

Temperatures
might drop to
zero in Kuwait



Washington puts
Tehran 'on notice'
for firing missile

14



El Hadary heroics
defy belief as
Egypt book final

46



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Local heritage preserved at bookshop



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PHOTO OF THE DAY



Kuwait City seen from Al-Shaheed Park. — Photo by Ghazy Qaffaf/KUNA

Local Spotlight

SAVE EXPATS



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Last week I raised the topic of animals that are abandoned on the streets by their owners or market vendors. This week, I feel obliged to call for 'saving' expats, after a Kuwait Times reader asked me a question over a situation he and many others face daily. He said and I quote: "We expats do not even know where to complain or what to complain about. I live in Farwaniya, where traffic police entered a dilapidated side street and ticketed the cars parked opposite a residential building. Where should we park our cars then? The cops are promised incentives to catch as many violations as possible. Who better to exploit than the expats?"

Parking has always been a problem in Kuwait, because for many years, the municipality allowed building owners to not allocate parking spaces for the tenants; or at least it was not compulsory to designate the basement of the building as a car park. So for many years, it was and still is a mess. Go to Salmiya, Hawally or Farwaniya at night and you will see cars scattered everywhere as if a tornado hit them.

We are exposing expats to a contradictory situation - between asking them to abide by the law and breaking it. We have expats who come from different countries, cultures and origins, and yet they will do whatever they are asked according to Kuwait's laws, habits, customs and traditions, despite the difficulty of the matter. Isn't this enough?

For example, a Kuwaiti friend went to a walking path downtown. He was wearing sports attire and driving a small and old car. After he finished his walk, he went back to his car. He remained stationary for 10 minutes before driving out of the parking lot. All of a sudden, a man in a dishdasha came up to his window and yelled at him, claiming he was slow in moving his car!

My Kuwaiti friend replied he was on the phone, and that's why he did not move the car. He added he was not blocking anyone's car or the road. Yet this man was screaming at him for no reason. The situation got absurd when the irate Kuwaiti man told my friend he was sorry because he thought he was expat and did not know he was a Kuwaiti too! So, if a person is an expat, does this justify shouting at him or her? Is that an excuse to humiliate others because they are not Kuwaitis? When you find out your adversary is a Kuwaiti, you apologize!

The reader is right, because he does not know what to complain about and to whom. Soaring rents are a problem, parking is another and rising prices are yet another problem. Moreover, sometimes there is the problem of discrimination, especially on the streets.

These people who target expats are insulting us in Kuwait and Kuwaitis in general. Such people are the cause of damaging our image as a civil and modern society. The reasons for such behavior are that they don't consider their actions a mistake. I personally do not know any custom or any law that permits such discrimination or behavior.

Rejection of discrimination is a value and a culture of the community. It is also the role of good education and parents to teach their kids that this is a shameful act in any society. So if a child abuses the maids in the house and is not punished, he will grow up thinking it is OK to abuse anyone who is not from his community.

Well sir, you're right. I do not know where to complain and to whom. It's all about ethics and culture.

IMPRINT

LEST WE THROW STONES



By Nejouad Al-Yagout

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To those from here, remember. We have no right to criticize Trump. Syrian refugees are not welcome here either. And let us not forget how many Iraqis and Palestinians were deported after the invasion for security reasons. A close friend of ours from Pakistan has given up on coming to visit Kuwait after she was denied entry a couple of times (once even transit on her way to NYC). We also had a temporary ban on Bangladeshis for a period of time.

I wonder why we think it is alright to vent our frustration on social media regarding Trump's policies when we remain silent regarding our own bigotry and xenophobia. Where are the voices in our community defending minorities and the rights of immigrants and refugees?

Sure, we have a few activists, but for some reason they seem to be lone voyagers - as we seem to be too complacent to assist them. Are we so afraid of love that we choose, instead, to surrender to fear? If this is the case, we have lost our right to complain about the way of the world.

Still, I remain optimistic that what is happening today is what the world needs to awaken from the stupor of separation. It starts within us. We are invited to remove all traces of beliefs that have taught us that we are superior to another in any way. We are invited to defend those who do not have a voice for fear of deportation or imprisonment. And we are invited to change ourselves. One by one. This is the time for new beginnings, albeit via a painful collective slap on the face to shake us out of our complacency. Yes to love.

Nejouad Al Yagout - Photo by Djinane Alsuwayeh

HALA FEBRUARY



February is one of the most popular months in Kuwait's calendar thanks to the nation celebrating National and Liberation Days. Photo shows youth celebrating last year's national holidays on the streets of Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al Zayyat

Just kiddin', seriously

MR PRESIDENT - BUILD BRIDGES NOT WALLS



By Sahar Moussa

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If you ask me what is common between deception and Trump, I would say: Misdirection. Misdirection, is a form of deception in which the attention of an audience is focused on one thing in order to distract its attention from another. Donald Trump in seven days was able to spread chaos throughout the world, from the first day he became President of the United States. But were his orders a misdirection intended to distract 'us' (the audience) and serve hidden agendas? After Trump's victory in the elections, we can't but acknowledge his ability to rile us all up. Today I will play the devil's advocate and look at the situation from another perspective.

Trump's executive order on immigration bars citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States for the next 90 days and suspends the admission of all refugees for 120 days. These countries are: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria, Sudan and Yemen. Since the order was issued, people from all over the world have been protesting against it.

But did you know that Kuwait also has a list of countries whose citizens are not allowed to enter the state? Ironically, these countries are Syria, Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Pakistan and Afghanistan. As far as I recall, not one person protested against this list.

Trump also set in motion his plan to build an "impenetrable, physical, tall, powerful, beautiful, southern border wall" between the US and Mexico. The border is about 1,900 miles (3,100 km) long and traverses all sorts of terrain. This wall will cover 1,000 miles and natural obstacles will take care of the rest, according to news reports. The wall is meant to stop illegal immigration, or so he claims. This order led to an uproar by some Americans in general and Mexicans in particular.

But did you know that Israel also built a security barrier or 'border wall' in 1994 between the Gaza Strip and Israel? The barrier runs along the entire land border of the Gaza Strip. In 2016, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) started working on a massive underground concrete wall along the border. The wall is expected to stretch along the entire Israeli border with Gaza, which is about 60 km long and the concrete wall will reach dozens of meters below ground, according to officials. Israel has also built another wall along its border with the occupied West Bank.

To my astonishment, I don't recall people demonstrating in the streets or protesting against these walls that have been strangling Palestinians and shattering their dreams and hopes for years. I don't recall any Arab countries standing together or uniting trying to destroy these "Big Walls" that are suffocating people behind them.

For years, Arabs have been persecuted by Arabs themselves, not standing or helping each other at the expense of their own profits and benefits. So before pointing fingers towards Trump's insanity, shouldn't we blame ourselves?! Because we "Arabs" are not better than him - we are worse than him because we hide behind the name of religion, a religion that is supposed to bind us, not divide us.

As a matter of fact, I would like to credit Trump, because if it wasn't for his crazy decisions, I wouldn't have seen people from different backgrounds, religions, races and nationalities uniting with each other against injustice, and this proves that maybe there is still hope in humanity. One last word, Mr President - you will only be great when you build bridges, not walls; when you connect, not divide.

in my view

PUSHING BACK AGAINST SOCIAL OPPRESSION

By Fatma Al Attar

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Social oppression is defined as "a concept that describes a relationship of dominance and subordination between categories of people in which one benefits from the systematic abuse, exploitation, and injustice directed toward the other." In other words, some groups have more power than other within society. Those people live a comfortable life and their acceptance of others makes life easier. But powerful groups tend to abuse their power for their own benefit. Although Kuwait is more privileged than most countries, that does not change the fact that social oppression exists here.

In Kuwait, foreigners make up the majority but, ironically, it is a minority of Kuwaiti citizens that wield the power. Most of the ruling class consists of Muslim Arab men who lead this country, a point evidenced in the parliament, workforce, etc.

Many of Kuwait's majority population of foreigners consists of smaller groups: Christian Kuwaitis, (who don't identify as either Muslims or Christians), Buddhists and Hindus. While some reside as citizens, others are here for mainly for work.

Many of these minorities lack representation, deprived when they are supposed to have a voice. Many residents rely on agencies/embassies for religious support, with many religions not accepted within Kuwaiti culture.

The major cause of social oppression is the cultural acceptance of Muslim-Arab superiority that results from Kuwait's history. While the constitution allows freedom of religion, the reality is more complex; socially, people are more accepted if they come from the Kuwaiti minority.

Although they live a privileged life compared to their Middle Eastern counterparts, women remain another oppressed group in Kuwait. Their rights are material or related to the workforce. Despite the fact they account for the majority of Kuwait's workforce, they are not accepted in all fields. There is only one woman in Kuwait's parliament. Kuwaiti women cannot pass on their citizenship if married to a non-Kuwaiti, while divorce sees mothers lose access to their children if they remarry.

Divorced Kuwaiti women lose their claim to homes pur-

chased by government housing programs, even if they have made their payments. Kuwaiti women cannot marry alone and require a male guardian. The country has no laws prohibiting domestic violence, sexual harassment or marital rape. Laws and social pressure push women to marry one man; She can be shunned, her reputation tarnished, if she does not. But it does not stop there.

Marrying someone her family does not approve of can also damage a woman's standing. In effect, she cannot marry unless someone else approves.

Women in Kuwait are often told to keep domestic violence and rape cases behind close door as it might make her less desirable. They are taboo subjects society, people preferring not to acknowledge their dark consequences.

Most of these things date back to pre-Islamic times, when women were far more objectified. Since then, it has become engrained in our culture to prepare a woman to become the most desirable bride possible, owned by her family. Though she is supposed to fend for herself, a Kuwaiti woman is expected to depend on a man.

Mental illness also remains a taboo subject in Kuwait, one that has caused many to be ostracized from society, the stigma associated with it more powerful than the need for rehabilitation. The Kuwaiti public seems mostly disinterested in fighting the problem.

Stigma surrounding the issue exists in Kuwait, with people unaware of how to access mental health care and, although several campaigns are now attempting to raise awareness, public support for mental illness awareness is virtually non-existent.

The effects of mental illness are not taken seriously, viewed as exaggerated. The fact that the identified cases are so rare makes the topic taboo, and one rarely talked about openly. This causes those in need to be shut out entirely. Only limited treatment is available; Kuwait does not provide the public with mental health services, like suicide hotlines.

Social oppression is a serious problem. It will require education, and for people to come together and accept one another to achieve equality.



The National Heritage Bookshop at the Heritage Village of Kuwait. — Photo By Athoob Al-Shuaibi



Books of gold

‘Local treasure at the Youm Al-Bahar heritage bookshop’

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

Young people like to stand out from the crowd, showing off their talents or luxury possessions. But one teenage boy had a particularly unusual passion: Collecting old books and magazines. It was a passion that led to him own one of Kuwait’s largest collections of rare books.

Saleh Al-Misbah, who runs the National Heritage Bookshop at Youm Al-Bahar (also called the Heritage Village), is no

hoarder. Still he is quite familiar with the contents of all his books. The bookshelves in his store reach to the ceiling, with thousands of books crammed in. You often find him in a discussion with customers, looking to find exactly the right book for them.

Back in 1975, Misbah would visit the annual Islamic book fair, hosted by the Social Reform Society, with his high school friends. That year, Kuwait launched the inaugural International Arab Book Fair, an event he still attends to this day. “My inter-

est began to grow after I read an article in Al-Qabas newspaper in 1981 about a young British man who loved to collect the first issue of every magazine. I began my hunt for the first issues of Kuwaiti newspapers and magazines after that. By the way, I have the first issue of Kuwait Times too,” he said.

It was difficult to find the first issues of newspapers in Kuwait and Misbah did not want to get copies from the archives. The struggle he faced at that time, as a student, to find a diversity of information about Kuwait only fuelled his



A photo of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Saleh Al-Misbah, former secretary general of the Association of Kuwaiti writers, owner of the National Heritage Bookshop.

passion. Local libraries and schoolbooks wouldn't provide in-depth information about the country, unlike books owned by amateur book collectors.

He began to concentrate his effort on everything Kuwait-related, from books, magazines and brochures to manuscripts and collectible antiques. The books are categorized by language and area. "What's happening at local libraries is awful. Some librarians get rid of old books only because they're torn, regardless of their value. I had to take action by holding workshops for librarians to teach them how to handle and maintain old books," Misbah said.

To Misbah, looking for old books is like digging for gold. He looks for bargains online, gets them from government stores, and sometimes even buys entire private libraries from their owners. "It's a huge responsibility I took upon myself. Kuwait lost a great deal of its literary and cultural heritage during the Iraqi invasion after libraries were plundered," he explained.

"In 1997, I joined the Institute of Teachers, and then obtained a bachelor's degree in the

Arabic language. I worked for many years as an Arabic teacher," he told Kuwait Times. Misbah has published documentary books and helped other authors revise their works. He became the secretary-general of the Association of Kuwaiti Writers in 2012, a position he held until 2013. In February, he will hold his first personal exhibition, placing some of his private collection on sale.

The bookshop at the Heritage Village only accounts for a fraction of the books Misbah has acquired. The number totals over a 100,000 at the time of writing, mainly in Arabic and a few thousand in English. So crammed with books is his house that he was forced to store some externally. A few are too valuable to be exhibited at the bookshop, but he will happily invite customers to his house if necessary. The oldest English book in his collection was published in 1780, while his oldest Kuwaiti book, written by Abdulaziz Al-Rasheed, dates back to 1826.

Misbah was honored in Qatar as a pioneer of heritage in the Gulf, and is hoping to win the State Incentive Award. He is the nation's memory and a man with a mind like a library.



A special supplement on Kuwait's history and heritage issued by the Kuwait Times in February 2012.



Akhbar Al-Kuwait, (Kuwait News), an old newspaper, dated to the 1970s.



The National Heritage Bookshop at the Heritage Village of Kuwait.

Kuwait Times



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KUWAIT: KFSD reported that a fire broke out at a building in Mirqab area, downtown Kuwait City, yesterday. After rushing to the scene, firemen discovered the blaze on a second-floor apartment and the entire building clouded by smoke. The building was evacuated and special equipment was used to disperse the smoke before firemen managed to control the flames. No casualties were reported. Further investigations into the cause of the fire are still in progress. — Photos by Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAITI SHEIKH AHMAD SEEKS RE-ELECTION TO FIFA COUNCIL

KUWAIT: Olympic Council of Asia President Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah of Kuwait will seek re-election to the FIFA Council after the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) named him as one of eight candidates for the four spots available for the continent. Sheikh Ahmad, who heads the Association of National Olympic committees and is an influential International Olympic Committee (IOC) member, currently has a FIFA Council seat, the term of which ends in May.

Kuwait is currently banned by both the IOC and FIFA for government interference in the running of the national sports associations. The FIFA Council replaced the largely discredited Executive Committee as FIFA's decision-making body under reforms instituted in the wake of the 2015 corruption scandal in soccer's world governing body.

The four successful candidates at May's AFC congress in Bahrain will represent Asia on the body along with Bahraini vice president Sheikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, also the head of the AFC, and

members from Japan and Malaysia. The four spots include one reserved for women. "The Asian Football Confederation has received the candidatures of eight candidates for the four places available to the AFC on the FIFA Council," the AFC said in a statement. Australian Moya Dodd, formerly a co-opted member of the old FIFA Executive Committee, will take on Mahfuza Ahkter of Bangladesh, Han Ungyong of North Korea and Susan R. A. Shalabi of Palestine.

Chinese Football Association general secretary Zhang Jian, Mariano V. Araneta Jr of Philippines and South Korean football chief Chung Mong-gyu will vie with Sheikh Ahmad for the three other seats. "The above list of candidates for the FIFA Council will be submitted to the FIFA General Secretariat in order for the FIFA Review Committee to carry out the eligibility check on each candidate," the AFC added. Last September, the AFC extraordinary congress, called to conduct the elections for the FIFA Council, was postponed over the disqualification of a Qatari candidate. — Reuters

KRCS SIGNS AGREEMENT TO DIG 16 WELLS IN TANZANIA

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and African Relief Organization in Tanzania signed an agreement yesterday to fund the digging of 16 water wells in Dar El Salaam to provide 16 schools with fresh water and to support the initiative made by the Kuwaiti embassy themed, "water well for each school." In a press statement after the signing ceremony, the Director of the African Relief Organization, Sami Al-Azeb hailed Kuwait's role made in the development projects in Tanzania and Africa.

Al-Azeb said, that Kuwait always been supporting and assisting less developed countries in their development, expressing his appreciation and gratitude for His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti government and people. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Tanzania Jassem Al-Najem, acknowledged the efforts made by KRCS to help Africa cope with water scarcity and draught. Ambassador Al-Najem stated the importance of KRCS projects made in Tanzania; where KRCS funds the projects and the African Relief Organization execute it, by digging the water wells. — KUNA



Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and African Relief Organization in Tanzania signed an agreement to fund the digging of 16 water wells in Dar El Salaam. — KUNA

News

in brief



Photo shows the coast of the Arabian Gulf. — KUNA

TEMPERATURES TO DROP

KUWAIT: The Meteorology Department said yesterday that a Siberian High is expected to sweep into the country starting today and over the weekend, bringing the temperature down. Meteorologist Yasir Al-Bloushi said that the day's temperatures will be between 10-12 Celsius while at night - they might drop to below zero Celsius. Tonight's temperature will be at 2 to 3 Celsius, he pointed out. The temperatures today are expected to reach 11 to 13 Celsius during the day and 1 to 2 Celsius at night. Meanwhile, tomorrow temperatures are expected to reach 15-17 Celsius during the day, and 1 to 3 C at night.

Resignation rumors 'untrue'

KUWAIT: Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Faleh Al-Azeb refuted yesterday, social media rumors on the resignation of the Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. "These rumors are untrue; the matter is left to the minister and the government to decide," Al-Azeb told the press at the parliament. On the matter of MPs failing to reach the quorum for today's special session which was supposed to discuss the country's population structure, the minister pointed out that there was a lack of preparation from the MPs part even though the government was present. Earlier, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim adjourned yesterday's session to due lack of quorum.



Sheikh Salman Humoud Al-Sabah

Kuwait, China boost ties

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Army's Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khoder yesterday discussed with visiting Chinese Naval Commander Bai Yaoping on issues of mutual concern. During his meeting with the commanding officer of the Chinese Naval Force, Al-Khoder extolled bilateral ties and underscored mutual eagerness for further progress in relations, Kuwait's Army Moral and Guidance Administration said in a statement. The meeting was attended by the Kuwaiti military's Assistant Chief of Staff for the Planning and Operations Unit Ahmad Al-Omairi.

OUR PROBLEM IS CORRUPTION - NOT THE EXPATS SYMPOSIUM ON 'ARGUMENT ON DEMOGRAPHICS'

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Women Cultural Society held a symposium on the 'Argument on Demographics' at its premises in Khaldiya on Wednesday. The issue has been highlighted frequently in recent times, particularly by MPs and officials who blame expats for Kuwait's problems and demand a decrease in the number living in the country.

Dr Ghadeer Aseri decried the hateful speech directed at expats recently. "Such hateful statements do not reflect the reality. Our problems are not caused by the expats, but by the corruption in public sector. We don't need to rid the country of the expats; Kuwait was always a multicultural country, its population coming from different origins. So how can we become racists after 200 years?" she wondered.

According to her, the government is responsible for the hateful rhetoric. "The government spread the idea that expats are to blame for different problems such as employment, healthcare and others. In the past, it has also separated the community into sects, tribes, and living areas. I agree that certain jobs - state security, interior, military and other positions in the public sector - are limited to citizens, as is the case all over the world, but we don't have to use this hateful dialogue," added Aseri.

She proposed solutions. "The 'visa businessmen' help create the problem, along with public corruption and the government's ban plans. The citizens make-up only 30% of the population, but we can solve part of the problem by replacing the 'Kafeel' (sponsorship) system with more decent system, or residency for expats. We need to spread tolerance for different nationalities, religions, and ideologies," concluded Aseri.

MP Dr Adel Adel Al-Damkhi agreed that the expat problem should be solved without insulting the expats. "We criticize the hateful statements from Western countries against refugees, while we use similar terms against the expats. The visa businessmen bring the illegal laborers for fake com-



KUWAIT: (From left) Ali Khaja, Dr Ghadeer Aseri, Dr Adel Al-Damkhi, Soad Al-Atiqi and Alia Al-Khalid are pictured during the symposium held at the Women Cultural and Social Society. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

panies, causing the huge number of marginal workers. These businessmen engage in this activity due to the wrong laws. All the ministers who came after the year 2000 are responsible for this problem, as they were giving exceptions," he further said.

There are different solutions in healthcare. "Instead of making the Jaber Hospital available to citizens only, it should serve its area for both citizens and expats. Also it's not logical to have all the Kuwaitis get treated in one hospital only. Instead of the discrimination, we can make all the services paid and provide the citizens medical insurance, while the constitution obliges the government to provide free healthcare for the citizens," stressed Al-Damkhi.

Dr Alia Al-Khalid diagnosed the problem and gave solutions, providing statistics. "Citizens make 1.3 million of the population. Out of the 2.9 expats living here, 600 thousand are domestic laborers, while 810 thousand are marginal laborers for which we don't have documents. 50 percent out of the 2 million expat workers have low degrees, 42 percent have medium degrees,

and only 8 percent are university graduates," she stated.

According to her, the problem of a prevailing number of expats has existed since the 1960s. Kuwaitis were 36% of the population in 1965, 30% in 1975, dropped to 27% in 1985, and then reached its highest percentage, 41%, in 1995 after the liberation. The biggest problems connected to the high number of expats are the complaints of traffic jam, crowded hospitals, pressure on natural resources, and competition on public employment. 95% of employees in the private sector are expats. We should find solutions to employ Kuwaitis in the private sector," she explained.

"The problem with visa businessmen exists as there is no strict law punishing this activity. According to the law, after five years the employees on governmental contract should leave the country, but in fact they don't and become marginal workers. The only law applied to the visa businessmen who buy and sell these illegal employees is No 38/1964, which considers this act a mis-

demeanor, not even a crime. Also the offices of domestic labor have a black market practicing human trafficking. We hope that the new company set by the government will end this problem," noted Al-Khalid.

Ali Khaja argued very logically that the expats are not the problem, as it is a matter of existing services rather than nationality. "If we replaced all the expats with citizens and the whole 4 million population only consisted of citizens, we would still need hospitals, water and electricity, houses and food. We can't exist without expats in Kuwait; they are the ones building our houses and roads, producing electricity and water, fishing and breeding, or we export the food from abroad," he pointed out.

"100 years ago, there were only Kuwaitis here. They worked in all professions and this is where their family names came from. Since the oil boom, the Kuwaitis refuse to do 'lower' jobs, so we need expats. The invasion period in 1990 was an exception. So we can't blame the expats. We should change our culture and way of thinking," concluded Khaja.

CABINET 'MULLS RESIGNATION'

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Well-informed ministerial sources said that the Cabinet is seriously considering submitting its resignation to HH the Amir during its weekly meeting on Monday and leaving the final decision to him. The sources added that this would be discussed on the meeting as Ministers express their dissatisfaction with the way lawmakers had been dealing with the Cabinet and their attempts to propose unconstitutional laws such as cancelling the fuel and electricity price increases. "There is a great deal of dissatisfaction with some MPs seeking to settle old scores at the expense of development plans", the sources explained, noting that such practices are hindering reform as well as the government's future strategies and plans.

Further, they stressed that MPs have been unjustifiably filing interpellations and inquiries for the sake of creating a state of tension and political crises. "This undermines the principle of inter-powers cooperation", the sources remarked, pointing that the parliament have been in office for just two months and that all those threats of grilling motions over already decided upon matters are illogical. "These things prove that MPs do not target reform and only want to pick up confrontations

with the government", added the sources. They noted that the grilling motion filed against the Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud included so many constitutional loopholes.

Labor complaints

The Manpower Authority said that the total number of labor complaints filed in 2016 was 11,000 of which 2,037 were settled in favor of the laborers and 1,225 in favor of employers. The Authority added that the total number of absconding reports dropped from 13,000 five years earlier to only 7,000 in 2016.

Nationalization bill

MPs Nasser Al-Doussari, Salah Khorshed, Abdullah Fahhad, Khaled Al-Otaibi and Marzouq Al-Khalifa yesterday proposed a bill to nationalize at least 2,000 bedoons recorded in the 1965 census.

'New Kuwait' plans

Within its plans to build 'New Kuwait', the Public Authority for Housing Welfare intends to offer 13 projects - with over 170,000 housing units for public bidding.

An audit bureau report showed that CSC had paid financial bonuses to a special work team without



Kuwait Red Crescent Society distributes relief aid to Syrian families. — KUNA

KRCS ASSISTS 4,000 SYRIANS IN JORDAN

AMMAN: Around 4,000 Syrian refugee families have benefited from Kuwait's urgent relief campaign in Jordan, Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced yesterday. KRCS teams exerted tremendous efforts in delivering contents of the 300-ton aid convoy to Syrian refugee families residing in various Jordanian areas and governorates, Anwar Al-Hasawi, KRCS' Deputy Chairman, stated. Al-Hasawi made his remarks after conclusion of the society's

seven-day relief campaign in the Kingdom, during which KRCS teams delivered food, clothes, and blankets to 400 families in Maan governorate, in addition to areas in Mafraq, Rowashed, Ramtha, and Amman. He commended the effort exerted by the volunteers from KRCS and Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRC) in distributing the Kuwaiti aid, stressing the importance of boosting coordination and cooperation between the two societies. — KUNA

KUWAITIS 'NOT AFFECTED' BY US TRAVEL BAN

WASHINGTON: Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah stressed that the US administration's travel ban will not affect Kuwaiti citizens who wish to travel to the United States. Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah even encouraged Kuwaitis to resume their plans to visit the US as usual. However, he advised them to abide by the US authorities' laws and regulations. The US administration tem-

porary travel ban includes: Iraq, Iran, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, Libya, and Somalia.

UN chief comments

Meanwhile, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said President Donald Trump's executive order on immigration is "not the best way to protect the United States." President Trump signed on January 27 an executive order to halt

the US refugee program for 120 days, and ban entry of immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries for 90 days.

Commenting on the measures, Guterres said the resettlement of refugees is, in many situations, the only possible solution.

"If you are a victim of torture, women and children have lost members of their families and are deeply traumatized people with complex

health situations," he told reporters. He affirmed that this is not the way to best protect US or any other country in relation to the serious concerns that exists about possibilities of terrorist infiltration, noting that he thinks that these measures should be removed sooner rather than later. This is not the first occasion the UN chief speaks on refugees and the ban of immigrants. — Agencies

Crime

Report

Police hunt suspects in niqabs

KUWAIT: A search is in progress for two women wearing niqabs seen on a surveillance camera stealing a female citizen's purse at a shopping center in Ogaila, security sources said. Case papers indicate that on discovering her purse was missing, the woman told her husband who asked to check the cameras. The tapes showed one woman distracting the victim while the other reached into her handbag to steal the purse, before both fled.

Shooting incident probed

Jahra detectives are investigating a citizen's report that he was shot at by an unknown person while driving along Salmi highway, security sources said. The sources noted that the main's testimony appears contradictory, after claiming to have known the shooter before changing his story. He claimed he chased the suspect, whose license plate fell off, before losing him. After returning to the scene neither the license plate or bullets were found. Despite the discrepancies, the case was filed and further investigations are underway.

Properties missing

A Fintas-based Egyptian reported that after returning from a trip to Egypt, he discovered his door open and several possessions, worth around KD 1600, missing. A case was filed.

Bike accident

A Syrian was recently rushed to Al-Sabah Hospital for treatment having lost control of his bike and falling in the Shuwaikh industrial area.

Dangerous driving

A man was recently arrested for dangerous driving in Ahmadi. The suspect initially ignored orders from police to pull over, said security sources. They also revealed that police discovered the man had been sentenced to a seven-year prison term he had yet to complete.

Harassment complaint

A female citizen recently filed a harassment complaint against a man who she accused of sending her indecent messages, security sources said. The woman added that when she demanded the unknown sender cease the messages, he responded with insults. A case was filed. Separately, a Kuwaiti woman launched a harassment claim against a man, who she claimed was not serious about marrying her, for allegedly showing up to her work and inquiring about the reason for their break-up, security sources said. The girl expressed fears that the suspect's behavior would scandalize her at work and with her family. The suspect is being summoned.

MoE investigates accident

MoE is investigating an accident where a bus carrying 33 school handymen turned over, injuring a several, when the driver suffered a stroke and lost control of the vehicle. — Al-Rai/ Al-Anbaa



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah headed the 113th (1-2017) meeting of the Supreme Council of petroleum at Seif Palace yesterday. During the meeting, participants discussed items on the agenda. — KUNA

LAWMAKER PROPOSES EXIT VISA FOR EXPATS

'POPULATION SESSION' FAILS TO TAKE PLACE; NO QUORUM

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti MP Majed Al-Mutairi yesterday proposed an amendment to the labor law in the private sector stipulating that expatriates must obtain an exit visa in order to leave the country, similar to procedures in Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Mutairi said that the measure is intended to safeguard the interests of Kuwaiti citizens who employ expatriates. He said that in some cases, expatriates who handle lots of money for Kuwaitis leave the country after taking some of the funds.

Meanwhile, a much anticipated Assembly session to debate the government's demographic policy failed to take place yesterday for a lack of quorum with the session just two lawmakers short of the legal number to start. MPs who called for the special session strongly criticized the government and lawmakers who failed to show up. Only three ministers were present in the chamber when Speaker Marzouk Al-Ghanem adjourned the session.

MPs Safa Al-Hashem, Abdulkarim Al-Kundari, Hamdan Al-Azemi, Mubarak Al-Hajraf and others strongly criticized the

government and other lawmakers for aborting the session. Hashem called for raising the minimum wage for expatriates and Kuwaitis as well saying this method will force employers to recruit only highly skilled foreign labor and eventually reduce the number of expatriates. She said that when there are three expatriates against every Kuwaiti citizen, then "the country has reached the danger level" and blamed senior officials at the interior ministry for both failing to stop visa traders and benefiting from the illegal trade.

The lawmaker said that by calling to rectify the demographic structure "we are not underestimating the importance of expatriates because we still need them in many professions". Last month, Hashem lashed out at expatriates and called for imposing taxes on them including a 100 fils tax for expats walking on the roads. The purpose of the special session was to hear a government statement about its policy on expatriates and reforming the population structure which is highly in favor of expatriates who make up around 70 percent of the 4.4 million population.

Earlier in the week, Social Affairs and

Labor Minister Hind Al-Sabeeh said a higher ministerial committee on population has devised a plan under which the percentage of expatriates will be lowered to 60 percent by 2030.

This means that the number of expatriates which currently stands at 3.1 million must not change until the end of the plan in 2030 because based on the growth rate for citizens, the number of Kuwaitis is expected to grow to around two million by 2030 which means that expats must be around three million to achieve the target.

In the meantime, 24 lawmakers have signed on a request to hold a special debate on the so-called bank deposits scandal in which a number of present and former MPs are involved in receiving millions of dinars in bribes for political reasons. The lawmakers want to announce the names of those politicians involved in the scandal. Assembly Speaker Ghanem and Minister of Justice Faleh Al-Azab denied yesterday that Information and Youth Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah has submitted his resignation. The two officials said that the issue is in the hands of the minister and the political leadership.

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MOSUL: Smoke rises from the western side of Mosul following a US-led coalition airstrike in Mosul, Iraq. —AP

ISLAMIC STATE OFFERS HOTEL ROOMS TO SUICIDE BOMBERS MOSUL HOTEL - FROM SADDAM ALLIES TO IS

MOSUL: When Islamic State seized the five-star Ninewah Oberoi Hotel in east Mosul it replaced wealthy Iraqi patrons with another kind of elite-foreign fighters and suicide bombers seen as the group's most prized members. The Iraqi army's recent capture of the ruined compound - renamed Hotel Waritheen (Inheritors) by Islamic State - deprived the militants of a strategic site that offers a comprehensive view across the vast city.

