykin' created by Haigo's furniture designers.



Lamps called 'Sturlesi' created by Haigo's furniture designers.



A man walks next to the round table called 'Lebeau' created by designer Patrick Jouin.



A girl aims a water pistol at the camera during Songkran, Thailand's traditional New Year festival, on Silom road in Bangkok. — AFP photos



People gather in front of a bar during Songkran.



People react to being soaked in cold water during Songkran.



Youth hang out together during Songkran.



Revelers play in a fountain as they carry water guns while celebrating Songkran.

Thais soak in new year with nationwide water fight

Hordes of revelers armed with plastic water guns poured onto Thai streets yesterday for a second day of watery warfare to ring in the kingdom's traditional new year. Known as Songkran, the Thai holiday is celebrated by paying respect to elders and sprinkling water over Buddha figures at local temples. But the festival has also become one of the world's biggest and booziest water fights. Every April rowdy street parties erupt across the nation as hundreds of thousands of Thais and tourists don floral shirts and drench each other with brightly-coloured water pistols.

Similar but smaller water festivals are also held in neighboring Buddhist countries like Myanmar and Laos. The burst of color was especially striking this year in Bangkok, where many Thais have worn only black and white for the past six months to mourn the October death of the deeply revered King Bhumibol Adulyadej. "At its peak I think there were hundreds of thousands of people in Silom," city official Vallop Suwantee told AFP, refer-

ring to a downtown Bangkok district that has become a Songkran hotspot.

"Overall the situation is orderly," he added. Many see the soggy celebration as a fun-filled respite from the sweltering heat that engulfs Thailand during its hot and dry season. But the military junta that came to power in 2014 has tried—mostly in vain—to rein in the revelry with bans on skimpy clothing and restrictions on alcohol. The generals have also struggled to curb drink driving, which surges during the holiday week, earning it a reputation as Thailand's "Seven Deadly Days".

Authorities reported 167 road deaths over the first three days of this year's festival—a toll only marginally lower than the 181 deaths recorded over the same period last April. The number of road accidents was also up slightly, according to the Interior Ministry, with nearly half of the crashes involving drunk drivers. — AFP



Revelers spray water at each other as they take part in a water festival celebrating Songkran.



CEO & Publisher of the Vogue Arabia, Shashi Menon poses for the camera at the magazine office at the Dubai Design District in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.



Mohammad Hazem Rezq, one of the Vogue staff works behind his desk at the magazine office at the Dubai Design District in Dubai.

Vogue Arabia appoints new editor after abrupt 2-issue exit

The local publisher of Vogue Arabia announced Manuel Arnaut as its new editor-in-chief yesterday, a day after the surprise exit of its former editor. Arnaut is currently the editor-in-chief of Architectural Digest Middle East, which like Vogue Arabia is a publication of Conde Nast International. Dubai-based publisher Nervora, which publishes Vogue Arabia in partnership with Conde Nast, said Arnaut will start in his new role on May 7. Arnaut, who hails from Portugal, previously held posts at Vogue Portugal, GQ Portugal, as well as having had his work published in Vogue and GQ Brazil. The luxury fashion magazine's edition for the Middle East had published just two print issues when it was reported Thursday that its editor-in-

chief, Saudi Princess Deena Aljuhani Abdulaziz, was no longer in the post. She was quoted in a statement to insider fashion website Business of Fashion saying she was fired because she refused to compromise on her vision for the magazine. "It had initially been my intention to build this important and groundbreaking edition of Vogue from inception to a mature magazine in line with others in the Vogue stable," she said, before adding that she felt the publisher's approach conflicted with the traditional values that underpin the region.

The inaugural print edition published in March featured American supermodel Gigi Hadid on the cover and included a section entirely in Arabic. In an interview last month with The Associated Press

in her Dubai office, Abdulaziz discussed the idea behind Hadid wearing an embellished, mesh veil on the cover. "I don't want Vogue Arabia to just be another regional magazine. I definitely want it to be a global one as well, especially in this political climate. I think it's very important," the mother of three had said. Her surprise departure comes just days after Abdulaziz posted on Instagram images from the magazine's launch party held recently in Doha, Qatar. — AP

This undated photo released by Vogue Arabia, shows the cover of the March 2017 edition of Vogue Arabia magazine with American supermodel Gigi Hadid in an embellished, mesh veil. — AP photos



DOCUMENTARY CHRONICLES BOSTON, 'GRANDDADDY OF ALL MARATHONS'

What's the planet's most legendary marathon? Probably that fabled first one Pheidippides ran in 490 BC, breathlessly proclaiming a great military victory before perishing from his effort. Next in line? Surely the Boston Marathon, whose colorful 121-year history is captured in a movie premiering Saturday in its host city. Narrated by Matt Damon, "Boston," the first feature-length documentary about the race, tells how it grew from 15 runners in 1897 to become the globe's most venerable footrace. The world premiere at the Boch Center's Wang Theatre, where the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra will conduct a live performance of Emmy-winning composer Jeff Beal's score, comes two days before Monday's running of the marathon. The film will be screened at 450 theaters around the US on Wednesday.

"The Boston Marathon is a truly iconic sporting event," said director Jon Dunham, a marathoner who calls it "the granddaddy of all marathons." "It's unique in the world of marathons, and in fact it transcends the world of marathons," he said. The 2013 bombings near the finish line that killed three spectators and wounded more than 260 others aren't the focus of the film, but neither are they a footnote. Dunham had 56 cameras rolling along the course in 2014 to record the euphoria of athletes from around the world essentially reclaiming the marathon, paced by Meb Keflezighi, the first American winner in 31 years.

Mostly, though, the documentary is devoted to the Boston Marathon's rich lore. The Boston Athletic Association, which organizes the race, gave Dunham exclusive rights to its archive of photos, video and marathon memorabilia. Through the ages, the marathon has mirrored society's idiosyncrasies:

1. Some of the first to run it - all men - thought steak and whiskey gave them a competitive advantage. Chuck Mellor, the 1925 winner, ran the entire race with a cheek full of

chewing tobacco.

2. Seven-time champion Clarence DeMar's doctors warned him to stop running because they were convinced it weakened the heart.
3. A race official had to pay 1939 winner Tarzan Brown's \$1 entry fee after he showed up penniless at the start line.

There's a direct tie to Pheidippides' run as a foot soldier relaying word of the Greeks' victory over the Persians in the Battle of Marathon. When the first modern Olympic marathon was run in 1896, retracing Pheidippides' steps from Marathon to Athens, members of the US team - many of them Bostonians - marveled at the event and came home determined to duplicate it here the following year.

"They said, 'Boston is the Athens of the West' - we want our own marathon," Tom Derderian, an acclaimed running coach and author who served as an executive producer for the documentary, says in the film. "Boston" also chronicles how women broke through the gender barrier, starting with Bobbi Gibb in 1966 and Kathrine Switzer the following year. Both, as well as Sara Rae Berman, ran before women were allowed to register for the 1972 race. Four-time Olympian Shalane Flanagan, who posted the fastest time ever for an American woman on the course in 2014, appears in the film and captures Boston's spirit. "There's no one who can watch the Boston Marathon and not be inspired somehow by someone," she says. — AP

In this April 19, 1930 file photo, veteran marathoner Clarence DeMar, of the Melrose American Legion Post, crosses the finish line to win the Boston Marathon in the last of his record seven wins in Boston. — AP



SECURITY, BIGGEST DETERRENT TO STORING DATA IN THE CLOUD

DUBAI: Security is the number one concern amongst senior business executives when it comes to cloud data adoption, yet more than half of business-critical data is likely to reside there by 2019. According to the findings of a new study released yesterday, by Teradata (NYSE: TDC), the leading data and analytics company, eight out of ten executives cite security as a concern when storing data in the cloud, but that has not stopped a huge rise in the amount of critical data being sent there. Looking ahead to 2019, executives predict that over half of IT (56 percent), customer (53 percent), and financial data (51 percent) will reside in the cloud.

The study highlights that although businesses want to invest in cloud storage and many plan to do so over the next two years, there are real concerns about security of information and data breaches. A number of key trends were identified: Security and lack of control are the top obstacles holding back storage of critical data in the cloud: 40 percent of respondents say general security is a risk, while 25 percent of respondents believe cloud data adoption will result in more security breaches.

A quarter of those surveyed believe data cloud adoption will result in lack of control. 52 percent say executive buy-in to data in the cloud is holding them back and 22 percent struggle with the addi-

tional staffing needed to move to the cloud. Yet cloud storage is set to rise sharply in the next two years: Although 58 percent of data from organizations surveyed already sits in the cloud today, usage of cloud will increase over the next two years, with three in ten companies globally predicting a significant increase of data in the cloud by 2019.

Majority of legal data is being held back from the cloud: Legal data is being kept on physical servers for the most part, with just 27 percent of businesses surveyed expecting to move their legal data to the cloud in the next two years. Telecoms are making the biggest commitment to the cloud, with marcomms making strong moves within organizations: 48 percent of organizations surveyed anticipate a significant increase in their cloud storage use by 2019.

48 percent of marketing and communications departments within organizations surveyed will



Marc Clark

increase data stored in the cloud by 2019. Healthcare will move its customer data to the cloud, whilst utilities will prioritize IT and R&D data: 59 percent of respondents highlighted that the healthcare industry will move customer data to the cloud in the next two years. Utilities will prioritize moving IT infrastructure (64 percent) and R&D/Engineering data (52 percent).

Marc Clark, "Director of Cloud Strategy and Deployment at Teradata said: "Our message to organizations around the world is that the cloud is actually one of the most secure means of virtual storage available. While our study finds widespread concerns, the fact is that cloud storage is growing rapidly, remains hugely cost-effective, and that there are ways to manage it securely.

"Cloud computing security processes should be designed to address the security controls that the cloud provider will incorporate, in order to maintain the data security, privacy and compliance with necessary regulations, as well as providing a business continuity and data backup plan. "By identifying the barriers within the business that hinder further adoption, as well as where cloud storage is creating positive opportunities, we aim to provide reassurance that cloud storage is a safe and cost effective way to store company information."

WITH SMARTPHONES, CUSTOMERS ARE CORPORATE WHISTLEBLOWERS

SMARTPHONES AND SOCIAL MEDIA SHIFTS POWER TO CONSUMERS

NEW YORK: Look out, Corporate America. Customers armed with smartphones and video cameras are watching when you screw up. The viral video of a ticketed passenger dragged forcefully off a United flight is only the latest example of bad behavior exposed in the age of social media. In February, Uber came under fire after a driver posted video of CEO Travis Kalanick berating him.

Earlier, a Comcast technician was shown in a video sleeping on a customer's couch, and an audio recording chronicled one man's herculean efforts to drop Comcast service; they are among the embarrassing customer complaints that ultimately forced improvements. FedEx had to respond after video showed a driver carelessly throwing a package with a computer monitor over the front gate.

Beyond the corporate sphere, smartphone videos of police brutality have prompted protests and investigations. Not long ago, such incidents might have gotten a mention on the local news at most, and quickly disappeared. But smartphone cameras and social media have democratized information and shifted power to consumers. Companies can no longer sweep complaints under the rug.

"That's something a lot of companies just don't get," said Paul Argenti, a professor of corporate communications at Dartmouth's Tuck School of Business. "Companies still operate as if they can hide things and make believe something didn't happen."

Rewriting the playbook

Companies can't eliminate embarrassing gaffes entirely, but can learn from past blunders to minimize the damage. It starts with training. Employees need to be ready to react when a situation gets dramatic - and companies should emphasize that anything employees do could be recorded. That's especially true for transportation, fast-food and other companies with a lot of employees who interact directly with large numbers of customers.

Running through hypothetical scenarios helps. "Have a couple things planned, what we should do if 'x' happens and what we should do if 'y' happens," said Lakshman Krishnamurthi, a Kellogg School of Management marketing professor. On-site employees need to be given more power to respond to avoid escalating an incident, especially one that might be recorded.

In United's case, for instance, even if employees were following the rules for seeking volunteers to give up seats, they should have been able to read the situation and increase the financial incentives for volunteers rather than drag a passenger



NEW YORK: In this file photo, United Airlines CEO Oscar Munoz speaks in New York, during a presentation of the carrier's new Polaris service. —AP

off a flight. "You need rules, but you need to be flexible and adapt," Argenti said.

Block and tackle

Once a video is out there, the standard PR-crisis response remains the same as it always has: Work swiftly to correct the situation in the eyes of the public. "Apologize, talk about why it happened, and say it will never happen again," Argenti said. United CEO Oscar Munoz eventually apologized, but not for two days and after first blaming the customer and airport security. And once a video goes viral, companies have to cede control of the narrative.

"When the video is out there, don't try to countermand what the video says," said Herman Leonard, a professor of business administration at Harvard. In the past, companies had hours or days to respond to a crisis. Now, companies must respond immediately, before a scandal spins out of control on social media. For example, when Domino's Pizza employees posted a YouTube video of workers defacing sandwiches in 2009, the employees were quickly fired, the store was inspected and the CEO apologized. That helped mitigate some, if not all of the damage. —AP

FACEBOOK LOOKING AT BEHAVIOR TO WEED OUT FAKE ACCOUNTS

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook on Wednesday said it has started weeding out bogus accounts by watching for suspicious behavior such as repetitive posts or torrents of messages. The security improvement was described as being part of a broader effort to rid the leading social network of hoaxes, misinformation, and fake news by making sure people are who they claim to be.

"We've found that when people represent themselves on Facebook the same way they do in real life, they act responsibly," Shabnam Shaik of the Facebook protect and care team said in a blog post. "Fake accounts don't follow this pattern, and are closely related to the creation and spread of spam." Accounts suspected of being bogus are suspended and holders asked to verify identifies, which scammers typically don't do, according to the California-based social network. In France, the new tactic has already resulted in Facebook taking action against 30,000 accounts believed to be fakes, Shaik said. "We've made improvements to recognize these inauthentic accounts more easily by identifying patterns of activity-without assessing the content itself," Shaik said. —AFP

CIA CHIEF CALLS WIKILEAKS A HOSTILE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

WASHINGTON: CIA Director Mike Pompeo on Thursday called WikiLeaks a non-state "hostile intelligence service" often abetted by state actors, such as Russia during last year's presidential campaign. "WikiLeaks walks like a hostile intelligence service and talks like a hostile intelligence service," Pompeo told an audience at a Washington think tank.

Russia's GRU intelligence service had used the anti-secrecy group to distribute hacked material during the 2016 US presidential election, he said. WikiLeaks released Democratic emails during the 2016 presidential campaign that US intelligence agencies say were hacked by Russia to try to tilt the election against Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton in favor of Republican Donald Trump, the eventual winner.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange said the release was not intended to influence the election. In March, WikiLeaks published documents describing secret Central Intelligence Agency hacking tools and snippets of computer code, but did not publish the full programs that would be needed to conduct cyber exploits against phones, computers and internet-connected televisions. Intelligence and law enforcement officials said contractors likely breached security and handed the documents to WikiLeaks. —Reuters

CENTRIFY APPOINTS NEW EMEA CHANNEL DIRECTOR

DUBAI: Centrifly, the leader in securing hybrid enterprises through the power of identity services, has appointed John Andrews as its new EMEA Channel Director. John, who reports to Vice President and Managing Director for EMEA, Andy Heather, will be responsible for setting out and delivering on the company's long-term channel strategy and building a core set of distribution partners and VARs across the region, including the UK, DACH, Middle East, Northern Europe and Southern Europe.

John, who joined from BeyondTrust, has spent the last 18 years helping to build a channel presence and coverage in the Middle East and APAC markets for market-leading security vendors, including Juniper Networks, F5 and McAfee. He also spent three years as Marketing Director for Computer links Distribution, managing a portfolio of more than 25 security-focused vendors.

As Centrifly continues to invest funds and resources into channel marketing, one of the first jobs of the new Channel Director will be to evaluate 250+ partners and focus on establishing a top 10 tier of VARs in each region. Centrifly also plans to introduce an enhanced and improved virtual training platform for partners. This will include a one-week boot-camp style delivery into each region, with intensive training to bring partners up to speed on the company's services capabilities and encourage better cross-selling and customer support.

"We have built up a strong channel network across EMEA over the past few years, but now is the time to assess these relationships to ensure our partners have the right skill set, product alignment and are committed to adding real value to our mutual customers," comments John Andrews. "We also want to ensure we are working with channel partners that can offer specialist skills and routes into core vertical markets, including banking, retail and telcos.

"Our strength is the identity message, which plays into every part of the security sell, from privileged access management and single sign on to multi-factor authentication and identity as a service (IaaS). My primary goal is to support our channel partners in

delivering this message to customers who are struggling to manage identity and access in today's diverse environments, incorporating hybrid cloud, mobile and data centre."

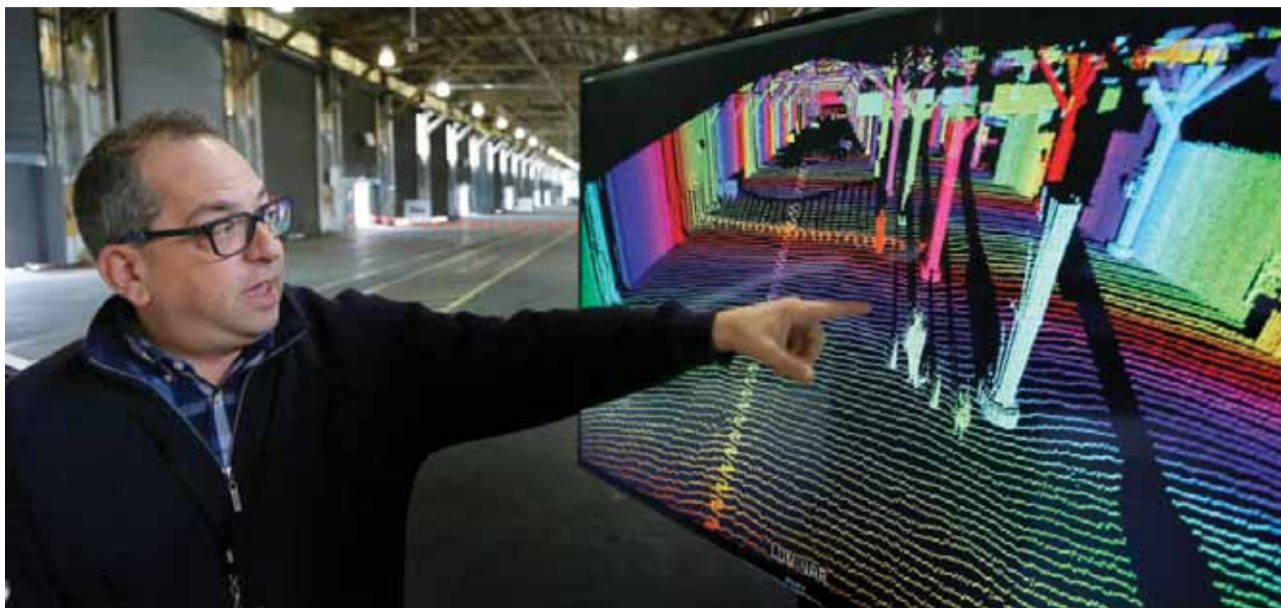
Centrifly, who appointed Exertis as its distribution partner in the UK two years ago following the decision to move to a two-tier model, will visit distributors in each country to involve them in the process and present the new corporate strategy and vision. Other distributors include Infinigate in DACH and France, StarLink in the Middle East, and DCB in Benelux.

