

SUBSCRIPTION

Kuwait Times



ESTABLISHED 1961

THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2017

JAMADA ALAWWAL 7, 1438 AH

No: 17131

Bishtakhta: Top audio system in old Kuwait



Emirati desert festival brings tradition to life



Iran bans travel of US wrestlers over Trump order



MAN SHOT AFTER MACHETE ATTACK AT PARIS LOUVRE

MUSEUM EVACUATED AFTER LOCKDOWN



150 Fils



Min 01°
Max 15°



PARIS: A man is seen on the floor as two soldiers guard him in the Louvre museum yesterday after an attack. — AP

PARIS: A French soldier shot and wounded a man armed with machetes and carrying two bags on his back yesterday as he tried to enter the Paris Louvre museum in what the government said appeared to have been a terrorist attack. Initial indications were that the man, who was hovering between life and death after being shot, was an Egyptian who arrived in France at the end of January, a source close to the investigation said.

The man shouted Allahu Akbar (God is Greatest) and rushed at police and soldiers before being shot and seriously wounded near the museum's shopping mall, police said. A second person was also detained after acting suspiciously. Paint-spray cans - but no explosives - were found in his back packs, a source close to the investigation told Reuters.

"The soldier fired five bullets," Michel Cadot, head of Paris police, said, describing how the man hurried threateningly towards the soldiers at around 10 am. "It was an attack by a person ... who represented a direct threat and whose actions suggested a terrorist context." At a meeting of EU leaders in Malta, French President Francois Hollande praised the courage and determination of the soldiers. "This operation undoubtedly prevented an attack whose terrorist nature leaves little doubt," he said.

The soldier who shot the man was from one of the patrolling groups which have become a common sight in Paris since a state of emergency was declared in Nov 2015 following bomb and shooting attacks by Islamist militants. An anti-terrorism inquiry has been opened, the public prosecutor said. Another soldier received a scalp wound in the incident.

More than a thousand visitors, including many young children, were kept for an hour inside the Louvre, home to Leonard da Vinci's 'Mona Lisa' and countless other treasures, before being released. US President Donald Trump also weighed in yesterday: "A new radical Islamic terrorist has just attacked in Louvre Museum in Paris. Tourists were locked down. France on edge again. GET SMART US," he tweeted. — Agencies

SNOW ALERT ISSUED IN UAE

DUBAI: A snow alert has been issued in the United Arab Emirates where a rare storm and high winds yesterday toppled one of thousands of cranes in the Gulf desert state. One person was injured and three cars were destroyed in a fire sparked by the collapse of the crane on Dubai's main thoroughfare, the multi-lane Sheikh Zayed Road, local officials said. The storm led to the cancellation of a stage in the Tour of Dubai yesterday because of the strong winds posing a danger to riders, organizers said.

The tour's 170-km penultimate stage, from Dubai to Hatta near the Omani border, would have left riders exposed to blustery winds. Today's stage was to go ahead as planned. Apart from rough seas and winds of between 75 and 80 km an hour across the UAE, there was rare snowfall on Jebel Jais, a mountain in Ras Al-Khaimah emirate. The met office said there was a depth of 10 cm of snow in some places on the less than 2,000-m mountain. The mercury fell to minus two degrees Celsius, with the light snow serving as a magnet for hundreds of Emiratis snapping pictures with smartphones to post on social media sites. — AFP



DUBAI: A construction crane is seen collapsed during high winds yesterday on the main highway running through Dubai, disrupting traffic in the heart of the commercial hub. — AP

SAUDI CLERIC: SOCIAL MEDIA HAVE LED TO 'STRANGE' PRACTICES

RIYADH: Social media have led to "strange practices" such as the use of "fingertips instead of minds" to think, a Saudi religious leader said yesterday in the Islamic kingdom where online platforms are used widely. "The nature of social media has given rise to strange practices contradicting morals, customs and norms," Sheikh Saud Al-Shiraim said during weekly prayers at Makkah's Grand Mosque, the official Saudi Press Agency reported.

"People are using their fingertips to think instead of their minds and tongues," he said, adding that the ease of online communication has detracted from the "grandeur and importance" of the spoken word. "This has removed a lot of the reservations or barriers of the spoken word that would normally not be uttered in front of people," he said. — AFP

KUWAIT EAGER TO BOLSTER TIES WITH SOUTH KOREA: EMBASSY



SEOUL: Kuwaiti Ambassador to South Korea Bader Al-Awadhi meets with South Korean Minister of Trade, Industry, and Energy Joo Hyunwang. —KUNA

SEOUL: Kuwait and South Korea discussed means of promoting bilateral ties, especially those on trade and commerce, in light of an upcoming visit by South Korean Minister of trade to Kuwait, said the Kuwaiti Embassy in Seoul yesterday. This desire to boost ties came during a meeting between Kuwaiti Ambassador to South Korea Bader Al-Awadhi and South Korean Minister of Trade, Industry, and Energy Joo Hyunwang, said a statement by the embassy.