Yet the 11-storey building fringed with palm trees is a reminder of the many dangers and uncertainties ahead as Iraqi forces prepare to expand their offensive against Islamic State into west Mosul, a far more complex battleground. The compound, with its abandoned playground and ferris wheel, lies within striking distance of Islamic State snipers and mortar bomb operators, dug in just across the Tigris River, which once soothed hotel guests standing on balconies. That uncomfortable reality is not lost on Iraqi soldiers, who venture into hotel rooms on high floors to spot enemy positions in the west just across the waterway, which bisects Mosul.

Curtains are peppered with bullet holes, the work of Islamic State marksmen. Iraqi security officials say the most lethal ones are foreign fighters, the kind that were put up in the hotel as a reward for their services. The original 265-room hotel, built in the 1980s, catered to the powerful during Saddam Hussein's rule, including military officers, government officials and businessmen rewarded for their loyalty to his Baath Party. One of Saddam's former palaces, located on an island on the Tigris, was demolished in recent fighting. Another one nearby suffered a similar fate.

Militant menu

Islamic State grabbed the hotel after it swept into Mosul in 2014, facing virtually no resistance from Iraqi troops, and imposed a reign of terror. A jihadi website showed militants with their wives, covered from head to toe in black, and children at the hotel, once described on the internet as "elegantly designed to offer comprehensive 5 star services". Alcohol was banned but pain killers and syringes used by jihadist fighters before and after battle remain. Old

photographs on internet advertisements show elegant suites with king-sized beds, conference rooms, a sprawling swimming pool, shopping arcade and bowling alley, in sharp contrast to the current destruction.

A rocket-propelled grenade and broken glass clutter the entrance to the health club, where the sauna and jacuzzi lie in ruins. One soldier, who asked not to be named, studied shredded furniture and chairs piled on top of each other on lower floors, seeking clues on how Islamic State operated in the hotel. "Conferences were held on that floor. The Daesh leadership must have held meetings there to discuss strategy," he said, using the derogatory acronym favoured by opponents to describe Islamic State. Islamic State had its own price list for the hotel restaurant and coffee shop displayed on simple plastic menus. Cappuccino sold for the equivalent of about \$1.

Beds were missing from the hotel rooms. Iraqi soldiers said militants sold them in the market as their self-proclaimed caliphate began collapsing under the pressure of the offensive, backed by U.S.-led coalition

airstrikes. Islamic State leaders, for their part, did their best to keep up morale, judging by a copy of their local propaganda newspaper left behind at the hotel. Front page headlines claim operations killed hundreds of Iraqi troops. Another highlighted the attack on an Istanbul nightclub on New Year's Eve. There are no signs the hotel will be revived anytime soon, with fierce fighting expected in west Mosul.

Even if Islamic State is defeated in all of Mosul, the group is expected to stage an insurgency in Iraq, a country that has suffered from dictatorships, wars and sectarian violence that have ruined many ventures like the hotel. The latest occupants, Iraqi soldiers, seem to have written it off as a lost cause, leaving styrofoam plates of rotting meat and rice on the floors of decimated rooms for weeks. In some areas, there were human feces. Soldiers have a far more pressing issue to worry about - the militants watching them from just across the Tigris - with mortar attacks and gunfire keeping eastern Mosul on edge. The only people wearing hotel slippers these days are Iraqi forces clutching assault rifles.—Reuters

GERMAN CHANCELLOR IN TURKEY TO SALVAGE BATTERED ALLIANCE

ANKARA: German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited Turkey yesterday to meet President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for the first time since July's failed coup, seeking to keep a key partnership alive after a series of crises. Merkel will also meet Prime Minister Binali Yildirim and Turkish opposition figures during the sensitive one-day visit to Ankara, which has caused controversy at home and in Turkey.

Merkel arrived in Ankara in the early afternoon and headed to talks with Erdogan at his palace, with both sides expected to make a statement afterwards. The relationship between the two NATO allies has been battered in the last months by a series of rows in the wake of the July 15 failed coup aimed at ousting Erdogan.

Berlin has repeatedly expressed unease over the extent of the crackdown that has seen some 43,000 people arrested in the wake of the putsch, under a state of emergency that has now lasted over half a year. Erdogan, meanwhile, has vented his exasperation that Germany has not responded to requests for the extradition of hundreds of suspects linked to the coup, the Kurdish militant movement and the ultra-left. The number of asylum requests made to Germany from Turkish citizens has shot up from 1,700 in 2015 to 5,700 in 2016, likely due to the crackdown after the coup.

Last week it was reported that 40 Turkish soldiers stationed at NATO bases had asked Berlin for asylum, with Turkey pressing for the bids to be rejected. While Germany has expressed alarm over an alleged deterioration of press freedom in Turkey, Ankara wants Berlin to hand over the former opposition Cumhuriyet newspaper's editor-in-chief Can Dunder who escaped the country after the coup. Dunder has founded a new anti-Erdogan news portal in Germany-Ozguruz (We Are Free) - and been received as an honored guest by officials including President Joachim Gauck. —AFP

HARDLINERS HOLD OUT IN WEST BANK SETTLEMENT

AMONA: Police moved into a synagogue of a wildcat outpost in the occupied West Bank yesterday to remove dozens of hardline Jewish settlers barricaded inside on the second day of an operation to evict residents. The eviction of settlers and their supporters came just hours after the government unveiled plans for 3,000 new homes in other West Bank settlements, viewed by the global community as illegal and barriers to peace with the Palestinians. Police on Wednesday managed to remove all but one of the 42 families living in the Amona outpost near Ramallah in line with a High Court order that found that it was built illegally on private Palestinian land.

Yesterday, large numbers of police moved in to evict the last remaining family, carrying them and supporters out of a house one by one with the mother screaming loudly as she was dragged away, an AFP correspondent reported. Police had tried to negotiate the voluntary departure of dozens of "anarchists" who had barricaded themselves inside a nearby synagogue, but entered after talks broke down.

Hundreds of far-right activists slipped past army roadblocks early on Wednesday in a show of support for the Amona residents. Police said they removed 800 people, making 13 arrests. They said 24 officers sustained minor injuries in scuffles with protesters, some from rocks and glass bottles thrown at them, others with chemical burns from cleaning fluid launched by the activists.

Around 100 police were positioned yesterday outside the synagogue wearing protective glasses with the first line of officers carrying shields. Eliana Passentin, a spokeswoman for the Benjamin Regional Council which covers settlements said that police were being "very violent" yesterday, "very different from yesterday." "We condemn violence on both sides but people here have a right for peaceful civil disobedience," she said. Police said they intend to finish the eviction yesterday, after which the defense ministry would begin to remove residents' possessions before bulldozing the structures. —AFP

US PUTS IRAN ON NOTICE ACCUSES OF THREATENING US ALLIES

WASHINGTON: The White House issued a cryptic warning Wednesday that the US will act against Iran unless it stops testing ballistic missiles and supporting Houthi rebels in Yemen, but declined to say what retaliatory actions the US would pursue. Michael Flynn, President Donald Trump's national security adviser, forcefully denounced Iran's behavior in his first public remarks since Trump took office. He accused Iran of threatening US allies and spreading instability throughout the Middle East while faulting the Obama administration for doing too little to stop the Islamic Republic.

"As of today, we are officially putting Iran on notice," Flynn said from the White House podium. On notice for what, Flynn didn't say. Senior Trump administration officials said they were actively considering a "range of options" including economic measures and increased support for Iran's regional adversaries. The officials, who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity, declined repeatedly to say whether military action was being considered. Later Wednesday, Trump tweeted: "Iran is rapidly taking over more and more of Iraq even after the US has squandered three trillion dollars there. Obvious long ago!"

The warning was an early manifestation of Trump's promise of a tougher American approach to Iran. Yet administration officials emphasized that their allegations were unrelated to Iran's obligations under the Iran nuclear deal that President Barack Obama and world leaders negotiated. Though Flynn noted Trump has criticized that deal, officials declined to say whether Trump planned to follow through on his campaign pledge to renegotiate it. "The Obama administration failed to respond adequately to Tehran's malign actions - including weapons transfers, support for terrorism and other violations of international norms," Flynn said.

The White House also faulted Iran for backing Houthi rebels in Yemen who on Tuesday claimed a successful missile strike against a warship belonging to a Saudi-led coalition fighting to reinstall Yemen's internationally recognized government. The media arm of the Shiite rebels said the vessel was believed to belong to the Saudi Arabian navy. Administration officials said Iran was providing key support by arming, training and financing the rebels, with a goal of leveraging its relationship with the Houthis to "build a long-term presence in Yemen."

The White House said the goal in putting Iran "on notice" was to signal to Tehran that it needed to rethink its behavior. Flynn said Iran specifically violated the UN's ban on "activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology." Iran's Defense Minister Gen. Hossein Dehghan confirmed Wednesday that Iran conducted a missile test, but did not say when the test was carried out or specify the type of missile. He insisted it wasn't a violation of UN resolutions.

The US said the test was of a medium-range ballistic missile. It ended with a "failed" re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, said a US defense official,



WASHINGTON: National Security Adviser Michael Flynn speaks during the daily news briefing at the White House, in Washington. —AP

who wasn't authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity. Reports of the test emerged after Trump signed an executive order last week temporarily suspending immigration from Iran and six other majority-Muslim countries. On one point, the US and Iran agree: The test didn't violate the nuclear deal itself. Ballistic missile testing wasn't explicitly included in the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and six world powers. But as part of the final negotiations, Iran agreed to an eight-year extension of a UN ban on ballistic missile development. The UN Security Council later endorsed the agreement, calling on Iran not to carry out such tests.

But Iran has flouted the prohibition

regularly in the past year-and-a-half, drawing sanctions from the US but also diplomatic cover from Russia. At America's request, the UN Security Council held a session Tuesday to address the missile test. The council referred the matter to its committee on Iran and asked for an investigation. Iran has long boasted of having missiles that can travel 2,000 kilometers, putting much of the Middle East, including Israel, in range. Such capability would also put US bases in the region in danger. Iran says its missiles are key to deterring a US or Israeli attack. In March, Iran test-fired two ballistic missiles. One was emblazoned with the phrase "Israel must be wiped out" in Hebrew, sparking international outcry. —AP

AN AFGHAN WOMAN MUTILATED BY HUSBAND SEEKS TREATMENT ABROAD

MAZAR-I-SHARIF: An Afghan woman whose husband cut off her ears said yesterday she was seeking donations for treatment abroad, as activists condemned the latest gruesome incident to highlight the abuse of women in the conservative country. Zarina, 23, was still hospitalized in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif yesterday, her mutilated ears bandaged and her face swollen. She said that she could not explain why her husband attacked her in the middle of the night Tuesday in a remote district of Balkh province, bordering Uzbekistan.

"He woke up at three in the morning, he tied my legs, my hands with my veil ... I was begging him (to stop) but he didn't listen to me." The husband punched his young wife several times then grabbed a sharp knife and sliced both her ears before disappearing. Zarina bled all night, until a neighbor found her in the morning and rushed her to relatives, who took her to hospital in Mazar-i-Sharif, capital of Balkh province.

"She arrived at the ICU at 9.30; both of her ears were cut. She was in shock ... imagine how much blood she lost," said

hospital chief Dr Shafir Shayek. Zarina said she did not know why her husband attacked her, saying she had always obeyed him, even when he refused to let her visit her mother "because he said I might meet boys." "He was very rude, very harsh, when he became angry he started beating everyone - his dad, his mum, he didn't care," she said. Zarina and her husband were betrothed when she was 13, though they did not marry for another seven years. Hospital officials said he was known for drug use, though they did not specify which drug.

Yesterday the man was still on the run, but "we opened an investigation to stop him," said Balkh governor's spokesman Sher Jan Durrani. Zarina said she is seeking private donations to fund a trip abroad for treatment. If she cannot raise the money, she said, "I implore Afghan officials" for help. Balkh women's rights activist Fahima Rahimi said the attack was "only the latest" example of "disgusting violence" and against Afghan women. "Afghan officials should bring the perpetrator of this crime to justice so that it is a lesson for others," she said. —AFP

PREGNANT AND ABANDONED BY SOLDIERS IN NIGERIA'S NE

KANO: Umami Hassan sat on the trunk of a felled tree, her eyes fixed on her bulging belly. She was just weeks away from giving birth but tears rolled down her cheeks. "I was in love with a soldier who got me pregnant," she said recently on the outskirts of the Borno state capital, Maiduguri, in northeast Nigeria. "He was redeployed when I was two months pregnant," she explained. Umami, 18, and her army lover kept in touch by telephone and she hoped to join him one day to bring up their baby in the economic capital Lagos, 1,200 kilometers away in the southwest.

But she said her dreams were crushed when he refused to provide money for her antenatal care. "I don't have food to eat, I only eat what I get from friends," she added. Ahmed Bolori, the coordinator of local charity the Fa'ash Foundation, said the teenager was one of "hordes" of young women seduced by soldiers sent to the northeast to fight Boko Haram. "A lot of young women have been impregnated by military officers who take advantage of these women," he said. "Before the pregnancy is detected the military officer is posted to another place and he cannot be traced."

'Not reachable'

Kaltime Ari, also 18, said the father of her young son was also a soldier. He gave her money for an abortion but she refused to go through with it, she said. "I was four months pregnant when he left and I don't know where he is now. His

phone is not reachable." Amina Mohammed's soldier boyfriend was redeployed to northern Borno state when she was three months pregnant with her son, Umar. Now aged two, the toddler has never seen his father. "His colleague took me to Konduga (37 kilometers, 23 miles from Maiduguri) to see him but I was told he had been redeployed to Gwoza 90 kilometers away," she explained. "It was dangerous for me to go to Gwoza at the time because of Boko Haram, which made me come back and accept my fate."

Poverty, hunger, impunity

The three women talk of futile attempts to force their boyfriends to take responsibility, visits to the men's superiors, being brushed off with excuses and having to survive on charity. Boko Haram's Islamist insurgency has killed 20,000 and made more than 2.6 million homeless in the northeast since 2009. But Bolori said the abandoned women were just as much victims. "They are invariably poor, hungry and uneducated which make them ready prey for the soldiers. Impunity also emboldens the perpetrators who go unpunished," he said. In October last year, Human Rights Watch said camp leaders, civilian vigilantes, police officers and soldiers had raped and sexually exploited women and girls displaced by the conflict. The organization said it had documented 43 cases of abuse in July at seven camps in Maiduguri for displaced people. Women and

girls were forced into sex and given false promises of marriage, food and money.

But they were abandoned if they became pregnant. The government has promised a "discreet and unbiased investigation" into the claims, about which President Muhammadu Buhari said he was "worried and shocked". Supplies of food, clothing and medicine have been irregular to those who have fled the violence; many of the women are widowed and the girls orphaned, making them vulnerable to exploitation. Kaltime said desperate times have led to desperate measures. "There is hunger in Maiduguri, people don't have food and have no money to buy anything to eat," she added. "This is why many young women like me end up sleeping with soldiers and getting pregnant because they are the ones with money to spend."

Umami and Kaltime said their parents kicked them out when they discovered the pregnancies. Umami moved in with friends while Kaltime went to her godmother's. Amina still lives with her parents but says their attitude towards her has changed and she is no longer treated with love and affection. Northern Nigeria is predominantly Muslim and conservative. Women who become pregnant outside marriage face rejection by their families for supposedly bringing them dishonor. "In our culture unwanted pregnancies are really unwanted," said Bolori, warning of the need to accept the children regardless of the manner of their birth. —AFP



SANAA: Yemenis search under the rubble of damaged houses following reported Saudi-led coalition air strikes on the outskirts of the Yemeni capital Sanaa. —AFP

QAEDA STANDS TO GAIN FROM TRUMP STRIKES SAUDI SOLDIER KILLED IN BORDER SHOOTOUT

RIYADH: A Saudi soldier has been killed in a firefight on the border with Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition has been battling rebels, the interior ministry said yesterday. A border guard post in Jazan province came under heavy Yemeni rebel fire at 6.30 am (0330 GMT) on Wednesday, the ministry said. The army intervened to back up the border guards and one soldier was killed. At least 113 Saudis have now been killed in skirmishes or rocket strikes along the frontier since the coalition launched its intervention in Yemen almost two years ago.

The gun battle came as forces loyal to Yemeni President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi pressed an assault against the rebels with coalition backing just across the border around the Red Sea coastal town of Midi. Early last month, loyalist forces launched a two-pronged offensive along the coast,

thrusting north from the Bab Al-Mandab strait at the entrance to the Indian Ocean and south from the Saudi border. On Monday, the coalition said two Saudi sailors had been killed in a rebel "suicide" boat strike on a frigate patrolling off the coast. The rebels said they hit the ship with a guided missile.

Qaeda stands to gain

Meanwhile, the International Crisis Group warned yesterday that Al-Qaeda is gaining ground in Yemen and could benefit from military actions like the deadly raid by elite US forces ordered by President Donald Trump. "The Yemeni branch of Al-Qaeda is stronger than it has ever been," ICG said in a report documenting the spread of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

"The first military actions by the Trump administration in Yemen bode poorly for the

prospect of smartly and effectively countering AQAP," read the report, released after Sunday's US air raid in central Yemen. While Washington has said at least 14 suspected jihadists and one US Navy SEAL were killed in the strike, ICG said the death toll included "many civilians, including at least 10 women and children". The think-tank warned that strikes like the January 29 raid on Baida province could increase fear of or even hostility towards the United States among civilians, providing fertile ground for recruitment by AQAP.

"The use of US soldiers, high civilian casualties and disregard for local tribal and political dynamics... plays into AQAP's narrative of defending Muslims against the West and could increase anti-US sentiment and with it AQAP's pool of recruits," said the Brussels-based ICG. —Agencies

TURKEY-BACKED REBELS FIGHTING AS PART OF EUPHRATES SHIELD

BEIRUT: A rapid advance by the Syrian army towards the Islamic State-held city of Al-Bab risks sparking a confrontation with Turkey as Damascus seeks to stop its neighbor penetrating deeper into a strategically important area of northern Syria. Northern Syria is one of the most complicated battlefields of the multi-sided Syrian war, with Islamic State now being fought there by the Syrian army, Turkey and its rebel allies, and an alliance of US-backed Syrian militias. In less than two weeks, Syrian army units have moved to within 6 km of Al-Bab, a city that is also being targeted in a campaign waged by the Turkish military and its allies, groups fighting under the Free Syrian Army banner.

A source in the military alliance fighting in support of President Bashar Al-Assad told Reuters on Wednesday the Syrian army aimed to reach Al-Bab and was ready "to clash with the FSA fighting" alongside the Turkish army if necessary. However, the source, a non-Syrian, said the main aim was to frustrate Turkey's ambitions and "to acquire a strong hand in the game unfolding on that front", rather than to provoke an all-out confrontation.

If a clash does occur, it would be the first time Syrian government forces have confronted the Turkish army on the ground in northern Syria since Turkey launched its operation in August. Russia, Assad's most powerful ally, has carried out air strikes targeting Islamic State in the Al-Bab area in support of both sides, underlining big shifts in the diplomatic landscape. The non-Syrian military source spoke on condition of anonymity as he was not an official spokesman for the pro-Assad alliance.

The attack is led by the army's elite Tiger Force, with intelligence support from a command centre in Aleppo staffed partly by Iranian advisors, the pro-Assad source said. The army campaign was receiving Russian air cover "when asked for". Assad has been backed in the war by an array of Iranian-backed Shiite militias, including Hezbollah, and the Russian air force. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based group reporting on the war, said on Wednesday the Turkey-backed forces had made new advances to the southwest of Al-Bab, calling this an effort to halt the gains by Syrian government forces.

Turkey launched its campaign in Syria, "Euphrates Shield", in order to secure its frontier from Islamic State and halt the advance of the powerful Kurdish YPG militia. Helping rebels to topple Assad is no longer seen as a priority for Ankara. The Euphrates Shield campaign has carved out an effective buffer zone controlled by Turkey-backed rebel groups, obstructing the YPG's plans of linking up Kurdish controlled areas in northeastern and northwestern Syria. Turkey sees the YPG as a terrorist group and a threat to its stability.

The YPG and allied militia are receiving air support from a US-led coalition because they are also fighting Islamic State, which has declared swathes of Syrian territory part of its "caliphate" that also stretches into Iraq. Turkey has criticized the coalition for what it sees as insufficient air support for the ground offensive, while welcoming Russian air strikes coordinated with it in the Al-Bab area this month. "We are carrying out our efforts with the coalition forces, and Russia provides support from time to time as well," Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said last week. —Reuters

WIFE TV CLIP POSES NEW PROBLEMS FOR FILLON

PARIS: French presidential candidate Francois Fillon was fighting to keep his campaign alive yesterday as a TV interview with his wife added fuel to fake job claims and some members of his party openly plotted to replace him. One of France's main investigative news programs, Envoye Special, is set to air previously unseen footage yesterday of Fillon's British-born wife Penelope talking to a journalist in 2007. Envoye Special presenter Elise Lucet said that "several interesting phrases" had been found in the long-forgotten interview, including that she had never been her husband's parliamentary assistant.

The British journalist who did the text version of the interview for the Sunday Telegraph newspaper, Kim Willsher, said she did not recall the phrase in question and that she had never seen the complete video. The interview was "not a political interview, it was a 'wife of' piece," she said. Fillon had been leading the presidential race until allegations emerged in the Canard Enchaîné newspaper that his wife earned a pre-tax income of 830,000 euros (\$900,000) as a parliamentary assistant over more than a decade despite no-one recalling her ever working at the National Assembly. A poll on Wednesday showed Fillon would crash out in the first round in

April behind far-right leader Marine Le Pen and 39-year-old centrist Emmanuel Macron, who is rising fast in the polls.

Facing a judicial investigation over his wife's supposed role, 62-year-old Fillon has flatly denied the accusations and insists the previously low-profile Penelope worked for him. Two of the couple's children were also employed as his parliamentary assistant at one point, earning an additional 84,000 euros before tax. The accusations are highly damaging for Fillon, who campaigned as a sleaze-free economic reformer who would slash public spending by cutting 500,000 civil servants' jobs. —AFP



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FOREIGN POLICY CHALLENGES PILE UP FOR TRUMP

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump's brief honeymoon from global affairs is over. After a week of relative calm and domestic preoccupations, actors from Russia to Iran are testing the new US president's mettle. On the face of it, a recent Iranian ballistic missile test and a Russian-backed incursion deeper into Ukraine appear to have little in common and less to do with the man in the Oval Office. But make no mistake, both were moves designed to test the Republican leader. Trump's election has ended diplomatic business as usual. No one is quite sure what the neophyte president knows about the world or what he will decide on any given issue.

Tehran and Moscow apparently have decided to find out. Since Trump spoke to President Vladimir Putin for an hour on Saturday, there has been a significant increase in violence around the Ukrainian industrial hub of Avdiivka. It is unlikely that Trump gave Putin the green light for operations, but since the call, 19 people have died as separatists shelled the town of 20,000 with repeated rounds of Grad multiple rocket systems and artillery fire. During Barack Obama's presidency, such incursions brought swift condemnation, calls for Russia and its allies to return to ceasefire agreements, support for Ukraine and a drip-drip of US and European sanctions against Moscow.

During the last four days of increasing violence, European capitals shouted concern, but Trump's White House—which is still finding its feet—made no public comment. Instead, the State Department released a comment on day three, saying it was “deeply concerned with the recent spike in violence” and noting Ukrainian casualties, but without naming the culprit. On day four, White House spokesman Sean Spicer said the president has been “kept aware” of the situation.

Transatlantic unity

There is growing concern among European diplomats that Trump, at best, is showing neglect. At worst, Ukraine may be collateral damage in his desire to improve relations with Russia. “Transatlantic unity has been decisive in pushing back against Russian aggression against Ukraine in the last years,” said Ulrich Speck, a foreign policy analyst at the Elcano Royal Institute. Sanctions-agreed between Obama and German chancellor Angela Merkel helped stop Russian advances, Speck said. Obama and Merkel made any sanctions relief contingent on Putin respecting the Minsk ceasefire agreement. “If this unity falls apart, Russia could feel encouraged to restart the war in Eastern Ukraine, in order to destabilize the Ukrainian government,” said Speck.

There are early signs that the unity is already fraying. The Kremlin's readout of the Trump-Putin call spoke of “restoring mutually beneficial trade and economic ties”—an oblique reference to sanctions. Colin Kahl, who was intimately involved in managing the Ukraine crisis in Obama's White House, expressed concern that Trump could back Russia's view of events and “blame the victim,” causing a split with Europe. The real danger, he said on Twitter, is “Ukraine feeling abandoned” and so Ukrainian nationalists take matters into their own hands—deepening the spiral of violence.

Missile offense

Transatlantic unity is also being tested in the Middle East. On Wednesday, after days of evasion, Iran's Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan presented another problem for Trump when he admitted that the Islamic Republic recently tested a ballistic missile. The medium-range missile was fired Sunday and saw a “failure of the re-entry vehicle,” according to one US official. But the test was not just military in scope—it was also a political statement. Throughout the election campaign, Trump has sounded a tough tone on Iran, vowing to stop Tehran's missile program and tear up a deal curbing its nuclear program. —AFP

TRUMP RIPPED INTO AUSTRALIAN LEADER

CALLED IT THE WORST CALL BY FAR

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump ripped into his Australian counterpart during their call last week, reports said, castigating a refugee accord he later described on Twitter as a “dumb deal.” The Washington Post said Trump abruptly cut short the fiery conversation after criticizing the agreement to re-settle people kept in Pacific camps, sparking a war of words with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull yesterday after the report surfaced. Australia is considered a close US ally—one of the so-called “Five Eyes” with which the US routinely shares sensitive intelligence—and



PERU: In this file photo, Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull attends the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) CEO Summit in Lima, Peru. —AP

the call might have been expected to be smooth sailing.

But, according to the Post, Trump's assessment was the opposite. Of his four conversations with world leaders that day “This was the worst call by far,” it cited him as telling Turnbull, shortly before he terminated the telephone meeting. Australian government sources told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation the report was “substantially accurate.” Turnbull said he was disappointed details of the “very frank and forthright” exchange had been leaked. “As far as the call is concerned I'm very disappointed that there has been a leak of purported details of the call in

Washington,” he told Sydney radio station 2GB.

“But I want to make one observation about it—the report that the president hung up is not correct. The call ended courteously.” He added that Canberra had “very, very strong standards in the way we deal with other leaders and we are not about to reveal details of conversations other than in a manner that is agreed.” The Post's account is markedly different from the official read-out of the call provided by both governments.

Turnbull said Monday that Trump had agreed to honor the deal struck with then president Barack Obama to resettle an unspecified number of the 1,600 people Australia holds in offshore processing centers in Nauru and Papua New Guinea. There were fears the new US president would rescind it after he signed an executive order last week to suspend the arrival of refugees to the US for at least 120 days, and bar entry for three months to people from seven Muslim-majority countries.

Diplomatic crisis

After the Post story broke late Wednesday, Trump weighed in on Twitter and threw the agreement into doubt. “Do you believe it? The Obama Administration agreed to take thousands of illegal immigrants from Australia. Why? I will study this dumb deal!” he wrote. After seeing the tweet, Turnbull insisted Trump had already agreed it would go ahead. “The commitment made by the president in that call was made and we announced that and it was confirmed by his spokesman a day or so later,” he said.

Reports of the Turnbull-Trump conversation came as the US and Mexican governments were denying claims that the former reality TV star had threatened to send troops into Mexico to deal with drug cartels. Mexican journalist Dolia Estevez, citing “confidential” US and Mexican sources, said Trump made the threat during an hour-long phone call with President Enrique Pena Nieto today. Mexican and White House officials vehemently denied the report.

Relations have plunged into the biggest diplomatic crisis between the two neighbors in decades. Trump angered Mexicans last week by ordering the construction of a massive border wall and vowing to make their country pay for the wall. Pena Nieto has pledged that his government will never pay for the barrier and canceled a meeting with Trump scheduled for this week in Washington. In addition to the row over the wall, Trump wants to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico. Mexican officials expect talks to begin in May. —AFP



WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump pauses during a meeting in the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington. —AP

TRUMP TO MEXICO: TAKE CARE OF BAD HOMBRES OR US MIGHT

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump warned in a phone call with his Mexican counterpart that he was ready to send US troops to stop “bad hombres down there” unless the Mexican military does more to control them, according to an excerpt of a transcript of the conversation obtained by The Associated Press. The excerpt of the call did not detail who exactly Trump considered “bad hombres,” nor did it make clear the tone and context of the remark, made in today morning's phone call between the leaders. It also did not contain Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto's response. Mexico denies that Trump's remarks were threatening. Still, the excerpt offers a rare and striking look at how the new president is conducting diplomacy behind closed doors. Trump's remarks suggest he is using the same tough and blunt talk with world leaders that he used to rally crowds on the campaign trail. Eduardo Sanchez, spokesman for Mexico's presidential office, denied the tone of the conversation was hostile or humiliating, saying it was respectful. “It is absolutely false that the president of the United States threatened to send troops to Mexico,” Sanchez said in an interview with Radio Formula on Wednesday night. A White House spokesman did not respond to requests for comment.

The Mexican Foreign Relations Department had earlier said: “The negative statements you refer to did not occur during said telephone call. On the contrary, the tone was constructive.” The phone call between the leaders was intended to patch things up between the new president and his ally. The two have had a series of public spats over Trump's determination to have Mexico pay for the planned border wall, something Mexico steadfastly refuses to agree to. “You have a bunch of bad hombres down there,” Trump told Pena Nieto, according to the excerpt given to AP. “You aren't doing enough to stop them. I think your military is scared. Our military isn't, so I just might send them down to take care of it.” —AP

ICELAND, AN UNEXPECTED ARCTIC ASYLUM FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

REYKJAVIK: The wind blows in icy gusts and the rain gently melts the snow: Welcome to Iceland. Far from their hometown Damascus, Joumaa and his family don't mind the Arctic cold, they're just happy to be living in safety. With 330,000 inhabitants surrounded by volcanoes, glaciers and geysers, Iceland is an unusual destination for refugees fleeing war in Syria. But since 2015, 118 Syrians have found hope for a new and tranquil life in the Nordic nation.

Many of them lived in Lebanon for several years before coming to the land of ice and fire, sent by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Most of them have settled in the capital Reykjavik and its surroundings, while others are beginning their new lives in Akureyri in the north of the country, 70 kilometers (45 miles) south of the Arctic Circle. Akureyri is where Joumaa Naser, his wife and their five children now call home. The state finances their rent for one year and pays them an allowance for daily expenses.

The Red Cross meanwhile finances Icelandic language classes and cultural courses. Speaking Icelandic is the main

obstacle for Joumaa, sporting a finely trimmed moustache and bundled up in a down jacket, his words translated by an interpreter. Does the harsh Nordic climate bother him? Not so much. "We're able to adapt to any conditions here, whether they're easy or difficult, we can live with them," he tells AFP. "It's only the language that is a bit complicated. We need time to become fully adapted," he adds.

Friends and football

But Joumaa's children, including his son Amjad, are picking up the language faster. Making friends and playing local sports like football have helped them adapt to their new homeland. "I like Iceland because it's very nice and there are very nice people. Here we like the snow because in Syria, maybe you'll see the snow but maybe not," Amjad says with a laugh as he throws himself down to make a snow angel. On the other side of the North Atlantic Island, in a residential suburb of Reykjavik, live Mustafa and Basma.

In their modern and soberly decorated two-room apartment of 50 square meters,

located just a stone's throw from the ocean, the couple enjoy their newfound security, far from the chaos of Latakia, the Mediterranean port city in Syria which they fled. "They (Icelanders) welcomed us in a very nice way," says 30-year-old Mustafa Akra, thin glasses perched on his nose and a cap on his head.

Child of exile

Mustafa says some people he has met in Iceland are "racist", but fewer than in other countries. Support for the anti-immigration Icelandic National Front, founded in early 2016 when the first Syrian refugees began arriving, remains minimal. The party garnered only 0.2 percent of votes in October's snap election. And according to a survey carried out for Amnesty International in September, more than 85 percent of Icelanders want to take in more refugees. "People are shy to advertise their opposition against refugees. It's not a popular view here," says Linda Blondal, the Syrian couple's neighbor who is helping them integrate into Icelandic society.