Phil Brown, Sales and Commercial Director, Exertis, adds: "We're delighted that Centrifly chose Exertis as its sole distribution partner in the UK and Ireland. The market for identity management/consolidation is growing rapidly as businesses start to appreciate and focus on cyber threats. Mobility continues to play a major part in improving productivity, with users accessing cloud and onsite resources from multiple devices. Centrifly's offering in the market is unique as it combines identity assurance, access control, centralized administration and adherence to the latest regulatory guidelines, so IT departments can improve efficiency and protect their most valuable resources.

"We believe Centrifly provides our enterprise and SMB partners with a comprehensive platform to help organizations reduce the attack surface and fight against the threat of compromised credentials associated with cybercrime. Given our strategic relationship with partners, Exertis is committed to adding value to this new initiative by helping to extend their reach and stimulating growth in new markets."



John Andrews



SAN FRANCISCO: In this photograph, Luminar chief technology officer Jason Eichenholz points to a 3-D lidar map displayed on a screen in San Francisco. — AP

ASPIRING TECH PRODIGY TRIES TO RE-ROUTE SELF-DRIVING CARS

SAN FRANCISCO: Austin Russell, now 22, was barely old enough to drive when he set out to create a safer navigation system for robot-controlled cars. His ambitions are about to be tested. Five years ago, Russell co-founded Luminar Technologies, a Silicon Valley startup trying to steer the rapidly expanding self-driving car industry in a new direction. Luminar kept its work closely guarded until Thursday, when the startup revealed the first details about a product Russell is touting as a far more powerful form of "lidar," a key sensing technology used in autonomous vehicles designed by Google, Uber and major automakers.

Lidar systems work by bouncing lasers off nearby objects and measuring the reflections to build up a detailed 3-D picture of the surrounding environment. The technology is similar to radar, which uses radio waves instead of lasers. Russell

says Luminar's version, consisting of its own patented hardware and software, will provide 50 times more resolution and 10 times the range of current lidar systems. Those improvements, he said, will enable self-driving cars to be sold on the mass market more quickly.

Thiel backbone

During an interview in an empty warehouse on a San Francisco pier where Luminar has been testing its lidar, Russell wasn't shy about making big claims for its technology. "When you see your vehicle is powered by Luminar, you will know you will be safer," he said. "We need to get to the point where humans don't have to constantly baby-sit and take control" of autonomous cars.

If Luminar's lidar lives up to its promise, some of the world's biggest technology and auto companies may have been

upstaged by a precocious entrepreneur who says he memorized all the periodic table of the elements when he was 2 years old. By the time he turned 11, Russell says he was tinkering with supercomputers.

Like another technology prodigy - Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg - Russell won the early support of PayPal co-founder Peter Thiel, who became a billionaire after investing \$500,000 in Facebook during the company's infancy.

One of Luminar's early investors is a venture capital firm backed by Thiel and eBay founder Pierre Omidyar. Russell also dropped out of Stanford University after just three months when he won a Thiel fellowship, which pays students \$100,000 to work on promising ideas instead of pursuing a degree.

Cost or safety?

Also like Zuckerberg, Russell is CEO of his company. Most of Luminar's roughly 150 employees are older than him, including his former mentor in photonics, 45-year-old Jason Eichenholz, now the company's chief technology officer. Russell's father, a former commercial real estate specialist, is the company's chief financial officer. Now Russell will have to prove he has indeed invented something revolutionary. While lidar is a key component in self-driving cars, some believe Luminar may be working on the wrong problem. The big issue for lidar systems these days is cost, not safety, said Alex Lidow, CEO of Efficient Power Conversion, which supplies chips for lidar. The systems currently cost thousands of dollars apiece.

"You don't need the resolution that would allow a car to stop before a bug hits its windshield," Lidow said. "The question comes down to, what is the exact right amount of information for the car to make exactly the right decision all the time?"

Luminar plans to be manufacturing 10,000 lidar units at a 50,000-square-foot plant in Orlando, Florida, this year. Russell won't disclose what they'll cost. About 100 of the lidar systems will be tested by four makers of autonomous cars that Luminar isn't identifying. The partners include technology companies and automakers, Russell said. — AP

TODDLERS PLAYING WITH TOUCH SCREENS SLEEP LESS: STUDY

PARIS: The more toddlers play with touchscreen devices the less they sleep, according to a study released Thursday that suggests the findings could be cause for concern. For every additional hour using a touchscreen phone or tablet during the day, children aged six months to three years slept nearly 16 minutes less in each 24 hour period, researchers reported in the journal *Scientific Reports*. But the study could not determine if the extra screen time was responsible for tiny tots sleeping less, or if the loss of shut-eye had any adverse health effects.

One expert not involved in the research said the results "should be interpreted with extreme caution." Sleep is critical for cognitive development, especially during the first few years of life, when the brain and sleep patterns evolve in tandem. Earlier research has shown that television watching and video game use are linked to sleep problems in children. But the burgeoning use of touch-

screens by an even younger cohort remained unexplored. In 2014, more than 70 percent of families in Britain, where the study was conducted, owned a touchscreen device.

For the study, parents of 715 infants and toddlers were asked to report their child's daytime and nighttime sleep, how quickly their children fell into slumber, and how often they woke during the night. The time children spent on touchscreen devices was also tracked. Three-quarters of toddlers monitored used a touchscreen tablet or phone on a daily basis. For children aged two or three, that percentage climbed to 92. On average, the devices were used 25 minutes per day.

Not only did more screen time correlate with less sleep, it was also associated with a longer transition into slumber. The quality of sleep, however, did not appear to change. Several experts commenting on the findings challenged the study's methodology and conclusions. — AFP

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 2017

OSN MOVIES HD
ACTION

- 00:15 REC 2
- 02:00 Gone In Sixty Seconds
- 06:00 Run All Night
- 08:00 Forbidden Empire
- 10:00 Gone In Sixty Seconds
- 12:00 The Throwaways
- 13:45 Run All Night
- 15:45 Hudson Hawk
- 17:30 A View To A Kill
- 19:45 The Living Daylights
- 22:00 Sanitarium

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:15 Swamp Brothers
- 00:45 Bondi Vet
- 01:40 Wildest India
- 02:35 Tanked
- 03:25 Running With Wolves
- 04:15 Gator Boys
- 05:02 Swamp Brothers
- 05:27 Swamp Brothers
- 05:49 Wildest India
- 06:36 Swamp Brothers
- 07:00 Swamp Brothers
- 07:25 Wildest India
- 08:15 Rugged Justice
- 09:10 Hunt For The Russian Tiger
- 10:05 Treetop Cat Rescue
- 10:30 Treetop Cat Rescue
- 11:00 Life At Vet University
- 11:55 Bondi Vet
- 12:50 Swamp Brothers
- 13:15 Swamp Brothers
- 13:45 Swamp Brothers
- 14:10 Swamp Brothers
- 14:40 Swamp Brothers
- 15:05 Swamp Brothers
- 15:35 Swamp Brothers
- 16:00 Swamp Brothers
- 16:30 Swamp Brothers
- 16:55 Swamp Brothers
- 17:25 Swamp Brothers
- 17:50 Swamp Brothers
- 18:20 Rugged Justice
- 19:15 Wildest India
- 20:10 Hunt For The Russian Tiger
- 21:05 Pit Bulls & Parolees
- 22:00 Rugged Justice
- 22:55 Gator Boys
- 23:50 Gator Boys

BBC FIRST

- 00:00 Doctors
- 00:30 Doctors
- 01:00 Line Of Duty
- 02:00 Line Of Duty
- 03:05 Benidorm
- 04:05 Doctors
- 04:35 Doctors
- 05:10 Father Brown
- 06:00 Doctors
- 06:30 Doctors
- 09:30 Eastenders
- 10:00 Eastenders
- 10:30 Eastenders
- 11:00 Eastenders
- 11:30 Holby City
- 12:20 Casualty
- 13:15 Father Brown
- 14:05 Doctor Who
- 14:50 Doctor Who
- 15:55 Doctor Who
- 17:00 Doctor Who: The Return Of Doctor Mysterio
- 18:00 Doctors
- 18:30 Eastenders
- 19:00 Father Brown
- 19:45 Rev.
- 20:15 Last Tango In Halifax
- 21:10 Programme To Be Confirmed
- 22:05 Thirteen
- 23:00 Line Of Duty

ci crime & investigation network

- 00:00 50 Ways To Kill Your Lover
- 01:00 My Haunted House
- 02:00 Crime Stories
- 03:00 Monster In My Family
- 04:00 50 Ways To Kill Your Lover
- 05:00 My Haunted House

- 06:00 My Crazy Ex
- 07:00 The First 48
- 08:00 Britain's Biggest Heists
- 09:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 10:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 11:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
- 12:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
- 13:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
- 14:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
- 15:00 I Killed My BFF
- 16:00 I Killed My BFF
- 17:00 Evil Up Close
- 18:00 Evil Up Close
- 19:00 Evil Up Close
- 20:00 The First 48
- 21:00 Homicide Hunter
- 22:00 They Took Our Child, We Got Her Back
- 23:00 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath

Discovery Family

- 00:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 01:20 Battle Bots
- 02:10 Deception With Keith Barry
- 03:00 Destroyed In Seconds
- 03:25 Destroyed In Seconds
- 03:50 Ultimate Survival
- 04:40 How It's Made
- 05:05 How It's Made
- 05:30 Dirty Jobs
- 06:20 Mythbusters
- 07:00 Doki
- 07:25 Doki
- 07:50 Bear Grylls Survival School
- 08:15 Bear Grylls Survival School
- 08:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 09:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 09:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 09:55 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 10:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 10:45 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 11:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 11:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 12:00 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 12:25 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 12:50 Mythbusters
- 13:40 Mythbusters
- 14:30 Mythbusters
- 15:20 Mythbusters

- 16:10 Mythbusters
- 17:00 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 17:50 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 18:40 Battle Bots
- 19:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 19:55 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 20:20 Now That's Funny
- 21:10 Dynamo A-Z Special
- 22:00 Destroyed In Seconds
- 22:25 Destroyed In Seconds
- 22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
- 23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
- 23:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things

DISNEY CHANNEL HD

- 00:10 Hank Zipzer
- 00:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 01:00 Binny And The Ghost
- 01:25 Hank Zipzer
- 01:45 The Hive
- 01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 02:40 Hank Zipzer
- 03:05 Binny And The Ghost
- 03:30 Binny And The Ghost
- 03:55 Hank Zipzer
- 04:15 The Hive
- 04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 04:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 05:10 Hank Zipzer
- 05:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 06:00 Binny And The Ghost
- 06:25 Hank Zipzer
- 06:45 The Hive
- 06:50 The 7D
- 07:00 Jessie
- 07:25 Jessie
- 07:50 Eco Club
- 07:55 The Zhuzhus
- 08:20 Elena Of Avalor
- 08:45 Bizaardvark
- 09:10 Bizaardvark
- 09:35 Stuck In The Middle
- 10:00 Stuck In The Middle
- 10:25 Disney The Lodge
- 10:50 Bunk'd
- 11:15 Bunk'd
- 11:40 Zapped
- 13:20 Girl Meets World

- 13:45 Girl Meets World
- 14:10 Girl Meets World
- 14:35 Girl Meets World
- 15:00 Girl Meets World
- 15:25 Jessie
- 15:50 Jessie
- 16:15 Austin & Ally
- 16:40 Austin & Ally
- 17:05 Descendants Wicked World
- 17:10 Elena Of Avalor
- 17:35 Liv And Maddie
- 18:00 Disney The Lodge
- 18:25 Monsters, Inc
- 20:00 Eco Club
- 20:05 Stuck In The Middle
- 20:30 Bizaardvark
- 20:55 Bunk'd
- 21:20 Best Friends Whenever
- 21:45 Disney The Lodge
- 22:10 Girl Meets World
- 22:35 That's So Raven
- 23:00 Good Luck Charlie
- 23:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 23:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

DISNEY JUNIOR

- 00:00 Henry Hugglemonster
- 00:15 Calimero
- 00:30 Art Attack
- 00:55 Zou
- 01:05 Loopdidoo
- 01:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 01:35 Calimero
- 01:50 Zou
- 02:05 Art Attack
- 02:30 The Hive
- 02:40 Loopdidoo
- 02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
- 03:10 Art Attack
- 03:35 Loopdidoo
- 03:50 Calimero
- 04:05 Art Attack
- 04:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 04:45 Zou
- 05:00 Art Attack
- 05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 05:45 Loopdidoo
- 06:00 Zou
- 06:15 Calimero
- 06:30 Loopdidoo
- 06:45 Henry Hugglemonster
- 07:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
- 07:25 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 07:50 Goldie & Bear
- 08:15 Miles From Tomorrow
- 08:30 The Legion Of Pirate Villains
- 09:20 Sofia The First
- 09:45 Doc McStuffins
- 10:00 The Lion Guard
- 10:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 10:55 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 11:25 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 11:50 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 12:15 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 12:45 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 13:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 13:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 14:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 14:35 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 15:00 Lion King 2: Simba's Pride
- 16:25 Sofia The First
- 16:55 Goldie & Bear
- 17:20 Doc McStuffins
- 17:45 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 18:15 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 18:45 PJ Masks
- 19:00 Doc McStuffins
- 19:25 Doc McStuffins
- 19:50 PJ Masks
- 20:05 Goldie & Bear
- 20:35 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 21:00 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 21:30 Miles From Tomorrow
- 22:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 22:25 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 22:55 PJ Masks
- 23:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 23:35 The Hive
- 23:45 Loopdidoo

Discovery CHANNEL HD

- 00:20 Toucan Nation
- 01:10 Wheeler Dealers
- 02:00 Diesel Brothers
- 02:50 Harley And The Davidsons
- 03:40 How Do They Do It?
- 04:05 How Do They Do It?
- 04:30 How Do They Do It?
- 05:00 How Do They Do It?

- 05:30 How Do They Do It?
- 06:00 Storage Hunters
- 06:25 Storage Hunters
- 06:50 Storage Hunters
- 07:15 Storage Hunters
- 07:40 Storage Hunters
- 08:05 How Do They Do It?
- 08:30 How Do They Do It?
- 08:55 How Do They Do It?
- 09:20 How Do They Do It?
- 09:45 How Do They Do It?
- 10:10 Gold Rush: Remembering John Schnabel
- 11:00 Idris Elba: No Limits
- 11:50 World's Top 5
- 12:40 Fast N' Loud
- 13:30 Fast N' Loud
- 14:20 Fast N' Loud
- 15:10 Fast N' Loud
- 16:00 Fast N' Loud
- 16:50 The Wheel: Survival Games
- 17:40 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
- 18:30 Deadliest Job Interview
- 19:20 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
- 20:10 Supertruckers
- 21:00 Toucan Nation
- 21:50 Yukon Men
- 22:40 Alaskan Bush People
- 23:30 Gold Rush: Remembering John Schnabel

XD

- 06:00 Guardians Of The Galaxy
- 06:25 Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister 6
- 06:50 Atomic Puppet
- 07:15 Gravity Falls
- 07:40 Supa Strikas
- 08:05 Two More Eggs
- 08:10 K.C. Undercover
- 08:35 Milo Murphy's Law
- 09:00 Walk The Prank
- 09:25 Right Now Kapow
- 09:50 Lab Rats
- 10:15 Two More Eggs
- 10:20 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 10:45 Mighty Med
- 11:10 K.C. Undercover
- 11:35 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 12:00 Bedtime Stories
- 13:45 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 14:15 Milo Murphy's Law
- 14:40 K.C. Undercover
- 15:05 Walk The Prank
- 15:30 Atomic Puppet
- 15:55 Lab Rats
- 16:25 Right Now Kapow
- 16:50 K.C. Undercover
- 17:15 Future-Worm!
- 17:40 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
- 18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 18:10 Star Wars Rebels
- 18:35 Bedtime Stories
- 20:20 Kickin' It
- 20:45 Mighty Med
- 21:10 Star Wars Rebels
- 21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 21:45 Marvel's Avengers Assemble
- 22:10 Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister 6
- 22:35 Boyster
- 23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA

EHD

- 00:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 00:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 01:50 E! News
- 02:50 Celebrity Style Story
- 03:20 Celebrity Style Story
- 03:50 Botched By Nature
- 04:40 Botched By Nature
- 05:30 Celebrity Style Story
- 06:00 E! NYC
- 06:55 E! News
- 07:10 E! News
- 08:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 09:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 09:50 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 10:40 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 11:30 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 12:20 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 13:15 E! News
- 13:45 Celebrity Style Story
- 14:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 15:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 16:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 17:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 18:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians



RUN ALL NIGHT ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 2017

- 19:00 E! News
- 20:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 22:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 23:00 E! News
- 23:30 Celebrity Style Story