During the meeting, Awadhi lauded relations between Kuwait and South Korea, stressing that the two countries were keen on promoting cooperation in the fields of energy and oil; in addition to encouraging investments in both countries.

Awadhi said that the South Korean minister's visit to Kuwait would result in stronger bilateral ties. Relations between Kuwait and South Korea have seen

great development in the past few years.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah visited Seoul in May 2016 where the two countries saw eye-to-eye on increasing the development of environmental trade, economy and investments.

Kuwait and South Korea agreed that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's 2035 vision would establish greater strategic cooperation. Kuwait is hoping that South Korea will get involved in its short-term and long-term developments plans. South Korea is considered Kuwait's biggest trade partner. It exports more than 400,000 oil barrels to Seoul daily. Kuwait's imports from South Korea reached 70 percent in the years 2013-2014. Trade volume between the two countries amounted to \$20 billion in 2015. —KUNA



President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic

CROATIAN PRESIDENT IN KUWAIT TODAY

KUWAIT: President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar Kitarovic and her accompanying delegation will arrive in Kuwait today on a three-day official visit which includes a meeting with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —KUNA

UN OFFICIAL PRAISES IRAQ'S 'EXCEPTIONAL' EFFORTS TOWARDS THE KUWAITI FILE

NEW YORK: UN official praised on Thursday the "exceptional and proactive" efforts and determination of Iraq's Government in pursuing the important work of tackling files with the neighboring State of Kuwait, namely the issue of re-collecting and returning items of the national archive of Kuwait.

UN Special Representative to the Secretary General Jan Kubis updated the Security Council with the 13th report of the Secretary General on the issue of missing Kuwaiti and third-country national and missing Kuwaiti property, including the National Archives. Positively, he said there was an increased number of witnesses that came forward to give information on this issue.

Even with the weight of regional challenges, Kubis told the Council that the strong working relations and positive dynamics between the two countries have led to a better cooperation, coordination and a measure of confidence with is invaluable in moving the process forward.

In recovering Kuwait's missing patrimony, the UN official confirmed that over 6,000 Kuwaiti books have been located and itemized from the libraries of the Kufa and Babil Universities. Ergo, the books are being prepared for an official handover, he added. Kubis also confirmed that Iraqi security personnel seized what is believed to be an ancient manuscript stolen from the Kuwait Museum. "This gives us all hope that a correct approach backed by determined efforts can lead to the discovery of the remainder of Kuwaiti property, in particular the National Archives," he said.

As this year marks the 26th year since the end of the First Gulf War, the UN official sadly expressed that until this day -regardless of its efforts and determination-the Iraqi government has yet to fully realize its obligation in addressing the human cost of that conflict and provide answers to the families of the missing.

At the end of his address, the UN official said "we owe it to the families of the deceased to continue supporting Iraq in this humanitarian process and to continue employing a multidimensional and innovative approach which is necessary for Iraq to honor and fulfill its international obligations under this file." —KUNA



KUWAIT'S CONSULATE IN IRBIL DISTRIBUTES 10,200 HEATERS FOR DISPLACED IRAQIS

IRBIL: The State of Kuwait, represented by its Consulate in Irbil, distributed yesterday some 10,200 heaters and blankets to displaced Iraqis residing in camps in Kirkuk and Sulaimaniya as well as those residing outside Irbil in light of the prevailing severe cold weather conditions.

Kuwait's Consul General in Irbil, Dr Omar Al-Kandari said in a statement that the aid was provided by Kuwait's Al-Najat Charitable Society as a result of the increasing cold wave and snowfall in northern Iraq. He added that some 3,412 heaters were also distributed yesterday on four camps in Kirkuk, pointing out that some 3,000 heaters and 6,000 blankets

were also handed to the displaced Iraqis in the past two days in Mosul and Irbil. He described the distribution process of the aid as successful, adding that some 60,000 people benefited from such aid.