The couple knew little or nothing about

their new home before coming. "We had never heard of Iceland before arriving here. We barely knew where it was!", explains Basma, who wears a hijab. Mustafa, a strapping man willing to work hard, ended up finding a job. But it wasn't easy—he speaks neither Icelandic nor English. In Syria he worked as a taxi driver, a car mechanic, a cook, a house painter and an electrician. He now works for Ali Baba, a Middle Eastern restaurant in the centre of Reykjavik.

The family is set to grow, as Basma is expected to give birth to their first child, a boy, in the coming weeks. "I'm proud that he will be born in Iceland, as safe as possible in a beautiful country," the 28-year-old mum-to-be says. Iceland registered 791 asylum applications last year, mostly from Balkan countries. Only 100 have been granted refugee status, including 25 Iraqis, 17 Syrians and 14 Iranians. A year ago, then-prime minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson welcomed the first six Syrian refugee families at Reykjavik airport. And on Monday, President Gudni Johannesson received another five refugees at his official residence. —AFP



BRASILIA: Senator Eunício Oliveira speaks during the Senate session to elect the new president of Brazil's upper house of Congress in Brasília. — AFP

TEMER ALLY ELECTED AS BRAZIL SENATE SPEAKER

BRASILIA: An ally of Brazilian President Michel Temer, millionaire businessman Eunício Oliveira, was elected Senate speaker Wednesday, despite being named in the investigation into the Petrobras corruption scandal that ensnared his predecessor. The Senate vote was a victory for the center-right president as he seeks to push through sweeping pension and labor reforms to haul Latin America's largest economy out of its worst recession in a century. But it also served to underline the ongoing threat Temer faces in the multibillion-dollar scandal centered on state oil company Petrobras.

Oliveira, a powerful figure in Temer's PMDB party, replaces fellow party member Renan Calheiros, who steps down after being charged with corruption in the Petrobras case. However, Oliveira could eventually face charges himself. In a plea bargain, a former executive for construction firm Odebrecht—which has admitted to paying fat bribes to land inflated Petrobras contracts—named him as one of the politicians involved in the scheme, according to Brazilian media reports. A source close to Odebrecht confirmed the reports. Oliveira, 64, is a senator for the state of Ceara, in Brazil's impoverished northeast.

He runs a small agribusiness empire and also a security and logistics firm that has recently won hefty federal contracts, according to the newspaper Estado de Sao Paulo. In his 2014 financial statement, he declared assets of 99 million reais (\$31 million) — triple what he declared when he was elected to the Senate three years earlier. Calheiros, who successfully battled finish his term as speaker after being caught up in a dozen graft investigations, now takes over Oliveira's old job as PMDB leader in the Senate. —AFP

TILLERSON TAKES CHARGE OF RESTIVE STATE DEPARTMENT

TILLERSON VOWS TO SERVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

WASHINGTON: Former ExxonMobil chief executive Rex Tillerson was sworn in Wednesday to take charge of a US State Department simmering with opposition to President Donald Trump's refugee ban. After the 64-year-old oilman's nomination was confirmed by the Senate, he headed to the White House, where Trump formally named the political newcomer Washington's next top diplomat.

"This is a man that is respected all over the world before he even begins," Trump said, thanking Tillerson. "He left a very good job for this, I want to tell you." Also in the Oval Office as Tillerson was sworn in was Trump's chief strategist Steve Bannon, the nationalist former boss of right-wing news platform Breitbart. Bannon is emerging as a key foreign policy figure and was reportedly involved in drafting the visa and refugee ban that triggered global protests. Tillerson thanked the president and vowed to serve him and the American people at all times. He is due to meet State Department staff at his new headquarters yesterday.

He takes over an agency already rattled by top-level resignations and by Trump's order suspending refugee arrivals and visas for citizens from some Muslim countries. On Tuesday, around 1,000 officials from US missions across the globe signed and submitted a protest memo, decrying Trump's ban as an affront to American values. The State Department "dissent channel" has existed since the Vietnam War to allow diplomats to question official policy, but the scale of the protest was unprecedented.

One official, speaking to AFP condition of anonymity, warned a bureaucratic "insurgency" against Trump is under way. Others spoke of colleagues bursting into tears. Tillerson has not made his views known on Trump's executive order, but the White House's response was uncompromising. Trump's spokesman Sean Spicer said the travel restrictions would help weed out



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump shakes hands with Rex Tillerson (L) as Tillerson's wife Renda St. Clair look on after Tillerson was sworn in as Secretary of State in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

extremists and keep America safe. The dissident diplomats, Spicer declared, "should either get with the program or they can go." His threat outraged many at the State Department, who argue that their in-house experts should have been consulted before the order was signed.

Amateur policy

Thomas Countryman, a 35-year career diplomat who retired on Monday as assistant secretary of state, urged Tillerson to protect his new employees from retribution. "If you don't trust professional public servants to help you on foreign policy then by definition you end up with an amateur foreign policy," he told MSNBC. Tillerson comes into office after a decade as Exxon's CEO and trails an impressive

reputation as a manager of a large international organization.

ExxonMobil's global empire has been compared to a quasi-state with its own policy. It is the world's largest publicly-traded energy firm—a \$350 billion corporation with revenue last year of \$226 billion and more than 70,000 employees. The US State Department has an annual budget of only \$65 billion and employs 13,000 diplomats, 11,000 civil servants and 45,000 local staff at 270 missions worldwide. At Exxon, Tillerson was the ultimate insider. He joined the firm in 1975 as a young engineer straight out of college and worked his way up the ranks to the top. At the State Department, by contrast, he will come in as an outsider with no political or diplomatic experience. — AFP

PROTESTS ERUPT AGAINST CHINESE PROJECTS IN SRI LANKA

HAMBANTOTA, Sri Lanka: China signed a deal with Sri Lanka late last year to further develop the strategic port of Hambantota and build a huge industrial zone nearby, a key part of Beijing's ambitions to create a modern-day "Silk Road" across Asia. The agreement was welcome relief for the island nation of 20 million people. As they try to reduce the country's debts, officials in Colombo see China's plans to include Sri Lanka on its "One Belt, One Road" initiative as an economic lifeline. China has spent almost \$2 billion so far on Hambantota and a new airport and wants to spend much more.

But Beijing now faces a new and unpredictable challenge to its presence in Sri Lanka and broader Silk Road project. Hundreds of Sri Lankans clashed with police at the opening last month of the industrial zone in the south, saying they would not be moved from their land. It was the first time opposition to Chinese investments in Sri Lanka turned violent. Leading the campaign against the latest deal, which he says is too

generous to China, is former President Mahinda Rajapaksa, an influential opposition politician who first allowed Chinese investment in Sri Lanka when he was leader from 2005-15. The clashes, in which demonstrators threw stones and police used tear gas and water cannon, underlined the depth of resentment at China's expansion felt by some local people, who feared they would be forced from their homes. The Chinese foreign ministry said Beijing was doing what was best for both countries. The Chinese embassy in Colombo did not respond to a request for comment on investments in Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lankan protests are not the first sign of opposition to China's One Belt plans to build land corridors across Southeast Asia, Pakistan and Central Asia and maritime routes opening up trade with the Middle East and Europe. Rail links from China through Laos and Thailand have hit the buffers over resistance to what they say are Beijing's excessive demands and unfavorable financing.

Impinges on sovereignty

Under the original deal negotiated by Rajapaksa during his tenure, the container terminal at Hambantota was to be operated by a joint venture between China Harbor Engineering Co. and state-run China Merchants Port Holdings for 40 years. The Port Authority of Sri Lanka would retain control of all other terminals in the harbor, as well as a 6,000 acre industrial zone. But last month, the administration of Rajapaksa's successor President Maithripala Sirisena, who came to office threatening to cancel high-value Chinese contracts on the grounds they were unfair, approved a deal to lease 80 percent of the port to China Merchants Port Holdings for \$1.12 billion.

The company also got the lease for 99 years. Officials said Sirisena's hand was forced by the country's high debt burden and the fact that inflows from countries including India and the United States were less than expected, despite a \$1.5 billion, three-year IMF loan program agreed last year. "A 99-year lease impinges on Sri

Lanka's sovereign rights, because a foreign company will enjoy the rights of the landlord over the free port and the main harbor," said Rajapaksa. "This is not an issue with China or with foreign investors. It is about getting the best deal for Sri Lanka," he told Reuters in an interview.

The government also announced the lease of much bigger 15,000 acres of land around the port for an industrial zone controlled by China Merchants Port Holdings, which has become a lightning rod for protests. The demonstrators said they feared eviction from their land to make way for the site, a concern that China put down to a misunderstanding. "Chinese companies have from the very start upheld the holding of talks and consultations with Sri Lanka on the basis of one's own free will, equality and mutual respect according to market principles," said Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying. China Merchants Port Holdings declined to comment on the protests. —Reuters

HOW DRUGS ARE USED TO WOO VOTERS IN PUNJAB

FREE DELIVERY OF DRUGS DURING ELECTIONS

GURDASPUR, India: Opium addict Rajendar usually has to beg, steal or borrow to get his fix but at election season in India's Punjab province, a packet is delivered to his home in a bid to win his vote. "Like all addicts, I love elections and wish we had them every month," the 38-year-old says with a twinkle in his eye. "It's the easiest time to get hold of what you need and everyone gets what they want. Normally we have to go out and find a dealer but at election time it gets delivered to your home for free." Rajendar, a farm laborer who is married with two children, is one of tens of thousands of addicts in Punjab who have earned the northern state an unwelcome reputation as India's drugs capital.

While inducing voters with household appliances, alcohol or cash is widespread in some parts; electoral officials say candidates in Punjab try to woo addicts with free drugs. Punjab is one of five states holding elections in the next few weeks, with the first round beginning on Feb 4. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and opposition leader Rahul Gandhi have addressed rallies in major towns and cities across the state, trying to sway voters with their oratory. But, as a former chief election commissioner explained, the appeal to voters in rural villages is often at a baser level.

Heroin seizures

"In 2012, when we conducted the Punjab state elections, we suspected the use of drugs during polls... and found drugs were in fact a very serious issue," SY Quraishi, chief commissioner from 2010-12, said. "In one month alone, we recovered around 55 kilograms of heroin, around 430 kilograms of poppy husk (the raw ingredient of opium) and found almost every psychotropic substance in circulation." The results of a government-commissioned survey in 2015 estimated there could be as many as 320,000 "opioid dependent individuals" in the state which has a population of 27 million. Heroin was the most commonly-used drug, followed by opium which is



INDIA: In this photograph, Indian XX Romesh Mahajan speaks during an interview at the Red Cross Integrated and Rehabilitation Centre in Gurdaspur. —AFP

legally grown in parts of India under government license for medical use.

In the four weeks since the date of this year's polls was announced at the beginning of Jan, the commission says more than 2.63 tons of drugs, including heroin and opium, have been seized. That compares with a figure of 2.03 tons in Uttar Pradesh which has a population of around 205 million and is also holding state elections. Drugs have become a hot button election issue, with opposition parties blaming the current state administration—an ally of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party—of looking the other way at the crisis. Candidates promise new laws or heavier sentences for drug offences, their tough-talking pledges warmly cheered at rallies.

But Romesh Mahajan, project director of an addiction rehabilitation centre, says campaigners for parties or independent candidates prey on villages by offering them the same drugs they pledge to eradicate. Mahajan said the problem was particularly acute in the period before the date was set for the polls which is

when the commission's monitors start trying to enforce a code of conduct with flying visits. Some voters, particularly women, are identified as wanting money and are subsequently handed cash. Others however are identified as wanting their various addictions fed. "There are people who want alcohol and then there are people who want opium or heroin or pills," Mahajan said at his centre in Gurdaspur district.

Rajendar, who attends Mahajan's clinic but asked that his surname not be used, said addicts were more than happy to promise their vote to a particular candidate, regardless of policies. "You never care about who's going to win. As long as they give you your fix, you promise to vote for them. You make the same promise to whoever comes along," said Rajendar who is trying to wean himself off opium. "We know that after the elections, we won't see them again so you have to enjoy it while it lasts." Another addict called Indarjeet, who is trying to kick a heroin habit, said it was "very common" to be offered drugs in return for backing a candidate. —AFP

MYANMAR BUDDHIST MONK MUZZLED AFTER MUSLIM LAWYER'S MURDER

YANGON: A Myanmar Buddhist monk known for scathing anti-Islam tirades has been barred from speaking at an event after the murder of a top Muslim lawyer, a killing that has rattled a nation bristling with religious tension. Ko Ni, a respected legal adviser to the ruling National League for Democracy, was shot in the head on Sunday afternoon as he waited outside Yangon airport while holding his grandson. While assassinations of political figures in Yangon are rare, Buddhist-majority Myanmar has suffered bouts of sectarian violence in recent years.

The unrest has been partially blamed on anti-Muslim rhetoric spread by a radical wing of Buddhist monks. An official from the southern city of Patheingyi said yesterday that local authorities cancelled an event due to be held this week by the movement's leader Wirathu, a monk once dubbed the "face of Buddhist terror" for his vitriolic anti-Muslim sermons. "The preaching event by U Wirathu is banned because of security reasons at this moment," a regional government official said on the condition of anonymity.

Director of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture Aung San Win also said the government was trying to restrict "writing that could incite tension over the assassination of NLD party legal advisor U Ko Ni." The ministry warned of fake news circulating on social media aimed at "destroying the stability of the state using harsh words that could lead to religious conflicts." Ko Ni was a rare voice for religious pluralism and his killing has sent shock waves through Myanmar's already hard-pressed Muslim community.

The 63-year-old also criticized the military's lingering grip on power over the new civilian government led by Aung San Suu Kyi, which has described his death as a political assassination. His death comes amid soaring tensions between Buddhists and Muslims, which make up about five percent of Myanmar's population, after the army launched a deadly crackdown on the Muslim Rohingya minority in northern Rakhine. The military say they are hunting Rohingya "terrorists" who carried out raids on police border posts in Oct. But escapees in Bangladesh, where almost 70,000 have fled, claim the military is raping, torturing and killing Muslims in a campaign rights groups say could amount to crimes against humanity. —AFP

BANGLADESH PROBES POLITICIAN'S WALK ON HUMAN BRIDGE

DHAKA: Bangladesh authorities ordered an investigation yesterday after images of a politician and a then wealthy businessman clambering over groups of students who had been forced to form a human chain went viral. Parents lodged complaints this week after dozens of students were made to stand and form a bridge out of their bodies for an elected mayor who then walked over them in the central district of Chandpur. It was followed by a similar incident in which a businessman was seen walking on the shoulders of students in a celebration to mark his donation of a piece of land to a school in the district of Jamalpur.

Photos of have since gone viral on social media and were widely published in local newspapers, sparking a welter of criticism. "This is a very disturbing and bizarre incident. I've directed the police to take the necessary legal steps," Shahabuddin Khan, chief government administrator of Jamalpur district, said. "The students' parents said they did not send their kids to school be part of this kind of thing which have a negative impact." Chandpur's district administrator appeared to defend the mayor Nur Hossain, who is a ruling Awami League party official, saying it was a traditional celebration for an honored guest.

"But we've an ordered investigation. We are trying to find out whether the elected official did it intentionally," he said, adding the mayor has since "apologized for his action." It was not immediately clear whether either man had actually broken the law but there were widespread calls on Facebook for their arrest on the grounds they had humiliated students. "The people who organize and participate in such events should be punished. We don't need any tradition which requires belittlement of human beings," one Facebook user Ariul Islam wrote. — AFP

S KOREA, US AGREE TO PUSH MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM

SEOUL: South Korea and the United States yesterday agreed to push through with the deployment of a US missile defense system strongly opposed by China, the prime minister said. Hwang Kyo-Ahn and US Defence Secretary James Mattis confirmed that the two allies will go ahead with the installation of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in the South this year as planned, the prime minister's office said. Mattis arrived yesterday in South Korea on the first leg of a trip that also includes Japan, two key allies rattled by US President Donald Trump's ascent to power.

It is the first overseas tour by a senior official in Trump's administration as concerns rise about the direction of American policy in the region under the protectionist and fiery leader. On the campaign trail, Trump threatened to withdraw US forces from the two countries if they do not step up their financial support. Some 28,500 US troops are based in South Korea and 47,000 in Japan. The rhetoric has raised concerns in both Seoul and Tokyo, and in a statement this week South Korea's defence ministry said it hoped Mattis' trip would be "an opportunity for the Trump administration to maintain and strengthen US commitment" to their alliance.

"President Trump ... wanted me to make a very clear statement about the priority that we place on this alliance between our two allies", Mattis said at the start of his talks with Hwang, who serves as the South's acting leader following the impeachment of President Park Geun-Hye in December over corruption charges. The two allies last year announced plans to deploy the THAAD system following a series of North Korean atomic and missile tests, infuriating China which fears it will undermine its own ballistic capabilities. North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un boasted last month that the country was in the "final stages" of developing an intercontinental ballistic missile.

But it remains unclear whether the missile shield system would actually be deployed in South Korea after the country's leading presidential candidate and opposition member Moon Jae-In argued the decision should be left to the next government. South Korea may hold elections in a matter of months if the Constitutional Court signs off on Park's impeachment. Should it reject the impeachment and restore her to presidency, the election would take place in December. — Reuters



YOGYAKARTA: Officials examine the Boeing 737-800 Garuda plane that skidded off the runway at the Adisutjipto International airport in Yogyakarta yesterday. —AFP

INDONESIAN PLANE SKIDS OFF RUNWAY IN AVIATION MISHAP

JAKARTA: An Indonesian passenger plane carrying 130 people skidded off the runway as it landed at a major airport in heavy rain, the airline said yesterday, the latest mishap to hit the country's aviation sector. No one was hurt after the Boeing 737-800 operated by Indonesian flag carrier Garuda came off the runway at the airport serving the city of Yogyakarta late Wednesday as it arrived from Jakarta. Adisutjipto International Airport, on Java island, was closed following the incident, with authorities saying it would remain shut until yesterday afternoon to allow the plane to be removed from the area.

Services to and from Yogyakarta were axed, with flights

supposed to arrive at the busy airport diverted to the nearby city of Solo. The flight was carrying 123 passengers and seven crew, Garuda spokesman Benny Butarbutar said in a statement. Transport ministry spokesman Agoes Subagio said the accident happened due to heavy rain. The Indonesian archipelago relies heavily on air transport to connect its thousands of islands but has suffered a string of deadly plane crashes in recent years. Yogyakarta airport has faced criticism for its poor safety record. In 2007, 21 people were killed when a Garuda plane overran the runway and burst into flames while landing there. —AFP

CHEAPER METHOD FOR CARBON CAPTURE AT WORK IN INDIA

MUMBAI: As students at the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology in Kharagpur in eastern India, Aniruddha Sharma and Prateek Bumb had one obsession: finding a cheaper, more efficient way to capture carbon emissions to combat climate change. They began working on the problem in 2009, while still at university. The eureka moment came after numerous trials and errors that required re-starting the process 16 times. With no help from the Indian government, Sharma and Bumb tapped private investors. They also won prize money of 3.6 million pounds (\$4.5 million) in a UK competition, giving them access to scientists and academics in the field.

"Carbon capture technology may have the single biggest impact on emissions reduction," said Sharma, co-founder of Carbon Clean Solutions (CCS), now based in London. "But for it to be widely used, it's very important that the technology be cost-effective," said. India is the world's fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gases. As a signatory to the Paris Agreement on climate change, it has committed to ensuring at least 40 percent of its electricity is generated from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030. However, India - and other nations - are also looking for ways to reduce cli-

mate-changing emissions from burning fossil fuels.

Capturing carbon dioxide produced by power plants is one way to cut those emissions. But while most previous technologies have focused on capturing the emissions and pumping them below ground, CCS's technique is a capture-and-utilize one. It uses a patented molecule that captures carbon dioxide from power plant emissions and uses it to make other useful products like baking soda. The technology can be retrofitted onto existing plants, and is cheaper and more efficient than existing methods, Sharma said.

Policy support

Worldwide, technology to capture carbon dioxide emissions and store them underground has struggled to find traction. The UK scrapped plans to spend up to 1 billion pounds to commercialize the technology just days before the Paris climate meeting in 2015. Nevertheless, countries and companies are still keen. BHP Billiton last year gave \$7.4 million to China's Peking University to develop carbon capture technology. India offers no subsidies for carbon capture and instead focuses on increasing its renewable capacity to

cut emissions.

"To encourage innovations like this, we would need more state backing, just as we have seen in the renewable space," said Aruna Kumarankandath at the Centre for Science and Environment in Delhi. "These technologies are hard to develop and scale." There is clearly a market: while Sharma and Bumb's Carbon Clean Solutions has found takers in Europe, its biggest vote of confidence has come from India. Tuticorin Alkali Chemicals & Fertilizers has used the technology at its plant in southern Tamil Nadu state since Oct. At the plant, carbon dioxide is captured from a coal-fired boiler and converted into soda ash, which is used in glass manufacturing, sweeteners and detergents.

The process is projected to save 60,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions a year, a world first, according to Sharma. The cost of capture is about \$30 per ton - about half the cost of other technologies in the market, he said. "The next wave of innovation will reduce the cost further, perhaps even by half, to the point where it's almost equivalent to or less than the emissions tax," he said. "Then it would make more sense to capture the carbon than to emit it," he said. —Reuters

INDONESIA, AUSTRALIA VOW TO CHOKE OFF TERROR FUNDING

JAKARTA: Indonesia and Australia yesterday pledged to “choke off” funding to terrorist groups planning attacks, as fears grow in both countries that Islamic State group supporters may be hatching new plots. There have been a series of IS-inspired assaults and foiled plans in the neighboring countries in recent years as the appeal of IS spawns a new generation of extremists in the region. Indonesian and Australian ministers meeting in Jakarta pledged to halt the flows of illicit money used to fund attacks, while financial intelligence agencies from both countries signed an agreement to tackle the scourge.

“We know that one of the most effective ways to combat the surge of terrorism is to attack the funding and the movement of money,” Australian Attorney-General George Brandis said after the talks. Indonesian Chief Security Minister Wiranto, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, said the

discussions focused on “how we can choke off funding routes.” Indonesian militants fighting with IS in the Middle East are suspected of sending money to finance plots in recent years, while radicalized Indonesian domestic workers in wealthier parts of Asia, such as Hong Kong, have also been accused of transferring funds to extremists back home.

There have also been indications that money to fund extremist activities has been flowing between Indonesia, the world’s most populous Muslim-majority country, and Australia. In 2015 Indonesia’s financial intelligence agency said it suspected that six billion rupiah (\$450,000) linked to terrorism had been transferred from Australia to Indonesia. The agreement announced by the intelligence agencies is a seven-year collaboration that includes sending Australian IT specialists to help the Indonesian side and workshops on counter-terrorism financing.—AFP



JAKARTA: Indonesia’s Chief Security Minister Wiranto shakes hand with Australia’s Attorney-General George Brandis during a press conference in Jakarta yesterday.—AFP



PHILIPPINES’ DUTERTE VOWS TO KILL MORE IN DRUG WAR, USE MILITARY RAISING THIS ISSUE AS THREAT TO NATIONAL SECURITY

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte announced yesterday the military would take a leading role in his deadly drug war, while vowing to kill more traffickers and addicts. “I’m taking in the AFP (Armed Forces of the Philippines) and raising the issue of drugs as a national security threat so that I will call on all the armed forces to assist,” Duterte said as he promised to kill more “son of a bitch” drug addicts.

His comments were the first following a report from Amnesty International that the killings in the drug war, in which more than 6,500 people have died in seven months, may amount to crimes against humanity. They were also the clearest signal of Duterte’s plans for the drug war, after he admitted this week the police force that had initially led the campaign was “corrupt to the core” and said they would no longer be allowed to take part. The 71-year-old former state prosecutor won presidential elections last year after promising during the campaign to eradicate drugs in society within six months by killing tens of thousands of people.

However Duterte has had to sideline the police after a series of scandals emerged over the past month in which police were caught committing murder, kidnapping, extortion and robbery using the

drug war as cover. In one of the highest-profile cases, anti-drug officers kidnapped a South Korean businessman then murdered him inside the national police headquarters as part of an extortion racket, according to an official investigation.

Gone crackers

Amnesty on Wednesday accused police of systemic human rights abuses in the drug war, including shooting dead defenseless people, fabricating evidence, paying assassins to murder drug addicts and stealing from those they killed. It also said police were being paid by their superiors to kill. Amnesty said it documented victims as young as eight years old. “The police are behaving like the criminal underworld that they are supposed to be enforcing the law against,” Amnesty said as it warned that the International Criminal Court may need to investigate possible crimes against humanity.

However Duterte was unrepentant yesterday as he launched a profanity-laced tirade against his critics and rejected charges of human rights abuses. He gave a lengthy explanation of the problems for people who used the highly addictive methamphetamine known locally as shabu and may have gone “crackers.” “And

you bleed for those son(s) of a bitch,” he said, adding that roughly 3,000 had been killed so far. “I will kill more. If only to get rid of drugs.” Police have reported killing 2,555 people in the drug war, while nearly 4,000 others have died in unexplained circumstances, according to official figures.

As he announced plans for using soldiers in the drug crackdown, Duterte remarked how he only had “limited warm bodies” and discussed the pros and cons of imposing “martial law” to fight drugs. “If it’s really needed to preserve the country, maybe. But it’s not the right thing to do at this moment, as you can see,” Duterte said. The defense department, which oversees the military, has asked Duterte’s executive secretary for a written official order to serve as legal basis for the military’s participation in the drug war, ministry spokesman Arsenio Andolong said.

Phelim Kine, Asia deputy director of Human Rights Watch, warned that using the military for policing forces anywhere “heightens the risk of unnecessary or excessive force and inappropriate military tactics.” “There is also a deeply rooted culture of impunity for military abuses in the Philippines,” with only one soldier convicted of an extrajudicial killing since 2001, Kine said.—AFP

THAILAND HOPES FOR UPGRADE IN US HUMAN TRAFFICKING REPORT

BANGKOK: Thailand has stepped up prosecutions for human trafficking and hopes its status will be upgraded in the annual US Trafficking in Persons report, the foreign minister said yesterday. The report, which ranks countries based on anti-trafficking efforts, matters to Thailand’s junta as it tries to fully normalize relations with Washington and to show it is tackling tough issues better than previous civilian administrations.

Last year, Thailand’s status was upgraded a notch to Tier 2 “Watch List.” It had been downgraded to the lowest level, Tier 3, after a 2014 coup. “We believe that any government would have a good feeling about, or even admire, what we have done,” Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai told a news conference. “We certainly are hopeful we’ll be viewed favorably.” In 2016, Thailand investigated 333 cases, prosecuted 301 people and convicted 268, he said. In last year’s TIP report, Thailand reported investigating 317 cases, prosecuting 242 people, and convicting 241.

The military government has vowed to crack down on human trafficking, particularly in Thailand’s multi-billion-dollar seafood industry. But rights groups say millions of migrant workers remain vulnerable to abuse in fishing, the sex trade and other industries. Don did not expect any change in US emphasis on the importance of fighting human trafficking under new President Donald Trump, but said it would remain a priority for Thailand anyway. “We’ll keep on as we have done,” he said. Thailand submitted its report on anti-trafficking efforts for the year 2016 to the United States on Tuesday. The US State Department’s TIP report usually comes out in June.—Reuters

Toronto filmmaker disappears diving off Florida coast



Rob Stewart

The Canadian documentary filmmaker and conservationist Rob Stewart disappeared while diving off Florida's southern coast during the filming of a movie about sharks, the US Coast Guard reported Wednesday. Stewart, 37, vanished Tuesday afternoon during a dive with three of his crew members at the Alligator Reef coral reef, some 4 nautical miles (seven kilometers) off the island of Islamorada. Islamorada belongs to the Florida Keys, an archipelago extending from the state's southern tip and ending at Key West.

The US Coast Guard issued a statement saying it had received a report of a missing diver shortly after 5 pm (2200 GMT). "Coast Guard watch standers issued an Urgent Marine Information Broadcast, launched a Station Islamorada 33-foot Law Enforcement Special Purpose Craft boat crew, launched an Air Station Miami

MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew and diverted the crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Charles Sexton," it said.

The Navy, police and Florida wildlife conservation commission are assisting the search, it added. The reason for Stewart's disappearance remains unknown. Resurfacing at the end of his dive, he went underwater again before the crew's boat was able to pick him up. The other three divers emerged safely. The particularly deep and difficult dive was his third of the day, his sister Alexandra Stewart told the state broadcaster CBC, adding that another crew member appears to have temporarily lost consciousness when he resurfaced.

A biologist and underwater photographer, Stewart was filming a sequel to his best-known 2006 documentary "Sharkwater," about shark hunting and its impact on the marine ecosystem. The film won the

Directors Guild of Canada award and a dozen others the following year. "So happy to be shooting #sharkwater2 with the best cameras and equipment in the world," he wrote in his latest Instagram post three days ago. "For the first time I can show you sharks through my eyes."

The filmmaker was capturing "the personality in #shark faces that people that spend their lives with sharks truly understand," he added. The accompanying picture shows a diver from behind, presumably Stewart, holding a camera on his shoulder. "The search and rescue continues in the Keys this morning," Stewart's film team wrote in a post on the director's Instagram account on Wednesday morning. — AFP



David Cassidy

After a 50-year career, David Cassidy to retire at year end

David Cassidy is wrapping up his 50-year career. The 66-year-old entertainer says he will play his final West Coast concerts this month and plans to retire at year's end. Cassidy says in a statement on his website Wednesday that "traveling and my arthritis" have made performing around the country difficult in recent years. The one-time "Partridge Family" heartthrob says, "This is not a complete 'Good bye' but I'm planning on working much less." He is set to perform in Las Vegas in Feb 17 and in Southern California shows on Feb 18 and Feb 19. A spokeswoman for Cassidy says he will perform some East Coast dates next month as well. — AP



Matthew McConaughey

Matthew McConaughey: Time to embrace fact Trump is president

Matthew McConaughey says it's time for Hollywood to "embrace and shake hands" with the fact that Donald Trump is president. The Oscar winner tells the BBC that Trump's rise to power is "as divisive of an inauguration" as there has ever been. When asked by interviewer Andrew Marr if Hollywood's elite should give Trump a break, McConaughey replied, "They don't have a choice now, he's our president." McConaughey is promoting his new film, "Gold," in which he plays a businessman who discovers the precious metal in the jungles of Indonesia. — AP



This file photo shows singer and songwriter of the Nigerian group 2Face, Idibia, performing after receiving the MTV Africa Music Awards for best artist and best male at a ceremony in Lagos. — AFP

Nigerian police block protest called by music star

Nigerian police said yesterday they would not allow an anti-government protest planned in the commercial hub Lagos by music star 2Face. The popular Afro-Pop artist, whose real name is Innocent Idibia, called on Nigerians earlier this week to march on February 6 in protest of the government's handling of the country's economic crisis. "Information reaching us revealed that some hoodlums are planning to hijack the peaceful protest. As such, we won't allow it to hold in Lagos," Lagos police commissioner Fatai Owooseni told AFP.

"We know that 2Face does not have the capacity to contain such a crowd and we will not fold our hands and watch while things go out of hand," Owooseni said. In a video posted on his Facebook account Tuesday, 2Face urged Nigerians to come out in a "peaceful and articulate manner" for the march. "The need for urgent solutions to the challenges facing Nigerians has become very clear," he said in the video. — AFP

Review: 'The Comedian' a love letter to New York comics

While there are a few good laughs to be had in "The Comedian" - and great cameos by myriad comics - Taylor Hackford's film isn't exactly a comedy. It's a portrait of an aging entertainer, unfortunately hampered by the tired trope of a May-December romance and the implication that men find redemption in success while women find it in motherhood. Such outdated elements detract from an otherwise interesting character study and heartfelt love letter to New York City and the camaraderie among its comedians.

Robert De Niro is Jackie Burke, a once-famous sitcom star who yearns for respect as a standup comic. He resents his fans for associating him with the character he used to play on the hit "Eddie's Home," and he bristles when they call him Eddie. Jackie isn't always kind to his long-suffering manager (Eddie Falco, disappointingly underused) and insults the patrons at the small-town clubs where he performs.