- 00:00 Ching's Amazing Asia
- 00:30 Ching's Amazing Asia
- 01:00 Reza, Spice Prince Of Thailand
- 01:30 Reza, Spice Prince Of Thailand
- 02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 02:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 03:00 Man Fire Food
- 03:30 Man Fire Food
- 04:00 Chopped
- 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 06:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 06:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
- 07:00 Chopped
- 08:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 08:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 09:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 09:30 The Pioneer Woman
- 10:00 Siba's Table
- 10:30 Siba's Table
- 11:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 11:30 Anna Olson: Bake
- 12:00 Man Fire Food
- 12:30 Man Fire Food
- 13:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 13:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 14:00 Chopped
- 15:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 15:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 16:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 16:30 The Pioneer Woman
- 17:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
- 17:30 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
- 18:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 18:30 Anna Olson: Bake
- 19:00 Man Fire Food
- 19:30 Man Fire Food
- 20:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 20:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 21:00 Restaurant: Impossible
- 22:00 Mystery Diners
- 22:30 Mystery Diners
- 23:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 23:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives



- 00:10 The Chase
- 01:00 Emmerdale
- 01:25 Emmerdale
- 01:50 Emmerdale
- 02:15 Emmerdale
- 02:40 Emmerdale
- 03:05 Emmerdale
- 03:25 Coronation Street
- 03:50 Coronation Street
- 04:15 Coronation Street
- 04:40 Coronation Street
- 05:05 Coronation Street
- 05:30 Vera
- 07:05 It's Not Rocket Science
- 08:00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
- 09:20 Broadchurch
- 10:15 Broadchurch
- 11:10 Prince Philip: The Plot To Make A King
- 12:10 Come Date With Me Australia
- 13:10 Come Date With Me Australia
- 13:40 Come Date With Me Australia
- 14:05 Come Date With Me Australia
- 14:35 Come Date With Me Australia
- 15:00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
- 16:15 Vera
- 17:45 Prince Philip: The Plot To Make A King
- 18:45 Gino's Italian Escape
- 19:00 Gino's Italian Escape
- 19:10 Guess This House
- 20:00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
- 21:15 It's Not Rocket Science
- 22:10 5 Star Family Reunion
- 23:05 Coronation Street
- 23:30 Coronation Street
- 23:50 Coronation Street



- 00:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 01:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 02:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
- 02:50 Ancient Aliens



EVEREST ON OSN MOVIES HD

- 03:40 Smartest Guy In The Room
- 04:05 Smartest Guy In The Room
- 04:30 The Universe
- 05:20 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 06:10 The Universe
- 07:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 08:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
- 09:00 Ancient Aliens
- 10:00 Smartest Guy In The Room
- 10:30 Smartest Guy In The Room
- 11:00 The Universe
- 23:00 Ancient Aliens



- 00:20 Leepu And Pitbull
- 01:10 Ultimate Wheels
- 02:00 Ice Road Truckers
- 02:50 Pawn Stars
- 03:15 Pawn Stars UK
- 03:40 Pawn Stars UK
- 04:05 Pawn Stars UK
- 04:30 Pawn Stars UK
- 05:00 Leepu And Pitbull
- 06:00 Storage Wars
- 06:25 Storage Wars
- 06:50 Pawn Stars South Africa
- 07:15 Pawn Stars South Africa
- 07:40 American Pickers
- 08:30 Pawn Stars
- 08:55 Pawn Stars
- 09:20 Ultimate Wheels
- 10:10 Leepu And Pitbull
- 11:00 Shipping Wars
- 11:25 Shipping Wars
- 11:50 Ice Road Truckers
- 12:40 Ax Men
- 13:30 Lost Worlds
- 14:20 Hunting Hitler
- 15:10 The Curse Of Oak Island
- 16:00 Gold Hunters: Legend Of The Superstition...
- 16:50 Big Easy Motors
- 17:15 Big Easy Motors
- 17:40 American Restoration
- 18:30 Ice Road Truckers
- 19:20 American Pickers
- 20:10 Forged In Fire
- 21:00 The Curse Of Oak Island
- 21:50 Hunting Hitler
- 22:40 Search For The Lost Giants
- 23:30 American Restoration



- 00:15 World's Best Beaches
- 01:05 Bangkok Airport
- 01:55 Confucius Was A Foodie
- 02:45 Chasing The Sun
- 03:10 Chasing The Sun
- 03:35 Eat Street
- 04:00 Eat Street
- 04:25 Eat Street
- 04:50 The Best Job In The World
- 05:20 Access 360 World Heritage
- 06:15 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Med

- 07:10 Street Food Around The World
- 08:05 Restoration Man
- 09:00 Living Free With Kimi Werner
- 09:55 A Model Adventure
- 10:50 Fish Of The Day
- 11:45 Dog Whisperer
- 12:40 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
- 13:35 Confucius Was A Foodie
- 14:30 Chasing The Sun
- 15:25 Eat Street
- 15:50 Eat Street
- 16:20 Around The World In 80 Dishes
- 17:15 Bangkok Airport
- 18:10 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 18:35 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 19:05 Chasing The Sun
- 19:30 Eat Street
- 20:00 Eat Street
- 20:25 Around The World In 80 Dishes
- 21:20 Bangkok Airport
- 22:10 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 22:35 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 23:00 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
- 23:25 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
- 23:50 Confucius Was A Foodie



- 00:10 The Story Of God With Morgan Freeman
- 01:00 Uncensored With Michael Ware
- 02:00 Nat Geo Amazing!
- 03:00 Inside
- 04:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 05:00 Air Crash Investigation
- 06:00 Mega Breakdown
- 07:00 Mega Factories
- 08:00 Dog Whisperer
- 09:00 Dog Whisperer
- 10:00 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 10:30 Danger Decoded
- 11:00 Science Of Stupid
- 11:30 Science Of Stupid
- 12:00 Titanic: Case Closed
- 14:00 Inside: China's Biggest Gala
- 15:00 Air Crash Investigation
- 16:00 The Story Of God With Morgan Freeman
- 17:00 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
- 18:00 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey
- 19:00 Air Crash Investigation
- 20:00 The Story Of God With Morgan Freeman
- 20:50 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
- 21:40 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey
- 22:30 Air Crash Investigation
- 23:20 Lawless Island



- 00:20 Revenge Of The Lioness
- 01:10 Animals Gone Wild Compilations
- 02:00 World's Deadliest Killers
- 02:50 Killer Dragons

- 03:45 Wild Indochina
- 04:40 Survive The Wild
- 05:35 Extreme Animal Babies
- 06:30 Monster Fish
- 07:25 Monster Fish
- 08:20 Unlikely Animal Friends
- 09:15 Caught In The Act
- 10:10 Strangest Bird Alive
- 11:05 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
- 12:00 When Sharks Attack
- 12:55 World's Deadliest: Jaws & Sins
- 13:50 Natural Born Monsters
- 14:45 The Desert Sea
- 15:40 Man And The Wild
- 16:35 Savage Kingdom
- 17:30 Africa's Deadliest
- 18:25 Wild 24
- 19:20 The Desert Sea
- 20:10 Man And The Wild
- 21:00 Savage Kingdom
- 21:50 Africa's Deadliest
- 22:40 Wild 24
- 23:30 When Sharks Attack



- 00:00 Underdog
- 02:00 Ice Age
- 04:00 The Incredible Adventures Of Professor Branestawm
- 05:00 High School Musical 3: Senior Year
- 07:00 Ice Age
- 09:00 Peter Pan
- 11:00 High School Musical 3: Senior Year
- 13:00 Ice Age 3: Dawn Of The Dinosaurs
- 15:00 Robots
- 17:00 Charlotte's Web
- 19:00 Ghost Squad
- 21:00 The Lone Ranger
- 23:30 Robots



- 00:15 Cocaine Cowboys: Reloaded
- 03:00 The Theory Of Everything
- 05:15 The Express
- 07:30 Ironweed
- 10:00 Neil Young: Heart Of Gold
- 11:45 The Theory Of Everything
- 14:00 Pele: Birth Of A Legend
- 16:00 Rosewater
- 17:45 Quiz Show
- 20:00 Lucky Them
- 22:00 A Late Quartet



- 00:45 Yugo & Lala 2
- 02:15 Hotel For Dogs
- 04:15 Oops Noah Is Gone
- 06:00 Evolution Man
- 07:45 The Boxcar Children

- 09:15 Capture The Flag
- 11:00 Yugo & Lala 2
- 12:30 Hotel For Dogs
- 14:15 Thumbelina
- 16:00 Capture The Flag
- 18:00 The Tale Of The Princess Kaguya
- 20:15 The Wild Thornberrys Movie
- 21:45 Thumbelina
- 23:15 The Boxcar Children



- 00:00 Goldfinger
- 02:00 Jurassic World
- 04:15 Beaches
- 06:15 Barely Lethal
- 08:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- 09:45 Paddington
- 11:30 Jurassic World
- 14:00 October Sky
- 16:00 Everest
- 18:15 D-Tox
- 20:00 Faster
- 22:00 Wild Horses



- 00:30 How Do They Do It?
- 00:55 Food Factory
- 01:20 Mythbusters
- 02:10 Ecopolis
- 03:00 Prototype This
- 03:48 Mythbusters
- 04:36 How Do They Do It?
- 05:00 Food Factory
- 05:24 Mythbusters
- 06:12 Ecopolis
- 07:00 How Do They Do It?
- 07:26 Food Factory
- 07:50 Food Factory
- 08:14 Food Factory
- 08:38 Food Factory
- 09:02 Food Factory
- 09:26 How Do They Do It?
- 09:50 How Do They Do It?
- 10:14 How Do They Do It?
- 10:38 How Do They Do It?
- 11:02 How Do They Do It?
- 11:26 Eco-Tech
- 12:14 Eco-Tech
- 13:02 Eco-Tech
- 13:50 Ecopolis
- 14:38 Ecopolis
- 15:26 Mythbusters
- 16:14 Mythbusters
- 17:02 Mythbusters
- 17:50 Mythbusters
- 18:40 Mythbusters
- 19:30 How The Universe Works
- 20:20 Sport Science
- 21:10 Strip The Cosmos
- 22:00 Home Factory
- 22:25 Home Factory
- 22:50 Mythbusters
- 23:40 Prototype This



- 00:20 The Day I Almost Died
- 01:10 The Undateables
- 02:00 Married By Mum And Dad
- 02:50 Monsters Inside Me
- 03:35 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
- 04:20 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 06:00 Little People, Big World
- 06:50 Little People, Big World
- 07:40 Little People, Big World
- 08:30 Say Yes To The Dress
- 09:20 Randy To The Rescue
- 10:10 Say Yes To The Dress: The Big Day
- 11:00 Say Yes To The Dress: The Big Day
- 11:50 Say Yes To The Dress: Bridesmaids
- 13:55 Say Yes To The Dress
- 14:45 Little Miss Atlanta
- 15:35 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 16:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 16:25 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 16:50 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 17:15 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 17:40 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 18:30 Iyanla: Fix My Life
- 19:20 Say Yes To The Dress
- 20:10 Save My Style
- 20:35 Save My Style
- 21:00 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 21:50 Iyanla: Fix My Life
- 22:40 90 Days To Wed
- 23:30 Botched Up Bodies



ICSK HOLDS NURSERY GRADUATION DAY

ICSK Junior held the Nursery Graduation Day on March 15, 2017 in the school premises. 235 proud and bubbly children graduated to class I. The esteemed guest Dr. Subramaniam Neelamani, Senior Research Scientist with Coastal Management Program, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research graced the occasion. The ceremony was well attended by the parents and well wishers. The program commenced with the recitation of the Verses from the Holy Quran followed by the Indian and Kuwait National Anthems.

The auspicious lamp of knowledge was lit by the distinguished guest escorted by Principal Incharge, Sherly Dennis and Vice Principal, Sheeja C. Sherly Dennis welcomed the gathering. She addressed about the importance of parenting and highlighted on the behavior of parents towards their children

such as spending quality time, listening to kids with patience, respect towards kids and being a role model to their kids.

The UKG choir enthralled the audience with a melodious song which was followed by a foot tapping dance by the LKG Students. Chief Guest Dr. S Neelamani spoke about the role of parents in helping children bloom and grow and congratulated the graduates in reaching a very memorable milestone of learning. The graduates expressed their gratitude to the teachers for their support, guidance and encouragement extended throughout the year. Vice Principal, Sheeja rendered the vote of thanks. She appreciated and thanked the entire team for their hard work, dedication and commitment towards making the event a memorable one.



Disilva T John



Roy Abraham



Sirajudheen P I

FOCUS ELECTS NEW OFFICE-BEARERS

FOCUS is an 11-year-old association of Indian CADD professionals in Kuwait registered with the Indian Embassy. FOCUS conducted its 11th annual general body meeting (AGM) on March 31, 2017 at Saradhi Auditorium, Abbasiya. The meeting was attended by a large number of FOCUS members from all the sixteen units of FOCUS. A details annual report for the working year 2016-17 and Income and Expenditure statement was presented and was unanimously approved after discussions.

The meeting reiterated the objectives of FOCUS to empower the CADD professionals in Kuwait through zonal wise learning sessions and seminars apart of Art-Cultural-Sports and charitable activities. The AGM pledged to promote unity and harmony

among five hundred plus steadfast members and unanimously selected 16 members Executive Committee and 32 members Working Committee for the year 2016-17. Through a democratic procedure the AGM elected the following persons as the new office-bearers of FOCUS.

President: Disilva T John,
General Secretary: Roy Abraham
Treasurer: Sirajudheen P I
Vice President: Malayil Mohammed Iqbal
Joint Secretary: Rajeev C Ramachandran
Joint Treasurer: Shaiju M Jose
Advisory Board: Thampi Lukose, Shaji Thankachan and Salim Raj
Auditors: Ratheesh Kumar S, Joji V Alex
Women Executive: Bindhu Mol, Aparna Unnikrishnan

KUWAIT NATIONAL ENGLISH SCHOOL PRIMARY CELEBRATES SPORTS DAY

Kuwait National English School Primary Department celebrated its Annual Sports Days for KS1 on Sunday, March 5, 2017 and KS2 on March 7, 2017. The focus was on Athletics, Benchball, Unihoc, Swimming, P E Games and Football. Activities tested the pupils' skills, motor control, vision, awareness, speed, dynamic balance etc. Overall, the Sports Day was designed to get all pupils active whilst enjoying the challenge of competing against their peers and working in teams.

Pupils at Kuwait National English School thoroughly enjoyed all activities and a good spirit of sportsmanship prevailed amongst all participants throughout the day. The values of success and failure are an invaluable lesson experienced by all and the ability to deal with this is invaluable in all aspects of school and outside life. The best participants from each year group at KNES were selected for each activity and presented with medals. The winning team in KS1 was London and Cambridge

was the winning team in KS2. These teams received the trophy for best overall performance and each pupil from the winning houses received medals.



SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY CLOSED ON EASTER SUNDAY

On the occasion of Easter Sunday, the South African Embassy will be closed on Sunday, April 16, 2017 (tomorrow). The Embassy will resume its normal working hours on Monday, April 17, 2017, from Sunday to Thursday. Please note that official office hours from 8.00 am to 4.00 pm and the Consular Section operation hours will be from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm.



ZUGZWANG ACADEMY CELEBRATES CLOSING CEREMONY OF KUWAIT WIZKID SPRING CAMP 2017

ZugZwang Academy celebrated the closing ceremony of Kuwait WizKid Spring Camp 2017 on March 30, 2017 at Indian Community School - Junior Branch in Salmiya. This was an intellectual development program attended by more than 50 children from age 5 to 13 years learning life skills through games and puzzles in Chess, Robotics, Problem Solving and Rubik's Cube.

The children and parents who attended this novel concept in Kuwait confirmed that the children learn important skills like planning, organizing, pattern recognition and memory skills at this fun filled camp and it was the best use of time in these holidays. An exhibition Chess match was organized as a part of the closing ceremony demonstrating a fresh view to the age old game of Chess and its possibilities of skill development.

ZugZwang Academy's head chess coach Praveen Sagar (FIDE rating of 2300+) challenged 20 players simultaneously and won against all of them within 1 hour. The best three opponents were honored at the closing ceremony along with certificate awarding to the students by Bharat Divyang, Founder CEO of ZugZwang Academy in the presence of parents and several prominent members of Indian Community in Kuwait.

At the event, ZugZwang Academy from Bangalore announced their Summer Camp for students in July-August 2017. Students can benefit from programs including Chess, Robotics, Problem Solving, Rubik's Cube, Scratch Coding, Math and language programs at the ZugZwang Academy Campus planned to open by end of August 2017.





SHANGHAI: This file photo shows a man grinding out his cigarette in an ashtray at a railway station in Shanghai.—AFP

SMOKING TO KILL 200 MILLION IN CHINA THIS CENTURY: WHO

CHINA, WORLD'S LARGEST CONSUMER, PRODUCER OF TOBACCO

BEIJING: Smoking-related diseases will claim 200 million lives in China this century and plunge tens of millions into poverty, a report said yesterday. China is the world's largest consumer and producer of tobacco and the industry provides the government with colossal sums. In 2015, it recorded 1.1 trillion yuan (\$160 billion) in profits, up 20 percent year-on-year.

But a report by the World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) said yesterday that the Asian giant will suffer an economic toll if it does not urgently reduce its smoking population. The paper-called "The Bill China Cannot Afford"—estimated that the total annual economic cost of tobacco use in the country in 2014 was 350 billion yuan, up tenfold from 2000.

"If nothing is done to reduce [the

death rate] and introduce more progressive policies, the consequences could be devastating not just for the health of people across the country, but also for China's economy as a whole," WHO China representative Bernhard Schwartlander said in a statement. The calculation includes both the direct costs of treating tobacco-related illness and the indirect costs such as lost work productivity.

"The rapid increase in costs associated with tobacco use in China is unsustainable," Schwartlander added. Twenty-eight percent of all adults and 50 percent of men in China are estimated to smoke regularly. Rural-to-urban migrants are more likely to be smokers, the report said, adding that they risk descending into poverty when smoking-related medical costs become too great a reality at odds with the government goal of eradi-

cating poverty nationwide by 2020. The organizations recommended a smoke-free policy across the country akin to laws in Beijing and Shanghai, where smoking is banned in most public places. However, enforcing anti-smoking measures can be difficult in China as the state-owned China National Tobacco Corp, which enjoys a near-monopoly, shares offices and senior officials with the national tobacco regulator. The report also urged further raising tobacco taxes to make smoking less affordable.