He said that the campaign was in response to the initiative of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to ease the suffering of the needy people in the region. Meanwhile, Director of Sulaimiya aid office of the Al-Barzani Charitable Society Soran Khalaf thanked the state of Kuwait for such generous aid, urging Kuwait to continue provision of food supplies to the displaced Iraqis in the region. —KUNA



CANCER SECOND CAUSE OF DEATH IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: Despite progress in medical care, people around the globe still suffer from the menacing shadow of cancer, a disease which claimed millions of lives. Marking the annual World Cancer Day today, Kuwait is keen on playing its part in spreading awareness regarding the fatal illness, showcasing global commitment to the fight against cancer.

Speaking about the annual event, Director of Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCI) Dr Ahmad Al-Awadhi revealed that the disease was second to heart attacks in claiming lives in Kuwait with 21 percent death rate amongst every 100,000 people. Cancer cases among males are on the rise, said the official, revealing that the number jumped from 89 cases in every 100,000 individuals between 1974 and 1984 to 129 cases in 2013.

The number amongst females also was reported to be at 136 cases for

100,000 people in 2013, said the Director who feared that the estimated number might reach 140 cases, for both males and females, in 2029.

In 2013, cancer cases for individuals under age 18 was at 32 percent, said the

official, revealing that cases for patients over age 60 was at 62 percent. Dr Awadhi said that 88 percent of the cases were discovered via histopathology in 2013, adding that various cancer treatments were applied on patients suffering from this dreaded illness.

Breast and Colon cancers were the most common types discovered amongst women and men respectively, said the KCCC Director who revealed that the leading causes for this disease came from bad eating habits, lack of exercise, and smoking. Regarding Kuwait's efforts to combat cancer, Dr Awadhi said that his country was looking for increasing of cancer detection centers as well as cancer awareness campaigns. A new cancer control center will be opened in Al-Sabah medical district by 2019 in hopes that Kuwaiti will manage to decrease cancer cases in the future, said Awadhi. —KUNA



KUWAIT TACKLES SNAGS OBSTRUCTING DEVELOPMENT: SENIOR OFFICIAL

KUWAIT: Government departments have tackled 48 percent of obstacles facing development schemes, said the Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) on Thursday. Speaking at a news conference, Dr Khaled Mahdi said 594 hindrances are mentioned in the third follow-up report for the duration (between April and end of December), as part of the 2016-2017 strategy.

Up to 27 percent of the obstacles are of administrative nature and 23 percent related to supervision, said Mahdi. Elaborating, he said overall ventures of the development plan amounted to 282, valued at KD three billion. Up to 48.6 percent of the sum had been spent this is compared to the 13.7 percent of such spending in the same period of time in 2016.

Total strategic projects in the annual plan (2016-2017) reached 35, totally valued at KD 21.4 billion, including KD 2.2 billion earmarked for the current year; allotted for four strategic ventures. There are 11 projects for higher education (KD 2.7 billion), nine for sustainable economy (KD 11.4 billion), eight for infrastructure (KD 5.7 billion) and three for the environment (KD 616 million).

In the category of human and social development, there are 188 ventures for the development (worth KD 877 million), including six related to the demographic and housing status and labor market (KD 463,000).



KUWAIT: Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD) Dr Khaled Mahdi (center) attends the press conference. —KUNA

Mahdi added that there are, in the category of human development, eight for construction development (KD 404 million), 24 in the health sector (KD 162 million), 49 for education and training (KD 250 million).

The plan encompasses 28 ventures for security and justice (KD 37 million), 24 for social care and social development (KD 848,000), 21 for women and youth care and empowerment (KD eight million), 15 for the environment (KD 3.760 million), 13 in the fields of culture, arts and media (KD 10 million). Mahdi added that the total number of econom-

ic development enterprises reached 17, including six ones related to government administration, combating corruption, planning and mapping out State policies (KD 1.570 million) and 11 projects in the fields of statistics and data (KD 5.7 million).

For his part, the assistant secretary general for planning and follow-up, Badr Al-Rifaei, said during the news conference that the third follow-up report had been adopted by the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, the Cabinet and was submitted to the National Assembly earlier today. —KUNA

NEW YORK: Chairman of the International Islamic Charitable Organization and Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq meets with the new United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. —KUNA



MAATOUQ CONGRATULATES GUTERRES ON UN TOP POST

NEW YORK: Chairman of the Kuwait-based International Islamic Charitable Organization (IICO) and Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq has met the new United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. In statements Thursday, Maatouq said that during the meeting he has congratulated Guterres on the new post and conveyed him the greetings of

his Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and an oral invitation to visit Kuwait.