Comedy club

After tussling with a heckler at one of his shows, Jackie is sentenced to jail and community service. He's working at a New York City soup kitchen when he meets Harmony (Leslie Mann), who's also clocking community-service hours. She tells Jackie that she watched "Eddie's Home" as a kid. It was her dad's favorite show. Jackie eventually asks Harmony out, and she tells him straight away that she won't have sex with him (handsome as he may be, there's an obvious 30-year age difference between them). He takes her to a comedy club, and the friendly outing turns into a quid pro quo: She agrees to be his date for his niece's wedding if he'll accompany her to a birthday dinner with her smarmy, overbearing father, Mac (Harvey Keitel).

The wedding scene - which goes on way too long (do we really need to see the wedding band perform two songs?) - hints that Jackie may have a tender heart under his gruff exterior.

But the awkward and ill-conceived dinner with dad sets Harmony up as a pawn between the two men: Will she sleep with Jackie, who declares his intention to do so directly to her father, or will she give into Mac's pressure to move back to Florida to work at the old-age home he owns? It's gross and trite to have these old guys competing for the younger woman's affections (especially since one of them is her dad), and it's an odd conundrum for a woman in her 40s to be facing in 2017.

But this isn't Harmony's story, it's Jackie's. De Niro was on board early: His friend Art Linson, who came up with the story concept, co-wrote the screenplay and produced the film, created the character for him.

Grand dame

Though Jackie bears some resemblance to Jack Byrnes from the "Fockers" films, De Niro does more than put on a sour mug here. He sells Jackie as a standup, and spent months with real comics to prepare for the part. Insult comic and frequent celebrity roaster Jeff Ross helped write Jackie's routines. The cast is a hoot, including Danny DeVito and Patti LuPone as Jackie's put-upon brother and sister-in-law, Charles Grodin as chief of the Friars Club and Cloris Leachman as a grand dame of comedy, plus cameos by comics such as Hannibal Buress, Richard Belzer, Brett Butler, Billy Crystal, Gilbert Gottfried, Jim Norton and Jessica Kirson.

"The Comedian" is all about standup, the culture among comics and what makes them assume that vulnerable and powerful position behind the microphone each night. That's such rich territory, why muck it up with misguided romance? "The Comedian," a Sony Pictures Classics release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "crude sexual references and language throughout." Running time: 120 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four. — AP

'Game of Thrones' music comes to a stage near you

Any fan of the HBO fantasy television series "Game of Thrones" will tell you that the show enralls right from its opening title sequence accompanied by a foreboding instrumental piece played using drums and violins. Later this month, Ramin Djawadi, the composer for the show who wrote this catchy title track, takes a production of music from "Game of Thrones" on a live performance tour across Canada and the US.

Three years in the making, the "Game of Thrones Live Concert Experience" comprises a musical program from all six seasons in chronological order, including "all the spoilers", Djawadi says with a laugh. "As the seasons have progressed and as the story has expanded, so has the score," he said. "And it's exciting every season to find new instrumentation for what we haven't used before." At a first look at rehearsals for the concert on Wednesday night, actor Liam Cunningham was impressed at the "enormous" scope of the production.

With massive screens, a piano raised high on a stage infused in green light, and a choir that performs in a sombre procession, the show promises to excite audiences. "Game of Thrones" has been a television phenomenon that has garnered large praise in the industry, winning a Golden Globe, SAG Awards, a BAFTA and several Emmys. "Listen, the best drama holds a mirror up to society," explained Cunningham. "One could certainly say that certain recently elected officials in a certain country could easily fit into our cast. I'll leave that to your imagination." The "Game of Thrones' Live Concert Experience" begins its tour on February 20 in Minneapolis, and travels across the United States until finishing in Portland, Oregon, on April 2. — Reuters



File photo shows Beyoncé and Jay Z perform on stage during a Get Out The Vote concert in support of Hillary Clinton at Wolstein Center in Cleveland, Ohio. — AFP photos



This file photo shows US singer Beyoncé as she accepts an award on stage during the 2016 MTV Video Music Award at the Madison Square Garden in New York.

Beyoncé takes over Internet with twins news

Beyoncé is pregnant—and this time, she's expecting twins with her husband, rap mogul Jay Z. The pop superstar—who already has a five-year-old daughter, Blue Ivy, with Jay Z—announced the news to her more than 92 million followers on Instagram on Wednesday. Clad in panties and a bra under a flowing veil, Beyoncé posted a picture of herself kneeling beside a human-size floral arrangement, her hands cradling her rounded belly.

"We would like to share our love and happiness. We have been blessed two times over," the 35-year-old singer wrote. "We are incredibly grateful that our family will be growing by two, and we thank you for all your well wishes," she added, signing with Jay Z. In a timeline sure to trigger intrigue, Beyoncé announced the pregnancy a little more than nine months after her last album "Lemonade"—in which she strongly hinted that Jay Z was unfaithful. Beyoncé released "Lemonade," an album intertwined with a film, on April 23. One lyric warns an unfaithful man of a "final warning" that he's "gonna lose your wife" if his behavior doesn't change.

A sullen Jay Z appears at the end of the film to embrace her, suggesting reconciliation. "Lemonade" is in the running for album of the year at the Grammy Awards on February 12, where Beyoncé leads the nominations. Her baby bump will presumably be even more evident two months later, when she is set for the first time to headline Coachella, the two-weekend festival in southern California that is among the world's premier live music events.

Previous miscarriage

Typically reserved, Beyoncé has openly spoken about the pain of a miscarriage before she gave birth to Blue Ivy, saying the heartbeat she had heard during her first pregnancy was "the most beautiful music I ever heard in my life." News of the twins prompted an avalanche of postings on social media—which included a guessing game on the children's names. Twitter reported half a million tweets on Beyoncé within the first 45 minutes as she became the world's top trending item. "When Beyoncé is pregnant I am pregnant," the popular YouTube comedian Tre Melvin tweeted, calling the news a "marvelous start" to February, marked in the United States as Black History Month.

Several of Beyoncé's fans—presumably critics of new US President Donald Trump—declared the announcement the happiest development so far of 2017. Some fans imagined the prospect of a new Jackson-style musical family, with Blue Ivy as the big sister and guide to the twins. Beyoncé was a music prodigy herself when she was growing up in Houston. Then known as Beyoncé Knowles, she started her career as the teenage lead singer of Destiny's Child.



This file photo shows singer Beyoncé during the 2016 MTV Video Music Awards at Madison Square Garden in New York.

She and Jay Z are among the most commercially successful figures in music, with a combined net worth estimated at \$1 billion. While enjoying a wide following, Beyoncé has increasingly felt comfortable showing her political side. She and Jay Z hit the trail for Hillary Clinton in her unsuccessful campaign against Trump last year. The first single on "Lemonade," the bouncy New Orleans-inspired track "Formation," was accompanied by a video that throws support behind the Black Lives Matter campaign against police brutality. — AFP



In this file photo, Chance The Rapper performs onstage during the iTunes festival at the Roundhouse in Camden, north London. — AP

Sturgill Simpson, Chance the Rapper to perform at Grammys

Top Grammy contenders Sturgill Simpson and Chance the Rapper are set to perform at the awards show this month. The Recording Academy announced yesterday that fellow nominee William Bell and Grammy winners Little Big Town and Gary Clark Jr will also perform on the live telecast on Feb 12. Simpson is nominated for album of the year and best country album for "A Sailor's Guide to Earth." Chance the Rapper is nominated for seven awards, including three for best rap song.

Beyoncé is the most nominated performer with nine, including bids for album, song and record of the year. James Corden will host the 59th annual Grammy Awards, airing live on CBS from the Staples Center in Los Angeles. Previously announced performers include Adele, Bruno Mars, the Weeknd and Daft Punk. — AP

As Trump sets up shop, nap studio helps Washingtonians unwind

Naps are for wimps, Donald Trump declared repeatedly as he powered his way to the presidency. But one of his new Washington neighbors begs to differ—offering drop-in zen one block from the White House. Founded by a think tank consultant who works 60 to 70 hours a week, the "recharj" nap and meditation studio is a tranquil space for harried workers to power down. One of a handful of similar startups across the United States, the siesta lounge is the first of its kind in the nation's capital.

For \$15 a pop, the weary can book a half-hour meditation class or a 25-minute doze on one of the studio's beanbag-esque beds. And as Washington transitions into a new political era, mindfulness instructor David Underwood, 59, said the studio—which had a soft open in the fall and a mid-December grand opening—has seen its client base swell since Trump's November 8th victory.

"The floor dropped out that day," Underwood said, perched on a tufted meditation cushion, his back ramrod-straight. While the Republican billionaire's election came as a surprise to much of the world, in overwhelmingly Democratic Washington it was a largely unwelcome one. "People coming in—they were in kind of a zombie state for a while. But now that it's settled, and there's acceptance in the air, we've picked up dramatically." "I think there's this resolution now that people are saying 'Hey, let's accept this and move on.'" Coming to that acceptance, he said, is partly about focusing back on life's basics. "The concept was to get people in the here and now," he said of the studio. "Get people into human-being mode, not human-doing mode."

'The world isn't ending'

Trump has branded sleep a symptom of weakness. As a candidate he tagged his primary and general election foes Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton, as "low energy" seemingly to great



Washington's new recharj zen power nap and meditation studio, which has opened just a block east from the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP photos

effect. "No naps for Trump! I don't nap. We don't have time," the real estate magnate and former reality show host told a Virginia rally back in July. Native Washingtonian Daniel Turissini—who founded recharj but has kept his high-powered day job—sees things differently. "I think there's a general climate of anxiety and stress," the 31-year-old said. "The stigma of napping in the workplace, and the stigma of meditation of being this kind of hippie ideal, is slowly deteriorating."

With a turf-grass floor and walls surfaced with real tree bark, the dimly lit lounge offers stark contrast to the concrete and glass that make up downtown Washington DC—a city more closely associated with workaholic than serenity. Amanda Herring assists college students at a nonprofit across the street. She recently started frequenting the studio as part of a New Year's resolution to "take some time for myself and get centered." "Life's been

crazy; DC's been crazy," the 27-year-old said. "There's been a lot of anger and hate and negativity, and I think in the new year I want to focus on being positive and understanding the point of view of others." "The best we can do is just take a moment—take a breather—and realize that the world isn't ending."

'Pushing to the wall'

The boutique taps into a growing trend, with companies including Google and The Huffington Post offering in-house nap rooms to their fatigued employees. The movement has science on its side: according to the National Institutes of Health agency, sleep deficiency is linked to heightened risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and hormonal imbalances—not to mention daytime drowsiness that can manifest as forgetfulness, slowed reaction time and diminished workday performance.

Recharj's manager Christine Marcella, 50, spearheaded the organization of a "Healing Through Fierce Transitions" workshop scheduled for the weekend after Trump's inauguration. "Grief and this type of transition have a similar emotional effect," she said, referring to Washington's political changing of the guard. "People are pushing to the wall—they're working so long and hard." Marcella said everyone from lobbyists to investment bankers to Department of Justice bigwigs have stopped in for a lie-down in one of the nap "cocoon" curtain-divided sleeping pods with body-conforming "lounges."

The studio also offers evening happy hour sessions, so clients can sneak a disco nap before heading for drinks. And if leading one of the world's most powerful nations starts sapping his energy, instructor Underwood said he would be happy for the United States' new commander-in-chief to stop by. — AFP



A limousine is parked in front of a casino in Portoroz, Slovenia. — AP photos



Tourists and residents walk across Tromostovje bridges in downtown Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Slovenia's tourism booms thanks in part to Melania Trump

The tiny European nation of Slovenia is undergoing a tourism boom partly because it is the native country of US First Lady Melania Trump. The national Statistics Bureau said Tuesday that the number of overnight stays in Slovenia by American tourists has jumped by 10 percent in 2016 when compared to 2015. Nearly 4 million foreign tourists visited the country of 2 million in 2016, up by about 10 percent.

Slovenian tourist agencies have been

organizing special tours "on the footsteps of Melania Trump" showing the places where she lived, studied and worked before she left in her 20s to pursue a modeling career. A website promoting the Alpine nation of stunning natural beauty says: "Welcome to the homeland of the new First Lady of the United States of America!" — AP



A church is pictured on the shore of lake Bled, northern Slovenia.

Indonesia Fashion Week 2017



Models strike a pose on the runway wearing creations by designer Lia Soraya during Indonesia Fashion Week 2017 in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday. — AP/AFP photos



Models showcase creations by designers Lia Soraya, Qonita Gholib, Petr Nitka, SI.SE.SA, Rya Baraba during Indonesia Fashion Week 2017 in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday.

Ralph Lauren CEO to step down after brief run

The chief executive tapped by fashion designer Ralph Lauren to lead his eponymous company will step down after just over a year in the job, the company announced yesterday. Stefan Larsson's departure as chief executive of Ralph Lauren Corp. follows disagreements with the company's founder over how to position the clothing line

in the fast-changing retail universe, both men said. "After many conversations with one another, and our Board of Directors, we have agreed to part ways," Lauren said in a statement.

Larsson, who will leave the company May 1, said on a conference call with analysts that the departure followed disagreements over the "creative- and consumer-facing parts of the business." "Ralph will always be an inspiration to me, and I am grateful to have had this experience," he added in a statement. The company appointed Larsson in September 2015. He previously worked at fast-fashion retailer H&M and Gap's Old Navy division. Lauren was to stay on as executive chairman and chief creative officer. The company announced a "Way Forward" plan in June 2016 under

Larsson that included efforts to eliminate several layers of middle management.

Chief financial officer Jane Nielsen will lead the execution of the plan until a new chief executive joins, the company said. The announcement came as Ralph Lauren posted a 37.1 percent drop in third-quarter earnings to \$82 million. Shares of Ralph Lauren Corp. tumbled 7.8 percent to \$80.60 in pre-market trading. — AFP

Tuscan flavors of olives and beans make this salad a treat

By Melissa D'Arabian

Kale is still in. It's still one of the nutritional highlights in my crisper drawer, and winter is its peak season, which means it's most abundant, healthy and cheap right now. Kale, part of the same family as broccoli, is loaded with vitamins (particularly A, C and K) as well as smaller quantities of protein, fiber and an impressive array of minerals. Plus, a cup of kale has under 35 calories, and a bunch of organic kale will set you back probably a little over a dollar right now. So, you're going to need some updated kale recipes to get your through the winter.

The two varieties most available in the supermarkets are curly kale and the darker flat-leaved version that is called Tuscan, lacinato or dinosaur kale. Tuscan kale is thicker and heartier than the curly variety, so it holds up nicely in sautees. Both kale varieties are slightly bitter in flavor and do well to be "mas-

saged" in acid, like lemon juice, which simultaneously tames the bitterness and gently breaks down the kale cells, making the leaf more tender in raw or lightly-cooked applications.

Today's recipe is a saute starring Tuscan kale. I like to think of it as a warm salad with leaves made slightly more tender by a lemon juice massage and a quick saute. The main flavors are perfectly Mediterranean: anchovy paste and olives for saltiness (you can cut the quantities down if you are watching sodium), lemon zest for brightness, and garlic, which is a heart-healthy staple of the region. Small grape tomatoes add sweetness and acid, while a handful of black beans boost the already-fiber-rich kale, turning this into a side dish that means you really can serve way less meat for the main. Or, double the recipe and skip the meat altogether, which makes the dish extra healthy and wallet-friendly.



TUSCAN KALE WITH OLIVES AND BEANS

Ingredients

Start to finish: 15 minutes

Servings: 4

- 1 bunch Tuscan, or lacinato kale, removed from thick stem, about 12 large leaves
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice, plus extra lemon juice for serving, if desired
- 2 teaspoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 teaspoons anchovy paste
- 2 teaspoons lemon zest
- Pinch red pepper flakes (optional)
- 2 tablespoons chopped or sliced olives
- 1/2 cup grape tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 cup cooked white beans, drained and rinsed if canned
- 2 tablespoons shredded parmesan cheese, for serving
- Lemon wedges, for serving (optional)

Preparation

Thoroughly wash the kale leaves (no need to dry), and slice into strips. Place in a medium bowl and pour lemon juice on top of the leaves. Use your hands to massage the lemon juice into the leaves, coating well. Let sit for a few minutes while you prepare the rest of the ingredients. Heat large skillet over medium heat. In a small bowl, mix together the olive oil, garlic, anchovy paste, lemon zest and red pepper flakes. Scrape the oil mixture into the pan and saute until fragrant, stirring with a wooden spoon, about 1 minute. Add the olives and kale leaves, stir and then cover with a lid and allow to steam for 2 minutes. Uncover and stir in the tomato halves and beans. Turn off the heat and top with parmesan cheese. Serve with lemon wedges for squeezing. — AP

COOKING ON DEADLINE: CHEESY WHITE AND GREEN SPINACH LASAGNA

By Katie Workman

In the quest for Big Crowd Food, lasagna reigns supreme. And at this time of year, you may find yourself entertaining a big crowd for a football game party, for the Oscars or another awards show, or just because it's cold out and it's nice to put together a cozy gathering. This lasagna is rich and creamy, absent the tomato sauce that anchors many lasagnas, filled with sauteed spinach folded into fluffy ricotta and a very simple bechamel sauce, rich

with melty cheeses. The nutmeg is optional - a little can add a nice flavor, but too much can overpower.

A few more notes on the ingredients: You may think that 2 pounds of spinach looks like an awful lot for one lasagna, but it cooks down to just a few cups. No-boil, or oven-ready, lasagna noodles are a gift to the busy cook, and the reason I make lasagna more often. I have also made this recipe in a super-large lasagna pan and increased the quantities by half again. Then it will serve 12 to 16.

It is tempting to dig into a bubbling lasagna, but resist the urge. Letting it sit for at least 10 minutes will reward you with slices that hold together, and it will still be perfectly warm - in fact, just the right temperature for you to enjoy the flavors without the pieces sliding apart on the plates. This can also be assembled a day ahead, held in the fridge and baked before dinner. Or it can be baked up to two days ahead and reheated for about 20 minutes in a 375 F oven.

CHEESY WHITE AND GREEN SPINACH LASAGNA

Ingredients

Serves 10 to 12
Start to finish: 2 hours
Spinach-Basil-Ricotta Filling
1 tablespoon unsalted butter
1/2 cup minced shallots
1 tablespoon minced garlic
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
2 pounds baby spinach leaves, roughly chopped
2 pounds ricotta, preferably fresh
2 large eggs
1 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese, plus 1/3 cup for sprinkling the top
1/2 cup chopped fresh basil leaves

Bechamel-Cheese Sauce:

4 tablespoons (1/2 stick) unsalted butter
1/4 cup all-purpose flour
4 cups (1 quart) whole milk
Pinch ground nutmeg (optional)
1 pound fresh mozzarella, shredded
8 ounces shredded Monterey Jack cheese
1 (8 ounce) package no-boil lasagna noodles (containing 12 noodles)

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 375 F. Make the Spinach-Basil-Ricotta Filling: Heat the tablespoon butter in a large saucepan over medium heat until melted. Add the shallots and garlic, season with salt and pepper and saute for 2 minutes until tender. Add the spinach in batches and saute, adding more spinach as each batch wilts down, about 6 minutes in all, until all of the spinach is added and wilted. Adjust the seasoning, transfer to a strainer over a bowl, press down with a spoon to release excess liquid, and set aside to cool slightly.

In a large bowl combine the ricotta, eggs, 1 cup Parmesan, and the basil. Season with salt and pepper, and set aside. Make the Bechamel-Cheese Sauce: Heat the 4 tablespoons butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat until melted. Whisk in the flour until the mixture turns a light golden color, about 3 minutes. While whisking constantly, slowly pour in the milk. Continue to cook and whisk until the mixture thickens and bubbles, about 4 minutes, adding the nutmeg, if using. Whisk in the mozzarella and Monterey Jack cheeses until they are melted, and season with salt and pepper.

If the spinach still seems wet, give it a squeeze with your



hands. Stir the drained spinach into the reserved ricotta mixture. Lay out all of the lasagna noodles on a clean counter top. Spread the spinach-ricotta filling evenly over all of the noodles, so that each is topped with about a 1/2-inch-thick layer of the spinach-ricotta mixture. Pour a small amount of Bechamel Sauce into the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch pan and spread it out.

Place four ricotta-covered noodles in the bottom of the pan to cover it in a single layer. Drizzle 1/3 of the white sauce over

the noodles. Place another layer of the ricotta-covered noodles over the top, drizzle with another third of the sauce, and then repeat the layers once more. Sprinkle with the remaining Parmesan cheese. Bake for about 40 minutes until the top is golden and the lasagna is bubbling. If you want a more browned top, run it under the broiler for 1 or 2 minutes, watching it carefully. Let the lasagna rest for at least 10 to 15 minutes before cutting into squares and serving warm. — AP



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Friday Times

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2017

Kids

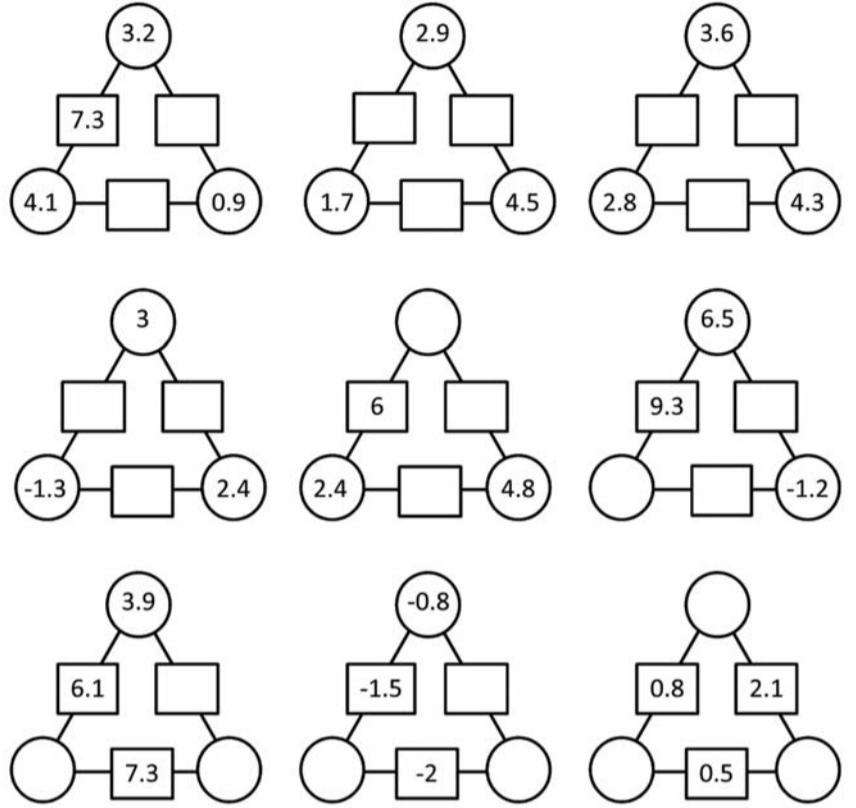


Color me!



ARITHMOGON TRIANGLE PUZZLE 5B

The numbers in the circles added together makes the number in the linking rectangle. Find the missing numbers in this puzzle.



Name _____

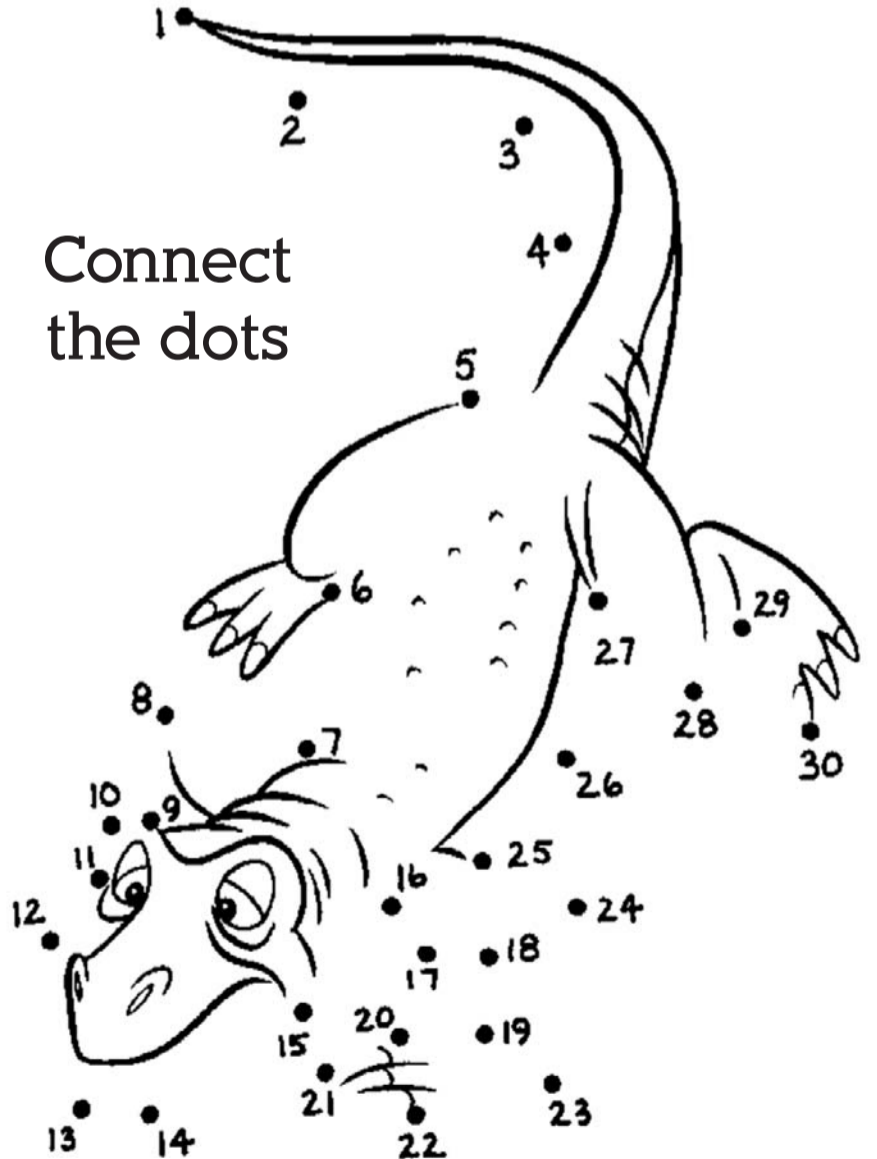
Fishin' For Digits!

Use the 120 board to help you fill in the charts below.

	46			99
55		57	108	110
	66			119
91			93	
		103		104
	112			115

On the back - design your own "Fishin' For Digits" boxes.

Connect the dots





AUTUMN WORD FIND

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

CRUNCHING

FALLING

OUTSIDE

BROWN

YELLOW

ORANGE

COLOURFUL

APRIL

DECIDUOUS

SCARECROW

AUTUMN

TREES

RAKE

WINDY

KITES

FOLIAGE

MAY

FUN

MARCH

LEAVES



Show the super hero the way through this maze!

Super Maze #8

START

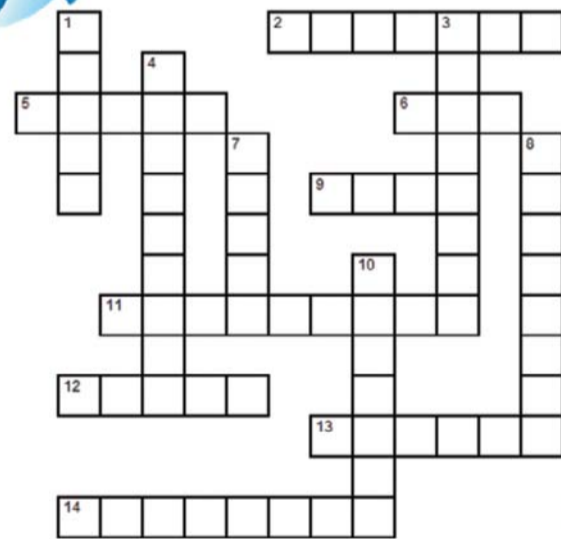
STOP

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comic book brain.com



Ocean Animals



ACROSS

2. fat layer that keeps some marine mammals warm
5. fish use these to breathe oxygen from the water
6. name for a group of whales
9. ocean dwellers that lay eggs and have bones
11. what a shark has instead of bones
12. a shark has several rows of these
13. what younger whales are called
14. marine animals with soft bodies and no backbone

DOWN

1. small creatures that look like shrimp
3. how a whale or dolphin breathes
4. largest animal in the world
7. bioluminescent animals make their own
8. clams, oysters and scallops are all ...
10. ocean dwellers that birth live babies and nurse their young

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Friday Times

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2017

Travel



10
reasons
to visit

UKRAINE

The massive
Rodina Mat
memorial





Andriivsky-Uzviz,
Kyiv's quaintest
thoroughfare

Due to the political turmoil in Ukraine, Kyiv has lost some of its tourist appeal in recent years. But the ancient Ukrainian capital - and the host of the 2017 Eurovision Song Contest - is completely safe to visit and awaits curious travelers to unveil its rich and colorful history. Among the most important cultural centers of eastern Europe, offering superb architecture and a cool foodie scene, Kyiv remains one of the most underrated cities on the continent.

Legends of Andriivsky Uzviz

Nicknamed 'the Montmartre of Kyiv', this street is one of the cultural gems of the Ukrainian capital. Every house here can tell a story, every corner hides a legend. With numerous galleries and workshops, Andriivsky Uzviz has always been the melting pot of Kyiv's artists, luring them with its bohemian atmosphere and attractive hilly setting. Here you can admire the gracious architecture of St Andrew's Church and buy handmade souvenirs from one of the local artisans.

Delicious Ukrainian cuisine

Ukrainian food is not only very tasty, but also quite affordable. When in Kyiv, you simply can't refrain from trying traditional Ukrainian varenyky (filled dumplings) and the legendary borshch (red beetroot soup). For a genuine Kyiv urban snack, try the perepichka (sausage in a fried bun) at Kyivska Perepichka near Teatralna metro station, and taste a magnificent cinnamon roll at Bulochnaya Yaroslavna bakery on busy Yaroslaviv Val street.

Outdoors fun along the Dnipro

Kyiv spreads along the wide Dnipro river, which divides the city into the right and left banks. Numerous islands in between offer a great range of outdoor activities. Truhaniv island is the perfect spot for relaxing walks or cycling with beautiful river views. During the summer, Hydropark becomes leisure central with sandy beaches, water activities and fancy bars. You can also take a boat cruise from the River Port (rpea.com.ua) for spectacular views of Kyiv hills.

Gigantic Soviet monuments

Kyiv was the third-largest city of the Soviet

Union, so it's no wonder that Soviet heritage in the form of colossal apartment blocks, socialist-realist frescoes and bizarre modernist buildings is found pretty much everywhere in the Ukrainian capital. But there's one structure you simply can't miss: the enormous Rodina Mat (meaning 'Motherland') memorial, part of the Museum of the Great Patriotic War. With a height of 102m, it's a distinctive element of Kyiv's skyline.

Rich entertainment scene

Kyiv is a vibrant capital with a wide array of events taking place daily. Fans of classical music can enjoy heavenly notes in the unique House of Organ and Chamber Music inside the St Nicholas Cathedral, which was designed by Wladyslaw Horodecki. Ballet enthusiasts will be enthralled by performances of the world-renowned National Ballet of Ukraine at the Taras Shevchenko National Opera Theatre. Kyiv nightlife is a microcosm of its own, with choices ranging from hipster Closer (facebook.com/closerkiev) to dynamic Caribbean Club (caribbean.com.ua).

Ukrainian Art Nouveau

Kyiv's eclectic cityscape makes it a perfect destination for architecture lovers. On a single street, you can find baroque buildings next to Soviet-style apartment blocks, or elegant Art Nouveau palaces overlooking newly built skyscrapers. Kyiv's so-called Modern architectural style is the equivalent of European Art Nouveau; its pioneer was Wladyslaw Horodecki, sometimes referred to as 'the Gaudl of Kyiv'. His architectural genius gave birth to the stunning Neo-Moorish Actor's House and one of the most enigmatic Kyiv landmarks, the splendid House of Chimeras.