While retail tobacco prices increased following a taxation hike in 2015, the average price of a cigarette pack remains just ten yuan. A 50 percent increase in the retail price of cigarettes would prevent 20 million premature deaths over 50 years, the report said.—AFP

US DOCTOR CHARGED WITH GENITAL MUTILATION ON GIRLS

NEW YORK: A US doctor in Detroit has been arrested and charged with carrying out female genital mutilation on girls aged six to eight, prosecutors said Thursday. Emergency room doctor Jumana Nagarwala, 44, of Northville, Michigan, is accused of carrying out the widely condemned practice-illegal in the United States—for 12 years from a medical office in Livonia, Michigan. She appeared in a US federal court in Detroit on Thursday and was remanded into custody until at least Monday, said a spokeswoman for the US attorney's office.

If convicted at trial she faces a maximum sentence of life behind bars. Congress passed a law in 1996 making it illegal to perform genital mutilation or cutting in the United States on anyone under than 18. Twenty-five US states also have laws prohibiting the practice. Prosecutors in Michigan say they believe it is the first case of its kind brought under the federal law. Some of Nagarwala's victims traveled from outside Michigan and were told not to talk about the procedure, prosecutors said.

"Dr Nagarwala is alleged to have performed horrifying acts of brutality on the most vulnerable victims," said acting Assistant Attorney General Kenneth Blanco. "The Department of Justice is committed to stopping female genital mutilation

in this country, and will use the full power of the law to ensure that no girls suffer such physical and emotional abuse." "The practice has no place in modern society and those who perform FGM on minors will be held accountable under federal law," said acting US Attorney Daniel Lemisch. In 2006, a court in Georgia found a man guilty of sexually mutilating his two-year-old daughter with a pair of scissors, in what was then the first recorded case of female genital mutilation in the United States. The Ethiopian immigrant was sentenced to 10 years in prison for aggravated battery and cruelty to children for the 2001 crime. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimated that 513,000 women and girls in the United States in 2012 were at risk of or had been subjected to female genital mutilation or cutting.

The estimate was three times higher than one based on 1990 data, due to increased immigration from countries where genital mutilation is practiced. Globally, at least 200 million girls and women alive today have suffered some form of female genital mutilation across 30 countries, according to the United Nations. While concentrated in Africa, it is common in some communities in Asia, Arab states and Latin America.—AFP

DUTCH PANDA MANIA AS GIANT BEARS ARRIVE FROM CHINA

THE HAGUE: Two giant pandas arrived by plane at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport Wednesday after a marathon 8,000 kilometer journey from China, the first breeding pair on Dutch soil in three decades. Female panda Wu Wen (Beautiful Powerful Cloud) and her male companion Xing Ya (Elegant Star) touched down at Schiphol at around 1730 GMT after leaving Chengdu in central China more than 10 hours earlier.

A giant television screen showed the pandas being lowered onto the tarmac from a passenger jet operated by Dutch national carrier KLM, surrounded by Dutch border police. Later they were put on display for more than 100 journalists and guests straining to catch a glimpse of the two animals in their specialized cages which included see-through plexiglass. "I'm so happy so many friends have come to welcome my two new colleagues," China's ambassador to The Netherlands Wu Ken told the crowd, speaking in Dutch.

"This is a huge step in bilateral relations between China and The Netherlands," Wu said. The pandas are headed for the Ouwehands Dierenpark zoo in Rhenen, where they'll stay on loan for the next 15 years as part of the park's Asian exhibition. The park has built a special enclosure for the two pandas at a cost of around seven million euros (\$7.4 million), Dutch media reported Wednesday. This includes separate indoor and outdoor spaces, night accommodation, a nursery, a cold store for their bamboo food supply, a special veterinary clinic and an area for their full-time keepers, the Ouwehands zoo said in a statement.

"A warm welcome awaits them, which will naturally be in an entirely panda-themed manner," the park added. The pandas will be housed at the park at a cost of around one million dollars per year for the rest of their stay, Dutch daily tabloid Algemeen Dagblad reported. The Ouwehands zoo said it "will make a substantial financial contribution each year to support nature-protection activities in China."

The zoo, with help from the Dutch government, has been negotiating for 16 years to bring the pandas to The Netherlands. The deal to bring the pandas to The Netherlands was clinched during a state visit to China by Dutch King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima in October 2015, the zoo added. Meanwhile, panda mania has gripped The Netherlands ahead of the bears' arrival, with Dutch newspapers devoting pages of space to the bears' arrival and the hashtags #Pandas #pandakoorts (panda fever) trending on the Dutch Twitter feed.

The last time there were pandas in The Netherlands was in 1987, when two giant pandas were on show at a Dutch safari park for four months. An expectant Dutch public however will have to wait to catch a glimpse of the animals: the bears will now be kept in quarantine for up to the six weeks before an official opening date, yet to be announced.—AFP



SCHIPHOL, Netherlands: Wu Wen, one of the panda cubs, is pictured as they are introduced to the public at Schiphol airport in Amsterdam after arriving from China.—AFP

SWISS OASIS FOR LEGAL CANNABIS, WITHOUT THE HIGH

LAUSANNE: A grey-haired woman in her early 60s daintily lifts small trays topped with different varieties of marijuana to her nose, sniffing each of them carefully. "Which one would you recommend for someone with medical issues?" she asks salesman Paul Monot, co-founder of the DrGreen shop in western Switzerland. Posters of bright green cannabis plants advertise its wares, which, like those sold openly in a growing number of shops across Switzerland, are completely legal.

There is a catch however: They won't make you high. "There is no psychotropic effect of our weed," says Monot, at his store in Lausanne. On display are four varieties of legal cannabis boasting familiar names such as Skunk and Purple Haze, and an identical appearance and smell as their illegal counterparts. Since 2011, cannabis containing up to one percent tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) — the component that gets recreational users high — can be sold and consumed legally in the wealthy Alpine country.

That compares to a 0.2-percent limit in most European countries, which effectively blocks all sale of cannabis flowers since crossbreeding plants to consistently contain below that level of THC has so far proved impossible. Switzerland was eager to enable large-scale production of non-drug cannabis, especially to exploit another active component, cannabidiol (CBD), used in a range of products, from cosmetics to pet food, and increasingly valued for its potential health benefits.

Taxed liked tobacco

It has taken years for the low-potency cannabis business to develop and demand to grow, but recently shops like DrGreen have been booming. Monot and his partner launched in December and are already raking in sales of up to 100,000 Swiss francs (\$99,500, 93,400 euros) a month. Swiss media have cited estimates that sales of legal cannabis are currently about 100 million Swiss francs annually. Trade really took off after health authorities in February ordered the low-THC cannabis be taxed like tobacco and carry similar health warnings, making it clear just how legal the product is.

"For the past month or so, it has just been exploding,.... and we're surfing the wave," Monot told AFP. Aziza, 37, said she only discovered a few weeks ago that legal cannabis was on sale in shops near her Geneva home. "I love this stuff," she said, adding she had become increasingly concerned about the rising THC-levels in the illegal product she liked to smoke. "With this stuff, I feel the same relaxation as before, but since there is no high, I can still get things done and play with my kids," she said.

Sort of oasis

Monot buys the cannabis he sells in bulk from a producer in northern Switzerland, KannaSwiss, which has also seen an explosion in sales. "Switzerland has become sort of an oasis" for legal cannabis, said KannaSwiss co-founder Corso Serra di Cassano. KannaSwiss counts

around 10,000 square meters of outdoor growing space and plans to soon triple the 800 square meters it has indoors. "Demand in Europe is very big, and we're the only country at the moment that has laws that make this possible," Serra di Cassano said.

Canada has just unveiled legislation to fully legalize recreational marijuana use, making it only the second country to do so, after Uruguay. For many, the Swiss offer seems too good to be true. "So this stuff is 100 percent legal?" asks a man in his 20s with several visible piercings and tattoos as he sniffs the DrGreen Skunk. "Can I smoke it on the street?"

Monot says he spends much of his time advising customers how to use his products without getting into trouble. If police are suspicious, they can demand to test the cannabis in a laboratory for THC levels and hand the bill to the user if it is above one percent, along with a fine for illegal possession. Monot urges the man to smoke discreetly and suggests he hold onto his receipt, pointing out that as long as the seal on the plastic container is not broken, the product inside is guaranteed to be legal.

Calming

The cannabis plants KannaSwiss and others specialise in are bred not only to have low THC levels but also high levels of CBD. CBD is considered anti-inflammatory and to have numerous potential therapeutic benefits, such as for panic attacks or as pain relief. "It really calms the



LAUSANNE: Dried flower buds of legal cannabis are photographed at Dr Green shop in Lausanne.—AFP

nervous system, but without any psychoactive effects," Serra di Cassano said. Many people also buy the low-potency cannabis to help wean themselves off the illegal variety. Legal cannabis currently sells for between seven and 18 Swiss francs a gram, on a par with the street price for the THC-loaded illegal marijuana.

Wild West

KannaSwiss specializes in making CBD oil, also used for therapeutic and relaxation purposes, which sells for between 17 and 50 francs a gram depending on its concentration. But while that business is booming, Serra di Cassano says the regulation of legalized cannabis is not yet tight enough. —AFP

CLINIC

PAGE





THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF





Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem **د. فهد علي المخيزيم**

Consultant Pediatrician **إستشاري أطفال**
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That compares to a 0.2-percent limit in most European countries, which effectively blocks all sale of cannabis flowers since crossbreeding plants to consistently contain below that level of THC has so far proved impossible. Switzerland was eager to enable large-scale production of non-drug cannabis, especially to exploit another active component, cannabidiol (CBD), used in a range of products, from cosmetics to pet food, and increasingly valued for its potential health benefits.

Taxed liked tobacco

It has taken years for the low-potency cannabis business to develop and demand to grow, but recently shops like DrGreen have been booming. Monot and his partner launched in December and are already raking in sales of up to 100,000 Swiss francs (\$99,500, 93,400 euros) a month. Swiss media have cited estimates that sales of legal cannabis are currently about 100 million Swiss francs annually. Trade really took off after health authorities in February ordered the low-THC cannabis be taxed like tobacco and carry similar health warnings, making it clear just how legal the product is.

"For the past month or so, it has just been exploding,.... and we're surfing the wave," Monot told AFP. Aziza, 37, said she only discovered a few weeks ago that legal cannabis was on sale in shops near her Geneva home. "I love this stuff," she said, adding she had become increasingly concerned about the rising THC-levels in the illegal product she liked to smoke. "With this stuff, I feel the same relaxation as before, but since there is no high, I can still get things done and play with my kids," she said.

Sort of oasis

Monot buys the cannabis he sells in bulk from a producer in northern Switzerland, KannaSwiss, which has also seen an explosion in sales. "Switzerland has become sort of an oasis" for legal cannabis, said KannaSwiss co-founder Corso Serra di Cassano. KannaSwiss counts

around 10,000 square meters of outdoor growing space and plans to soon triple the 800 square meters it has indoors. "Demand in Europe is very big, and we're the only country at the moment that has laws that make this possible," Serra di Cassano said.

Canada has just unveiled legislation to fully legalize recreational marijuana use, making it only the second country to do so, after Uruguay. For many, the Swiss offer seems too good to be true. "So this stuff is 100 percent legal?" asks a man in his 20s with several visible piercings and tattoos as he sniffs the DrGreen Skunk. "Can I smoke it on the street?"

Monot says he spends much of his time advising customers how to use his products without getting into trouble. If police are suspicious, they can demand to test the cannabis in a laboratory for THC levels and hand the bill to the user if it is above one percent, along with a fine for illegal possession. Monot urges the man to smoke discreetly and suggests he hold onto his receipt, pointing out that as long as the seal on the plastic container is not broken, the product inside is guaranteed to be legal.

Calming

The cannabis plants KannaSwiss and others specialise in are bred not only to have low THC levels but also high levels of CBD. CBD is considered anti-inflammatory and to have numerous potential therapeutic benefits, such as for panic attacks or as pain relief. "It really calms the



LAUSANNE: Dried flower buds of legal cannabis are photographed at Dr Green shop in Lausanne.—AFP

nervous system, but without any psychoactive effects," Serra di Cassano said. Many people also buy the low-potency cannabis to help wean themselves off the illegal variety. Legal cannabis currently sells for between seven and 18 Swiss francs a gram, on a par with the street price for the THC-loaded illegal marijuana.

Wild West

KannaSwiss specializes in making CBD oil, also used for therapeutic and relaxation purposes, which sells for between 17 and 50 francs a gram depending on its concentration. But while that business is booming, Serra di Cassano says the regulation of legalized cannabis is not yet tight enough. —AFP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
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Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (13/04/2017 TO 19/04/2017)

Movie/Show	Time	Movie/Show	Time	Movie/Show	Time
SHARQIA-1		FAST & FURIOUS 8	12:45 AM	GOING IN STYLE	11:30 PM
FEIN QALBY	12:00 PM				
FEIN QALBY	2:15 PM	MARINA-1		AL-KOUT.1	
RABBIT SCHOOL	4:30 PM	FEIN QALBY	12:15 PM	SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	11:30 AM
SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	6:15 PM	RABBIT SCHOOL	2:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	1:30 PM
FEIN QALBY	8:15 PM	RABBIT SCHOOL	4:15 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	4:15 PM
GOING IN STYLE	10:30 PM	SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	6:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	7:00 PM
FEIN QALBY	12:30 AM	SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	8:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	9:45 PM
		FEIN QALBY	10:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	12:30 AM
		FEIN QALBY	12:15 AM		
SHARQIA-2		MARINA-2		AL-KOUT.2	
SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	11:45 AM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	1:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	11:45 AM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	1:45 PM	SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	1:45 PM	RABBIT SCHOOL	2:30 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	4:30 PM	SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	3:45 PM	RABBIT SCHOOL	4:15 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	7:15 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	6:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	6:00 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	10:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	9:15 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	8:45 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	12:45 AM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	12:05 AM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	11:30 PM
SHARQIA-3		MARINA-3		AL-KOUT.3	
FAST & FURIOUS 8	12:45 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	12:00 PM	GOING IN STYLE	12:30 PM
GOING IN STYLE	1:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	2:45 PM	GOING IN STYLE	2:30 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	3:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	5:30 PM	THE BELKO EXPERIMENT	4:30 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	6:15 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	8:15 PM	SAFRA 5 NJOOM	6:30 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	9:00 PM	Special Show "FAST & FURIOUS 8"	8:15 PM	SAFRA 5 NJOOM	8:30 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	11:45 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	11:00 PM	SAFRA 5 NJOOM	10:30 PM
				THE BELKO EXPERIMENT	12:30 AM
MUHALAB-1		AVENUES-1		BAIRAQ-1	
FEIN QALBY	11:45 AM	RABBIT SCHOOL	12:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	12:00 PM
FEIN QALBY	2:00 PM	RABBIT SCHOOL	2:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	2:45 PM
RABBIT SCHOOL	2:15 PM	RABBIT SCHOOL	3:45 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	5:30 PM
RABBIT SCHOOL	4:15 PM	SAFRA 5 NJOOM	7:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	8:15 PM
SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE- Arabic	6:00 PM	SAFRA 5 NJOOM	9:45 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	11:00 PM
SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	8:00 PM	SAFRA 5 NJOOM	12:15 AM		
FEIN QALBY	10:00 PM			BAIRAQ-2	
FEIN QALBY	12:15 AM			FAST & FURIOUS 8	11:30 AM
		AVENUES-2		RABBIT SCHOOL	3:00 PM
MUHALAB-2		FAST & FURIOUS 8-2D-4DX	1:00 PM	RABBIT SCHOOL	4:45 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	12:15 PM	SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE -3D-4DX	1:45 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	6:30 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	3:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8-2D-4DX	3:45 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	9:15 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	5:45 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8-2D-4DX	6:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	12:05 AM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	8:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8-2D-4DX	9:15 PM		
FAST & FURIOUS 8	11:15 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8-2D-4DX	12:05 AM	BAIRAQ-3	
				FEIN QALBY	11:45 AM
MUHALAB-3		AVENUES-3		SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	2:00 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	11:30 AM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	11:45 AM	SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE- Arabic	4:00 PM
SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	2:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	2:30 PM	SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	6:00 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	4:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	5:45 PM	SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	8:00 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	6:45 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	8:30 PM	FEIN QALBY	10:00 PM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	9:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	11:15 PM	FEIN QALBY	12:15 AM
FAST & FURIOUS 8	12:15 AM				
FANAR-1		AVENUES-4		PLAZA	
FEIN QALBY	12:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	12:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	4:00 PM
FEIN QALBY	2:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	2:45 PM	NO FRI+SAT+MON	
FEIN QALBY	4:45 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	5:30 PM	THE GREAT FATHER- Malayalam	3:45 PM
FEIN QALBY	7:00 PM	Special Show "SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE"	5:30 PM	FRI+SAT+MON	
FEIN QALBY	9:15 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	8:15 PM	THE GREAT FATHER- Malayalam	6:45 PM
FEIN QALBY	11:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	11:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	9:45 PM
FANAR-2		360° 1		LAILA	
GOING IN STYLE	12:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	11:30 AM	GOING IN STYLE	3:15 PM
SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	2:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	2:15 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	5:15 PM
GOING IN STYLE	2:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	5:00 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	8:00 PM
SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	4:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	7:45 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	10:45 PM
SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	6:30 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	10:30 PM		
SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	8:30 PM	GET OUT	1:15 AM	AJIAL.1	
GOING IN STYLE	10:30 PM			THE GREAT FATHER- Malayalam	3:30 PM
GOING IN STYLE	12:30 AM			THE GREAT FATHER- Malayalam	6:30 PM
		360° 2		THE GREAT FATHER- Malayalam	9:30 PM
FANAR-3		AFTERMATH	1:30 PM	Special Show "THE GREAT FATHER- Malayalam"	9:30 PM
KONG: SKULL ISLAND	1:00 PM	THE GREAT FATHER- Malayalam	3:45 PM		
RABBIT SCHOOL	1:30 PM	THE GREAT FATHER- Malayalam	6:45 PM	AJIAL.2	
RABBIT SCHOOL	3:30 PM	THE GREAT FATHER- Malayalam	9:45 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	4:00 PM
RABBIT SCHOOL	5:15 PM	THU+FRI+MON		FAST & FURIOUS 8	6:45 PM
KONG: SKULL ISLAND	7:00 PM	KONG: SKULL ISLAND	9:45 PM	FAST & FURIOUS 8	9:45 PM
THE BELKO EXPERIMENT	9:30 PM	NO THU+FRI+MON			
THE BELKO EXPERIMENT	11:15 PM	AFTERMATH	12:45 AM	AJIAL.3	
THE BELKO EXPERIMENT	1:00 AM			RABBIT SCHOOL	4:15 PM
		360° 3		NAAM SHABANA -Hindi	6:00 PM
FANAR-4		GOING IN STYLE	12:15 PM		
SMURFS: THE LOST VILLAGE	11:45 AM	GOING IN STYLE	2:30 PM		
FAST & FURIOUS 8	1:45 PM	GOING IN STYLE	4:45 PM		
FAST & FURIOUS 8	4:30 PM	GOING IN STYLE	7:00 PM		
FAST & FURIOUS 8	7:15 PM	AKHER DEEK FE MASR -Arabic	9:15 PM		
FAST & FURIOUS 8	10:00 PM				