Maatouq lauded the strong and deeply-rooted relations between Kuwait and the United Nations. He expressed Kuwait's support to the UN efforts especially in the humanitarian domain. —KUNA

In my view

THE US-GCC RELATIONS



By Labeed Abdal

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The new US President Donald Trump had made controversial statements about US foreign relations, including those with EU members, China, and Russia, in addition to UK's exclusion of the EU, real estate relations with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), relations with the Arab world and Israel, the Iranian nuclear reactor and his attitude from the 5+1 agreement. As former president Barack Obama himself asserted, the new president is an exception compared to all his predecessors in terms of wealth, assets, real estate experience inside and outside the US, adding that all this will have a significant impact on his decisions.

Involvement in forming a new cabinet in a presidential system have consumed most of the time during Trump's first days as president, especially regarding the foreign affairs and defense departments, which are considered the top two positions symbolizing America's status as a major power and a permanent member in the UN Security Council that accordingly has a great impact on international peace and security.

Constant West-East competition between the US and its rivals; Russia and China, call the new president for more self-restraint, and avoid being dragged into competition, especially in several cases that had been so often associated with the possibility of a World War III and major powers demonstration of strength in Syria, East China, the Philippines and exchanging sanctions and economic restrictions.

Back to our Arab World, the GCC wealth has been brought up so often, especially that of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Trump had claimed that those countries would have never existed if it was not for the United States' protection, adding that those states have to pay off a great part of America's trillions-worth debts.

On one hand, America's friendship and alliance with GCC states are deep-rooted and go way back to the 19th century. But on the other, I believe that such ancient deep-rooted relations were not for free. They were made according to normal relations among friends and allies with trillions of dollars spent on armament and other sectors. These relations also involved several important stops in international energy, which needs to be stabilized on major powers' chess tables that never remain still.

AL-BISHTAKHTA: A TOPNOTCH AUDIO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM IN OLD KUWAIT

KUWAIT: While high-fidelity systems rule supreme over how people enjoy music nowadays, 'Al-Bishtakhta' - a name given by Kuwaitis to the phonograph - was the mainstay of audio entertainment in the old days. Historians in Kuwait differed on the origin of the word Al-Bishtakhta with some saying that it originated from the Hindi language. But the most compelling argument was that the word was derived from the English word pickup. In any case, the Bishtakhta was created by prolific American inventor and businessman Thomas Edison in 1877.

The box-shaped device mainly consisted of a turntable, a needle, and a horn. People in old Kuwait used to place their vinyl records of choice on the turntable and then press the device's needle on the record, an action which resulted in sound being emitted by the horn. Back then, the Bishtakhta came in various shapes and types and was imported from Iraq and India.

Various models were imported to Kuwait with the European 'Swan Bishtakhta' arriving first in the country

around 1909. It was followed by the 'Edison,' 'Columbia,' and 'Victoria' Bishtakhtas in 1918. They were sold in the aptly-named Bishtakhta market. The device was not widely spread amongst the populace, but was commonly found at wealthy households and coffee shops.

Stories about the Bishtakhta were very common back in the day with European travelers, who happened stop in Kuwait in the early 1930s, saying that one of the few aspects of western civilization was the usage of the phonograph. Perhaps one of the most humorous accounts connected with the Bishtakhta came from the book "from here Kuwait began" by author Abdullah Al-Hathem. The author said that one of the first times the phonograph was used in Al-Safat Public Square in 1915 had led to panic amongst the people who feared that the device contained evil spirits singing from the box. This incident led to the temporary ban in the era of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah. In modern times, the Bishtakhta is consider as an antique item owned by old Kuwaitis yearning to days gone by. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Bishtakhta (phonograph). — KUNA

Photo

o f t h e d a y



KUWAIT: With the advent of February, Kuwait begins its national celebrations. — KUNA



Al-Jahra Gate

KUWAIT MARKS 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF 3RD DEFENSIVE WALL'S DEMOLITION

KUWAIT: Kuwaitis marks today the 60th anniversary of demolishing the country's third defensive wall which was built in 1920. In the era of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah a decree was issued on February 4, 1957 to demolish the wall which was built with a height

of four meters and stretched for seven kilometers. The wall originally had four gates but a fifth one was added later on. During Kuwait's history, three defensive walls were constructed between 1760 till 1920. — KUNA



Al-Shamiya Gate.



Al-Shaab Gate.





KUWAIT: Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah (left) and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah attend the flag-hoisting ceremony. —KUNA



Senior officials attend the ceremony at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.