Monumental Kyiv metro

From colorful frescoes depicting medieval Kiev Rus heritage at Zoloti Vorota station to white marble busts of scientists and poets at Universytet station - not to mention the labyrinth of Soviet underground transfer passages - Kyiv metro is truly impressive. It's also record-breaking, with Arsenalna station considered the world's deepest. Both the

immense heritage of Ukraine's Soviet past and the main transport of city dwellers today, Kyiv metro is a curious attraction and a true highlight of the Ukrainian capital. Big, diverse and largely undiscovered, Ukraine is one of Europe's last genuine travel frontiers, a poor nation rich in colorful tradition, warm-hearted people and off-the-map experiences.



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Travel

Friday Times

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2017

The golden domes of the Dormition Cathedral at Kyevo-Pecherska Lavra



City of Golden Domes

This proud nickname reflects the architectural splendor of Kyiv's churches, as well as the prominence of the Ukrainian capital for Orthodox Christians. Visitors are easily amazed by the beauty of the Kyevo-Pecherska Lavra monastery complex and the grandeur of St Sophia's Cathedral, both Unesco World Heritage sites. You can spend days admiring the medieval frescoes and baroque facades, descending into holy dungeons and watching stunning panoramas from the bell towers.



Colorful mosaics at Zoloti Vorota metro station

One of Europe's largest open-air museums

The Pyrohovo Museum of Folk Architecture is a perfect place to explore how Ukrainians lived over the centuries. Exhibiting 300 examples of folk architecture from all parts of Ukraine and more than 40,000 household items and objects of traditional culture, Pyrohovo is a one-of-a-kind outdoor museum experience. It also regularly hosts open-air festivals to showcase the old Ukrainian rural lifestyle.

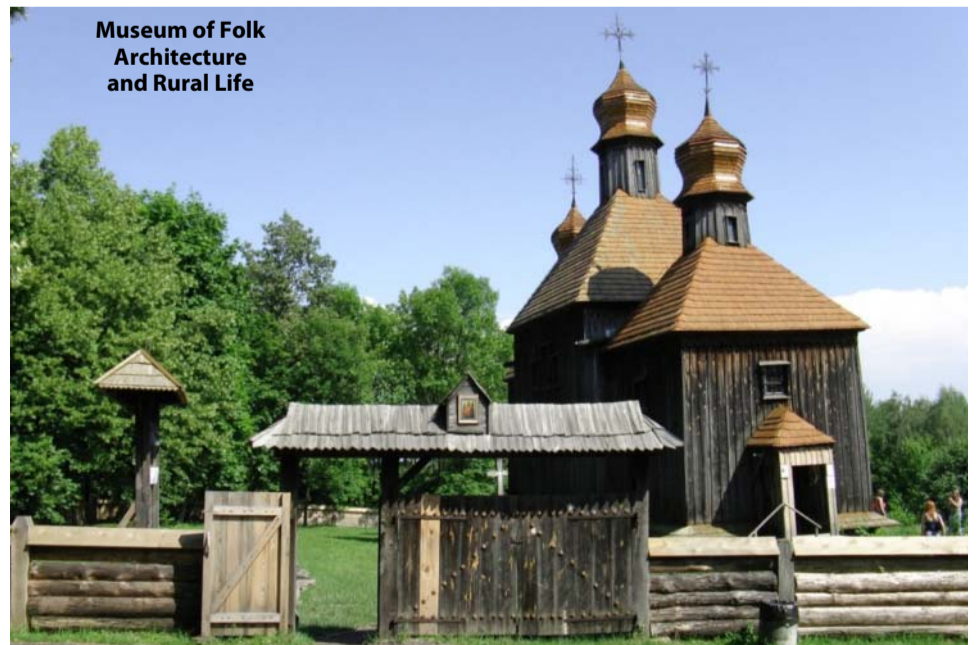
Affordability

Kyiv often tops the lists of the most affordable European destinations, particularly in recent years - and for good reason. For example, one metro ride will cost you about 0.15 euros, while opera tickets start from just 1 euro. Food and accommodation costs are also much lower than in central and Western Europe especially since the devaluation of the hryvnya, which makes the Ukrainian capital a very tempting budget-friendly destination. — (www.lonelyplanet.com)

Wooden windmills at the Pyrohovo Museum of Folk Architecture



Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Life





Aries (March 21-April 19)

Business is improving and expanding. New methods of bookkeeping may be presented soon. If you are not perceptive to the computer world and feel left out, you may want to consider taking a class on computers. There are new methods of communication that will increase your own productivity. Fresh insight comes to you through some sort of advertisement or editorial, giving you a whole new perspective. You could be noticed, especially with superiors or in relation to your work. You may find that you enjoy your job or the responsibility it entails more than usual. Connections with people on a grand scale-for example, at a distance or en masse-play a bigger part in your life now. Education, advertising and travel could play a part in this.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your path of self-development and expression may become more and more unusual-setting you apart from the crowd and from all that is traditional. This may mean a shift from your normal job description-an opportunity to excel. This is a busy time and before this day is over, there may be a lot of correspondence. Your future looks bright-you are to be praised for your open mind when it comes to new possibilities. Meetings, presentations and published material are just a few of the things you will be required to absorb this day. Inventive ways of making or saving money may occur to you this afternoon. If anyone can spot a good deal, it is you. Even a quick trip to the stores could yield some surprises. You have a story to tell this evening, and an audience!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Achievement, ambition and authority take on a greater importance at this time. Organizing and administering people and projects will become central to your lifestyle. This is a very lucky day for making plans or decisions and finding your way through just about any problem you may discover. You feel successful and able to handle difficult situations. Good advice from a guide or older person may be forthcoming and you appreciate the example that is set. A business trip is in the wind-if you want it, you need to speak up soon. The way in which you express yourself will be very important for all of this month. There is a need to be extra mindful with fire and tools at home. Pay attention to what you are doing by tending to one thing at a time.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Investment questions could be on hold until the end of this month. Careful planning, or at least thinking through things before you act, is the best policy for now. Local and everyday matters become more intense. If you want to travel, this could be possible through your work. Extra work this afternoon could have you getting home a little late. Learn to be more practical when it comes to your personal abilities and health. It is commendable to work and get things accomplished, but not when it takes away time from family or health. This evening you may feel more intuitive and psychic than usual. You may find yourself guiding someone younger than you in matters of importance. Quiet time with a loved one proves quite enjoyable this evening.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

There is a possibility that someone will pay you back today for a past debt. Competitiveness is the key word in the workplace. This, however, is the drive of energy that creates success for you. This is perfect for starting something out or taking care of business-very physical. You may have an urge to push for changes in the workplace-perhaps new equipment or a new advertisement idea. It is time to plot your course. Your friends from work enjoy being with you during the noon breaks. You are warm, friendly and diplomatic and so many of your co-worker friends like to have the wise feedback that you can give when questions arise. You and a friend will have fun practicing reading tarot cards or tea leaves for each other this evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Think through the events of today, as there are many possibilities available for you to move up the corporate ladder, or at least make some positive changes in your lifestyle. Things are happening and your career or path depends on where you want to go in your profession. You are able to use good common sense-you can feel the trends and make the right decisions. This is a time to get ahead by taking action. Do not be too surprised if you meet the mate of your dreams. Acting on impulse can be riskier than usual: get a grip on yourself; do not just react to stimuli and situations. You have the desire to shape events now and not to be shaped by them! If you already have a permanent relationship, you will see some real improvements.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You have a lot of energy to pour into practical and career decisions. Develop a good support system so that stress in the workplace is not so difficult to manage. There are many opportunities this month to seek a better career or position, perhaps a promotion. If you are satisfied with your progress, you will probably just want to enjoy the ladder of success, each step at a time. However, you could become a subject in which your superiors are most interested. Progressive people and idealistic groups or concepts play a more important role in your life now. This is a time for discovering others. You are able to respond to friends and enter into relationships with a renewed sense of love and forgiveness. Romance is possible.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

A new birth today has everybody talking. A group gift may be a good suggestion. Opportunities appear for better working conditions, but there could be challenges. You will know how to handle any difficulties today and will be pleased at the results of your actions. A new job may be lurking behind the scenes, but you must weigh your options and decide whether the risk is worth the changes it could bring. There is a lot of energy available for disciplined work and you may find yourself working overtime. The great wheel of change may appear to move at a snail's pace or grind to a halt; patience. When you leave work, leave the frustrations behind you. This is the perfect night to spend with your loved one. Travel could be included this next weekend.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Resolve tensions and promote harmony today in order to keep from being left out of the action. There are real opportunities to complete and work out difficulties in the workplace. Projects that require both long-term effort and a high degree of discipline will come more easily. You have an inner knowing that your income will be stronger as this year progresses and you may be quite excited about getting a head start. You should see some positive results of your hard work soon. This is a time during which circumstances bend to your will and things have a way of working out smoothly. Your desires are strong and you will want to enjoy yourself this evening. Social opportunities are in the making for this weekend and romance is getting better and better.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Circumstances may urge you to great effort and hard work. For now, take time to think through your frustrations and when you see that your patience is wearing thin, try to involve yourself in the exercise of walking or climbing stairs during your break time. This will help you to balance your emotions and gain some insight. It could be quite possible that you are not seeing things too clearly just now. Acting on impulse without sufficient regard for risks can create more harm than good . . . Patience. Ambitious schemes and the pursuit of success and status take on a high priority. Job interviews or proposals for advancement can be positive and are possible now. You may find yourself helping a young person with a project or homework this evening.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Your curiosity takes you into some interesting places. More than likely, you are one to create your own opportunities and people refer to you as an entrepreneur. Because you meet and learn about so many different personalities, you can become quite private when left alone. Although you have enjoyed a variety of work professions, you will definitely enjoy the simplicity of quiet surroundings. There is an opportunity to purchase a semi-secluded type of property at this time and it may be just the place where you have wanted to hang your hat. To miss that opportunity would be sad, so pay attention to property and real estate when you are away from home. Enjoy the attention that you are sure to receive tonight. Happy birthday!



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You develop a knack for organizing things and people, as a sense of ambition and practicality takes hold. Work, achievement and ambition are the things that mean a lot to you. Emphatically, making yourself clear is the mode of the day. Getting the facts and making sure that people get your message straight can make all the difference in the world-any shortcomings in these areas can raise a few challenges. You are able to use good common sense and you can feel the trends and make the right moves. This is a time when job and family can take up most of your time. This time marks the end of a number of years of apprenticeship and begins a fine-tuning with regard to your talents. If you are looking for success-it is within your grasp.

COUNTRY CODES

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



- 00:20 Wheeler Dealers
- 01:10 So You Think You'd Survive?
- 02:00 Legend Of Croc Gold
- 02:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
- 03:40 Fast N' Loud
- 04:30 Auction Hunters
- 05:00 How Do They Do It?
- 05:30 How Do They Do It?
- 06:00 Blowing Up History
- 06:50 Mega Shippers
- 07:40 Fast N' Loud
- 08:30 Deadliest Catch
- 10:10 Bear Grylls: Mission Survive
- 11:00 Venom Hunters
- 11:50 Storage Hunters UK
- 12:15 Storage Hunters UK
- 12:40 Sonic Sea
- 13:30 Fast N' Loud
- 14:20 Misfit Garage
- 15:10 Street Outlaws
- 16:00 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
- 16:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
- 17:40 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
- 18:30 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
- 19:20 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
- 20:10 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
- 21:00 Fast N' Loud
- 21:50 Misfit Garage
- 22:40 Street Outlaws
- 23:30 Sonic Sea



- 00:10 Hank Zipzer
- 00:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 01:00 Violetta
- 01:45 The Hive
- 01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 02:40 Hank Zipzer
- 03:05 Binny And The Ghost
- 03:30 Violetta
- 04:15 The Hive
- 04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 05:10 Hank Zipzer
- 05:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 06:00 Violetta
- 06:45 The Hive
- 06:50 The 7D
- 07:00 Jessie
- 07:25 Jessie
- 07:50 Rolling To The Ronks
- 08:15 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 08:20 Elena Of Avalor
- 08:45 Bunk'd
- 09:10 Gravity Falls
- 09:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
- 10:25 A.N.T. Farm
- 11:15 Good Luck Charlie
- 12:05 Shake It Up
- 12:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 13:00 Welcome To The Ronks
- 13:15 Gravity Falls
- 13:40 Hank Zipzer
- 14:05 Star Darlings
- 14:10 Austin & Ally
- 14:35 Austin & Ally
- 15:00 Jessie
- 15:25 Jessie

- 15:50 Rolling To The Ronks
- 16:15 Sunny Bunnies
- 16:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 16:45 Elena Of Avalor
- 17:10 Bunk'd
- 17:35 Ratatouille
- 19:25 The Next Step
- 19:50 Austin & Ally
- 20:15 Star Darlings
- 20:20 Shake It Up
- 20:45 Backstage
- 21:10 Liv And Maddie
- 21:35 Cracked
- 21:40 The Next Step
- 22:05 Best Friends Whenever
- 22:30 Mako Mermaids
- 22:55 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 23:00 Binny And The Ghost
- 23:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch



- 00:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 00:35 The Hive
- 00:45 Loopdidoo
- 01:00 Henry Hugglemonster
- 01:15 Calimero
- 01:30 Art Attack
- 01:50 Zou
- 02:05 Loopdidoo
- 02:20 Henry Hugglemonster
- 02:35 Calimero
- 02:50 Zou
- 03:05 Art Attack
- 03:30 The Hive
- 03:40 Loopdidoo
- 03:55 Henry Hugglemonster
- 04:10 Art Attack
- 04:35 Loopdidoo
- 04:50 Calimero
- 05:05 Art Attack
- 05:30 Henry Hugglemonster

- 05:45 Zou
- 06:00 Art Attack
- 06:30 Henry Hugglemonster
- 06:45 Loopdidoo
- 07:00 Zou
- 07:15 Calimero
- 07:30 Loopdidoo
- 07:45 Henry Hugglemonster
- 08:20 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 08:05 PJ Masks
- 08:15 Goldie & Bear
- 08:30 Jake And The Neverland Pirates
- 08:45 Miles From Tomorrow
- 08:55 Sofia The First
- 09:20 Doc McStuffins
- 09:35 Goldie & Bear
- 09:50 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 10:00 PJ Masks
- 10:15 Jake And The Neverland Pirates
- 10:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
- 10:35 Sofia The First
- 11:30 Doc McStuffins
- 12:20 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
- 13:15 Gummi Bears
- 13:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
- 14:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 15:30 Little Mermaid
- 15:55 Unbungalievable
- 16:00 Miles From Tomorrow
- 16:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 16:55 The Lion Guard
- 17:20 Goldie & Bear
- 17:50 PJ Masks
- 18:15 Sofia The First
- 18:40 Doc McStuffins
- 19:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 19:30 Little Mermaid
- 20:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
- 20:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates



- 06:00 Danger Mouse
- 06:25 Gravity Falls
- 06:50 The 7D
- 07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
- 07:15 Counterfeit Cat
- 07:40 Supa Strikas
- 08:10 K.C. Undercover
- 08:35 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
- 09:00 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 09:50 Danger Mouse
- 10:20 Supa Strikas
- 11:10 Counterfeit Cat
- 11:35 Pair Of Kings
- 12:00 Pair Of Kings
- 12:30 Future-Worm!
- 12:55 Lab Rats
- 13:20 Lab Rats
- 13:45 Atomic Puppet
- 14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 14:15 Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution
- 14:40 Supa Strikas
- 15:05 Lab Rats
- 15:30 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 15:55 Danger Mouse
- 16:25 K.C. Undercover
- 16:50 Future-Worm!
- 17:15 Gravity Falls
- 17:40 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
- 18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 18:10 Supa Strikas
- 19:00 Atomic Puppet
- 19:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
- 19:55 K.C. Undercover
- 20:20 Counterfeit Cat
- 20:45 Mighty Med
- 21:10 Pickle And Peanut
- 21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
- 21:45 Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution
- 22:10 Ultimate Spider-Man: Web Warriors
- 22:35 Boyster
- 23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA

- 17:00 Tonight At The London Palladium
- 17:50 Code Of A Killer
- 18:45 Emmerdale
- 19:15 Emmerdale
- 19:45 Coronation Street
- 20:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
- 21:00 Don't Tell The Bride
- 22:00 Tonight At The London Palladium



- 00:10 Jose Andres: Dinner In Haiti
- 01:00 Tom's Istanbul Delight
- 01:25 A Is For Apple
- 01:50 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
- 02:40 Confucius Was A Foodie
- 03:30 Sara's Australia Unveiled
- 04:20 Places We Go
- 05:10 Street Food Around The World
- 05:35 Street Food Around The World
- 06:00 The Wine Show
- 06:50 Tom's Istanbul Delight
- 07:15 A Is For Apple
- 07:40 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
- 08:30 Confucius Was A Foodie
- 09:20 Sara's Australia Unveiled
- 09:45 Sara's Australia Unveiled
- 10:10 Places We Go
- 10:35 Places We Go
- 11:00 Street Food Around The World
- 11:25 Street Food Around The World
- 11:50 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
- 12:15 What's For Sale?
- 12:40 Tom's Istanbul Delight
- 13:05 A Is For Apple
- 13:35 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
- 14:30 Confucius Was A Foodie
- 15:25 Sara's Australia Unveiled
- 16:20 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
- 16:45 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
- 17:15 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
- 17:40 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
- 18:10 The Wine Show
- 19:05 Delinquent Gourmet
- 19:30 Sara's Australia Unveiled
- 20:00 Sara's Australia Unveiled
- 20:25 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
- 20:50 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
- 21:15 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
- 21:40 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
- 22:05 The Wine Show
- 22:55 Tom's Istanbul Delight
- 23:20 A Is For Apple



- 00:00 The Killing Season
- 01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
- 02:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
- 03:00 Murder In-Law
- 04:00 The Killing Season
- 05:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
- 06:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
- 07:00 Shannon Matthews: The Disappearance
- 08:00 The Richardsons By Fred Dinenage
- 09:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 10:00 It Takes A Killer
- 11:00 Killers
- 15:00 The Richardsons By Fred Dinenage
- 16:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 17:00 It Takes A Killer
- 18:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
- 19:00 The First 48
- 21:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 22:00 The Richardsons By Fred Dinenage



- 00:30 Nextworld
- 01:20 NASA's Greatest Missions
- 02:10 NASA's Unexplained Files
- 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 Storm Chasers
- 06:20 Mythbusters
- 07:00 Do You Know?
- 07:15 Doki
- 07:35 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
- 08:00 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
- 08:45 How It's Made
- 09:05 How It's Made
- 09:30 Nextworld
- 10:20 Mythbusters
- 11:10 Storm Chasers
- 12:00 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
- 12:50 Ultimate Survival
- 13:40 How It's Made
- 14:05 How It's Made
- 14:30 Storm Chasers
- 15:15 Mythbusters
- 16:00 Doki
- 16:20 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
- 16:45 Do You Know?
- 17:00 Man v Expert
- 17:50 The Carbonaro Effect
- 18:15 The Carbonaro Effect
- 18:40 Nextworld
- 19:30 How It's Made
- 19:55 How It's Made
- 20:20 Mythbusters
- 21:10 Man v Expert
- 22:00 The Carbonaro Effect
- 22:25 The Carbonaro Effect
- 22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
- 23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
- 23:40 Ultimate Survival

A HIGH OCTANE ACTION THRILLER

SCOTT ADKINS

CLOSE RANGE

VENGEANCE HITS HOME

"VIEWERS WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED"
CUTPRINTFILM.COM

"ADKINS IS A FORCE TO WATCH"
CUTPRINTFILM.COM

"CLOSE RANGE DELIVERS IN SPADES"
FLICKERING MYTH

CLOSE RANGE ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD



- 00:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 00:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 01:50 E! News
- 02:50 Just Jillian
- 05:30 Celebrity Style Story
- 06:00 LA Clippers Dance Squad
- 06:55 E! News
- 07:10 LA Clippers Dance Squad
- 08:10 E! News
- 09:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 12:00 E! News
- 12:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
- 15:00 E! News
- 15:15 Fashion Police
- 16:15 Hollywood & Football
- 17:10 Botched
- 18:05 Botched
- 19:00 E! News
- 20:00 Botched
- 20:30 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
- 22:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
- 23:00 E! News



- 00:10 The Chase
- 01:00 Emmerdale
- 01:30 Coronation Street
- 02:00 Coronation Street
- 02:30 Couples Come Dine With Me
- 03:25 Don't Tell The Bride
- 04:25 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 05:15 Code Of A Killer
- 06:10 The Chase
- 07:05 Couples Come Dine With Me
- 08:00 Don't Tell The Bride
- 09:00 The Jonathan Ross Show
- 10:00 Code Of A Killer
- 10:55 The Chase
- 11:50 Couples Come Dine With Me
- 12:45 Emmerdale
- 13:15 Emmerdale
- 13:45 Coronation Street
- 14:15 The Chase
- 15:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
- 16:00 Don't Tell The Bride



- 00:20 Vanishing Kings: Desert Lions Of Namib
- 01:10 Planet Carnivore
- 02:00 Valley Of The Wolves
- 02:50 Urban Jungle
- 03:45 Swamp Men
- 04:40 Natural Born Monsters
- 05:35 Valley Of The Wolves
- 06:30 Urban Jungle
- 07:25 Swamp Men
- 08:20 Natural Born Monsters
- 09:15 Wild Galapagos
- 10:10 Borneo's Secret Kingdom
- 11:05 Badass Animals
- 12:00 Alien Crab
- 12:55 Cat Fight
- 13:50 Urban Jungle
- 14:45 Swamp Men
- 15:40 Natural Born Monsters
- 16:35 World's Deadliest
- 17:30 Wildebeeste: Born To Run
- 18:25 Wild Indonesia
- 19:20 Swamp Men
- 20:10 Natural Born Monsters
- 21:00 World's Deadliest
- 21:50 Wildebeeste: Born To Run
- 22:40 Wild Indonesia



- 00:10 Pope vs Hitler
- 02:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 02:55 Ultimate Airport Dubai
- 03:50 Air Crash Investigation
- 04:45 The Numbers Game
- 05:10 The Numbers Game
- 05:40 Car SOS
- 06:35 Inside
- 07:30 Breakout
- 08:25 Lords Of War
- 08:50 Lords Of War
- 09:20 The Numbers Game
- 09:45 The Numbers Game

- 10:15 Locked Up Abroad
- 11:10 The Border
- 12:05 Mega Bridges
- 13:00 Battleground Brothers
- 14:00 Dirty Rotten Survival
- 15:00 Classified: CIA Confidential
- 16:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 17:00 The Border
- 18:00 Taboo USA
- 19:00 Classified: CIA Confidential
- 20:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 20:50 The Border
- 21:40 Taboo USA
- 22:30 Classified: CIA Confidential
- 23:20 Car SOS



- 00:16 Team Umizoomi
- 00:37 Louie
- 00:50 Olive The Ostrich
- 01:00 Max & Ruby
- 01:23 Wanda And The Alien
- 01:33 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 01:43 The Day Henry Met
- 01:54 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 02:17 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 02:40 Zack & Quack
- 03:02 Team Umizoomi
- 03:24 Louie
- 03:37 Olive The Ostrich
- 03:47 Paw Patrol
- 04:11 Little Charmers
- 04:23 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 04:35 Dora The Explorer
- 04:58 Max & Ruby
- 05:07 Bubble Guppies
- 05:31 Shimmer And Shine
- 05:54 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 06:18 Zack & Quack
- 06:28 The Day Henry Met
- 06:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 07:00 Paw Patrol
- 07:13 Paw Patrol
- 07:37 Dora The Explorer
- 08:00 Wanda And The Alien
- 08:11 Zack & Quack
- 08:22 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 08:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 09:10 Paw Patrol
- 09:35 Shimmer And Shine
- 09:58 Dora The Explorer
- 10:21 Paw Patrol
- 10:45 Little Charmers
- 10:57 Bubble Guppies
- 11:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 11:40 Zack & Quack
- 11:52 Team Umizoomi
- 12:38 Louie
- 12:45 Louie
- 12:53 Olive The Ostrich
- 13:03 Max & Ruby
- 13:26 Wanda And The Alien
- 13:37 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 13:48 The Day Henry Met
- 14:00 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 14:22 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 14:45 Zack & Quack
- 15:05 Team Umizoomi
- 15:28 Louie
- 15:35 Louie
- 15:40 Olive The Ostrich
- 15:44 Olive The Ostrich
- 15:50 Paw Patrol
- 16:13 Little Charmers
- 16:25 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 16:37 Dora The Explorer
- 16:59 Max & Ruby
- 17:07 Bubble Guppies
- 17:31 Shimmer And Shine
- 17:54 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 18:17 Zack & Quack
- 18:29 The Day Henry Met
- 18:34 The Day Henry Met
- 18:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 19:00 Paw Patrol
- 19:13 Paw Patrol
- 19:37 Dora The Explorer
- 20:00 Wanda And The Alien
- 20:11 Zack & Quack
- 20:22 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
- 20:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 21:10 Paw Patrol
- 21:35 Shimmer And Shine
- 21:58 Dora The Explorer
- 22:21 Paw Patrol
- 22:45 Little Charmers
- 22:57 Bubble Guppies
- 23:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies



FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD ON OSN MOVIES HD



- 00:00 Wanted
- 02:00 Sharknado 3: Oh Hell No!
- 04:00 Close Range
- 06:00 The Machine
- 07:45 Tomorrowland
- 10:00 San Andreas
- 12:00 Robot Overlords
- 14:00 Cradle 2 The Grave
- 16:00 Code Of Silence
- 18:00 Seventh Son
- 20:00 Reign Of Fire
- 22:00 Hitman: Agent 47



- 01:00 Beverly Hills Chihuahua
- 03:00 The Last Flight Of Noah's Ark
- 05:00 Tinker Bell And The Lost Treasure
- 07:00 Open Season: Scared Silly
- 09:00 Mousehunt
- 11:00 Tinker Bell And The Lost Treasure
- 13:00 Home On The Range
- 15:00 Cars
- 17:00 Secretariat
- 19:00 The Lizzie McGuire Movie
- 20:45 Mary Poppins
- 23:15 Cars



- 01:15 Paranormal Activity: The Ghost Dimension
- 03:00 Zootropolis
- 05:00 Woodlawn
- 07:00 Far From The Madding Crowd
- 09:00 Zootropolis
- 11:00 The Peanuts Movie
- 13:00 The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out Of Water
- 15:00 The Best Of Me
- 17:00 Ride Along 2
- 18:45 Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials
- 21:00 The Angry Birds Movie
- 22:45 Spy



- 00:00 Three Night Stand
- 02:00 Dickie Roberts: Former Child Star
- 04:00 Overboard
- 06:00 The Beautician And The Beast
- 08:00 Night At The Museum: Battle Of The Smithsonian
- 10:00 Overboard
- 12:00 The Bad News Bears (2005)

- 14:00 Crazy On The Outside
- 16:00 The Golden Child
- 18:00 Honeymooners
- 20:00 She's Funny That Way
- 22:00 A Million Ways To Die In The West



- 00:15 Black Swan
- 02:00 The Theory Of Everything
- 04:00 Whiplash
- 05:45 Ordinary People
- 08:00 Ironweed
- 10:45 The Theory Of Everything
- 13:15 Fearless
- 15:30 Steve Jobs
- 18:00 Spotlight
- 20:15 Blood Diamond
- 22:45 The Revenant



- 00:00 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
- 01:30 Moomins And The Comet Chase
- 03:00 Marco Macaco
- 04:30 The Heart Of The Oak
- 06:00 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 07:45 Columbus In The Last Journey
- 09:15 Robosapien: Rebooted
- 11:00 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
- 12:30 Moomins And The Comet Chase
- 14:00 Blue Elephant 2
- 16:00 Robosapien: Rebooted
- 18:00 Jock The Hero Dog
- 19:30 The Olsen Gang In Deep Trouble
- 21:00 Blue Elephant 2



- 00:40 Mythbusters
- 01:30 How Do They Do It?
- 01:55 Food Factory
- 02:20 The Quick And The Curious
- 02:45 Sci-Fi Science: Physics Of The Impossible
- 03:10 Weird Or What?
- 04:00 The Future Of...
- 04:48 Mythbusters
- 05:36 The Quick And The Curious
- 06:00 Sci-Fi Science: Physics Of The Impossible
- 06:24 Weird Or What?
- 07:12 How Do They Do It?
- 07:36 Food Factory
- 08:00 How Do They Do It?

- 08:26 Weird Or What?
- 09:14 Mythbusters
- 10:02 The Future Of...
- 10:50 How Do They Do It?
- 11:14 Food Factory
- 11:38 The Quick And The Curious
- 12:02 Sci-Fi Science: Physics Of The Impossible
- 12:26 Mythbusters
- 13:14 Weird Or What?
- 14:02 How Do They Do It?
- 14:26 Food Factory
- 14:50 The Future Of...
- 15:38 The Quick And The Curious
- 16:02 Sci-Fi Science: Physics Of The Impossible
- 16:26 Weird Or What?
- 17:14 Mythbusters
- 18:02 The Future Of...
- 18:50 Da Vinci's Machines
- 19:40 Speed Junkie
- 20:30 Mythbusters
- 21:20 How Do They Do It?
- 21:45 Food Factory
- 22:10 The Future Of...
- 23:00 Mythbusters
- 23:50 Da Vinci's Machines



- 00:20 Belief
- 01:10 Single Dad Seeking...
- 02:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 02:25 Say Yes To The Dress
- 02:50 Love At First Swipe
- 03:15 Cake Boss
- 03:35 Belief
- 04:20 Little People, Big World
- 04:45 Little People, Big World
- 05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 06:00 Little People, Big World
- 06:25 Little People, Big World
- 08:30 Kid Tycoons
- 09:20 Sister Wives
- 10:10 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 11:00 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 11:50 Love At First Swipe
- 12:15 Love At First Swipe
- 12:40 Love At First Swipe
- 13:05 Love At First Swipe
- 13:30 Love At First Swipe
- 13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 14:45 Belief
- 15:35 Cake Boss
- 16:00 Cake Boss
- 16:25 Cake Boss
- 16:50 Cake Boss
- 17:15 Cake Boss
- 17:40 Ugly House To Lovely House
- 18:30 Suddenly Rich
- 19:20 Kid Tycoons
- 20:10 Sister Wives
- 21:00 Little People, Big World
- 21:50 First Heartbeat
- 22:40 Too Ugly For Love?
- 23:30 Mormon Half Love

- 20:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 21:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
- 22:00 Ancient Aliens
- 23:00 Engineering Disasters



- 00:20 Time Team
- 01:10 President Obama: In His Own Words
- 02:50 Storage Wars
- 03:15 American Pickers
- 04:05 Pawn Stars
- 04:30 Pawn Stars
- 05:00 Mountain Men
- 06:00 Mankind The Story Of All Of Us
- 06:50 Gold Hunters: Legend Of The Superstition...
- 07:40 Billion Dollar Wreck
- 08:30 Shark Wranglers
- 09:20 Mountain Men
- 10:10 Time Team
- 11:00 American Pickers
- 11:50 Counting Cars
- 12:15 Car Hunters
- 12:40 Pawn Stars
- 13:05 Storage Wars: Best Of
- 13:30 American Pickers
- 14:20 American Pickers
- 15:10 American Pickers
- 16:00 American Pickers
- 16:50 American Pickers
- 17:40 American Pickers
- 18:30 Shipping Wars
- 18:55 Shipping Wars
- 19:20 Alaska Off-Road Warriors



- 00:00 The Universe
- 01:00 World War II: Lost Films
- 02:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 03:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 03:50 Ancient Aliens
- 04:40 How 2 Win
- 05:30 The Universe
- 06:20 World War II: Lost Films
- 07:10 The Universe
- 08:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 09:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 10:00 Ancient Aliens
- 11:00 How 2 Win
- 12:00 The Universe
- 13:00 World War II: Lost Films
- 14:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 15:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 16:00 Ancient Aliens
- 17:00 How 2 Win
- 18:00 The Universe
- 19:00 World War II: Lost Films

- 00:00 Patricia Heaton Parties
- 01:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 02:00 Man Fire Food
- 03:00 Chopped
- 04:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 05:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 06:00 The Kitchen
- 07:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 08:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
- 09:00 Valerie's Home Cooking
- 10:00 The Kitchen
- 11:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 12:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
- 13:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 14:00 Chopped
- 15:00 The Kitchen
- 16:00 Valerie's Home Cooking
- 17:00 Chopped
- 18:00 Iron Chef America
- 19:00 Man Finds Food
- 20:00 Follow Donal... To Europe
- 21:00 Girl Eat World
- 22:00 Iron Chef America
- 23:00 Man Finds Food



THE THEORY OF EVERYTHING ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL HD

WORD SEARCH

Human Skeleton & Organs

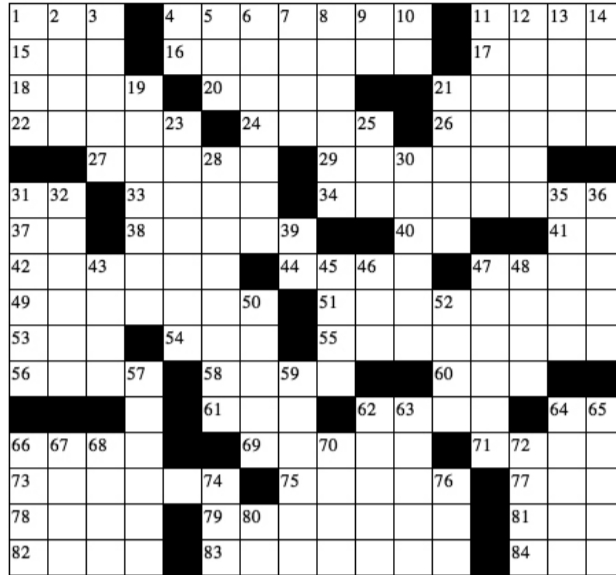
Find and circle all of the skeletal parts and body organs that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.