CHANGE OF NAME

The public is hereby notified that ANNALEE VILLAREAL HER-NANDEZ has filed with the Embassy of the Republic of the Philippines, State of Kuwait, a Migrant Petition for Change of First Name of her daughter, from LIRY to LYRA ABBYGAIL in the Report of Birth filed with the Embassy on 11 April 2017 under Registry Number 2012-4140291. Any person having knowledge and/or claiming interest or may be adversely affected by said Petition, file a written opposition with the Philippine Embassy within ten (10) working days. (C 5295) 13-4-2017
I, Khalilulla Nabujan Sayyed s/o Nawabjan Shaikh, holder of

Indian Passport No. L3465768 and Civil ID No. 276070402459 has changed my name to Khalilullah Nawabjan Shaikh, hereinafter in all my dealings and documents. (C 5294)

SITUATION WANTED

Looking for job as procurement/ business development/ commercial executive. Experienced in industrial and construction equipment as well as electrical and hand tools. Can join immediately. Contact: 55276407, email: msyusuf110@yahoo.com (C 5296)

15-4-2017

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr:	04:00
Shorook	05:22
Duhr:	11:48
Asr:	15:22
Maghrib:	18:14
Isha:	19:34



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

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 2017



Flight Schedule

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Saturday 15/4/2017

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	501	Alexandria	00:05
THY	772	Istanbul	00:10
SVA	514	Riyadh	00:25
JZR	267	Beirut	00:35
KAC	102	London	00:55
MSR	618	Alexandria	00:55
DLH	635	Doha	01:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:15
JZR	539	Cairo	01:25
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40
RJA	642	Amman	01:45
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:50
KKK	6506	Istanbul	01:55
KAC	786	Jeddah	02:00
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:05
QTR	1086	Doha	02:05
JZR	553	Alexandria	02:10
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15
KAC	418	Manila	02:50
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15
FDB	069	Dubai	03:15
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:25
QTR	1076	Doha	03:40
UAE	873	Dubai	04:15
KAC	344	Ahmedabad	04:15
KAC	366	Colombo	04:20
KAC	544	Cairo	04:20
KAC	358	Kochi	04:50
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:05
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10
JZR	529	Asyut	05:35
BAW	157	London	06:05
KAC	204	Lahore	06:20
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:35
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:40
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:55
JZR	503	Luxor	07:25
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40
IRM	1188	Mashhad	09:55
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40
PAL	668	Manila	11:00
JZR	325	Al Najaf	11:10
KAC	614	Bahrain	11:15
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:30
KAC	742	Dammam	11:45
JZR	165	Dubai	11:50
JZR	239	Amman	12:20
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45
KAC	774	Riyadh	12:45
THY	766	Istanbul	12:50
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00
KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	13:35
KAC	672	Dubai	13:55
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10
KAC	364	Colombo	14:15
KAC	352	Kochi	14:20
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20
GFA	221	Bahrain	14:20
KAC	618	Doha	14:20
KAC	512	Mashhad	14:25
IRC	526	Mashhad	14:30
KAC	540	Sharm el-Sheikh	14:35
JZR	357	Mashhad	14:50
KAC	788	Jeddah	14:55
KNE	529	Jeddah	14:55
KAC	692	Muscat	14:55
KNE	683	Madinah	15:05
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:05
OMA	645	Muscat	15:10
KAC	562	Amman	15:10
KAC	412	Bangkok	15:30
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:35
KAC	118	New York	15:40
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
SAW	705	Damascus	15:50
RJA	640	Amman	16:00
SVA	504	Madinah	16:00
FDK	801	Damascus	16:00
MSR	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	16:10
FDB	051	Dubai	16:15
QTR	1072	Doha	16:15
JZR	535	Cairo	16:20
KAC	106	London	16:30
KNE	531	Jeddah	16:35
JZR	787	Riyadh	16:35
NIA	361	Alexandria	16:50
KAC	542	Cairo	17:05
IRA	669	Mashhad	17:10

SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
JZR	777	Jeddah	17:35
JZR	177	Dubai	17:45
SVA	500	Jeddah	18:00
QTR	1080	Doha	18:05
MSR	620	Cairo	18:30
CLX	856	Luxembourg	18:50
KAC	1544	Cairo	19:05
UAE	875	Dubai	19:05
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:05
FDB	063	Dubai	19:10
ABY	123	Sharjah	19:20
KAC	174	Munich	19:25
KAC	154	Istanbul	19:30
KAC	674	Dubai	19:40
KAC	620	Doha	19:50
FDB	057	Dubai	19:50
KAC	776	Riyadh	19:50
OMA	647	Muscat	20:05
KNE	381	Taif	20:10
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:15
MEA	402	Beirut	20:15
JZR	189	Dubai	20:25
QTR	1088	Doha	20:35
KAC	616	Bahrain	20:40
KAC	514	Tehran	20:55
KAC	564	Amman	21:00
KAC	168	Paris	21:05
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:10
ALK	229	Colombo	21:15
KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:15
UAE	859	Dubai	21:15
FDB	8053	Dubai	21:25
KAC	676	Dubai	21:35
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:50
QTR	1082	Doha	22:00
NIA	161	Cairo	22:10
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:10
AIC	987	Chennai/Hyderabad	22:25
KNE	533	Jeddah	22:45
JZR	241	Amman	22:55
JZR	185	Dubai	22:55
JAI	574	Mumbai	23:00
THY	764	Istanbul	23:05
MSC	405	Sohag	23:30
FDB	071	Dubai	23:35

Departure Flights on Saturday 15/4/2017

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
BBC	044	Dhaka	00:10
JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30
FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
PIA	240	Sialkot	01:00
MSC	502	Alexandria	01:05
JZR	502	Luxor	01:15
SVA	515	Riyadh	01:25
THY	773	Istanbul	01:40
KAC	105	London	01:40
MSR	619	Alexandria	01:55
KAC	363	Colombo	01:55
SAI	442	Lahore	02:30
PGT	859	Istanbul	02:35
THY	765	Istanbul	02:50
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	02:50
KKK	6505	Istanbul	02:55
KAC	351	Kochi	03:05
UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:30
OMA	644	Muscat	04:05
QTR	1087	Doha	04:10
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:10
MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
KAC	417	Manila	04:20
PGT	861	Istanbul	04:25
QTR	1077	Doha	05:35
UAE	874	Dubai	06:15
RJA	643	Amman	06:25
THY	771	Istanbul	06:25
GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
KAC	173	Munich	06:55
JZR	238	Amman	06:55
FDB	070	Dubai	07:05
JZR	164	Dubai	07:15
KAC	167	Paris	07:15
JZR	324	Al Najaf	07:45
KAC	613	Bahrain	07:55
BAW	156	London	08:20
FDB	054	Dubai	08:30
KAC	741	Dammam	08:30
KAC	773	Riyadh	08:35
KAC	511	Mashhad	08:35
KAC	539	Sharm el-Sheikh	08:40
KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	09:00
KAC	117	New York	09:00
JZR	356	Mashhad	09:00
KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
KAC	787	Jeddah	09:15
JZR	534	Cairo	09:30
KAC	561	Amman	09:30
KAC	691	Muscat	09:30

ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
KAC	101	London	09:45
UAE	856	Dubai	09:50
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:00
KAC	541	Cairo	10:00
KAC	617	Doha	10:15
FDB	056	Dubai	10:25
KAC	153	Istanbul	10:30
QTR	1071	Doha	10:35
SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00
IRM	1189	Mashhad	11:10
GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
VIZ	201	IQA	12:00
JZR	776	Jeddah	12:00
RBG	554	Alexandria	12:10
JZR	176	Dubai	13:10
JZR	786	Riyadh	13:10
PAL	669	Manila	13:10
THY	767	Istanbul	13:45
MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
IAW	158	Al Najaf	14:25
KNE	382	Taif	15:00
KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
GFA	222	Bahrain	15:05
FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
QTR	1079	Doha	15:15
IRC	527	Mashhad	15:30
KAC	563	Amman	15:40
JZR	188	Dubai	15:50
KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
KNE	684	Madinah	16:00
KAC	619	Doha	16:00
KAC	1543	Cairo	16:00
OMA	646	Muscat	16:10
ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15
ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC	513	Tehran	16:30
SAW	708	KAC	16:50
MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	16:50
FDK	802	Damascus	16:55
SVA	505	Madinah	16:55
RJA	641	Amman	16:55
KAC	675	Dubai	17:00
KAC	331	Trivandrum	17:00
FDB	052	Dubai	17:05
KAC	361	Colombo	17:10
JZR	266	Beirut	17:15
KAC	503	Beirut	17:15
QTR	1073	Doha	17:25
KNE	532	Jeddah	17:25
JZR	240	Amman	17:30
KAC	615	Bahrain	17:30
UAE	858	Dubai	17:40
KAC	357	Kochi	17:40
NIA	362	Alexandria	17:50
KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
KAC	283	Dhaka	18:00
KAC	1541	Cairo	18:00
IRA	666	fahan	18:10
SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
JZR	184	Dubai	18:20
GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	545	Cairo	18:35
JZR	538	Cairo	18:35
KAC	785	Jeddah	18:45
QTR	1081	Doha	19:15
JZR	552	Alexandria	19:20
KAC	343	Ahmedabad	19:20
SVA	501	Jeddah	19:30
MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
GFA	218	Bahrain	19:50
FDB	064	Dubai	19:50
ABY	124	Sharjah	20:00
CLX	856	Hong Kong	20:20
FDB	058	Dubai	20:30
UAE	876	Dubai	20:35
KAC	353	Bangalore	20:55
DLH	634	Doha	21:00
OMA	648	Seeb International, Muscat	21:05
KNE	232	Riyadh	21:10
JZR	124	Bahrain	21:15
MEA	403	Beirut	21:15
KAC	301	Mumbai	21:40
QTR	1089	Doha	21:45
DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
KAC	205	Islamabad	21:55
ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:00
KAC	155	Istanbul	22:15
ALK	230	Colombo	22:20
KLM	445	Bahrain	22:25
FDB	8054	Dubai	22:25
UAE	860	Dubai	22:35
KAC	383	Delhi	22:35
GFA	220	Bahrain	22:50
ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:00
NIA	162	Cairo	23:10
KAC	783	Jeddah	23:10
QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
KNE	534	Jeddah	23:35
KAC	411	Bangkok	23:35

WORDSEARCH PUZZLE

Types of Music 2

Find and circle all of the different types of music that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 15 letters spell an additional type of music.

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

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| ACID JAZZ | CLASSICAL | GYPSY | REGGAE |
| AFRICAN | COUNTRY | IRISH | ROCK AND ROLL |
| ALTERNATIVE | DOO WOP | MAMBO | SALSA |
| BEBOP | ELEVATOR | MARIACHI | SURF |
| BLUES | EUROPOP | MIDDLE EASTERN | SWING |
| BOLLYWOOD | EXPERIMENTAL | NEW AGE | TECHNO |
| BOSSA NOVA | FOLK ROCK | NEW ORLEANS | TRIP HOP |
| BRAZILIAN | FUNK | OPERA | TROPICAL |
| CELTIC | GOSPEL | POP MUSIC | URBAN |
| CHAMBER | GRUNGE | PROGRESSIVE | ZYDECO |

Yesterday's Solution

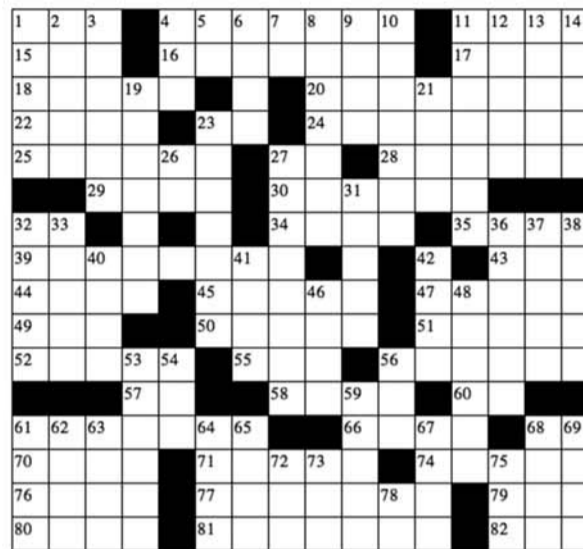
Types of Music 1

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

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| ACAPELLA | CHRISTMAS | HIP HOP | PSYCHEDELIC |
| ACID ROCK | CLASSIC ROCK | INDIAN | PUNK |
| ACOUSTIC | DANCE | INDIE | ROCKABILLY |
| AMBIENT | DISCO | JAZZ | SAMBA |
| AVANT-GARDE | ELECTRONICA | LATIN MUSIC | SOUL |
| BIG BAND | FLAMENCO | LOUNGE | TANGO |
| BLUEGRASS | FOLK | MERENGUE | WALTZ |
| BROADWAY | GANGSTA RAP | MEXICAN | WORLD |
| CABARET | GOthic | NEW WAVE | |
| CHORAL | HEAVY METAL | POLKA | |

The hidden message is: RHYTHM AND BLUES

CROSSWORD 1579



ACROSS

- Any of numerous hairy-bodied insects including social and solitary species.
- Sweet liqueur made from wine and brandy flavored with plum or peach or apricot kernels and bitter almonds.
- South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
- Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
- The craniometric point in the region of the sphenoid fontanelle.
- Long coarse hair growing from the crest of the animal's neck.
- United States biochemist who discovered how genes act by regulating definite chemical events (1909-1975).
- The absence of mental stress or anxiety.
- Type and only genus of the family Esocidae.
- Pronounce with a lowered velum.
- Tasting sour like a lemon.
- A young pig.
- (informal) Exceptionally good.
- An island in the Aegean Sea in the Saronic Gulf.
- Being or moving higher in position or greater in some value.
- A soft heavy toxic malleable metallic element.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- Any of various plants of the genus Ziganenus having glaucous leaves and terminal racemes of mostly white flowers.
- The most common computer memory which can be used by programs to perform necessary tasks while the computer is on.
- Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
- A blanket that is used as a cloak or shawl.
- Deduce (a principle) or construe (a meaning).
- Used of a single unit or thing.
- Large antelope with lightly spiraled horns of desert regions of North Africa.
- Russian founder of the Bolsheviks and leader of the Russian Revolution and first head of the USSR (1870-1924).
- Sluggish tailless Australian arboreal marsupial with gray furry ears and coat.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- A Russian river.
- A training program to prepare college students to be commissioned officers.
- A heavy odorless colorless gas formed during respiration and by the decomposition of organic substances.
- North American plant having large leaves and yellowish green flowers growing in racemes.
- (Greek mythology) The goddess of youth and spring.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- Avoid or try to avoid, as of duties, questions and issues.
- An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
- A thin strip (wood or metal).
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- Light informal conversation for social occasions.
- Wife of Ramachandra.
- Genus of beetles whose grubs feed mainly on roots of plants.
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.

DOWN

- Asian pepper plant whose dried leaves are chewed with betel nut (seed of the betel palm) by southeast Asians.

- Remove from memory or existence.
- Place in a grave or tomb.
- Rate of revolution of a motor.
- A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
- Being of the age 13 through 19.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- A woman who is engaged to be married.
- A tiny or scarcely detectable amount.
- Extinct small freshwater jawless fish usually having a heterocercal tail and an armored head.
- An alloy of mercury with another metal (usually silver) used by dentists to fill cavities in teeth.
- A selective-serotonin reuptake inhibitor commonly prescribed as an antidepressant (trade name Paxil).
- Native to Egypt but cultivated widely for its aromatic seeds and the oil from them used medicinally and as a flavoring in cookery.
- Device for resetting instruments or controls v 1.
- Of or befitting or characteristic of a wife.
- Water falling in drops from vapor condensed in the atmosphere.
- Type genus of the family Zygnemataceae.
- A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
- A system of timekeeping that defines the beginning and length and divisions of the year.
- Tufted evergreen perennial herb having spikes of tiny white flowers and glossy green round to heart-shaped leaves that become coppery to maroon or purplish in fall.
- Used chiefly as a direction or description in music.
- Any of several coarse tall perennial grasses of most warm areas.
- A sheet or band of fibrous connective tissue separating or binding together muscles and organs etc.
- Make amendments to.
- (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
- A quantity of no importance.
- A hollow device made of metal that makes a ringing sound when struck.
- Edible starchy tuberous root of taro plants.
- Heater that removes ice or frost (as from a windshield or a refrigerator or the wings of an airplane).
- Ctenophore having tentacles only in the immature stage.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- (informal) Of the highest quality.
- A case or sheath especially a pollen sac or moss capsule.
- Large sweet juicy hybrid between tangerine and grapefruit having a thick wrinkled skin.
- Stairway in India leading down to a landing on the water.
- Type genus of the Nepidae.
- Divisible by two.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- Rounded like an egg.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- A rapid bustling commotion.
- Lacking in light.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

METS BEAT MARLINS IN 16TH INNING

MIAMI: Travis d'Arnaud led off the 16th inning with a home run, giving him a career-high four hits, as the New York Mets beat the Miami Marlins 9-8 Thursday night for their fifth straight win. The game was the longest in the five-year history of Marlins Park. It took more than 5 1/2 hours and ended well past midnight. D'Arnaud also had a bases-loaded triple in the second and teammate Yoenis Cespedes had his second multihomer game in three nights. D'Arnaud's homer came on the 475th pitch of the night and the first from Adam Conley (1-1). Marlins relievers retired 13 consecutive batters before the homer. Miami's Marcell Ozuna hit a grand slam in the first inning, increasing his RBI total to 16, the most in the majors. Neither team had a runner in scoring position in extra innings until Miami's 15th. Miguel Rojas led off with a single and advanced on a sacrifice but was stranded by Hansel Robles (2-0), who pitched two scoreless innings.