FLAG-HOISTING CEREMONY SIGNALS START OF KUWAIT NATIONAL CELEBRATIONS OF 2017

KUWAIT: In a big ceremony attended by a plethora of cabinet ministers, state officials, public figures and ordinary people, Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah on Thursday raised Kuwaiti flag over Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center to signal the start of national celebrations of 2017. Speaking on the sideline of the ceremony, Sheikh Salman, also minister of state for youth affairs and president of the standing committee of national celebrations, stated the flag-hoisting ceremony mixes heritage with moderation and stimulate patriotic feeling among people of Kuwait.

He urged Kuwaiti youth to unite around the flag for building

and developing their country while adopting moderation in thinking and acting. He expressed pleasure of the remarkable popular contributions to the ceremony, particularly from youth.

Sheikh Salman congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on the occasion of the national days: Independence Day on February 25 and Liberation Day on February 26.

Meanwhile, Undersecretary of the Information Ministry Tariq Al-Mezram pointed out that the standing committee and the

Information Ministry has prepared several artistic, cultural and entertainment activities to celebrate national days. He added Kuwait TV and Radio would offer a wide coverage to the national days celebrations in the coming days. The flag-hoisting ceremony was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Minister of State for Social Affairs and Labor Hend Al-Sabeeh, Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan, Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yasser Abul and Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa. —KUNA



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BERKELEY: University of California at Berkeley police guard the building where Breitbart News editor Milo Yiannopoulos was to speak. — AP

BERKELEY PROTESTS TARGET FAR-RIGHT FIREBRAND

TRUMP SLAMS UNIVERSITY, THREATENS TO REVOKE FUNDS

LOS ANGELES: President Donald Trump threatened Thursday to withdraw federal funds from UC Berkeley after violent campus protests forced the cancellation of a speech by Milo Yiannopoulos, a firebrand editor of right-wing news site Breitbart. The disturbances were a fiery reminder of the university's history as a cradle of the 1960s anti-war movement and a sign of the sharp tensions pitting the country's mostly left-wing student body against a far-right minority.

Hundreds of students and other protesters chanting "shut him down" marched at the University of California campus. Masked protesters, said to be outsiders, smashed windows, set wooden pallets ablaze and threw fireworks and rocks as police in full riot gear responded with tear gas. The university was placed on lockdown as the sold-out appearance by Yiannopoulos, a conservative provocateur and self-proclaimed internet troll who styles himself on Facebook as "Dangerous Faggot," was canceled late Wednesday.

"If UC Berkeley does not allow free speech and practices violence on innocent people with a different point of view - NO FEDERAL FUNDS?" Trump wrote on Twitter Thursday.

About half of research at Berkeley is funded by the federal government, according to the university website. Berkeley however has been struggling in the past years with budget shortfalls and spending deficits. Trump's top political adviser Stephen Bannon is the former chairman of Breitbart News. Berkeley Chancellor Nicholas Dirks said that the peaceful student protest "was invaded by more than 100 armed individuals clad all in black who utilized paramilitary tactics to engage in violent, destructive behavior designed to shut the event down". Because of the violence campus police "concluded that the speaker had to be evacuated from campus for his own safety," thus ending the event.

'Dangerous Faggot'

Yiannopoulos, Breitbart's technology editor, is a flamboyant firebrand reviled by his critics as racist and misogynistic but who casts himself as a gay crusader against "political correctness". He is often portrayed as a leader of the so-called alt-right-a white nationalist extremist fringe that has found a home on Breitbart's pages-although he has sought to distance himself from the movement.

He is however a vocal supporter of Trump-

nicknamed the billionaire "Daddy" during his election campaign. The 32-year-old Briton is probably best known for inciting a campaign of online abuse against the African-American "Ghostbusters" actress Leslie Jones. Twitter banned him in July. The Berkeley event was to be the last stop of a college speaking tour that has drawn big crowds and also sparked fistfights, a shooting and at least one other cancellation.

According to an article on Breitbart News, Yiannopoulos was planning to use the event to launch a campaign against so-called sanctuary campuses, which have declared their opposition to Trump's tough stance toward undocumented immigrants. Yiannopoulos said on Facebook he was evacuated "after violent left-wing protestors tore down barricades, lit fires, threw rocks and Roman candles at the windows and breached the ground floor of the building". "One thing we do know for sure: the Left is absolutely terrified of free speech and will do literally anything to shut it down." UC Berkeley, one of the top public universities in the United States, is the home of the 1960s "Free Speech Movement" that helped launch the era's student protests against the Vietnam War.