Note: TARSALS and METATARSALS are hidden separately and do not overlap. The same goes for CARPALS and METACARPALS, and BLADDER and GALLBLADDER.

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

- Skeleton:**
- CARPALS
- CLAVICLE
- COCCYX
- CRANIUM
- FEMUR
- FIBULA
- HUMERUS
- INNOMINATE
- MANDIBLE
- METACARPALS
- METATARSALS
- Organs:**
- APPENDIX
- BLADDER
- BRAIN
- GALLBLADDER
- SKIN
- SPLEEN
- STOMACH
- VOICE BOX
- Other:**
- PATELLA
- PHALANGES
- RADIUS
- RIBS
- SACRUM
- SCAPULA
- STERNUM
- TARSALS
- TIBIA
- ULNA
- VERTEBRA
- Other:**
- LIVER
- LUNGS
- PANCREAS
- RIBS
- SKIN
- SPLEEN
- STOMACH
- VOICE BOX

CROSSWORD 1510



ACROSS

- (informal) 'johnny' was applied as a nickname for Confederate soldiers by the Federal soldiers in the American Civil War.
- A bag used for carrying money and small personal items or accessories (especially by women).
- A humorous anecdote or remark.
- An implement used to propel or steer a boat.
- English writer (born in Scotland) of children's stories (1859-1932).
- Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
- The cardinal number that is the sum of one and one and one.
- A small nail.
- Large swift fly the female of which sucks blood of various animals.
- Wearing or provided with clothing.
- A French river.
- A person of Iranian descent.
- A member of an agricultural people in southeastern India.
- A person forced to flee from home or country.
- The sediment from fermentation of an alcoholic beverage.
- A city in the northern panhandle of Texas.
- The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- A metric unit of length equal to one hundredth of a meter.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- Become or cause to become unobstructed.
- Something acquired without compensation.
- Conspicuously or grossly unconventional or unusual.
- Lack of strength or vigor esp from illness.
- The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- Edible tuber of any of several yams.
- Relating to or characteristic of Malawi or its people or culture.
- (British) Diesel oil used in cars and lorries with diesel engines (from d(iesel) e(ngine) r(oad) v(ehicle)).
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- The cry made by sheep.
- Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- Enthusiastic approval.
- The content of cognition.
- A family of Afroasiatic tonal languages (mostly two tones) spoken in the regions west and south of Lake Chad in north central Africa.
- United States writer noted for his stories about life during the California gold rush (1836-1902).
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- A three-tone Chadic language.
- Unique or specific to a person or thing or category.
- (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
- A person with unusual powers of foresight.
- Large drinking vessel with one handle.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

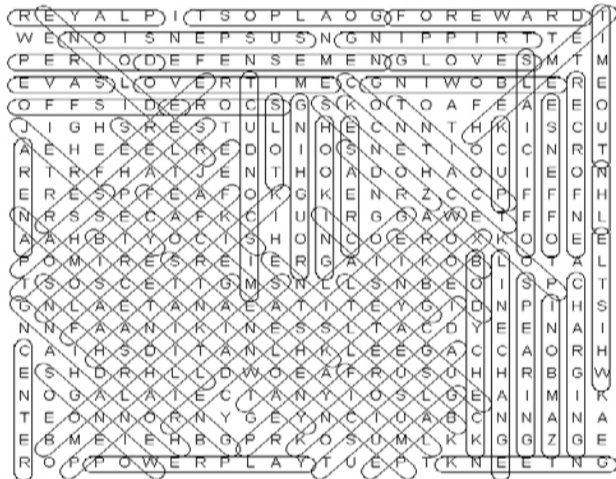
DOWN

- A training program to prepare college students to be commissioned officers.
- A British peer ranking below a Marquess and above a Viscount.
- Of short duration or distance.
- A heavy silvery toxic univalent and bivalent metallic element.
- Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).

- An exceptional interest in and admiration for yourself.
- Tropical woody herb with showy yellow flowers and flat pods.
- A member of an agricultural people of southern India.
- Before noon.
- A brittle gray crystalline element that is a semiconducting metalloid (resembling silicon) used in transistors.
- German mathematician (1804-1851).
- (anatomy) Of or relating to a cavity or chamber in the body (especially one of the upper chambers of the heart).
- A set of two similar things considered as a unit.
- Any of several related languages of the Celts in Ireland and Scotland.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly inhabiting the Black Hills of western South Dakota.
- Fear resulting from the awareness of danger.
- The pope who sponsored the introduction of the modern calendar (1572-1585).
- A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.
- Any of various seaweeds that grow underwater in shallow beds.
- A metrical unit with stressed-unstressed-unstressed syllables.
- Grey or green or brown mineral similar to mica and containing aluminum and potassium sulphates.
- (folklore) A corpse that rises at night to drink the blood of the living.
- A large body of water constituting a principal part of the hydrosphere.
- A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
- A male monarch or emperor (especially of Russia prior to 1917).
- A metrical unit with unstressed-stressed syllables.
- A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
- A state in the United States in the central Pacific on the Hawaiian Islands.
- Type genus of the Amidiidae.
- A person who acts as host at formal occasions (makes an introductory speech and introduces other speakers).
- (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
- Included seven times in every 19 years.
- A city in western Germany near the Dutch and Belgian borders.
- A dark region of considerable extent on the surface of the moon.
- Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
- Clarified butter used in Indian cookery.
- Swift timid long-eared mammal larger than a rabbit having a divided upper lip and long hind legs.
- The state of needing something that is absent or unavailable.
- Fallow deer.
- Standard time in the 6th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 90th meridian.
- Late time of life.
- An informal term for a father.
- Clarified butter used in Indian cookery.
- Swift timid long-eared mammal larger than a rabbit having a divided upper lip and long hind legs.
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- Fallow deer.
- Standard time in the 6th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 90th meridian.
- Late time of life.
- An informal term for a father.

Yesterday's Solution

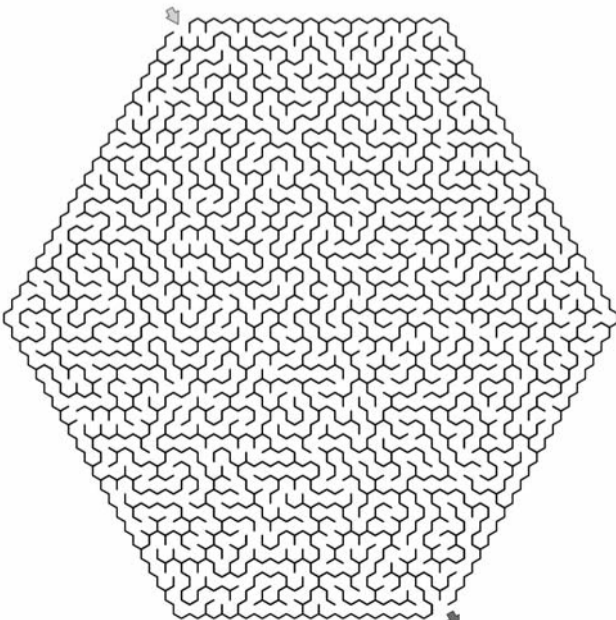
Hockey



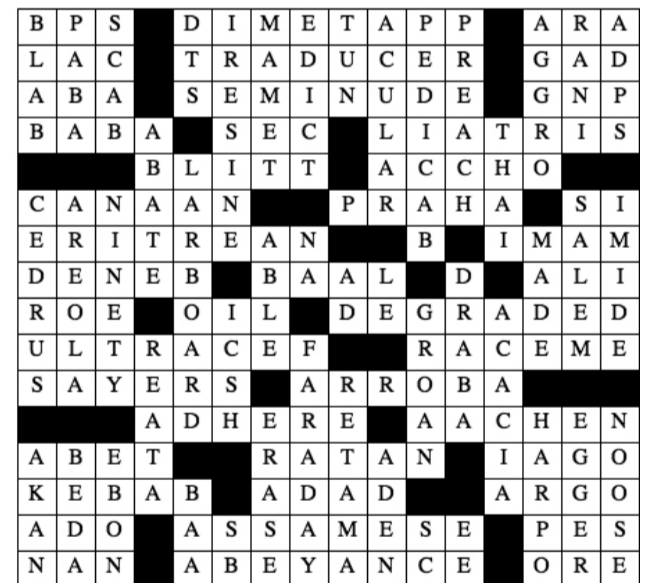
- ARENA ELBOWING ICE RINK PENALTIES SLAPSHOT
ASSIST ENFORCER ICING PENALTY BOX SLASHING
BLUE LINE FACE MASK JERSEY PERIOD SLOT
BOARDING FACE-OFF KNEEING PLAYER SPEARING
BOARDS FOREWARD LEAGUE POINT STANLEY CUP
BODY CHECK FOUL LINE CHANGE POKE CHECK SUSPENSION
BREAKAWAY GAME LINESMAN POWER PLAY TIME-OUT
CENTER GLOVES MISCONDUCT PUCK TRIPPING
CHARGING GOALPOST NHL RED LINE WHISTLE
CONTACT GOALTENDER OFFENSE REFEREE WINGS
CREASE HAT TRICK OFFICIALS ROUGHING WRIST SHOT
DEFENSEMEN HELMET OFFSIDE SAVE ZAMBONI
DEKE HOLDING OVERTIME SCORE ZONES
EJECTION HOOKING PASS SKATES

Hidden sentence: I WENT TO A FIGHT THE OTHER NIGHT, AND A HOCKEY GAME BROKE OUT

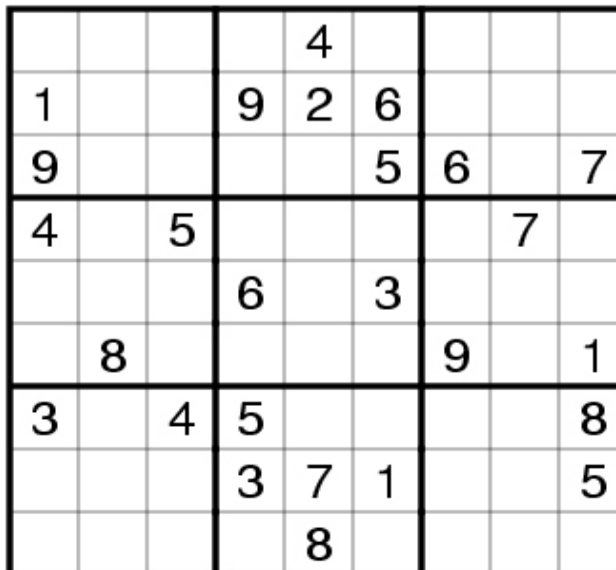
CHALLENGING MAZE



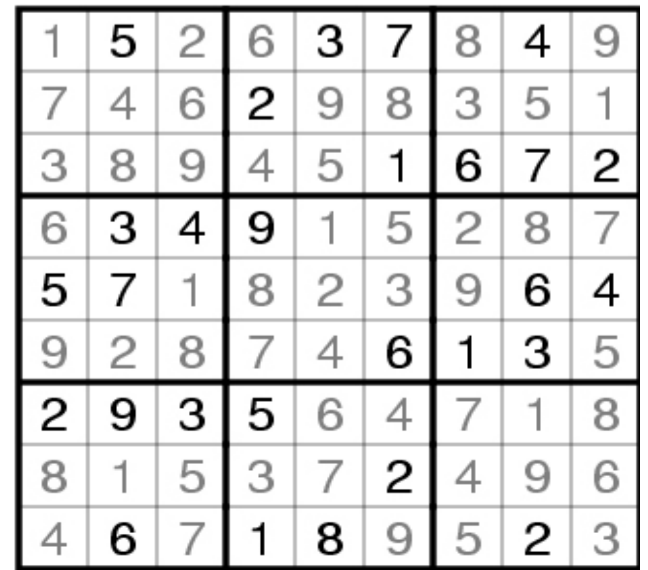
Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



KING OF THE ZOO - LIGER CUB TSAR IS RUSSIAN HIT

ROSTOV-ON-DON: His name is fit for a king, and he's being treated like one: Tsar the liger cub, born from an extremely rare lion-tiger romance, is proving a hit for a travelling Russian zoo. Stretched out in the zoo director's van, the stripy Tsar-whose name is a throwback to the Russian emperors of centuries past- impatiently awaits his milk bottle. "We don't leave him in a cage-it's too cold outside," said zoo chief Erik Airapetyan. "We keep him here with us-he even sleeps in our bed." With the tawny fur of a lion cub but covered in black stripes, Tsar was born on November 11 while the zoo was on tour in southern Russia's Rostov-on-Don region. Airapetyan and colleagues are feeding him with goat's milk, and so far, he drinks about a litre (two pints) a day. His mother Princess, the zoo's only tigress, had a difficult birth and has been unable to suckle him. She has given birth to a total of three liger cubs, but only Tsar has survived, according to Airapetyan.

"Hybrids like this are extremely rare-and generally they are weaker than lion cubs or ordinary young tigers," explained Dmitry Miloserdov, a researcher at Moscow's Darwin Museum of natural history. "But if you take good care of them, they can grow up and live a long time," he said, adding however that male ligers are born sterile. Mindful that Tsar's survival is against the odds, the zoo is catering to his every whim: he has an unlimited milk supply, sleeps 16 hours a day, and plays whenever he wants. "We're all taking care of him-we're very proud of our little treasure. He's unique, our stripy lion," Airapetyan smiled. Neither Princess or Tsar's father, Caesar the lion, have access to the cub for the moment. At two and a half months old and weighing five kilograms, he is "still too small and fragile" to meet his parents, said Airapetyan.

Unlikely love

Princess and Caesar have occupied neighboring cages for years and "are used to one another", according to the zoo director. Every time she is in heat, the zoo faces a tricky dilemma: offer Caesar as a suitor, or deal with the wrath of a sexually frustrated Princess. "So we dared to half-open the dividing wall between the cages," Airapetyan recalled. "Then seeing that everything was going well, we took to risk of leaving them face to face." When it became clear Princess was pregnant, "everyone was so happy", he said. "It's so rare, a liger! Right now there are only about 20 in the world," he added, grinning from ear to ear. —AFP

DRUG RESISTANT MALARIA STRAIN MAKES MEKONG GAINS

BANGKOK: An especially drug-resistant type of malaria is becoming dominant in parts of the Mekong region, researchers said yesterday, warning of potentially dire consequences if it makes the leap to India and Africa. For the last decade scientists and health workers have become increasingly alarmed by the spread of a malaria strain resistant to a key drug used to treat patients: artemisinin.

It was first detected in western Cambodia in 2007 and has since spread to parts of northeastern Thailand, southern Laos and eastern Myanmar. Now researchers have also discovered a version of that strain that is not only resistant to two types of drugs, but has muscled out its less dangerous peers to become the dominant variant, according to a paper published Thursday in The Lancet Infectious Diseases medical journal.

"What's happened now is that one lineage which arose in western Cambodia, one family of parasites if you like, has effectively beaten all the rest out and has spread," Nicholas White, a specialist from the Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit (MORU) in Bangkok, which led the research said. So far the dominant lineage has been detected in parts of Cambodia, Thailand and Laos but not

Myanmar-the bridge to South Asia-although researchers believe it is just a matter of time before it pushes westwards. For tropical disease experts, the emergence of this strain has a worrying historical precedent.

Last century the borderlands of Cambodia, Thailand and Laos incubated two previous waves of drug-resistant malaria that spread from the region to India and Africa where they killed millions. The first was a chloroquine resistant strain that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s and the second wave was a type of parasite impervious to the next generation of anti-malarial medicine, sulphadoxine pyrimethamine (SP). The Chinese military came to the rescue when a female chemist discovered artemisinin in the 1970s during a secret project to protect their North Vietnamese allies from the debilitating disease in their war against the United States.

Clock is ticking

The discovery, coupled with worldwide preventative measures against the mosquitoes, resulted in significant successes made against malaria over the last few decades. But scientists fear much of those gains could unravel if the latest generation of drug-resistant parasites is not tackled. "There's been

too much talking and not enough doing on this," warned White. Arjen Dondorp, the study's lead author, told AFP a major global effort was needed to stop the latest generation of drug resistant malaria before it heads west. "Once it is in Africa that would be a disaster because that is where most of the world's malaria cases are," he said. Doctors are hampered by the lack of artemisinin-like breakthroughs. Some new drugs are being worked on with "several compounds" that look promising, Dondorp said, but the testing takes time.

Meanwhile a triple cocktail of drugs is currently working against the latest malaria strain, though resistance to that could build. In the meantime, he said, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Myanmar have to aggressively target the often remote, poor and inaccessible regions where the strains are emerging with "creative use of drugs". Significant money has been made available from international donors and funds, he said. "But the window of opportunity is getting shorter and shorter." His colleague White added, "Today we don't have untreatable malaria, we have malaria that is becoming increasingly more difficult to treat. But the prospects for the next few years are very uncertain."—AFP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE ORIGINAL INSPIRATION BEHIND THE ARABIAN NEWS

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

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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (02/02/2017 TO 08/02/2017)

SHARQIA-1
SPLIT 1:00 PM
SPLIT 3:15 PM
KAABIL- HINDI 5:30 PM
SPLIT 8:30 PM
xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE 10:45 PM
SPLIT 12:45 AM

SHARQIA-2
KUNG-FU YOGA 12:15 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA 2:30 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA 4:45 PM
MONSTER TRUCKS 7:00 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA 9:15 PM
SPLIT 11:30 PM

SHARQIA-3
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 12:30 PM
MONSTER TRUCKS 2:45 PM
MONSTER TRUCKS 5:00 PM
RAEES- HINDI 7:15 PM
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 10:15 PM
RAEES- HINDI 12:30 AM

MUHALAB-1
DANGAL -Hindi 12:15 PM
xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE 1:30 PM
FRI
RAEES- HINDI 3:30 PM
RAEES- HINDI 6:30 PM
xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE 9:30 PM
SPLIT 11:30 PM

MUHALAB-2
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 12:15 PM
MONSTER TRUCKS 2:30 PM
MONSTER TRUCKS 4:45 PM
KAABIL- HINDI 7:00 PM
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 10:00 PM
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 12:15 AM

MUHALAB-3
xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE 11:30 AM
SPLIT 1:30 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA 3:45 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA 6:00 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA 8:15 PM
SPLIT 10:30 PM
SPLIT 12:45 AM

FANAR-1
OZZY 11:30 AM
THU+SAT+MON
SPLIT 11:30 AM
SUN+TUE+WED
SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS 1:45 PM
OZZY 3:45 PM
SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS 5:45 PM
SPLIT 7:45 PM
SPLIT 10:00 PM
SPLIT 12:30 AM

FANAR-2
LIVE BY NIGHT 12:45 PM
RAHAF 1:30 PM
FRI
LIVE BY NIGHT 3:30 PM
LIVE BY NIGHT 6:15 PM
RAHAF 8:45 PM
RAHAF 10:30 PM
LIVE BY NIGHT 12:15 AM

FANAR-3
DANGAL -Hindi 11:30 AM
MONSTER TRUCKS 2:45 PM
MONSTER TRUCKS 5:00 PM
DANGAL -Hindi 7:15 PM
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 10:30 PM
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 12:45 AM

FANAR-4
KUNG-FU YOGA 11:45 AM
KUNG-FU YOGA 2:00 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA 4:15 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA 6:30 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA 8:45 PM
xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE 11:00 PM
xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE 1:00 AM

FANAR-5
RAEES- HINDI 12:00 PM
RAEES- HINDI 3:00 PM
KAABIL- HINDI 6:00 PM

RAEES- HINDI 9:00 PM
RAEES- HINDI 12:05 AM

MARINA-1
RAEES- HINDI 12:00 PM
SPLIT 2:45 PM
RAEES- HINDI 5:00 PM
SPLIT 8:00 PM
SPLIT 10:15 PM
SPLIT 12:30 AM

MARINA-2
xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE 11:30 AM
KUNG-FU YOGA 1:30 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA 3:45 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA 6:00 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA 8:15 PM
xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE 10:30 PM
xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE 12:45 AM

MARINA-3
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 12:45 PM
MONSTER TRUCKS 3:00 PM
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 5:15 PM
MONSTER TRUCKS 7:30 PM
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 12:05 AM

AVENUES-1
DANGAL -Hindi 12:00 PM
KAABIL- HINDI 3:15 PM
JOMONTE SUVISHESHANGAL- Malayalam 6:15 PM
NO SUN+TUE+WED
DANGAL -Hindi 6:00 PM
SUN+TUE+WED
DANGAL -Hindi 9:15 PM
KAABIL- HINDI 12:30 AM

AVENUES-2
MONSTER TRUCKS -3D -4DX 12:45 PM
MONSTER TRUCKS -3D -4DX 3:00 PM
MONSTER TRUCKS -3D -4DX 5:15 PM
MONSTER TRUCKS -3D -4DX 7:30 PM
xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE -3D -4DX 10:00 PM
xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE -3D -4DX 12:15 AM

AVENUES-3
RAEES- HINDI 11:30 AM
RAEES- HINDI 2:30 PM
RAEES- HINDI 5:30 PM
RAEES- HINDI 8:30 PM
RAEES- HINDI 11:30 PM

360°-1
SPLIT 11:30 AM
SPLIT 1:45 PM
SPLIT 4:15 PM
SPLIT 6:45 PM
SPLIT 9:15 PM
SPLIT 11:45 PM

360°-2
DANGAL -Hindi 1:15 PM
MOANA 1:45 PM
FRI
DANGAL -Hindi 4:30 PM
DANGAL -Hindi 7:45 PM
DANGAL -Hindi 11:00 PM

360°-3
LIVE BY NIGHT 12:45 PM
SING 3:30 PM
SING 5:45 PM
AL ATR -Kuwaiti Film 8:00 PM
LIVE BY NIGHT 10:00 PM
LIVE BY NIGHT 12:45 AM

AL-KOUT.1
SPLIT 12:45 PM
SPLIT 3:00 PM
SPLIT 5:15 PM
xXx: RETURN OF XANDER CAGE 7:30 PM
SPLIT 9:45 PM
SPLIT 12:05 AM

AL-KOUT.2
SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS 11:30 AM
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 1:30 PM
SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS 3:45 PM
SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS 6:00 PM
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 8:00 PM
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 10:15 PM
RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter 12:30 AM

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PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr: 05:15
Shorook 06:36
Duhr: 12:02
Asr: 15:06
Maghrib: 17:28
Isha: 18:46

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

Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2017



Grab to invest \$700 million in Indonesia

US CAR SALES HIT BRAKES

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Page 39



FRANKFURT: A worker cleans in front of the headquarters of Deutsche Bank during the bank's annual press conference in Frankfurt, Germany yesterday. — AP

DEUTSCHE BANK REPORTS HUGE LOSS

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Troubled German banking giant Deutsche Bank yesterday asked for patience after reporting its second annual net loss in a row, saying it was laying the foundations for durable success in the future. "The year 2016 was not a bad year," chief executive John Cryan insisted at a press conference in Frankfurt. "We made huge progress." "2016 was a year of small steps. But there were many of those small steps, even if most of them don't yet show up in the results," the CEO added, referring to the massive restructuring launched shortly after he took the helm in summer 2015.

Deutsche reported a net loss of 1.4 billion euros (\$1.5 billion) for the year, struggling with the impact of mammoth fines, lower revenues and restructuring costs. Like its rivals, Deutsche continues to face headwinds from low interest rates as well as increased regulation and higher capital requirements introduced in the wake of the financial crisis. But the lender was also battered by a fresh series of fines in 2016 that took deep bites out of its

result. The result is worse than the 200 million euro loss forecast by analysts FactSet, but an improvement on the nearly seven-billion-euro loss recorded in 2015.

Looking beyond the net result, Deutsche saw revenues shrink by 10 percent in 2016 compared with the previous year, at just over 30 billion euros. Meanwhile, the bank's underlying, or operating result before interest and taxes was 810 million euros in the red. Deutsche's result also continued to be burdened by provisions the bank has set aside to cover credit risks, which grew 45 percent compared with 2015 to almost 1.4 billion euros. Among other risks, Deutsche is exposed to the struggling shipping sector, which has been floundering since the 2008 financial crisis.

Painful medicine

The fourth quarter alone saw a loss of 1.9 billion euros, affected largely by \$7.2 billion the bank agreed to pay in fines and compensation in the US over its involvement in the

mortgage-backed securities crisis of 2008. Combined with several smaller legal settlements, the penalty accounted for a 1.6-billion-euro weight on Deutsche's net result. Adding to its woes, on Tuesday the bank was hit with yet another penalty as New York and British authorities slapped it with nearly \$630 million over alleged money laundering in Russia.

But with those looming threats dispelled, even at heavy cost, the bank believes it can look to the future. "Of course we aren't happy with the results" in 2016, finance director Marcus Schenck told the press conference. But "we have to sow today if we want a good harvest later. And that requires patience." Deutsche pointed to an increase in its capital cushion, required by regulators to see the bank through financial shocks, progress in closing branches and the final winding down of some 128 billion euros of risky assets it held in 2012. Cryan's tough restructuring plan will see Deutsche shed 200 branches in Germany and some 9,000 of its roughly 100,000 full-time employees.

Eyes on new year

The bank's legal woes "didn't just cost money, but also weighed on our reputation and our image," Cryan told journalists yesterday. As part of his efforts to restore shine to Germany's largest bank, Deutsche announced in January that it would slash bonuses for some 25 percent of employees, largely in upper management. Despite its difficulties, "most of our clients maintained their confidence in Deutsche Bank," and since the fine over the mortgage crisis case was agreed "clients who had held off are once again doing much more business with us," Cryan said.

He expects Deutsche to return to profitability in 2017 on the back of increased revenues and a wider economic upturn. The bank recently recruited 350 staff in its compliance and financial crime divisions, and plans 600 more hires this year. But Deutsche will continue to face legal tripwires in the months ahead, as it remains tangled in almost 8,000 legal cases worldwide. — AFP

SURGE IN ELECTRIC CARS MAY BLINDSIDE BIG OIL

PARIS: Oil companies underestimating the global market for electric vehicles could be caught unaware by weakened demand for petrol within a decade, analysts said yesterday. Falling costs of electric cars and renewable technology may halt growth in oil demand from as early as 2020, they argued in a report. The current boom in electric vehicles is on track to displace two million barrels of oil per day by 2025, they calculated.

A similar drop in demand preceded the collapse of oil prices in 2014. By 2035, that figure could quintuple, with electric cars accounting for a third of the road transport market, said the report, jointly issued by financial think tank Carbon Tracker and the Grantham Institute, both in London. The power and road transport sectors account for about half of fossil fuel consumption, so growth in solar energy and electric vehicles can have a major impact on demand. "Electric vehicles and solar power are game-changers that the

fossil fuel industry consistently underestimates," said Luke Sussams, a senior analyst at Carbon Tracker.

"Very few companies or institutions in the energy industry are really considering the upside if the technology explodes and grows exponentially," he said. Oil and gas giant BP, for example, predicted last week that oil demand from cars would continue to rise well into the mid-2030s. In 2035, electric vehicles will only make up six percent of the global car fleet, it said in its 2017 Energy Outlook. Other fossil fuel companies have made similarly rosy forecasts for oil demand. Non-industry analysts are split on how quickly electric vehicles will displace those powered by internal combustion engines. The 29-nation International Energy Agency (IEA), formed after the 1973 oil crisis, sees relatively modest growth, resulting in an eight percent market share—about 150 million vehicles—by 2040, and only 1.3 million barrels of oil displaced per day.

Exponential growth

Even their prescriptive "450 ppm" forecast—a blueprint for energy growth deemed consistent with capping global warming at two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) — only foresees 710 million electric vehicles by that date. Holding warming to 2C is the core goal of the 196-nation Paris climate treaty. But the IEA's poor track record for forecasting solar and wind growth suggests estimates for electric cars may be too conservative as well. "The IEA and the oil companies are still playing catch up on renewables," said Sussams. "Every year they are upgrading their assumptions around renewable energy penetration."

The IEA's last revision was in October 2016. Private forecaster Bloomberg New Energy Finance's estimates, by contrast, are much closer to the new figures: a 22 percent market share for electric vehicles by 2035. The disagreement on how quickly fossil fuel companies may face falling demand—and possibly stranded assets—is

built into the assumptions behind the forecasts. "We assume the electric vehicles will be cheaper than oil-burning combustion engine vehicles from 2020 onward," explained Sussams. The Carbon Tracker model also presumes very rapid growth, and an absence of bottlenecks, such as a shortage of charging stations.

China—the largest market in the world for electric vehicles—sold more than half-a-million in 2016. "That is close to exponential growth," Sussams said. The forecasts are also in line with those of major car makers, including Tesla, GM and major European manufacturers. The 60-page report—entitled "The disruptive power of low-carbon technology—notes that a 10 percent loss of the power market-share caused the collapse of the US coal mining industry. Similarly, Europe's five major utilities lost more than 100 billion euros (\$105 billion) in value from 2008 to 2013 "because they were unprepared for an eight percent growth in renewable power." —AFP



TOKYO: A woman looks at an electronic stock indicator of a securities firm in Tokyo, yesterday. Asian markets wavered and the dollar lost some steam yesterday after the Fed kept its key lending rate on hold as expected at its latest policy meeting. —AP

DOLLAR HITS 12-WEEK LOW

NON-COMMITTAL US FED DAMPENS STOCKS

LONDON: The dollar slipped to a 12-week low yesterday and stock and bonds markets both showed caution after the US Federal Reserve stuck to its mildly upbeat view of the world but gave no hint on when it will next raise interest rates. With all the political uncertainties about, the big central banks appear to be lying low - or at least trying not to add to the volatility. The Fed decision and statement was a non-event, with the lack of any nod toward a possible further rate rise next month - not least because the latest US economic numbers have been so strong. It sent the dollar to its lowest level since mid-November against a six-strong group of other top world currencies,

to add to January's worst start to a year in three decades.

Rabobank analyst Michael Every said despite tweaks in the Fed's statement, including that inflation "will", rather than "is expected to" rise to 2 percent, it could be taken as broadly dovish. "There was not the spoon-feeding 'expect a rate hike in March' guidance the market has come to expect (from the Fed) before such changes in policy are made," he said. There was another salvo of Twitter comment from US President Donald Trump, this time aimed at Iran and a "dumb" immigration deal struck with Australia. The Aussie dollar didn't mind though, concentrating instead on strong trade surplus figures as it jumped 1

percent to a near three-month high.