CUBS 4, DODGERS 0

Brett Anderson beat his former team with five solid innings and center fielder Albert Almora Jr. made two outstanding catches against the ivy to lead the Cubs past the Los Angeles Dodgers. Anderson (1-0) won in his Wrigley Field debut for the Cubs. The lefty lowered his ERA to 0.84 through two starts with his new club. Anderson, the only member of the Cubs without a World Series ring after Wednesday's celebration, allowed three hits but walked four. He stranded seven runners, helped by Almora's defense. Anthony Rizzo and Addison Russell hit long solo home runs, their first of the season. Both came off Hyun-Jin Ryu (0-2). Rizzo's drive to right field in the first inning opened the scoring and sent a fan's beer all over the bleachers. Russell's homer to left in the fourth landed on Waveland Avenue.

ROCKIES 3, GIANTS 1

Trevor Story hit a two-run homer as five Colorado pitchers combined on a five-hitter. Colorado starter Jon Gray left with a re-aggravated toe injury after allowing one hit in three scoreless innings. Chris Rusin (1-0) pitched the next 3 1/3 innings, allowing one run and two hits. Adam Ottavino got four straight outs, Mike Dunn got one more and Greg Holland pitched the ninth for his sixth straight save this season. Gray originally hurt the big toe on his left foot during spring training. It was unclear whether he reinjured the toe during this game and the Rockies did not immediately say whether he'll miss his next start. Story's first home run of the season came with two outs in the fourth inning against Giants starter Madison Bumgarner (0-2), who allowed three runs and six hits in six innings. He struck out eight.

TWINS 11, TIGERS 5

Max Kepler, Miguel Sano and Robbie Grossman homered for Minnesota as the Twins took advantage of an uncharacteristically wild outing by Jordan Zimmermann. Zimmermann (1-1) allowed five runs and four hits in 4 2/3 innings, walking a career-high five. Anibal Sanchez was even worse for the Tigers in relief, allowing six runs in 1 1/3 innings and letting two of Zimmermann's runners score on Kepler's three-run homer in the fifth. Grossman hit a two-run shot in the third and Sano connected for a three-run homer in the sixth. Phil Hughes (2-0) allowed four runs and five hits in 5 2/3 innings. Justin Haley worked the final 3 1/3 innings to earn his first career save, striking out six. Miguel Cabrera and Justin Upton each hit their first home run of the season for the Tigers.



MIAMI: New York Mets' Travis d'Arnaud (18) runs home to score the tying run as Miami Marlins catcher AJ Ellis waits for the throw during the eighth inning of a baseball game. — AP

RANGERS 8, ANGELS 3

Yu Darvish pitched seven scoreless innings and Carlos Gomez hit a leadoff homer in Texas' victory over Los Angeles. Nomar Mazara also homered and Robinson Chirinos drove in three runs to help the Rangers take two of three from their AL West rivals. Darvish (1-1) struck out 10 and limited the Angels to five singles and two walks, improving to 8-2 in his career against the Angels. Danny Espinosa hit a three-run homer with two outs in the ninth for the Angels. Ricky Nolasco (0-2) was the loser.

RED SOX 4, PIRATES 3

Xander Bogaerts' RBI single capped a three-run rally in the eighth inning, lifting Boston past Pittsburgh in a makeup game from a rainout in the opening series. Boston ended up sweeping Pittsburgh in three games after taking the first two games of the season. Matt Barnes (2-0) worked one inning of hitless relief, and Craig Kimbrel pitched the ninth for his third save. Juan Nicasio (0-2) was the loser. Andrew McCutchen homered for Pittsburgh.

ROYALS 3, ATHLETICS 1

Jason Vargas carried a shutout into the eighth as Kansas City finally generated some early offense to snap an eight-game losing streak against the A's. Vargas (2-0) scattered four hits and a walk over 7 2/3 innings, striking out eight, in his second straight crisp performance. The left-hander only allowed one runner to reach second base in his longest outing since 2014, when Vargas shut out the Athletics at Kauffman Stadium. Kelvin Herrera served up a homer to Rajai Davis and a double to Jed Lowrie in the ninth but bounced

back to retire the next three batters and earn his first save. Lorenzo Cain and Salvador Perez drove in runs off A's starter Jesse Hahn (0-1) in the first, and Brandon Moss added a lazy sacrifice fly in the third.

YANKEES 3, RAYS 2

Aaron Hicks homered twice, including a go-ahead, two-run drive in the seventh inning, as the Yankees moved above .500 for the first time this season. Luis Severino (1-0) struck out a career-high 11 in seven innings, including four of his last five batters. The Yankees completed a three-game sweep and won their fourth in a row following a 1-4 start. Hicks homered in the first off Matt Andriese batting left-handed and connected right-handed against Xavier Cedeño to erase a 2-1 deficit. Ronald Torreyes singled with one out in the seventh off Erasmo Ramirez and Rays manager Kevin Cash brought in Cedeño (1-1), the only lefty in his bullpen. Jacoby Ellsbury grounded into a forceout, and Hicks sent a changeup into the left-field seats.

ORIOLES 2, BLUE JAYS 1

Orioles closer Zach Britton escaped a nervy ninth inning as Baltimore handed Toronto its sixth straight loss. The Blue Jays, off to a franchise-worst 1-8 start, also lost star slugger Josh Donaldson in the sixth when he aggravated the sore right calf that kept him out of Tuesday's home opener. Kevin Gausman (1-0) pitched six innings for his first victory in nine career appearances at Rogers Centre. Britton took over in the ninth and put runners on second and third before holding on for his fourth save by retiring Kevin Pillar on a grounder then getting pinch hitter and former teammate Steve Pearce on a flyball. Francisco

Liriano (0-1) struck out 10 and gave up two runs and five hits in 6 2/3 innings.

WHITE SOX 10, INDIANS 4

Tim Anderson homered on the game's first pitch and Matt Davidson added a three-run shot in a five-run first inning as Chicago beat slumping Cleveland. The defending AL champion Indians have lost five of six after sweeping Texas to begin the season and dropped to 4-5. Anderson hit Josh Tomlin's first pitch onto the porch in left field while Davidson lined a two-out homer to right-center. Tomlin (0-2) gave up seven runs in 1 2/3 innings. Cleveland used five pitchers in the first eight innings, forcing infielder Michael Martinez to work the ninth. Making his first career appearance on the mound, Martinez gave up a single but retired the other three hitters on grounders. Avisail Garcia was 3 for 4 with three RBIs. Anthony Swarzak (1-0) relieved starter Miguel Gonzalez in the fifth and allowed one hit in 1 2/3 innings.

BREWERS 5, REDS 1

Ryan Braun and Eric Thames homered and Jimmy Nelson turned in his second straight strong start as Milwaukee snapped Cincinnati's four-game winning streak. At 5-5, the Brewers reached .500 for the first time since last April. Nelson (1-0) gave up one run and five hits in seven innings, striking out five without a walk. Last week against the Cubs, he threw six solid innings. Nelson also put down a sacrifice bunt in the third that moved runners up to second and third to set up Jonathan Villar's run-scoring groundout and Thames' RBI single. Bronson Arroyo (0-2) allowed five runs and seven hits in six innings. — AP

CAPITALS DEFEAT MAPLE LEAFS, PREDATORS BEAT BLACKHAWKS

WASHINGTON: Toronto native Tom Wilson scored his first NHL playoff goal 5:15 into overtime as the Washington Capitals survived a scare to beat the Maple Leafs 3-2 on Thursday night in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series. The top-seeded Capitals came back from a two-goal deficit to take the early lead in the series and at least momentarily stop the panic about a slip-up. Justin Williams scored twice in regulation as Washington showed it could handle the adversity of falling behind. Braden Holtby was up to the

task in goal, stopping 35 of the 37 shots he faced. Toronto counterpart Frederik Andersen was arguably the best player on the ice with 41 saves before being beaten by Wilson with an absurd shot on the winner. Mitch Marner and Jake Gardiner scored in the first period for Toronto, back in the playoffs for the first time since 2013. Game 2 is Saturday night in Washington.

PREDATORS 1, BLACKHAWKS 0
Pekka Rinne made 29 saves after

Viktor Arvidsson scored in the first period as Nashville beat Chicago in Game 1 of their series. Rinne's second career postseason shutout sent Nashville to just its second playoff win in Chicago in seven tries. The Predators did not have a 1-0 victory during the regular season. Corey Crawford had 19 saves for Chicago. Game 2 is Saturday night at the United Center.

DUCKS 3, FLAMES 2
Jakob Silfverberg scored the tiebreaking power-play goal late in

the second period while captain Ryan Getzlaf had a goal and an assist to lead Anaheim in the series opener. Rickard Rakell scored the tying goal after Calgary made a horrendous line change in the second period while John Gibson made 30 saves for the Ducks. Sean Monahan and Sam Bennett scored and Brian Elliott stopped 38 shots for the wild-card Flames. Calgary is winless in Anaheim since 2006, when the Flames won a playoff game in a series won by the Ducks. — AP



SUZUKA: This is a Friday Oct 7, 2016 file photo of McLaren driver's Jenson Button, left, of Britain and Fernando Alonso of Spain as they pose for a photo with their team in front of their pit lane garage ahead of the first practice session for the Japanese Formula One Grand Prix at the Suzuka International Circuit. — AP

POINT-SEEKING BUTTON REPLACES ALONSO AT MONACO GRAND PRIX

SAKHIR: Veteran British driver Jenson Button will step in for Fernando Alonso at the Monaco Grand Prix next month. Although the 37-year-old Button retired at the end of last season, he is taking Alonso's seat for this single race because McLaren has allowed the Spaniard to make his IndyCar debut at the Indianapolis 500 on May 28. Both races are on the same day.

"I'm thrilled to be making a one-off return to Formula 1 racing, and I couldn't think of a better place to make that return," Button said in a team statement yesterday. "I've won the race before, in 2009, and it's one of my all-time favorite racetracks. It's a tricky street circuit on which a good driver can really make a difference and, although the McLaren-Honda MCL32 hasn't begun the season well, I think it may be more suited to Monaco than to the faster circuits."

Button is oozing confidence he will be fit enough despite the six-month gap from his last F1 race. "I'm supremely fit, having done a lot of triathlon training recently, so I have no worries on that score," he said. "I'll drive the MCL32 around Monaco in the McLaren simulator beforehand, and I reckon I'll be ready." Alonso retakes his seat for the race after Monaco - the Canadian GP on June 11 - and for the remainder of the season.

McLaren has yet to score a point after two races - Australia and China - following a frustrating campaign last year where the team struggled to adapt to the Honda engines. "I realize we won't have a realistic chance of repeating my 2009 victory, but I think we'll have an opportunity to score world championship points," said Button, who will race alongside teammate Stoffel Vandoorne.

"I was truly delighted when Jenson accepted our suggestion

that he race at Monaco," McLaren's racing director Eric Boullier said. "Jenson is a class act. He's a superb driver, fast, smooth and precise, and he won't have lost any of his competitive edge over the past few months. He'll do a great job for us, I'm sure of that."

'GREAT FOR THE SPORT'

Button's farewell race at last season's Abu Dhabi GP ended badly when he had to retire with a suspension problem. Although Button, who is still contracted to McLaren, also has an option to drive for the team in 2018, he said at the time that he did not expect to come back. Button was widely expected to take Alonso's seat at Monaco. Other drivers were already saying how excited they were by his potential return, even before yesterday's announcement.

"I think it would be great for the sport to have Jenson back in," said three-time F1 champion Lewis Hamilton, who raced alongside Button at McLaren before joining Mercedes in 2012. "I like Jenson, I still think he is one of the best drivers ... his caliber is still higher than any other driver who could take that spot, for sure."

The 35-year-old Alonso's motivation is part of a wider ambition that also includes the Le Mans 24 Hours endurance race. McLaren is back in the Indianapolis 500 for the first time in 38 years with Alonso's entry, a Dallara DW12 chassis run by Andretti Autosport. Team owner Michael Andretti is a former IndyCar champion who raced in Formula One for McLaren in 1993. Alonso flies to Alabama next week to visit his IndyCar team members and then have a seat fitting done. After the Russian GP on April 30, his schedule will become even more hectic. — AP

ARENA THINKS US COULD WIN 2026 WORLD CUP

NEW YORK: Bruce Arena looks into the future, thinks about the possibility of the US hosting the World Cup for the second time and believes the Americans could win the title. "I think in 2026 we're going to be fully emerged into the game and a big player," the US coach said Thursday. "So I think 2026 will be the time where we're going to start talking about winning a World Cup. It wasn't going to be in 1994. It wasn't going to be in 2010, but 2026 could be our time."

Continued strides in player development leading up to the event is what he figures could allow that to become reality. The US had not played in the World Cup since 1950 when FIFA voted in 1988 to have the US host the '94 tournament, which drew more than 3.58 million fans and became the most-attended World Cup ever. The Americans have qualified for seven straight World Cups, and Arena coached them to the 2002 quarterfinals, the best American finish since they reached the semifinals of the first World Cup in 1930.

'POLITICALLY CORRECT'

This week, the US Soccer Federation announced it intends to bid jointly to host the 2026 tournament with Mexico and Canada. Sixty matches would be in the US, with 10 each in the other countries. "Think about where we were in 1994, '98, 2000, and keep going, and just think about where we'll be with even nine more in our league, even nine more years of players developing all over the world, and then play in the World Cup in our country," Arena said. While the joint bid is considered the favorite, Arena said he wasn't assuming the US will host because "we're being politically correct in a time where you don't even need to be politically correct."

Arena coached the US from 1998-2006 and was rehired in November to replace Jurgen Klinsmann, fired following losses to Mexico and Costa Rica in the first two games of the final round of World Cup qualifying in North and Central America and the Caribbean. The US rebounded in March to rout Honduras 6-0 at home and draw 1-1 at Panama.

Next, the US hosts Trinidad and Tobago on June 8 and plays three days later at Mexico City. Mexico leads the hexagonal with 10 points, followed by Costa Rica (seven), Panama (five), the United States and Honduras (four each) and T&T (three). The top three nations qualify for next year's tournament in Russia, and the No. 4 finisher plays Asia's fifth-place team in a playoff for another berth. "We're far from out of the woods here," Arena said. "We have, again, I think very little margin for error, so there's a lot of urgency in these two games. ... Perhaps we're not in as much trouble as we were the last time but I don't feel good about sitting with four points after four games."

The team is tentatively scheduled to reconvene May 28 ahead of an exhibition in Sandy, Utah, followed by the qualifier against Trinidad at Commerce City, Colorado. The Utah venue is at about 4,500 feet altitude, Colorado at 5,200 feet and Azteca Stadium at 7,820. "Our game plan is already established in some ways in that we are going to go in, train at altitude," Arena said, adding: "I've had experience with this in the past, failed miserably" a reference to March training in Colorado Springs ahead of a 2-1 loss at Mexico City in 2005.

Arena doesn't expect strained relations between President Donald Trump's administration and Mexico to be a factor. "Mexico-US is such a big game I would think that that will take precedent over any kind of political issues," Arena said. "I don't think the Mexican fans are going to be pointing fingers at us because of the political climate." — AP

KELSEY PLUM GOES 1ST IN WNBA DRAFT

NEW YORK: Kelsey Plum went first in the WNBA draft Thursday. Then, South Carolina took over. Plum was taken No 1 by the San Antonio Stars. The Washington guard finished her college career with an NCAA-record 3,527 points. The Stars had the worst record last season and held the top pick for the first time in franchise history. "I've been dreaming about it for so long," Plum said. "I'm really excited and grateful for the opportunity and will make the most of it."

It's the second straight year that the Stars have drafted a guard. They took Moriah Jefferson with the No 2 pick last season. Plum played with Jefferson on a USA Basketball Under-18 team and was excited for the chance to play with her again. Chicago drafted Alaina Coates with the second pick. The South Carolina star, the first of three Gamecocks selected in the first round, injured her right ankle in the SEC Tournament and didn't play in the team's run to the national championship.

She still isn't able to really fly because of the injury and risk of blood clots, so she made the nearly 11-hour drive up to New York from South Carolina. She got around the draft on a scooter she affectionately called "scoot, scoot." Coates said she had surgery on the ankle a few weeks ago and doesn't know how long she'll be out. She hopes to be able to play this season.

"For me to go number two with my situation, I'm really excited about that as well," Coates said. "I don't know when I'll be able to play. It's all up to what the doctors say." Dallas took Kentucky forward Evelyn Akhator with the third pick, and the Wings came back with South Carolina's Allisha Gray with the fourth choice. Gray decided to forego her senior year of eligibility and enter the draft a day after the Gamecocks won the title.

'I COULDN'T BE HAPPIER'

Kaela Davis was taken by the Wings at No. 10, meaning the two Gamecocks who had both transferred into South Carolina together and skipped their last year to play in college will be together in Dallas. "It's great to have the connection and familiarity in an unknown situation," said Davis of playing with Gray.

South Carolina coach Dawn Staley was at the draft and thrilled to see her three players get picked. The Gamecocks became just the third school to have three players taken in the opening round, joining Tennessee and UConn. The Huskies had the first three picks in last year's draft. They had no one taken in the first round this year for the first time since 2012. Saniya Chong, the lone senior on the team, was picked by Dallas in the third round. "It's so great to see those three young ladies get a chance to realize their dreams," Staley said. "I couldn't be happier for them."