Rattled euro zone bond market drew some comfort from the Fed's apparent lack of urgency to push up rates. Yields, which move inverse to price, drifted down across the board with those on benchmark Bunds down to 0.48 percent. France's bonds went with the flow but the gap over German peers was near its widest level in three years on nerves about far-right Marine Le Pen polling strongly ahead of elections in April and May. Back in the currency market, sterling also pounced on the weakened dollar to hit a 12-week high as construction sector data showed builders, like manufacturers the day before, are seeing a sharp rise in their costs. —Reuters

RUSSIAN OIL OUTPUT CONTRACTS 100,000 BPD AFTER GLOBAL DEAL

MOSCOW: Russian oil output contracted in January by 100,000 barrels per day, led by decline at all the major domestic producers and following a global accord aimed at eliminating oversupply and supporting oil prices, Energy Ministry data showed yesterday. Russian output, one of the world's largest, declined for the first time since August. The decrease showed that Moscow is serious in its pledges to reduce production of oil, its chief commodity exports and key supplier of budget revenues. January marked the start of planned output cuts by 11 members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and other producers led by Russia under a deal reached on Dec. 10.

Russian oil and gas condensate output declined to 11.11 million bpd from 11.21 million bpd in December. In tons, oil output fell to 46,992 million from 47,402 million in December. Top Russian producer Rosneft cut output in January by 0.5 percent month on month, Lukoil cut by 1 percent, Surgutneftegaz cut by 1.2 percent and Tatneft by 3.7 percent. The data does not take into account production at subsidiaries and joint ventures. Russian oil pipeline exports rose to 4,409 million bpd from 4,358 million. Moscow has said that the deal was related exclusively to production, not exports.

Global deal

OPEC, Russia and other producers agreed to cut oil production by a combined 1.8 million bpd in the first half of 2017. Russia pledged to reduce 300,000 bpd by the end of the first half. A Reuters survey this week put compliance with the OPEC deal at 82 percent, above the initial 60 percent achieved when a similar deal was implemented in 2009. Market watchers have focused on the level of compliance to those promises as in the past the OPEC members have often failed to stick to their pledges. Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said on Wednesday that global oil output was cut by 1.4 million bpd last month. Since Nov 30, when OPEC announced a production target of 32.5 million bpd, oil prices have jumped by around a fifth to \$56.5 per barrel, comfortably above the \$40 per barrel average envisaged in Russia's budget for 2017. Novak has said he expects global oil prices at between \$50 and \$60 per barrel this year. He has said Russia aims to cut production by 200,000 per day by the end of first quarter and reduce it by 300,000 bpd thereafter.

US help needed

"Russia's approach to cutting would only foresee a gradual decrease in production as of the end of Q1. Consequently, while OPEC cuts seem to be well underway - asserting confidence in the deal - there is still some way to go for non-OPEC," Vienna-based JBC Energy said in a note on Wednesday. "Moreover, signals from the US continue to indicate a more rapid rebound in US crude production, which could counter some of the non-OPEC contributions to the cuts." Igor Yusufov, Russia's energy minister from 2001 to 2004, and who oversaw Moscow's first deal with OPEC said that Russia and OPEC should bring the United States into the global deal on oil output curbs as the US was ramping up its production. —Reuters

FAMED TAX HAVEN SWITZERLAND CHASES HIDDEN CASH

BERN: Switzerland, a perennial target for governments pursuing tax evaders, is finding out what it is like to chase down hidden cash. The Swiss finance ministry said yesterday it had reached a deal with Liechtenstein to exchange tax information, potentially helping to uncover billions of dollars in undeclared assets kept by Swiss citizens in neighboring Liechtenstein.

"These assets will be declared and the person has the chance either to repatriate the assets to Switzerland, or he will be taxed and he keeps his money in Liechtenstein," said Joerg Gasser, head of the State Secretariat for International Financial Matters, a branch of the finance ministry. The

amount of undeclared Swiss assets in Liechtenstein, a principality of just 38,000 people sandwiched between Switzerland and Austria, is unknown.

However, around 3.5 billion Swiss francs (\$3.5 billion) could be with Liechtensteinische Landesbank, one of the country's biggest banks, according to an estimate by Andreas Brun, a banking analyst at Mirabaud Securities LLP. The situation is a role reversal for Switzerland, whose strict bank secrecy laws for years had made the wealthy Alpine country a haven for hidden money. A turning point came in 2007 when Bradley Birkenfeld, a former employee at UBS, blew the whistle on tax evasion practices - including smuggling diamonds

in a toothpaste tube - and opened the door for a broader clamp-down on tax evasion in Switzerland.

UBS, Switzerland's biggest bank, and cross-town rival Credit Suisse eventually paid \$780 million and \$2.6 billion respectively to US authorities over charges they helped wealthy Americans evade tax. The Swiss-Liechtenstein agreement is under a global tax sharing initiative spearheaded by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Under the OECD's Automatic Exchange of Information (AEI), banks pass on information to local tax agencies, which in turn share it with foreign counterparts. — Reuters

RIDE-HAILING FIRM TO INVEST \$700 MILLION IN INDONESIA

JAKARTA: Southeast Asian ride-hailing firm Grab yesterday unveiled a plan to invest \$700 million in Indonesia over the next four years, as transport app competition in the country accelerates. The company, whose main service in Indonesia is an app for hailing private cars and motorbike taxis, said a key part of the investment would be opening a research and development centre.

The move ups the ante between ride-hailing services in Southeast Asia's top economy, where the growing use of smartphones and need for motorbike taxis in traffic-choked cities has led to rising popularity of transport apps. Singapore-headquartered Grab, considered the leading ride-hailing app in Southeast Asia, sees its main competitors in Indonesia as US firm Uber and homegrown outfit Go-Jek.

Unveiling the plan in Jakarta, Grab chief executive and co-founder Anthony Tan said: "We are excited to make this significant investment in Indonesia's future and accelerate their transition to a fully integrated digital economy." The news came the same week that Grab announced it had hired the former head of Indonesia's national police, Badrodin Haiti, to oversee corporate governance in the country. Hiring a former top law enforcement official could help Grab with the regulatory hurdles facing ride-hailing startups in the country. Authorities have placed conditions on the services, including that they register with local partners.

As part of its new investment, Grab plans to open a research and development centre in Jakarta and hire 150 engineers over the next two years. It will invest up to \$100 million in startups and entrepreneurs as part of a "social impact" initiative aimed at bringing more Indonesians into the digital economy, Grab said in a statement. Grab operates in Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. Its core product platform includes private cars, motorbikes and taxi-hailing services which are rapidly gaining popularity in a region that is home to over 600 million people and a rising middle class. — AFP



JAKARTA: A Grab Bike rider (front right) talks to a motorcyclist while using his mobile phone in Jakarta. Southeast Asian ride-hailing firm Grab yesterday unveiled a plan to invest \$700 million in Indonesia over the next four years, as transport app competition in the country accelerates. —AFP



PARIS: Photo shows the logo of Uber in Paris. German auto giant Daimler said it had struck a partnership with Uber to supply self-driving cars for the US ride-hailing company. — AFP

UBER SUSPENDS OPERATION IN TAIWAN AFTER FINE HIKE

GOVT SLAMMED FOR SHUNNING NEW BUSINESS MODELS

TAIPEI: Uber announced yesterday it is halting operations in Taiwan, saying it is at an "impasse" with authorities which deem the ride-hailing app as illegal. The US firm has racked up fines since it entered the Taiwan market in 2013 for running a business without the proper registration to operate as a taxi service. Taiwan's suspension comes after Uber halted services in Hungary last July due to new legislation that stops drivers from making money with their own vehicles.

Last month Taiwanese authorities hiked the maximum possible penalty for Uber drivers to Tw\$25 million (\$803,639) - the highest in the world. The Transport Ministry yesterday said it was preparing to charge the firm Tw\$230 million in penalties and would issue an order to halt operations. The order would be executed by the Taipei's office of commerce, an official at the transport ministry said.

Preempting the order, Uber said in a statement on its website that it would suspend service on the island from February 10. "In the face of this impasse, we must create a new path forward," the company said. "We hope that pressing pause will reset the conversation and inspire President Tsai to take action," it added. Uber had in November warned President Tsai Ing-wen in an open letter that actions against the firm were scaring away foreign investors.

Tsai's administration is pushing for Taiwan to foster its own "Asian Silicon Valley" to help kickstart the economy by encouraging and fostering start-up technologies. But Uber yesterday slammed the government for shunning new business models. "Unfortunately, the government has moved further and further away from embracing innova-

tion and setting the stage for a 21st century transportation policy," it said. Uber has also taken heat on social media in the United States in recent days for continuing to operate during a New York taxi strike against Donald Trump's immigration ban.

The firm this week said it was committed to assisting drivers affected by the restrictions. Across the world, the smartphone app has faced stiff resistance from traditional taxi drivers, as well as bans in some places over safety concerns and questions over legal issues, including taxes. Uber says it is not a transport company like taxi companies, and that it is simply a platform connecting drivers and passengers. It had intended to reconcile with cab drivers with a new service UberTAXI in Taiwan that lets customers order taxis with its app. — AFP

US CAR SALES HIT BRAKES

CHICAGO: US car buyers hit the brake pedal in the new year, with the industry on Wednesday reporting a significant slowdown from December, but sales could be on track for another big year. GM, Ford, Toyota and the North American arm of Fiat Chrysler, FCA US, all saw sales dwindle, though it is a traditionally slow month for car makers as winter sets in and consumers recover from holiday spending. Other car makers, with smaller US inventories, posted impressive gains, including Nissan, Honda, Mazda and Volkswagen. Most were buoyed by strong demand for light trucks and sport utility vehicles (SUVs). Total industry sales fell by almost a third compared to December, according to Autodata.

However, the annualized sales rate of 17.61 million vehicles, seasonally-adjusted, would mean a third year of record sales if the pace holds up through the end of

2017, even though that is about 1.6 percent below the year-ago period. The bigger auto makers took the brunt of the slowdown in the month. GM's American sales fell 3.8 percent compared to January 2016, Ford was down one percent, while FCA US and Toyota each plunged about 11 percent. "After a record December capped a new record year of vehicles sales in 2016, January figures appear to be enduring a hangover effect," Kelley Blue Book analyst Alec Gutierrez said in a forecast statement last week.

Light trucks, SUVs lead

Consumers who were still out shopping for cars in the sluggish sales month appeared to continue the trend of favoring light trucks, crossovers and SUVs, over sedans and compact cars. The bigger vehicles often

cost more, which helped profitability for GM, the biggest American auto maker, as consumers paid record average prices for its vehicles last month even "while key competitors sold down their large stocks of deeply discounted, old-model-year pickups," GM US sales chief Kurt McNeil said in a statement.

Ford said consumers were paying more on average for its vehicles as well, thanks to strong demand for its pricier F-Series pickups, which was up 13 percent. FCA US, struggling in many of its car models, including Chrysler, Fiat and Dodge brands, saw sales increase for Ram trucks and some Jeep SUV models. Toyota also sold more SUVs, but fewer of its Camry, Corolla and Prius sedans. Its Lexus luxury brand took a 40.6-percent tumble, which the company blamed partly on low SUV inventories. — AFP



TOKYO: A woman uses a mobile phone in front of the Sony showroom building at Ginza shopping district in Tokyo yesterday. — AP

SONY HALVES FORECAST YEN, MOVIE UNIT HAMMER PROFIT

TOKYO: Sony yesterday halved its full-year profit forecast as it was battered by a near \$1 billion writedown on its movie unit while a strong yen also dug into the Japanese firm's bottom line. The dour reading comes as the embattled entertainment giant struggles with a painful restructuring drive that has included layoffs and asset sales after years of huge losses. It said net profit in the nine months to December 31 plunged 80.7 percent to 45.6 billion yen (\$405 million) and warned it expected to see a full-year figure of 26 billion yen.

The April-March estimate is sharply down from the 60 billion yen tipped in October, which was itself a reassessment of an initial 80 billion yen total. It said operating profit halved in the nine-month period after booking a \$962 million writedown in its movie unit following a plunge in the home entertainment business as viewers turn increasingly to streaming sites. "We as management take seriously that we had to book the significant impairment loss," Sony chief financial officer Kenichiro Yoshida told a news briefing.

Sony's cinema woes, which included box-office disappointments such as "Ghostbusters" and "Inferno", a sequel to the "Da Vinci Code", came as online movie distribution becomes increasingly popular, depressing the financial value of DVDs and BluRays. The writedown was flagged on Monday and comes weeks after the departure of Michael Lynton as head of the entertainment division after 13 years. "Entertainment is very important to Sony, so I want to see what kind of approach they take to turning it around," Tachibana Securities analyst Kiyoto Utsumi said ahead of the release, according to Bloomberg News.

Revenue slipped 9.3 percent, which the firm said was "mainly due to the impact of foreign exchange rates", adding that the yen rose about 14 percent on-year against the dollar and euro during the period. Sony also cited losses linked to the sale of its battery business as a factor driving down operating profit. The mobile segment, which the firm is scaling down, also continued to struggle as smartphone sales in Europe remained weak.

PlayStation 4

Sony's semiconductor business, projected to see annual operating losses, was hit hard by the high yen along with serious damage to a factory in southern Japan caused by deadly earthquakes in April. Sony, with its international business portfolio, could also reap benefits from yen strength, Yoshida said, while pledging to improve the semiconductor and movie operations. "What is desirable is for foreign exchange to stabilize," Yoshida said.

Sony's PlayStation 4 provided a bright spot as surging sales of the console and a slew of new titles helped the gaming division post a 5.2 percent rise in revenue. "Its game sector will remain a strong earnings driver, while the TV and camera businesses are steadily recovering," said Yasuo Imanaka, an analyst at Rakuten Securities in Tokyo. The fate of its film division was a concern, particularly with Lynton's departure, Imanaka said before the earnings announcement. Sony also needs to reform its mobile business, which heavily depends on domestic demand, he added. — AFP

NOKIA REPORTS 766 MILLION EURO LOSS

HELSINKI: Telcoms giant Nokia yesterday said that falling network sales and costs stemming from acquisitions and its integration of Alcatel-Lucent had resulted in a "disappointing" loss in 2016. The firm recorded a net loss of 766 million euros (\$826 million) last year, which chief executive Rajeev Suri described in a statement as a "year of transition." Suri admitted he was "disappointed" with the 2016 results but said he expected a better financial performance this year "as market conditions improve." "We remain in a position of financial strength," said the chief executive. Nokia has been going through a process of radical transformation over the last few years.

In 2013, it bought 50 percent of its network activities from Germany's Siemens, and the following year it divested from its previously world-leading mobile phone business. It sold its mapping unit Here in 2015 as well as completing the deal late last year to buy Alcatel-Lucent, which had only recorded one year of annual profit since its inception in 2006. Nokia was the world's top mobile phone maker between 1998 and 2011 but was overtaken by South Korean rival Samsung after failing to respond to the rapid rise of smartphones. — AFP

PANASONIC UPGRADES ITS FULL-YEAR OUTLOOK

TOKYO: Japanese electronics giant Panasonic yesterday revised up its full-year profit and revenue outlook following the weakness of the yen in the wake of Donald Trump's election as US president. Panasonic, which slashed its annual forecasts three months ago, said it now expects net profit to come in at 130 billion yen (\$1.2 billion) for the fiscal year through March, up from its earlier estimate of 120 billion yen. The company also raised its revenue expectation, saying full-year sales would come in at 7.35 trillion yen, up from 7.2 trillion yen projected earlier.

"The company took into account the effect of exchange rates, as the yen has become lower since the time of the last announcement on October 31, 2016," the company said in a statement. Panasonic and other major Japanese companies doing business abroad have benefitted from a weak yen, which inflates the value of their repatriated profits. "After Brexit, the yen surged, prompting many Japanese electronics makers to see their profits fall and revise down their outlooks," said Masahiko Ishino, an analyst at Tokai Tokyo Research Institute.

"But the recent retreat of the yen in the wake of Trump's victory is offsetting the negative impact," Ishino said. Trump's shock victory in November's US presidential election pushed the dollar higher on expectations of his pro-growth economic agenda. For the nine months to December, Panasonic said it had recorded net profit of 175.4 billion yen, up 9.5 percent from the same period last year thanks mainly to one-off tax-related gains. Operating profit, however, tumbled by nearly a quarter while revenue was off 5.7 percent to 5.35 trillion yen. —AFP

AIRBUS CALLS IN THE MOVERS AS POWER SHIFTS TO NEW HQ

PARIS: After top-level restructuring at Airbus come the musical chairs and a new logo intended to convey unity as the European giant aims to refocus its management without a return to past infighting. In a symbolic move, the man in charge of making Airbus jets has reluctantly agreed to leave his office by the vast factories in Toulouse and move to a new corporate headquarters in the same southern French city, people familiar with the matter said. At first sight, it might seem an obvious move following the restructuring in which the planemaking division became the mainstay of the overall structure of a company that also manufactures space rockets, helicopters and military jets.

But close watchers of the predominantly Franco-German firm, still bruised by decades of infighting, fear the decision to put planemaking chief Fabrice Bregier in the new HQ alongside his boss Tom Enders could test a fragile internal power balance. For Bregier, it may only be a move of about a kilometer on the ground, but it shifts him ever so slightly away from the company's economic nerve centre that drives its share price, revenue and profits. And it comes at a critical time for the world's second largest planemaker as it strives to boost output. "(Bregier) isn't happy, but he is going to make it work," said one person close to the company, who asked not to be named.

Airbus agreed last year to merge its jetliner division with its parent group to reflect the stronger bias towards civil manufacturing that started in 2013, after the failure of a planned merger with British defense firm BAE Systems. After the latest internal restructuring, Bregier gave up his title as chief executive of the Airbus commercial airliner business, but remained its president while also becoming chief operating officer and number two for the group as a whole. "Airbus is now an aircraft manufacturing company with two other divisions, so after the merger the focus on the core business is much tighter," an Airbus spokesman said.

Enders, 58, is now drawing core people and functions around him at the new HQ to secure his vision of forging the integrated company he believes is necessary to remain on a par with arch-rival Boeing and fend off new competition. He has pledged to make Airbus a "normal company" after French and German political interference was curbed in 2014 by a change in its corporate governance following the failure of the BAE deal.

Critical task

But plucking Bregier from a domain in which he is undisputed leader - having overseen record plane output and an improved industrial performance - and accentuating his other role as deputy to Enders is seen by some as a potential loss of focus. Airbus is confronted with the critical task of raising its jet output fast to fill thousands of orders on its books, and investors are especially sensitive to any risk its top managers become distracted by internal politics.

"What is unusual is to have restructuring happening at a time when production is increasing sharply," one European aerospace analyst said. At the same time, a raft of top managers in the planemaking business involved in operations, sales, programs and engineering are nearing retirement age. Publicly, Airbus managers have closed ranks behind the CEO's plans. Many recall the industrial chaos and tensions between French and German government shareholders - and their proxies within the company - that hampered Airbus shares a decade ago.

Enders, who is German, and Bregier, a 55-year-old Frenchman, have occasionally appeared uneasy partners. Both are major industry figures in their own right and aspire to the top job. But they also demonstrated a pragmatic ability to work together in 2007-12 at what was then the jet division of EADS, later renamed Airbus Group, again with Enders in the lead role. The latest overhaul cements Bregier's position as heir apparent as he is now operational chief of the whole group but it also means he may have to wait longer for the top job.

Both men have pledged to make jet production their top priority and company insiders say Bregier had initially suggested he would keep a physical presence in each camp to ensure this. But his office move is just the latest example of a steady shift of key oversight functions towards the centre, consolidating the power of Enders and prompting reports of fresh tension in one of the industry's key personal relationships. — Reuters



MUSCAT: Omanis take photos on the tarmac during the unveiling of SalamAir - Oman's new low-cost airline, at the Muscat International Airport in the Omani capital on January 29, 2017. — AFP

AIR TRAVEL SOARS

IATA WARNS OVER 'PROTECTIONIST AGENDA'

GENEVA: Global air passenger traffic soared 6.3 percent in 2016 from a year earlier as air fares dropped, IATA said yesterday, warning against "protectionist agendas" that threaten reining in rising air travel. "Air travel was a good news story in 2016," said Alexandre de Juniac, head of the International Air Transport Association (IATA). The addition of more than 700 new airline routes last year, and the average fall in the price for return tickets of \$44 (41 euros), "helped to make air travel even more accessible," he said. This allowed global passenger numbers to reach a record 3.7 billion, he said. Last year's hike was well above the 10-year average annual growth rate of 5.5 percent.

Airline capacity meanwhile rose 6.2 percent, with the average load factor, or percentage of seats occupied, climbing 0.1 percent to a record annual high of 80.5 percent. De Juniac hailed the growing global demand, stressing that "our freedom to connect through air travel drives prosperity and enriches societies." "That freedom can only be given its fullest expression when governments facilitate the movement of people and goods," he said, insisting that "aviation is the business of freedom (and) we must defend its social and economic benefits from barriers to travel and protectionist agendas."

His comments came amid concerns over rising protectionism in developed economies, and especially in the United States where President Donald Trump has issued a controversial order to ban travellers from seven Muslim-majority countries. De Juniac stressed that facilitating global travel was beneficial, urging governments to work with the industry to ensure "infrastructure that can accommodate the growth, regulation that facilitates the growth and taxes that don't choke growth." "If we can achieve that, there is plenty of potential for a safe, secure and sustainable aviation industry to create more jobs and

increase prosperity," he said.

Growth in international traffic was particularly high last year, jumping 6.7 percent, with all regions seeing a rise in demand, compared to a 5.7-percent increase in domestic air travel. The strongest overall growth in international travel was recorded by carriers in the

Middle East, with a 11.8-percent hike, followed by the Asia-Pacific region at 8.3 percent, and Latin America and Africa at 7.4 percent. European carriers meanwhile saw their international traffic expand 4.8 percent, while North American airlines saw demand rise just 2.6 percent in 2016. — AFP

UK URGED TO EMBARK ON A RADICAL PROJECT OR RISK FAILING ON PLEDGES

LONDON: Britain must embark upon a radical project of town building to avoid falling short of its targets to build one million new homes by 2020, a leading think tank said yesterday. The Centre for Policy Studies, a pro-market policy institute with historic links to the ruling Conservative Party, called on the government to create independent businesses tasked with constructing entire towns.

The report said the businesses, known as Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs), would kickstart the building of communities on a scale comparable to Milton Keynes, a town of 200,000 built in the 1960s and 1970s to relieve housing shortages in London and southern England. Daniel Greenberg, a lawyer and specialist on legislation law who co-authored the report, said the government would act as guarantor for the project to provide the certainty that private sector developers require to make large investments.

"Areas that at the moment nobody could justify investing heavily in building on will be turned into thriving new communities, with large amounts of housing where people want to live, can live, and enjoy living," Greenberg told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Successive British governments have promised to tackle a shortage that has seen house prices spiral in London and

other major cities out of the reach of many buyers, while social housing is in short supply. But developers have complained about a lack of available land and strict planning laws that outlaw development on "greenbelt" land around existing towns and give local councils the power to block construction.

Planning at scale

In an SPV, the government could bundle its mission to build homes with a town's other assets - including infrastructure, transport, schools and workplaces, said Greenberg. By planning at this scale, the projects would create jobs in low-employment rural and urban areas, which currently fail to attract investment in housing. The report said the system would be based on the existing planning framework for national transport, electricity and water projects - which circumvent usual planning permission requirements - and be backed by compulsory purchase order powers to evict existing landowners.

Areas designated as protected "greenbelt" should be scaled back to encourage building, said the report. Greenberg said local governments would be able to build specific requirements into the SPVs, including provision for green spaces and public buildings. — Reuters



FOXBOROUGH: In a Sunday, Jan 22, 2017 file photo, New England Patriots kicker Stephen Gostkowski (3) kicks a field goal during the first half of the AFC championship NFL football game against the Pittsburgh Steelers. — AP

AFTER TURBULENT SEASON, PATS' GOSTKOWSKI STAYS CONFIDENT

HOUSTON: Being a kicker in the NFL is hard enough. Doing it for a New England Patriots franchise that has enjoyed some of the most clutch kicking performances in NFL playoff history is something entirely different. Such is the position Patriots kicker Stephen Gostkowski is in as New England prepares for what could be a close Super Bowl matchup between its No. 1-ranked offense and Atlanta's No. 1 defense.

The Patriots have won their four Super Bowls by a total of just 13 points, and are favored by just three over the Falcons. In such a game it could come down to which team has the best kicker. The successor to Adam Vinatieri, who was responsible for game-winning kicks in each of the Patriots' Super Bowl wins in 2002 and 2004, Gostkowski has been a steadying force since Bill Belichick used a fourth-round pick on him in 2006.

But this season has brought uncharacteristic accuracy issues for the 33-year-old. Gostkowski missed three field goals and two extra-points in the Patriots first seven games of 2016 - his most missed field goals since 2012. The extra-point misses were also his first since his rookie season. He has eight game-winning kicks in his career, but just one in the playoffs - back in 2007. But he says his confidence is high heading into his fourth Super Bowl.

"You know the pressures of the game and you want it so bad, but it's easy to compartmentalize and focus on doing your job instead of all the craziness around it," he said. "If that will

help me play better, good. I hope so." That approach has certainly worked for him over the latter part of the season. He's missed just two field goals over the last 11 games.

HISTORY IS SECURE

In New England's AFC championship win over Pittsburgh, Gostkowski hit three field goals to pass Vinatieri and become the franchise's all-time leader in made playoff field goals. So no matter what happens Sunday, Gostkowski's place in Patriots' history is secure. Special teams captain Matt Slater said even when his kicker was struggling early, he never worried about him getting back on track.

"I don't think much needs to be said between Stephen and I," Slater said. "We've had several conversations over the years about these types of situations and it is what it is. It's football and things like this are going to happen." Even still, Gostkowski has taken the bitter with the sweet this season. Though he's been in several high pressure moments since the first time he walked on an NFL field 11 years ago, there's also still a feeling of newness.

"I'd say it's more enjoyable," Gostkowski said. "Because the first Super Bowl we had the whole undefeated thing going on, so it was even crazier. ...My first time I wasn't married, I had no kids. This was all I had. It was a lot harder to turn off." Having a wife and three kids since then served as a nice buffer much of the pageantry and deluge of media that follows a team

throughout Super Bowl week. "Now we've been to a couple, we've won one," he said. "It's easier to take this stuff and concentrate on the game." That's the case even as the noise level may be as high as it's ever been this time around. Along with the usual spotlight that shines on the Patriots, they're preparing for a Falcons' team that is 12-0 this season when scoring 31 or more points.

The most important marker for Gostkowski entering this week, though, is that he is back to full strength of sitting a day of practice during the Patriots' open week following the conference championship win. "It took a while to get to feeling strong again," he said. "Luckily all I gotta do is kick a ball." The Patriots are 4-1 in games decided by seven or fewer points this season. But they haven't needed Gostkowski's leg to pull out many of their wins.

Only one of New England's games during the 2016 season have been decided by three points or fewer, its 23-21 season-opening win over Arizona. In that game Gostkowski connected on what proved to be the deciding 32-yard field goal with 3:44 to play in the game. Though he thinks experience will be on his side if his number is called with the game on the line Sunday, he's not trying to think about what might happen. "I don't know if you ever get comfortable. This team is just focused on playing and winning," he said. "It all starts with coach Belichick keeping our focus on the game and our task at hand...When you do that, you simplify everything." — AP

HORROR START FOR WOODS IN DUBAI

DUBAI: Tiger Woods felt the pain, figuratively at least, after the former world number one failed to make a single birdie in recording a miserable five-over 77 on the opening day of the Dubai Desert Classic yesterday. The creaking American, now ranked 666th after his long injury layoff, trailed Spain's early leader Sergio Garcia by 12 shots and with only three players below him on the leaderboard among the morning starters.

"I was just trying to hit shots and I wasn't doing a very good job," Woods told reporters. "At the end, I finally hit some good ones but the damage had already been done. "I could have hung in there. I could have shot something near even par if I would have made some putts but I made nothing." Appearing for the eighth time in Dubai, where he has won twice with a 92-under par record for the 28 rounds played there since 2001, the 41-year-old Woods looked out of sorts as he continued his comeback at the European Tour event.

The numbers from the opening round were not pretty, two shots higher than his previous worst ever at the Emirates Golf Club, and nor was his swing or his putting stroke. The 14-times major winner had also looked rusty last week when he played his first full-field PGA Tour event in 17 months after being sidelined by back pain and spine surgery, and missed the cut at the Farmers Insurance Open at Torrey Pines.

His chances of avoiding another early exit looked slim on Thursday, with the American appearing to be in some discomfort as he struggled to find a rhythm and reached the turn in a three-over 40 after two bogeys in his opening three holes. Starting on the back nine, he bogeyed the par-five opener after finding a bunker and dropped another shot at the 12th.

At the par-five 18th, his approach shot fell short of the green and rolled back into the water for his third bogey of the day. The fifth turned into a three-putt bogey and he missed par from five feet on the next. While Woods struggled, Garcia fired a first round 65 to set the early target and open up a one-shot clubhouse lead over Chile's Felipe Aguilar and South African George Coetzee. "It was a nice way to start, a good solid round," Garcia said. Defending champion Danny Willett, the US Masters winner who was playing alongside Woods and fellow Briton Matt Fitzpatrick (69), started with a one-under 71. — Reuters

NZ TO LAUNCH URGENT INQUIRY INTO WASHOUT

NAPIER: New Zealand Cricket (NZC) and local authorities have agreed to an urgent inquiry to determine why the second one-day international between the hosts and Australia was abandoned yesterday without a ball being bowled. Morning rain delayed the scheduled start time, but the conditions improved enough for the ground staff to prepare McLean Park in Napier for a shortened match.

Practice facilities across the road from the ground were "bone dry" shortly after the rain stopped, according to New Zealand coach Mike Hesson, but the outfield at McLean Park failed to drain properly. "There were parts of the ground where you'd hit the ball and water would just go everywhere," Australia captain Aaron Finch told reporters. "It wasn't ideal, I don't think it would have been safe for players to play on."

The decision left thousands of fans frustrated and the players visibly annoyed. NZC chief operating officer Anthony Crummy said they had agreed with the ground owners, the Napier City Council, to begin an independent inquiry as soon as possible as to why the field did not drain effectively.

"It's too early to say what happened," Crummy said. "We did have some rain today but not enough to have the game being abandoned. So we really need to have a look at what has happened. "We have spoken to council and they have reassured us there will be a full independent review." Council chief executive Wayne Jack said he considered the review to be an "urgent" matter and would meet with NZC to start proceedings on Friday.

The ground is due to host another ODI against South Africa on March 1. Crummy said it was too early to say whether that fixture was in doubt. "Our number one priority is making sure that that game can go ahead without interruption," Crummy added. "Again, we just have to find out what has happened and what steps need to take place that it doesn't happen again." — Reuters

CURRY'S 3-POINT CLINIC SWATS HORNETS

OAKLAND: With dad Dell watching live, Stephen Curry hit 11 3-pointers and scored 39 points in three quarters, coming back with vengeance from a one-game absence and leading the Golden State Warriors to a 126-111 blowout of his hometown Charlotte Hornets on Wednesday night. Klay Thompson added 29 points, matched his career high with eight assists and Kevin Durant had 18 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the NBA-leading Warriors (42-7). Curry recorded his fifth career game with at least 11 3s, shot 14 for 20 and 11 of 15 from long range and dished out eight assists facing Charlotte for the second time in a week. Frank Kaminsky scored 24 points off the bench for the Hornets, who lost their sixth in a row overall and ninth straight on the road.

CAVALIERS 125, TIMBERWOLVES 97

LeBron James scored 27 points while Kyrie Irving had 14 and a career-high 14 assists as the Cleveland Cavaliers, coming off a losing record in January, defeated the Minnesota Timberwolves. Cleveland, which went 7-8 last month, began February looking like the defending NBA champions. The Cavaliers held a three-point halftime lead and took control midway through the third quarter. James' three-point play gave the Cavaliers a 90-70 lead. Cleveland All-Star forward Kevin Love missed his second straight game because of back spasms, but the Cavaliers had five players in double figures in scoring. James was 11 of 14 from the field, and Irving scored 14 points. Kyle Korver, who has struggled since being acquired from Atlanta last month, scored 20 points, going 8 of 11 from the field and hitting four 3-pointers. Tristan Thompson had 18 points and 14 rebounds. Karl-Anthony Towns led Minnesota with 26 points and Andrew Wiggins added 23 for the Timberwolves, who won five of six to finish January.

CELTICS 109, RAPTORS 104

Isaiah Thomas scored 19 of his 44 points in the final quarter to lift the Boston Celtics over the Toronto Raptors in a showdown for first place in the Atlantic Division. It was the fifth straight win for Boston, which moved 1-1/2 games ahead of the Raptors in the division and holds the Eastern Conference's No. 2 seed. Kyle Lowry led Toronto with 32 points, former Celtic Jared Sullinger had 13 and Norman Powell added 12. The Raptors have lost seven of nine. In a final quarter that rivaled playoff intensity, Celtics forward Jaylen Brown was fouled on a breakaway attempt and walked over and had words with Lowry - before a few others player joined in and had to be separated by the officials. Boston's Terry Rozier and the Raptors' DeMarre Carroll were each given a technical.

HEAT 116, HAWKS 93

Goran Dragic scored 27 points, Dion Waiters added 20 and the Miami Heat pushed the NBA's longest current winning streak to nine games by easing past the Atlanta Hawks. Hassan Whiteside scored 18 points and grabbed 18 rebounds for the Heat, who hadn't won nine straight since November 2013. James Johnson scored 16 before getting ejected in the fourth quarter for Miami. Kent Bazemore scored 14 and Dennis Schroder scored 12 for the Hawks. Atlanta's Taurean Prince was ejected midway through the fourth quarter for pulling Whiteside down from behind and being assessed a flagrant-2. James Johnson retaliated in Whiteside's defense, and was ejected after getting a technical.



OAKLAND: Golden State Warriors' Stephen Curry (30) reacts after a score from teammate Kevin Durant during the second half of the team's NBA basketball game against the Charlotte Hornets. — AP

PISTONS 118, PELICANS 98

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored a career-high 38 points, leading the Detroit Pistons over the New Orleans Pelicans. Tobias Harris added 19 points and Andre Drummond 17 for the Pistons, who ended an eight-game losing streak to New Orleans. Detroit had lost three in a row overall. New Orleans blew a nine-point lead in the third quarter and lost its third straight and fourth in five games. Anthony Davis, who scored a career-high 59 points last February at Detroit, had 31 points and 12 rebounds, while Jrue Holliday added 22 points and 11 assists.

KNICKS 95, NETS 90

Kristaps Porzingis had 19 points and 12 rebounds, and joined a group of mostly substitutes who led a big fourth-quarter turnaround that carried the New York Knicks over the Brooklyn Nets. Carmelo Anthony had 15 points for the Knicks, but he was on the bench for the entire fourth quarter after shooting 6 for 22 from the field. Instead, the Knicks rallied behind Willy Hernangomez, who had 16 points and 16 rebounds, and Sasha Vujacic, who made team history by converting a pair of four-point plays in the game. The only other starter on the floor for the comeback was Brandon Jennings - and he was only starting because point guard

Derrick Rose remained out with a sprained ankle. Rondae Hollis-Jefferson scored 16 for the Nets, who lost their seventh straight and fell to 0-9 against Atlantic Division opponents this season.

PACERS 98, MAGIC 88

CJ Miles scored 16 points, Glenn Robinson III added 14 and the Indiana Pacers held on to beat the Orlando Magic. The Pacers used their smaller lineup and timely 3-point shooting to keep the struggling Magic from rallying. Orlando didn't have an answer for Miles' 3-point shooting, including a trey that pushed the lead to 96-88 in the final two minutes of the fourth quarter. Orlando moved within five points a few times in the final period but could not come any closer. Jeff Teague had 13 points and nine assists and was 8 for 9 from the free-throw line to join six Pacers in double figures. Serge Ibaka led five Magic players in double figures with 20 points. The Pacers have defeated their former coach Frank Vogel four straight times this season.

MAVERICKS 113, 76ERS 95

Seth Curry scored 22 points, Salah Mejri had 16 points and a career-high 17 rebounds and the Dallas Mavericks beat the Philadelphia 76ers for their fifth win in six games. Mejri played 21 minutes at center

with Andrew Bogut out of action and helped Dallas - the NBA's worst-rebounding team - set a season high for boards and out-rebound the Sixers 51-39. He scored 10 points, all on dunks, early in the fourth quarter to help the Mavericks lead by 22. Jahlil Okafor led the 76ers with 16 points, and Ersan Ilyasova added 13. Philadelphia played without starters Robert Covington (bruised right hand) and Joel Embiid (left knee contusion).

CLIPPERS 124, SUNS 114

Blake Griffin scored 29 points and the Los Angeles Clippers bounced back from a humiliating 46-point loss at Golden State to beat the Phoenix Suns. The victory over the team with the worst record in the West left Los Angeles 2-4 since Chris Paul went down with a torn left thumb ligament. Raymond Felton added 18 points and J.J. Redick 16 for the Clippers. Los Angeles never trailed, but Phoenix cut the lead to two four times and was down by just one at 94-93 with 10:26 to play. Eric Bledsoe scored 41 to tie the career high he set two games ago, but Phoenix lost its fifth in a row. Devin Booker added 20 points, his 14th straight game scoring at least 20. The Clippers' DeAndre Jordan drew a flagrant foul two for flattening Phoenix's Marquese Chriss and was ejected with 4:52 left in the third quarter. —AP



KUWAIT EXCELS AT INTERNATIONAL GRAND PRIX

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: As competitions in HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's Sixth International Grand Prix nears the end, Kuwait teams continued their excellent performances. The skeet team of Saud Habeeb, Zaid Al-Mutairi, and Nasser Al-Daihani won the gold medal ahead of the Qatari team which took silver while Saudi Arabia's team settled for bronze.

Meanwhile in the individual event, UAE's Saif bin Futais won the gold medal, and Kuwait's Saud Habeeb took silver as his teammate Zaid Al-Mutairi took bronze. In the women's team 10 meter air pistol event Tunisia won gold with the score of 1105 points, Bahrain came in second place with 1099 points then Kuwait third with 1080. UAE's Wafaa Khamis took the gold medal in the individual event, Bahrain's Mouza Ali took silver and Jordan's Sameera

Batayneh took bronze.

In a statement following the event, Secretary General of Jordan's Shooting Federation, member of Arab Shooting Federation Board Ghassan Shaaban said the outstanding organization of the tournament contributed to bringing it to the best possible level as he lauded the organizing committee for its efforts. He said the tournament's success reflects Kuwait's shooting Sport Federation's ability to organize major events and appreciated the high technical standard of the participating shooters.

Shaaban said the ASF decided to hold two all-inclusive tournaments in Egypt and Qatar, in addition to some specialized events. He said the ASF under the leadership of Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi is keen on the development of the Arab Shooting Teams, especially that shooting brought Olympic medals to the Arab world.



KUWAIT TENNIS TEAM MEETS THAILAND TODAY

KUWAIT: Within the second group's matches for Asia and Oceania in men's world tennis championship (Davis Club), Kuwait's National Tennis Team will play its first game with Thailand at 9:30am today. The matches will be played at Kuwait Tennis Federation (KTF) and the Yarmouk Sports Club courts.

For this occasion, KTF recently threw a dinner banquet to the honors of the Thai delegation attended by KTF's board of director's vice chairman, Abdul Samad Al-Eryan and top federation officials in addition to the Iranian referee general, Ali Katebi. Notably, the competition will include five matches including individual and couples matches and will be from Friday to Sunday.



LUCAS FULFILLING PSG POTENTIAL

PARIS: Brazilian winger Lucas is finally fulfilling his potential for Paris Saint-Germain, five years after joining as a talented teenager with a big price tag weighing him down. Lucas netted his 11th goal of the season in Wednesday night's 4-0 French Cup win against Rennes. He has become a key provider for top scorer Edinson Cavani this season and has blossomed into one of manager Unai Emery's main players.

It has taken quite some time. His first two seasons were difficult and the last two were inconsistent. Fans were unsure what they were getting: was Lucas a finisher or a provider, a dribbler or a playmaker? Lucas was actually a bit of everything, but nothing really stood out for long enough.

This season he has been extremely consistent, however, adding more goals to his wide repertoire of pace, skill, explosive running and perceptive passing. "I'm much more settled now," the 24-year-old Lucas told The Associated Press in an interview. "I was too young before." When he joined from Brazilian club Sao Paulo in 2012, it was only one year after Qatari investors QSI had taken over PSG.

He was one of the first of several big signings costing 40 million euros (\$43 million) or more. PSG beat Manchester United to his signature - a coup considering how highly rated Lucas was by then-United manager Alex Ferguson. But he found the expectation level, and other factors, tough to handle.

"(It's difficult) for any player that leaves their country at 19 or 20, especially Brazilians," Lucas told The AP. "We're used to our country, our culture. Here it's very different, it's cold as well." He had snubbed United because of a phone call from Brazilian Leonardo, a former PSG star and the club's sporting director at the time. When asked, Lucas said Ferguson did not call him. "Everything was almost in place (to join United) but at the last minute Leonardo phoned me. He convinced me," Lucas said. "I think because of the team, the Brazilians that were here at the time, I thought it would be easier for me." He initially struggled for consistency and was soon labeled by fans and pundits as a wasteful finisher. "I was criticized a lot," said Lucas, who has 34 caps for Brazil. "People were saying 'Oh, he doesn't score a lot of goals.'"

UNFAIR JUDGMENT

The frustration clearly lingers today at what he considered to be an unfair judgment of him. "Statistics are important but they're not everything," Lucas said, his voice quickening with defiance. "You can create five or 10 chances in a match and the striker will miss them." At the end of this season, Lucas will have two years left on his contract. He feels right at home in Paris and says he does not see his future elsewhere.

Lucas comfortably conducted the interview in French. Earlier this week, swapping boots for skates, he spearheaded a promotional event for the 2017 ice hockey world championships, co-hosted by Paris in May. "I have everything I need and I want to become a part of history here, like Rai, Ronaldinho," he said, speaking about two Brazilians who are among the club's most revered players.

Although Lucas is thriving, PSG is not the force it was last season when it won the league by a record 31 points. PSG is third, three points behind leader Monaco, and has lost four matches: twice as many as last season. In fact, PSG has not won any big games, failing to beat Monaco or second-place Nice. In the Champions League, PSG twice drew with Arsenal, finishing second and landing a daunting match against Barcelona in the next round.

The lack of a cutting edge in big games is somewhat down to the absence of Zlatan Ibrahimovic, who left for Manchester United. The club also changed coach, with Emery replacing Laurent Blanc. PSG's four away losses were all before Christmas as the players appeared confused by how to approach games. "It takes a bit of time to adapt to a new way of playing," Lucas said. —AP



ROME: Roma's Francesco Totti is airborne after a contrast with Cesena's Alessandro Ligi during the Italians Cup quarterfinal soccer match between Roma and Cesena at the Olympic stadium. —AP

TOTTI LATE SHOW SETS UP CUP SEMI DERBY

MILAN: A last-gasp penalty from Francesco Totti fired Roma into an Italian Cup semi-final with city rivals Lazio after a shaky 2-1 win over Cesena on Wednesday. Totti was given a rare start by Roma coach Luciano Spalletti, but it took the Serie A title challengers until the 68th minute to hit the mark, Edin Dzeko making up for a series of glaring misses by sweeping Stephan El Shaarawy's pass from the left past onrushing goalkeeper Federico Agliardi.

Second division Cesena were given a chance to pull level when Roma 'keeper Alisson, standing in for Wojciech Szczesny, almost collided with defender Kostas Manolas as he rose to challenge for a high ball, spilling it into the path of a thankful Luca Garritano who fired home from the edge of the area on 73 minutes.

Totti came close with a superb free-kick effort from outside the area that Agliardi did well to palm away. The match looked to be heading for extra time until Totti, playing his 25th and likely last season with the capital club, stepped up to beat Agliardi from the spot in the seventh minute of added-on time. In the other semi-final holders Juventus, who eliminated last year's finalists AC Milan, meet title challengers Napoli.

TELLO SNATCHES VICTORY FOR FIORENTINA

Meanwhile in the league, a late brace from Cristian Tello kept Fiorentina in contention for a place in Europe with a 2-1 come-from-behind Serie A win on Wednesday. The sides' fix-

ture earlier this season had been snowed off but a dogged Pescara earned a 15th minute lead when Gianluca Caprari fired Cristiano Biraghi's delivery past the onrushing Marco Sportiello in the visitors' net.

Pescara dominated for long spells but Fiorentina's fortunes improved when Federico Chiesa came off the bench early in the second half. Kouma Babacar's 54th minute goal was ruled offside after the Senegal striker had pounced on a rebound from a Josip Ilicic effort. But it fired a warning, and La Viola pulled themselves back into contention in some style 15 minutes later when Tello curled a great strike into the far top corner from the edge of the box.

Fiorentina took command, Matias Vecino's shot charged down before Ilicic twice came close. But when their last-gasp winner came, even Fiorentina were stunned. Tello's cross from the left sailed past everyone in the area, and eventually also 'keeper Albano Bizzarri, to slot into the far bottom corner to seal a dramatic win.

Fiorentina's third victory from their last four games kept Paulo Sousa's men in eighth place, 14 points behind leaders Juventus but only three shy of the European places. Promoted Pescara's 15th reverse left was too much for embattled coach Massimo Oddo, who cried tears of frustration at the end. Their sole victory this season came when league officials handed Pescara the points from a fixture against Sassuolo, who had fielded an ineligible player. —Agencies

COACH RODGERS HAILS 'REMARKABLE' CELTIC

GLASGOW: Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers says he can't ask any more of his players as they extended their lead at the top of the Scottish Premiership with a 1-0 defeat of Aberdeen. The Hoops moved 25 points clear of Rangers, who lost further ground on their rivals following a 4-1 hammering by Hearts on Wednesday, to stretch their unbeaten start to the season to 28 games.

Rodgers' side have dropped just two points in 23 matches following a 2-2 draw with Inverness in September and have

won 18 league matches in a row. But the Celtic manager joked that there was always room for improvement. "We should have beaten Inverness," Rodgers jokingly said when asked if his side were ahead of schedule in his plans for the club.

"Listen, I can't ask for more. Goodness me, they are doing remarkably well. "I always walk round to give thanks to the supporters and I now look up on a Wednesday evening against St Johnstone and against Aberdeen and the place is packed. "That's the best compliment the players can get.

There's that real connection now between them and the team. It's very much one.

"I said to the players before the game that it was February 3 last year they played against Aberdeen. It was away of course, but they lost the game and Aberdeen went three points just behind Celtic. "I said to them 'If you win this game tonight then in less than a year you go 27 points in front of them'. "That difference and how you create it means you cannot go soft and you have to push and you've got to keep fighting. —AFP



LIBREVILLE: Egypt players run celebrating after winning the African Cup of Nations semifinal soccer match between Burkina Faso and Egypt at the Stade de l'Amitie. — AP

44-YEAR-OLD EL HADARY TAKES EGYPT INTO FINAL

LIBREVILLE: Veteran 44-year-old goalkeeper Essam El Hadary saved from Bertrand Traore's spot-kick to allow Egypt to beat Burkina Faso 4-3 on penalties on Wednesday as they secured their place in the Africa Cup of Nations final. A tense semi-final in Libreville had ended 1-1 after 90 minutes and extra time, with Roma star Mohamed Salah's superb 66th-minute opener for the Egyptians quickly cancelled out by Aristide Bance for Burkina Faso.

That goal was the first conceded by El Hadary—the oldest ever player at the Cup of Nations—in 653 minutes at the tournament going back to 2010. Abdallah El Said missed Egypt's first penalty in the shoot-out but El Hadary kept the Pharaohs in it when he saved from opposing goalkeeper Herve Koffi, before denying Traore from the last kick.

For Egypt, the record seven-time champions of Africa, the win completes a remarkable journey all the way to the final in their first appearance at the tournament after a seven-year absence. Unbeaten in 24 games at the tournament, they will play Cameroon or Ghana in Gabon's capital on Sunday as they look to reclaim a trophy they had won three times in a row between 2006 and 2010 before their fall from grace.

Cameroon and Ghana meet in Franceville in the second semi-final on Thursday. "They were better than us and had several chances that they didn't take," admitted Egypt's Argentine coach Hector Cuper. "We were very tired and our wish was to go to penalties because then anything can happen. We are delighted to be in the final."

Burkina Faso, who were hoping to repeat their run to the final in 2013, will instead go to Port-Gentil for the third-place play-off on Saturday. Their coach Paulo Duarte said: "Looking at the match—not the penalties because Egypt won those thanks to a goalkeeper with enormous experience—if one team had to win it was us."

At a Stade de l'Amitie that was once again a long way from full, Burkina Faso enjoyed the better of the game for long

spells but came up against an Egypt side transformed under Cuper. The Pharaohs had not conceded a goal at this Cup of Nations coming into this last-four tie, with a well organised defence complemented by the extraordinary El Hadary, who broke the record for the oldest ever player at the competition when he came off the bench in Egypt's first group game.

SALAH STUNNER

Without the injured Arsenal midfielder Mohamed Elneny, Egypt handed a start to Mahmoud Kahraba, who had come on to get the winner in the quarter-final against Morocco, while Bance came into the Burkina Faso starting line-up. With him leading the line the Stallions were the better side in the first half and El Hadary had to save from Bati Toure while the impressive Prejuice Nakoulma sent a rising effort.

Trezeguet and Kahraba both threatened Koffi's goal as the first half ended goalless, while El Hadary batted away another free-kick from Traore after the restart. And it looked set to be another classic smash and grab act from the Egyptians as they opened the scoring just before the midway point in the second half.

After some patient build-up play, Ahmed Elmohamady's ball into the box found Kahraba, who controlled and laid it off for Roma winger Salah to blast a first-time strike high into the net. Yet Burkina Faso kept going and the Egypt defense was breached for the first time at this Cup of Nations thanks to giant striker Bance.

Steeve Yago's backheel found Charles Kabore and the captain's flighted ball was controlled and smashed home from close range in one lightning-fast action by Bance, ending El Hadary's remarkable record of invincibility at the tournament at just short of 11 hours. El Hadary then needed to be alert to tip over from substitute Banou Diawara in stoppage time, ensuring the game went to the extra period and then penalties. — AFP

SUAREZ, MESSI HAND BARCA LEAD IN COPA

MADRID: Wonder goals from Luis Suarez and Lionel Messi left Barcelona with a 2-1 Copa del Rey semi-final, first leg advantage over Atletico Madrid to take back to the Camp Nou next week. Suarez's solo effort and a thunderous strike from Messi gave Barca a deserved commanding lead at half-time.

Yet, Atletico roared back after the break as Antoine Griezmann halved the arrears and the hosts went close to an equaliser as they piled on the pressure in the final stages. However, Diego Simeone's men were left to rue their slow start with Barca now favourites to make a fourth straight Cup final ahead of the second leg on February 7.

"It is normal that playing here at their home they would push us and they were much better in the second-half than the first," said Suarez. "The didn't have anything to lose. They risked a lot more and made us suffer a little." The honours have been split two apiece in the four previous two-legged ties between these sides in the past three seasons.

Yet there was a gulf in class as Barca took control in the first 45 minutes. It took just seven minutes for Suarez to open the scoring with his seventh goal in nine appearances against Atletico. The Uruguayan ran half the length of the field, leaving Diego Godin and Stefan Savic in his wake, before slotting the ball home with the outside of his foot into the far corner.

Suarez should have had a second when he was played in by Neymar, but, inside of going for goal, the former Liverpool striker tried to return the ball to the Brazilian who couldn't control. Messi was the source of most of Barca's best moves and sealed a scintillating first-half performance with a stunning finish for the second 12 minutes before half-time when he blasted home off the inside of the post from outside the box.

'POSITIVE FEELING'

Atletico had offered precious little other than one effort from Koke that dipped onto the roof of the net before the break. However, the hosts were a team transformed after the break with Fernando Torres introduced alongside Griezmann up front. "We spoke at half-time and I think in the second-half we got close to the team we have always been," said Atletico boss Simeone. "I am left with that positive feeling. We were close to a draw, we fronted up against all the difficulties we faced in the first-half."

Atletico were back in the tie just before the hour mark when a free-kick to the back post found Godin and his header across goal was turned home by Griezmann. The French international had a glorious chance to then level moments later when he was picked out perfectly by Filipe Luis's low cross. However, Griezmann's effort was straight at Jasper Cillessen, who saved from point blank range.

Barca could have put the tie to bed with a third away goal as a Messi free-kick was brilliantly turned onto the bar by Miguel Angel Moya. Neymar then had a glorious chance as Messi again split the Atletico defence, but his careless finish flew miles over the bar with just Moya to beat. Barca could and arguably should have been punished in the latter stages as Torres flicked another fine Luis cross inches wide. Torres also fired wide with a much better opening from the edge of the area before Griezmann rifled a thirty-yard strike inches past Cillessen's far post. — AFP



MADRID: FC Barcelona's Luis Suarez, left, duels for the ball with Atletico de Madrid Filipe Luis during a Spanish Copa del Rey semifinal first round soccer match between Atletico de Madrid and FC Barcelona at the Vicente Calderon stadium. — AP

AUBAMEYANG TOLD TO TONE DOWN EXIT TALK

BERLIN: Star striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has been told by Borussia Dortmund's director of sport to tone down any talk in future interviews about leaving at the end of the season. "We spoke briefly and I advised him to give less interviews about the summer and to concentrate on the hunt for a Champions League place," Dortmund boss Michael Zorc told local newspaper WAZ. "He understood."

Aubameyang, the Bundesliga's top scorer this season with 16 goals in 16 games, fell offside with Zorc after giving two interviews recently when he openly admitted considering leaving in June. The

Gabon striker has a Dortmund contract until 2020, but has made it clear he wants to eventually play for Real Madrid to keep a promise he made to his grandfather just before he died.

Late last month, the 27-year-old told sports daily Fussball Bild that he may leave Dortmund in June, but insisted he would never join German rivals Bayern Munich. Then this week, he told French radio station RMC that he is pondering a transfer out of Dortmund "to reach the next level" in his career. But despite stern words with Aubameyang, Zorc made it clear the club's relationship with their

star striker has not been affected. "We have a very, very good relationship, but we had to set a marker, inside and out, that the focus now has to be on the sport," said Zorc. Dortmund, who are fourth in the table, host second-placed RB Leipzig tomorrow in a key Bundesliga clash having lost 1-0 at the Red Bull Arena to the Bundesliga new boys in September. Dortmund are also at home to Bundesliga rivals Hertha Berlin next Wednesday in the third round of the German Cup and play Benfica away in a last 16, first leg, Champions League tie on February 14. —AFP

JESUS FIRES MAN CITY, JAKUPOVIC FOILS UTD

LONDON: Gabriel Jesus opened his Manchester City account in a 4-0 stroll at West Ham United on Wednesday that sent his side level with fourth-place Liverpool in the Premier League. Pep Guardiola's team took full advantage of slip-ups by the other teams in the leading pack on Tuesday to move level on points with Liverpool, 10 points below leaders Chelsea.

"Gabriel Jesus is a fighter with an instinct for the goal," beamed Guardiola of his £27 million (\$33.6 million, 31.3 million euros) recruit from Palmeiras. "He's good at assists too." Manchester United could not follow suit, however, a damaging 0-0 draw at home to struggling Hull City leaving Jose Mourinho's men four points below Liverpool and City in sixth place.

Just a point now separates the teams sitting second, third, fourth and fifth, with Tottenham Hotspur and Arsenal level on 47 points, a point above Liverpool and City. Guardiola made two bold selection choices at West Ham's London Stadium, dropping goalkeeper Claudio Bravo for Willy Caballero and keeping City talisman Sergio Aguero on the bench.

And it worked as the visitors streaked into a 3-0 lead inside 39 minutes through goals by Kevin De Bruyne, David Silva and 19-year-old Brazil starlet Jesus. De Bruyne opened the scoring in the 17th minute, picking up a loose ball and exchanging passes with Jesus before sweeping a first-time shot into the bottom-right corner.

Leroy Sane created the second goal four minutes later, neatly nutmegging Sam Byram and slipping past West Ham debutant Jose Fonte before squaring for Silva to convert at the back post. Jesus then opened his account with a delightfully constructed goal, slotting in after Sane's through ball had been steered across goal by Raheem Sterling.

West Ham manager Slaven Bilic gave Robert Snodgrass his debut as a 64th-minute substitute following his move from Hull. But three minutes later Yaya Toure made it 4-0 from the penalty spot after Sterling was clumsily fouled by Fonte, sealing a second convincing win for City at West Ham after last month's 5-0 FA Cup romp. "We played a front three with an average age of 20. I like the fans to be excited," Guardiola told BT Sport. "Those players are the future of the club. They will be important players for the next few years."

CROUCH MILESTONE

Hull's draw at Old Trafford gave them a small measure of revenge for last week's League Cup semi-final defeat at Manchester United's hands. Mourinho made nine changes to the United team that had crushed Wigan Athletic 4-0 in the FA Cup on Sunday, but Hull goalkeeper Eldin Jakupovic repelled everything the hosts threw his way.

He saved spectacularly from Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Paul Pogba in the first half and produced a stunning goal-line block to deny substitute Juan Mata what seemed a certain goal in the second half. United continue to press, but Hull new boy Lazar Markovic almost completed a smash-and-grab win in the 86th minute, the on-loan Liverpool winger seeing his shot come back off the post.

"We didn't score. You don't score, it is not possible to win. Their goalkeeper was good," Mourinho said in a terse post-match interview. "They had the feedback and were comfortable to do what they did. I am not critical of that. They are fighting against relegation and every point is gold." The point took Hull off the foot of the table, but Marco Silva's much improved side are still four points from safety. — AFP



MUNICH: This Saturday May 19, 2012, file photo shows Frank Lampard holding the trophy at the end of the Champions League final soccer match between Bayern Munich and Chelsea. — AP

FORMER CHELSEA LEGEND LAMPARD RETIRES AT 38

LONDON: Former England and Chelsea midfield star Frank Lampard retired yesterday aged 38, calling time on a playing career that will be remembered as one of the Premier League's finest. Lampard did not reveal what he plans to do next, but said he was grateful to the Football Association for the opportunity to do his coaching badges, suggesting he may go into management. Chelsea's record goalscorer said he had turned down "a number of exciting offers" to carry on playing in Britain and abroad.

"After 21 incredible years I have decided that now is the right time to finish my career as a professional footballer," Lampard wrote on Facebook. "I'm immensely proud of the trophies I've won, of representing my country over 100 times and of scoring more than 300 career goals." Lampard left New York City FC in the autumn and also played for West Ham United and Manchester City in the Premier League. But it was at Stamford Bridge where he really made his name as a prolific midfielder.

He scored 211 times for the Blues and won every major club honor, netting the goals which in 2005 secured the club's first championship title in 50 years. "Of course, the largest part of my

heart belongs to Chelsea Football Club, a club which has given me so many great memories," Lampard wrote. "I will never forget the opportunity they gave me and the success that we managed to achieve together. It is impossible to give thanks individually to all the people that helped and supported me in my 13 years playing there.

"All I can say is from the day I signed until now and going forward, I'm eternally grateful for everything and to everyone. Chelsea fans gave myself and my teammates such incredible support. "Their passion and hunger drove me on personally to give my best year after year. I couldn't have done it without them."

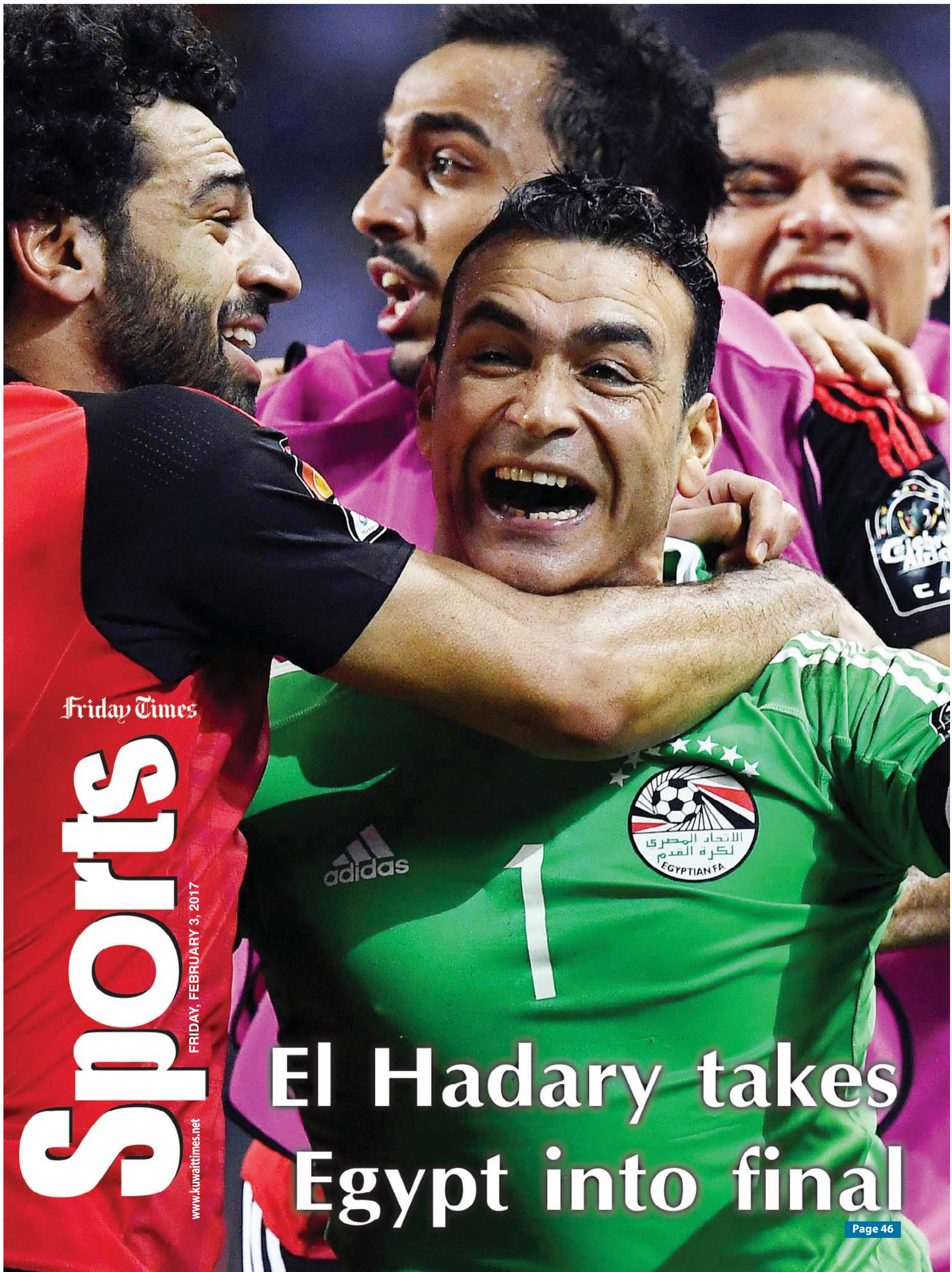
'WORLD CLASS'

Lampard was a pivotal figure in the greatest period in Chelsea's history as he helped the west London club win the Champions League, three Premier Leagues, four FA Cups, two League Cups, the Europa League and a Community Shield. He thrived under Jose Mourinho's management, scoring 13 goals in their 2005 title-winning season and netting 16 times the following season as Chelsea retained their title.

In 2006, he finished runner-up to Barcelona forward Ronaldinho in both the Ballon d'Or and FIFA World Player of the Year awards. Lampard scored 10 or more Premier League goals in 10 successive seasons for Chelsea and peaked with 22 as he picked up a third Premier League winner's medal in 2009-10.

After many years of agonising near misses, including a penalty shoot-out defeat against Manchester United in the 2008 final, Lampard finally capped his glittering career with Champions League glory in 2011-12. With John Terry suspended, Lampard captained underdogs Chelsea to a shock penalty shoot-out win over Bayern Munich in the German club's own Allianz Arena. Lampard's retirement drew tributes from across the world of football.

"After all those Chelsea battles and Frank Lampard now retiring, I can finally admit the respect I had for him and that he was a great player," said former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher. "He was definitely a world-class player for a long period of time," former Chelsea winger Pat Nevin told the BBC. "I don't think we rate him as highly as we should do. He was a better all-round footballer than he was given credit for." — AFP



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El Hadary takes Egypt into final