Northwestern's Nia Coffey went fifth to San Antonio, with Maryland's Shatori Walker-Kimbrough picked sixth by Washington. Atlanta took Brittney Sykes of Syracuse seventh. Brianna Jones of Maryland went to Connecticut with the eighth pick. Chicago used its second pick in the first round to select Tori Jankoska at No. 9. That made for four Big Ten players drafted in the first nine picks.

Sydney Wiese of Oregon State went 11th to Los Angeles and Alexis Jones of Baylor closed out the first round heading to Minnesota. The draft was held in an event space in New York with WNBA President Lisa Borders announcing the picks from a deejay booth, creating a party-like atmosphere although there wasn't the traditional podium and stage for the players to walk up to and greet the president. The league will start its 21st season on May 13 with training camps opening on April 23. The WNBA unveiled a new "Watch me Work" 2017 video on Thursday during the draft. — AP



NEW YORK: Shatori Walker-Kimbrough, left, reacts after being selected as the No. 6 pick in the WNBA basketball draft by the Washington Mystics. — AP



SALT LAKE CITY: San Antonio Spurs center Pau Gasol, right, drives around Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert (27) during the first half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, April 12, 2017. — AP

THERE WILL BE BIG INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IN THE NBA PLAYOFFS

TORONTO: Milwaukee star Giannis Antetokounmpo returns to the playoffs in Toronto today afternoon. Except in Greece, where it'll already be very early Sunday morning. They won't mind staying up late in Athens to watch. Same goes for plenty of other places around the world at this time of year. All eight of the NBA first-round playoff series that start this weekend have international players involved, meaning the game's global reach will be on full display once again. And as NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said at the All-Star break, the league expects the international players to keep coming.

"I grew up in Athens not having much," Antetokounmpo said earlier this season. "And being in the situation and to keep pushing, keep pushing, it's a great feeling because all the hard work I did in my life, it paid off." Now the playoff stage again awaits Antetokounmpo, and plenty of other international players. By the NBA's count, there's 54 - including some with dual citizenship like Cleveland's Kyrie Irving - from 28 different countries set to appear in these playoffs. Here's some of the top international storylines for the postseason:

VAMOS, GASOL

We know a Spanish big man is headed to the second round. San Antonio's Pau Gasol and Memphis' Marc Gasol were on opposite sides in the 2015 All-Star Game, have gone head-to-head a slew of regular-season times - and now the brothers will face off in the playoffs for the first time. The Spurs and Grizzlies are a first-round series in the Western Conference. Once they actually take the floor, the Gasols will become the sixth set of brothers to meet in the postseason, joining the Mikans (George and Ed, 1949, 1950 and 1953), the Kings (Bernard and Albert, 1983), the Persons (Chuck and Wesley, 1996), the Grants (Horace and Harvey, 1999), and the Wrights (Dorell and Delon, 2016).

SIX SPURS

San Antonio has six international players on its roster this season. That's down a few from recent years. The Spurs had nine international players when they won their most recent NBA title in 2014. Some remain, like Manu Ginobili, Patty Mills and Tony Parker. Davis Bertans, Joel Anthony and Pau Gasol

are now in the silver and black as well. While the six Spurs are a lot, it's not the most in these playoffs. Utah and Toronto each have seven international players on their playoff rosters.

FINALS REPRESENTATION

If an international player appears in this year's NBA Finals - almost guaranteed to happen - it would be the 24th consecutive year that at least one player who doesn't hail from the United States got in the title series. There's seven active players in these playoffs with at least one All-Star appearance that the NBA define as being international: Giannis Antetokounmpo, Marc and Pau Gasol, Manu Ginobili, Al Horford, Kyrie Irving and Tony Parker.

VIVA LA FRANCE

Utah's Rudy Gobert and San Antonio's Tony Parker are two of the six French-born players in this postseason, and they'll be asked to carry big roles. Parker enters these playoffs 115 shy of 4,000 postseason points in his career. He'd be the second international player to reach that milestone - after only his longtime and now former San Antonio teammate Tim Duncan (5,172). Parker is also the NBA's all-time international playoff assist leader. And he's third in playoff steals by an international player, behind No. 2 Hakeem Olajuwon - and yet another Spur, No. 1 Manu Ginobili. Gobert is a Defensive Player of the Year candidate for the Jazz, and now gets to make his playoff debut.

THERE ARE OTHERS, TOO

Not all the best international players are in the playoffs. And that speaks to the depth of the foreign influence on the league today. Among players born outside the US, five of the top eight scorers this season didn't reach the postseason. Cleveland's Kyrie Irving was first, Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo was third and Memphis' Marc Gasol was sixth on that list - but No. 2 Andrew Wiggins of Minnesota, No. 4 Goran Dragic of Miami, No. 5 Joel Embiid of Philadelphia, No. 7 Danilo Gallinari of Denver and No. 8 Kristaps Porzingis of New York will all be watching the playoffs from afar. — AP



CLEVELAND: Cleveland Cavaliers' LeBron James (23) drives past Atlanta Hawks' DeAndre Bembry (95) in the second half of an NBA basketball game. — AP

LEBRON CONFIDENT AS NBA PLAYOFFS BEGIN

LOS ANGELES: LeBron James believes the Cleveland Cavaliers are ready to defend their NBA crown as the postseason gets under way this weekend with the Golden State Warriors desperate to reclaim their throne. The Cavaliers stumbled into the playoffs after an erratic finale to the regular season which saw them pipped for the number one ranking in the Eastern Conference by the Boston Celtics. But despite a four-game losing streak which culminated with Wednesday's 98-83 defeat to Toronto, James is confident the Cavaliers will raise their game as they prepare for game one of their best-of-seven series against the Indiana Pacers today.

"We have good chance to win it all, but it starts with our opponent in two days," James said. "So we have to be very determined but we have to be very smart about our game plan and how we execute. Through everything that went on with our team, we're in a position where we can do something special still." The Cavaliers will head into today's opener buoyed by the knowledge they have already dominated the Pacers this season, winning their mini-series 3-1 over the course of the campaign.

James however insists that his mind is solely focused on the challenge of the here and now as he leads the Cavaliers into battle once more. "I'm not going to harp on about what happened in the regular season through injuries, through good wins, through bad losses," James told reporters on Thursday. "We have a good club going to the postseason and that's all I can ask for right now. At the end of the day I can't have my mind focused on the past right now. The present is the only thing that matters." In last year's epic NBA Finals series against the Warriors, James inspired the Cavaliers in an unprecedented recovery from 3-1 down to a 4-3 series victory.

'Locked in'

James is once again relishing his leadership role as

the playoffs come into view. "Preparing this group, getting us locked in, and understanding what our opportunity is," James explained. "Let's get ready to go. Nothing changes for me. I've got to be the leader of this team every time I step on the floor. "I've gotta command these guys and put them in the right positions to be successful. And I've gotta do it at both ends. And if I do that we've got a good chance."

The biggest obstacle to James and the Cavaliers chances of a repeat NBA title comes in the formidable shape of the Warriors. The Western Conference top seeds have by far the best record in the NBA this season, finishing in first place with 67 wins against 15 losses. Ominously for their rivals, there are signs that the Warriors are building irresistible momentum at the right time.

Kevin Durant has returned to form and fitness following his extended injury lay-off, draining 29 points in 27 minutes during a routine 109-94 victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Wednesday. Stephen Curry meanwhile, who added 20 points in the win, revealed that the Warriors were brimming with confidence as they geared up for Sunday's opening playoff game against the Portland Trail Blazers.

Curry explained that the team's mindset had changed from a year ago, when they were defending their title following a record-breaking regular season. "We're chasing something—we're not protecting anything this year," Curry said. "Feel good. Feel confident. I just like the way we ended the season this year." Elsewhere in the Western Conference this weekend, a battle of triple-double kings Russell Westbrook and James Harden looms large as the Oklahoma City Thunder open their series against the Houston Rockets. Game one takes place in Houston on Sunday. The second-seeded San Antonio Spurs meanwhile open against the Memphis Grizzlies today while the fifth-seeded Utah Jazz travel to the Los Angeles Clippers. —AFP

CLIPPERS LOOK TO AVOID INJURIES AND BAD LUCK

LOS ANGELES: When it comes to the playoffs, the Los Angeles Clippers' history is short and not at all sweet. The once-beleaguered franchise has never made it past the second round, and in two of the last three years under coach Doc Rivers they've blown comfortable series leads and ended up going home. At least they're going to open these playoffs at home, and given the team's recent history, that's no small thing. Neither is the momentum they're riding.

The Clippers won seven in a row and 11 of 13 to end the regular season. They clinched home court for the first round against Utah six months after starting the season as the NBA's hottest team at 14-2. "This really could be their year," Sacramento coach Dave Joergel said. "They could really do something. They're in a rhythm, they're playing well." The Clippers have shown maturity down the stretch, seizing home court after the Jazz put the pressure on by winning on Wednesday night. The Clippers had to beat the Kings to end up tied with Utah at 51-31, and they owned the tiebreaker by virtue of winning the season series 3-1. "This team has grown a lot," Blake Griffin said. "Maybe more than any other season that we have had here."

The Clippers survived a combined 42 games without Griffin and Chris Paul, going 19-23 in their absence. Their worst stretch was a six-game skid between Christmas and New Year's and they responded by starting the new year on a seven-game winning streak, equaling their longest of the season. "When you have as many injuries as we did, the ups and downs of the season, the length of the season, you go through a lot of adversity," Griffin said. "You always say that when we come out on the other side we are going to be better for it, and I truly believe that we are."

Infamous meltdown

The Big Three of Griffin, Paul and

DeAndre Jordan are in their sixth season together and still in pursuit of their first title. Their sense of urgency may never be greater. Paul and Griffin are in the final year of their contracts, which include player options for 2017-18. Jordan has a year remaining, with a player option for 2018-19. A year ago, the Clippers owned a 2-0 lead against Portland in the first round only to lose in six games after injuries to Paul and Griffin.

In 2015, they gave up a 3-1 lead against Houston and blew a 19-point lead in Game 6 with a trip to the Western Conference finals on the line. In 2014, Paul had an infamous meltdown, twice turning the ball over and fouling Russell Westbrook, who made three straight free throws to beat the Clippers by one point in Game 5 of the conference semifinals. They lost Game 6 back at home. In fact, the Clippers have lost at least once at home in their last six playoff appearances.

"Because of the experiences we've had, I think we're concentrating on finishing," Paul said. "Trying not to have those different lapses in games. That's probably where we've showed a little bit of growth and we won't really be able to tell until the playoffs." Heading into Saturday's playoff opener, the Clippers are healthy, with the exception of back-up guard Austin Rivers, who missed the final six games with a strained left hamstring. He could return soon.

Despite their recent failures, Doc Rivers insists he never goes into a new playoff series thinking about the past. "Does that mean there's no residual effect?" he asked. "I can't say." While they can't change their painful past, they recognize it and clearly want to get past it. "We've been waiting a long time for this," said Jamal Crawford, three-time Sixth Man of the Year. "Ultimately, we'll be one of the teams judged on our postseason success, so we're ready for it." — AP



LOS ANGELES: Los Angeles Clippers forward Paul Pierce, left, is fouled by Houston Rockets forward Troy Williams, right, and is able to score on the play during the second half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, April 10, 2017. — AP

BOARD DEBATE NOT A BOTHER TO WENGER

LONDON: Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger insisted any discussions the Gunners' board may be having about his future will not distract him from his job, with the debate about his position showing no sign of stopping. Wenger's contract is up at the end of the season and there has been intense speculation about whether the veteran French manager, in charge at north London giants Arsenal since September 1996, will carry on.

Poor recent results, including Monday's 3-0 defeat by a Crystal Palace side battling to avoid relegation, have only fuelled talk about Wenger's prospects. Wenger has indicated previously he has made a decision about his Arsenal future but that any public announcement will come from the club. "What is

happening at board level is not down to me," said Wenger at a news conference yesterday. "I focus on what is down to me, the performance of the team and what the fans are interested in is the performance of the team."

Arsenal are sixth in the Premier League table and seven points adrift of a Champions League place, with eight league games left to play this season. Theo Walcott suggested after the Palace defeat that the Eagles wanted to win more than the Gunners, adding to the pressure being heaped on the 67-year-old Wenger. But no one in Arsenal's hierarchy, including the club's US-based owner Stan Kroenke, has yet said anything in public to suggest Wenger's position is

under threat, for all that some fans have called for him to resign. And Wenger insisted yesterday that results such as Monday's loss had not altered his relationship with Kroenke. "I believe our relationship has always been the same and that has not changed." Wenger, asked if anything had changed regarding his future, replied: "Nothing." Following the Palace match, England forward Walcott told Sky Sports: "That wasn't us tonight. We are all disappointed in the changing room, like the fans are. "We let them down. We can only apologise." But then, in comments that angered many Gunners fans, Walcott, Arsenal's captain at Selhurst Park, added: "They (Palace) wanted it more. You could sense that from the kick-off. —AFP

LEICESTER FACE TEST AMID EURO DRAMA

LONDON: Craig Shakespeare must decide whether to focus on securing Leicester's Premier League survival against Crystal Palace or allow his stars to rest before the latest chapter in their European adventure. Shakespeare's side head to Selhurst Park today still licking their wounds after Antoine Griezmann's controversial penalty gave Atletico Madrid a 1-0 victory in the Champions League quarter-final first leg on Wednesday.

It was a bitter defeat for the English champions as the spot-kick was awarded for a Marc Albrighton tackle on Griezmann that took place outside the penalty area. Leicester have the chance to make amends and extend their incredible European run when they host Atletico in the second leg on Tuesday. With little time to recover in between the two ties, Foxes boss Shakespeare is aware two of the biggest matches in his club's history have overshadowed the Palace game, which provides a chance to effectively guarantee Premier League safety.

But Leicester have moved eight points clear of the relegation zone in recent weeks and Shakespeare may well decide to risk resting players in south London on Saturday. "In terms of recovery we've had this fixture planned for a while. We know what it's about," Shakespeare said. "It's a tight turnaround but one that we're more than capable of."

Leicester midfielder Andy King played 45 minutes in Madrid, but the long-serving midfielder is one of the understudies who could be handed a start against Palace and he is determined to concentrate on the task at hand on the domestic front. "There is still a lot of work to be done in the league," King said. "We're in good form and we've got a lot of confidence. Palace are confident as well, it'll be a good game but we need to make sure we're ready."

SURVIVAL BATTLE

Robert Huth also seems certain to start at Selhurst Park, with the German defender suspended for the second leg against Atletico. Sam Allardyce will attempt to ensure Palace avoid another setback in the wake of an unexpected victory against one of the leading teams. Palace go into the game on the back of Monday's stunning 3-0 defeat of Arsenal, a win that extended their recent run to five victories in six games and moved them six points clear of the relegation zone.

Confidence is high, but Allardyce and his players are well aware of what happened in the wake of the recent win at Chelsea when they travelled to Southampton and lost 3-1. That defeat, together with improved results for some of their relegation rivals, provided a warning that nothing can be taken for granted as the survival battle intensifies.

Allardyce, though, can be satisfied his key players are finding their best form when it matters most, with Christian Benteke, Yohan Cabaye and Wilfried Zaha outstanding in recent weeks. "Certainly Chelsea away, a little blip at Southampton, then Arsenal at home. The two victories were such great victories, in such a short space of time, but it was well deserved," Allardyce said. "If we can perform like that in any of the last seven games, we can beat any team. Our performances have to be to that level, so we get safe and can start preparing for next season. "One or two more results and we should be safe." — AFP



LIVERPOOL: In this Tuesday, Jan 31, 2017 file photo, Chelsea's David Luiz, front left, celebrates scoring a goal against Liverpool with Chelsea's manager Antonio Conte and players during their English Premier League soccer match at Anfield stadium. — AP

ALONSO WARY OF UNITED, SPURS READY TO POUNCE

LONDON: Chelsea defender Marcos Alonso has warned the leaders to beware of a Manchester United backlash, while Mauricio Pochettino believes Tottenham can provide a dramatic finale to the title race. With just seven games remaining, Chelsea are looking to land the knockout blow as they slug it out with second placed Tottenham in the fight for Premier League supremacy.

Antonio Conte's side hold a seven point lead at the top, but Tottenham can temporarily trim the gap to four if they beat Bournemouth at White Hart Lane in today's early kick-off. Alonso admits that would pile the pressure back on Chelsea, who face a tricky trip to Old Trafford to face a United team fuelled by a revenge mission on Sunday. Managed by former Chelsea boss Jose Mourinho, United have already endured a humiliating 4-0 thrashing at Chelsea in October and an acrimonious 1-0 loss on their return to Stamford Bridge in the FA Cup quarter-finals in March. But Mourinho's fifth placed team, four points behind fourth placed Manchester City in the Champions League qualification scrap, are unbeaten in their 21 league matches since that first painful loss to Chelsea this season. "It will be tougher this time around. They are one of the best teams in England, no doubt," Alonso said.

"It will be a very hard game, even more so after losing twice against us. They will give even more to try and beat us. "We will have to do the same or more than before to get another win. They will be hard to beat. We will have to be ready." Chelsea, unbeaten in their last 12 meetings with United, have won back to back matches since their shock defeat against Crystal Palace, but Tottenham remain hot on their heels.

'FIGHTING FOR BIGGER THINGS'

Pochettino's side have reeled off six successive victories, sparking dreams of winning the club's first English title since 1961 and finishing above bitter rivals Arsenal for the first time since 1995. They currently sit 14 points clear of Arsenal, but Pochettino is understandably more concerned about catching Chelsea than earning north London bragging rights. "I think we're playing and fighting for bigger things," said Pochettino, who may hand a first start to Harry Kane since the striker's ankle injury five weeks ago. "If we look at the bigger picture it's to try to reduce the gap with Chelsea. I think today it's not important the gap we have with Arsenal. "The most important thing is to do our job, try to win games and try to reduce the gap with Chelsea."

FURIOUS

Arsene Wenger and his Arsenal flops head to Middlesbrough looking to redeem themselves in the eyes of their furious fans after their shocking 3-0 defeat at lowly Crystal Palace on Monday. Subjected to vitriolic abuse from supporters during their fifth defeat in their last eight games and labelled as "cowards" by former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher, Wenger's sixth placed side can't afford another debacle as they try to close the seven-point gap on the top four. Wenger, who endured calls for his resignation, has led Arsenal into the Champions League for the last 19 years, but that record is in severe danger and a defeat at the Riverside Stadium might usher the beleaguered Frenchman towards the exit. "This isn't Arsenal in this moment in time. — AFP



MADRID: Real Madrid's forward Alvaro Morata (C) kicks the ball during a training session at Valdebebas training grounds in Madrid yesterday on the eve of their Liga football match against Sporting Gijon. —AFP

FIVE THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR IN LA LIGA

MADRID: Ahead of another Champions League salvage mission there is no room for error for Barcelona as they try to chase down Real Madrid at the top of La Liga. Here are five things to look out for in La Liga this weekend.

BARCA BEGIN LIFE WITHOUT NEYMAR

Barca's season unravelled quickly in the past week as they lost at Malaga to fall three points behind Madrid, who also have a game in hand, at the top of the table and were then thrashed 3-0 by Juventus in the Champions League. In between Neymar was also slapped with a three-game ban following his first Barca red card last weekend and misses Real Sociedad's visit today, as well as a potential decisive clash with Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu next weekend. Barca have to win to have any chance of keeping the title alive ahead next weekend's Clasico but have been let down by their lack of strength in depth this season. Boss Luis Enrique therefore has a delicate balance to find between resting some of his star names ahead of another Champions League rescue mission in midweek and still having enough to see off a Sociedad side battling for a place in the Europa League.

ASENSIO'S TIME TO SHINE

In stark contrast to Barca's troubles, Real Madrid have been propped up throughout the campaign by the depth of their resources. No more so than by Marco Asensio. The 21-year-old made a huge impact by setting up Cristiano Ronaldo's winner against Bayern Munich on Wednesday after replacing Gareth Bale for the final half hour. With Bale set to sit out the trip to Gijon, Asensio will get his chance to make a case to start against Bayern on Tuesday.

ADAMS'S 'ARSE-KICKING' COMMENCES

Tony Adams made a surprise return to coaching this week as Granada boss due to his close ties with the club's Chinese ownership. The eccentric former Arsenal captain didn't disappoint in his first press conference where he promised to "kick some players' arse" in an uphill battle to save Granada from relegation in the final seven games of the season. Adams takes charge for the first time against Celta Vigo on Sunday with Granada seven points adrift of safety.

BASQUE BATTLE ROYALE FOR EUROPE

The fight to be top dogs in the Basque Country will almost certainly be rewarded with a place in Europe with Sociedad, Athletic Bilbao and Eibar separated by just two points between sixth and eighth. With Sociedad at the Camp Nou, Athletic can move a step ahead when they host Las Palmas on Friday night before Eibar continue their remarkable charge at struggling Betis on Sunday. The population of Eibar would fit twice into Betis' Benito Villamarin stadium, yet they are 19 points ahead of the Seville giants thanks to an already record points tally of 50 in the top flight.

VALENCIA ON THE RISE

There is a rare sense of positivity around Valencia's fortunes at the minute after three consecutive wins for the first time in a year. Chairwoman Layhoon Chan's resignation earlier in the week also pleased a large section of the fanbase unhappy with her role in a disastrous past couple of seasons on and off the pitch. Sunday's visitors to the Mestalla should take note of what bad organization from the top can do to even a historically big club. Sevilla are in a state of flux after sporting director Monchi's departure and look set to lose coach Jorge Sampaoli to Argentina's advances at the end of the season too. —AFP

ATTACK WAS LONGEST 15 MINS OF MY LIFE: BARTRA

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund defender Marc Bartra, who was wounded when three bombs rocked his Bundesliga team's bus, described yesterday his ordeal as "the longest and hardest 15 minutes of my life". "The pain, the panic, the uncertainty of not knowing what was happening, or how long it would last... they were the longest and hardest 15 minutes of my life," the Spanish defender wrote in a message posted on Instagram.

The bombs containing metal pieces detonated minutes after the team bus set off to a Champions League game against Monaco on Tuesday night. Bartra was hurt by flying

glass and had to undergo a wrist operation, taking him out of action for four weeks. The 26-year-old said "the shock of the past few days is diminishing all the time" and that when he looks at his swollen wrist, what he feels is "pride".

"I look at it proud thinking of all the damage they wanted to do to us on Tuesday and it resulted in just that," he said, thanking those who are treating him as well as fans, his team-mates and others who have showered him with support. "I needed to write and get this off my chest and settle it so I can just think about getting back to 100 percent as soon as possible," he added.

Three days after the attack that injured Bartra and a policeman who suffered trauma from the noise of the blasts, investigators are still scrambling to find possible culprits. The probe suffered a setback on Thursday when the sole suspect in custody was cleared of involvement in the crime. Investigators had zeroed in on two suspects believed to belong to a large jihadist scene in western Germany's Ruhr region, after three identical letters were found at the site of the attack. The letter demanded that Berlin stop its Tornado reconnaissance missions in the international anti-IS coalition and close the US air base at Ramstein, western Germany. —AFP



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Tottenham v Bournemouth	14:30
beIN SPORTS HD	
Stoke City v Hull City	17:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Crystal Palace v Leicester City	17:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Watford v Swansea City	17:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Everton v Burnley	17:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Sunderland v West Ham United	17:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Southampton v Manchester City	19:30
beIN SPORTS HD	

SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA

Deportivo La Coruna v Malaga	14:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Sporting Gijon v Real Madrid	17:15
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
beIN SPORTS HD 2	
Atletico de Madrid v Osasuna	19:30
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
FC Barcelona v Real Sociedad	21:45
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
beIN SPORTS HD 2	

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

Internazionale v AC Milan	13:30
beIN SPORTS HD	
ACF Fiorentina v Empoli	16:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
AS Roma v Atalanta	16:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Torino FC v Crotone	16:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Genoa CFC v SS Lazio	16:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Citta di Palermo v Bologna	16:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Cagliari v AC Chievo Verona	16:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Pescara v Juventus FC	16:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Sassuolo Calcio v Sampdoria	19:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
Napoli v Udinese Calcio	21:45
beIN SPORTS HD	

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Dortmund v Eintracht Frankfurt	16:30
beIN SPORTS HD	
VfL Wolfsburg v Ingolstadt 04	16:30
beIN SPORTS HD	
FSV Mainz 05 v Hertha Berlin	16:30
beIN SPORTS HD	
FC Augsburg v FC Koln	16:30
beIN SPORTS HD	
Hoffenheim v Monchengladbach	16:30
beIN SPORTS HD	
RB Leipzig v SC Freiburg	16:30
beIN SPORTS HD	
Bayer 04 v Bayern Munich	19:30
beIN SPORTS HD	

FRENCH LEAGUE

OGC Nice v Nancy Lorraine	18:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6	
FC Metz v Caen	21:00
beIN SPORTS HD 7	
Montpellier HSC v Lorient	21:00
beIN SPORTS HD 9	
Stade Rennes v Lille OSC	21:00
beIN SPORTS HD 10	
Guingamp v Toulouse FC	21:00
beIN SPORTS HD	
AS Monaco FC v Dijon	22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6	

RATTLED DORTMUND SEEK SOLACE AFTER BUS ATTACK

BERLIN: Borussia Dortmund face the difficult challenge of recovering from Tuesday's frightening bomb attack on their team bus as they prepare to host Eintracht Frankfurt in the Bundesliga this weekend. Players and staff alike were badly shaken after their team coach was rocked by three explosions on the way to Signal Iduna Park ahead of their Champions League tie against Monaco.

Defender Marc Bartra underwent emergency surgery on a fractured wrist and to remove glass that became planted in his arm after the blast shattered windows on the Dortmund bus. His team-mates also felt the psychological effects, losing 3-2 to Monaco after their quarter-final first leg was pushed back to Wednesday. Many in the Dortmund squad said they had not wanted to play, while manager Thomas Tuchel railed at the decision to reschedule the match less than 24 hours after the planned kick-off.

"Unless you experienced it, you can't understand how bad it was for us," said defender Sokratis Papastathopoulos. "I am just happy to be alive, it was the worst day of my life," he added, referring to the night of the attack. Tuchel accused UEFA of treating Dortmund as if only a "beer can" had been thrown at their bus. But European football's governing body rejected the claim, insisting that both clubs had agreed to play on Wednesday.

German police are still hunting the culprits and an officer was also hurt in the blast. Tuchel is sure to rotate his fourth-placed squad to try to help give those worst affected by the attack time to recover. "We must find a way of overcoming that. But we still don't know how that's going to happen," admitted Tuchel. "Everyone must face up to it in their own way. No one felt it in exactly the same way. 'Some players saw the explosion... there were lots of different feelings and therefore many different ways of handling the trauma.'"

LEWANDOWSKI BANNED

Germany winger Marco Reus, sidelined for the past six weeks by a hamstring injury, is set to return for Dortmund but Bartra faces four weeks out. Frankfurt were quick to extend their best wishes to the Spaniard, but solidarity aside, Niko Kovac's men need the points on Saturday having dropped to ninth following a run of nine games without a win. As a result of the Dortmund attack, authorities are beefing up security across the country ahead of this weekend's fixtures.

Runaway league leaders Bayern Munich, who are at Bayer Leverkusen, have for the first time introduced security checks at open training sessions. Bayern are 10 points clear of RB Leipzig but will again be without striker Robert Lewandowski, this time through suspension after he picked up his fifth yellow card last weekend.

The Poland star is the league's top scorer with 26 goals but missed Bayern's 2-1 defeat to Real Madrid in the Champions League with a bruised shoulder. Carlo Ancelotti will hope to have both Lewandowski and Mats Hummels (ankle) back in time for Tuesday's quarter-final return leg in Madrid. Leverkusen are desperately looking to stop their slide down the table after just one win in their last seven league games.

Second-placed RB Leipzig are edging ever closer to finishing their debut Bundesliga season by qualifying directly for the Champions League but have a tricky trip to Freiburg. Freiburg, last season's second division champions ahead of Leipzig, have exceeded expectations this term by challenging for a Europa League place. Ex-Bayern striker Nils Petersen equaled the Bundesliga record of 18 goals off the bench when he came on to secure their 1-0 win over Mainz last weekend. —AFP



MILAN: From left, David Han Li, Yonghong Li, and Marco Fassone, pose with AC Milan jerseys during a press conference to illustrate takeover of AC Milan soccer club by a Chinese consortium. —AP

AC MILAN'S NEW OWNERS TARGET RETURN TO CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

MILAN: AC Milan's new owners are aiming to make the team a force in European soccer once more, and they want to do so with a mix of star signings and talented young players such as teenage goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma. The takeover of Milan by a Chinese-led consortium was finally completed on Thursday, after several delays, ending Silvio Berlusconi's 31-year reign.

During Berlusconi's time in charge, the Rossoneri won trophies at home and abroad, including eight league titles and five Champions League titles. But the seven-time European champion has declined in recent years and is currently sixth in Serie A. It hasn't participated in the Champions League since the 2013-14 season.

"The aim of the next few years is to create a Milan side which is very competitive and very ambitious ... we think we can reach this in a short time," new CEO Marco Fassone said at a press conference yesterday. "We are Milan, we can't say 'slowly slowly and let's see what happens.' The idea is to get back to the Champions League as soon as possible, the aim is to be in it from the 2018-19 season ... UEFA has given us a small advantage with the decision that from 2018 Italy will have four teams in the Champions League, so from then I am certain Milan will be there."

TRAIL BY DERBY

Currently only the top three in Serie A qualify for Europe's premier club competition. One of the immediate priorities for Milan's new owners will be tying Donnarumma to a long-term contract. The goalkeeper only turned 18 in February but has already played for Italy and is attracting interest from Europe's top clubs.

"We talked about it also at dinner last night with Berlusconi," Fassone said. "I can say that the new owners have all the consideration for Donnarumma that he deserves. "On our part there is

the desire to sort it out quickly and make Gigio (Donnarumma) a pillar of Milan's future." Fassone and the new owners are already planning for the next campaign and want coach Vincenzo Montella to have "60-70 percent" of his squad by the beginning of July and the start of pre-season training.

And they are keen to bring in experienced players to help Milan's talented youngsters take the team back to the top. "We would like to have at the club one or two really big-name players," Fassone said. "Between saying and doing there always has to be the willingness of the clubs and of the players, but we would like to go in that direction." Fassone also said the new owners plan - "in the medium term" - to address the issue of a modern stadium for Milan, which currently shares San Siro with Inter Milan.

Chinese businessman Yonghong Li, who will be Milan's new president, was present yesterday and spoke at length for the first time since his group Rossoneri Sport Luxembourg completed the purchase of the club for 740 million euros (about \$800 million). "Such a glorious club is now beginning a new chapter in its history and the success of this deal was made possible thanks to AC Milan supporters' deep love and expectations," Li said.

"Considering all the top players who have played in this team and all the victories of the past years, the fans are hoping to see the club at the top of European football once again." He added that "we want to go beyond supporters' expectations." The new owners' first match will be today's derby against Inter Milan, which is also owned by a Chinese company. Fassone, who also worked at Juventus, left Inter in 2015. "From an emotional and emotive point of view, I couldn't ask for anything better," he said. "My last match as a sporting director was Inter-Milan so it's nice that I'm starting again with another Inter-Milan." —AP

BUM-PINCHING FOOTBALL BOSS GIVEN A LIFE BAN

TUNIS: The head of a Tunisian football club who pinched an assistant referee on the backside during a match has been banned from the sport for life. The Tunisian Football Federation (FTF) suspended CS Sfaxien President Moncef Khemakhem "from any activity in football" for abusing officials at a championship match last month, it said in a statement Thursday. It said Khemakhem had "violently assaulted" and bitten an assistant referee then pinched his buttocks in an attempt to influence the match's outcome.

Khemakhem later boasted on TV

that he had twice pinched the assistant referee on the backside during the match against Etoile de Sahel on March 1. Sfaxien won the game 3-2.

The FTF accused Khemakhem of verbally abusing match officials, "dangerous and unsporting behavior", "indecent assault" and "harm to good morals". It also fined him \$12,900 (12,000 euros), it said. The FTF statement did not say whether the judgment was open to appeal. In a video posted on YouTube, Khemakhem can be seen joining players' protests on the pitch Etoile equalized with a con-

troversial penalty. After grabbing the referee, the club president heads back to the sideline, raising his thumb at the linesman. He can be seen kissing the official, biting him below the left ear and pinching his cheek. The next day, Khemakhem appeared on public TV channel Wataniya and declared, smiling, that he had "twice pinched the backside" of the linesman "to cheer him up because he lost the match". "We decided to get our rights with our teeth and our fingers," he added, before concluding: "we have had our gift." —AFP

Sports

UNITED DENIED, VIOLENCE ERUPTS IN LYON

BRUSSELS: Leander Dendoncker struck late to snatch a 1-1 draw for Anderlecht against Manchester United in the first leg of Thursday's Europa League quarter-final, while crowd trouble overshadowed Lyon's tie with Besiktas. Belgian international midfielder Dendoncker rose to majestically power home a header from Ivan Obradovic's cross four minutes from time and cancel out Henrikh Mkhitaryan's first-half opener.

It was no less than Anderlecht deserved for a committed second-half display, although United will rue not taking earlier chances to kill off the tie ahead of next week's return at Old Trafford. "We have to kill matches. We had chances, control, but we don't score goals," said United boss Jose Mourinho. "There was lots of space to kill, there were good chances that we don't get because of a bad touch, sloppy touch, a flick, bad decisions in the last third."

In Lyon, Turkish fans clashed with rival supporters and security forces in the run-up to kick-off before fans spilled onto the pitch causing a 45-minute delay to a match designated as high-risk by authorities. The violence came in the same week that the Borussia Dortmund team bus was attacked

with explosives in Germany and Leicester City fans had clashed with police in Madrid.

Despite the problems, Lyon had the last laugh, coming back from a goal down to win 2-1 in the dying stages. With United potentially facing two matches a week right through to the end of the season, Mourinho had been hoping for a quiet night to conserve energy ahead of Sunday's crunch Old Trafford clash against Chelsea.

United should have won but Anderlecht had their moments, particularly at the beginning of both halves. They created the first clear chance but Massimo Bruno connected only with thin air when well placed on the edge of the box. Frank Acheampong was lively down the Anderlecht left, with one low cross begging to be knocked in but evading everyone. Yet United soon started to assert their class and were a lick of paint from going in front when Marcus Rashford's inswinger picked out Zlatan Ibrahimovic. Ruben Martinez made a point blank save and Jesse Lingard knocked the follow-up onto the post before Anderlecht scrambled the ball clear. Bram Nuytinck then threw himself full length to block a Mkhitaryan shot as United started to turn the screw.

Serigne Mbodji was next to produce a desperate last-ditch tackle to deny Lingard but by now Mkhitaryan was dictating play. United were at times guilty of over-playing in the final third but the chances were starting to rack up. And Mkhitaryan opened the scoring on 36 minutes after Rashford's volley from Antonio Valencia's cross was only parried by Martinez, the Armenian running on to slot home from close range despite a tight angle. Anderlecht started the second half with renewed vigor as Nicolae Stanciu curled a free-kick just over the bar and then Valencia was forced into three interventions in quick succession, first hooking a Bruno effort off the line and then twice blocking Acheampong. United at times lived dangerously but Anderlecht didn't have the quality to capitalize, even with the introduction of semi-fit top scorer Lukasz Teodorczyk 15 minutes from time.

United's Belgian international Marouane Fellaini-formerly of Standard Liege-provided an entertaining 15-minute substitute cameo, provoking a cacophony of jeers from the home crowd every time he touched the ball. He even had a chance from 20 yards that drew nervous gasps from the home crowd, although it deflected into Martinez's arms. — AFP



BRUSSELS: United's Matteo Darmian, right, leaves behind Anderlecht's Massimo Bruno during a Europa League quarterfinal first leg soccer match between Anderlecht and Manchester United at the Constant Vanden Stock stadium. — AP

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