Violence deplored

The mayor of Berkeley, one of America's most liberal cities, deplored the violence by a "small minority" of protesters.

They "provided the ultra-nationalist far right exactly the images they want to use to discredit the vast majority of peaceful protesters in Berkeley and across America who are deeply concerned about where the country is heading," said Jesse Arreguin, the mayor.

Similar protests at the University of California at Davis last month also forced the cancellation of speeches by Yiannopoulos and Martin Shkreli, a former pharmaceuticals boss who became a hate figure after jacking up the price of a life-saving drug.

The events at Davis and Berkeley were organized by conservative student groups. A similar invitation to speak at UCLA was rescinded. Officials at the three University of California campuses stressed that they did not invite Yiannopoulos or endorse his ideas but were committed to free speech.

More than 100 UC Berkeley faculty members had signed two letters sent last month to the school's chancellor, urging him to cancel the event. — AFP

SAUDI DIPLOMAT JAILED IN SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE: A Beijing-based Saudi diplomat was sentenced in Singapore yesterday to more than two years in jail and four strokes of a cane for molesting a hotel intern. Bander Yahya A Alzahrani, 39, was sentenced to 26 months and one week in prison after being convicted of "outraging modesty", the legal term in Singapore for sexual assault short of rape.

Alzahrani was granted bail for Sg\$20,000 (\$14,140) and will be appealing the sentence and conviction, his lawyer Shashi Nathan told AFP.

"He's obviously upset and disappointed, but he understands there's another stage of the appeal to be had, and that's what we will be preparing for," Nathan said. The victim had initially refused to report the incident but staff members at the hotel later convinced her to contact police after they found out that she had been molested in Alzahrani's room, court papers showed.

The diplomat, who handled media affairs at the Saudi mission in the Chinese capital, was in Singapore on holiday with his family. However,

he was alone in the room with the victim during the incident. Alzahrani had said in his defense that the victim was conspiring with hotel staff to extort money from him, an allegation which the judge dismissed. "The accused preyed on a young, naive victim," said district judge Lee Poh Choo. "He knew and intended his actions." Outrage of modesty is punishable by up to 10 years in jail and whipping with a rattan cane, a punishment which dates back to British colonial rule in Singapore. — AFP



BASRA: An Iraqi artist paints a mural on a concrete blast wall. — AP

US-LED COALITION TRAINS MOSUL POLICE, PLANS FOR IS-FREE IRAQ

PREPARING TO BATTLE FOR CITY'S WESTERN SECTOR

BASMAYA: The US-led coalition is planning for the day when Iraq will be free of the Islamic State group, ramping up training of a future Mosul police force - even as the battle for the rest of the city is briefly on hold. Sometime during the lull, significant numbers of the security forces are expected to move into villages scattered across the plains of Ninevah province around Mosul and also into parts of the city retaken from IS over the past three months.

The Iraqi military declared Mosul's eastern half "fully liberated" in January and is now preparing to battle for the city's western sector - likely to be a much tougher fight in a dense and overcrowded urban environment. The operation to free Iraq's second-largest city has been the most complex challenge for Iraqi forces to date.

With more than 100,000 soldiers, police, tribal and militia fighters deployed for the offensive, Iraqi leaders are aware that after IS militants are routed from Mosul, a well-trained police force will be needed on the

ground - to keep the hard-won victory. In the blistery winter wind, a few hundred police recruits shuffled in place to keep warm during a recent training exercise at a coalition base run by the Spanish Army in Basmaya, east of the Iraqi capital, Baghdad.

Young men

The young men, mostly in their twenties and thirties, have had no previous training or experience. Many carried dilapidated Kalashnikov-style rifles, slung over their shoulders with rope or rubber-coated wire. "We start our program at a very basic level," said Spanish Army's First Lt Carlos Egido, who works as a trainer with the US-led coalition. "When they arrive, they don't have any skills."

Ninevah's police force - along with Iraq's military - largely evaporated when IS first pushed into the province from neighboring Syria in the summer of 2014. Since then, the US-led coalition has largely focused on building up combat forces for the Mosul operation. But

after the operation, a "well-trained police force will be key to Iraq's long-term security," said Spanish Army Brig. Gen. Angel Castilla, who oversees the police training.

For now, the training lasts only five weeks, which Castilla said is inadequate in the long term but forced by the condensed timetable. "We hope they will return to be retrained," he added, explaining that the objective is to rebuild the province's police force within months. Watching the training at Basmaya, Nineveh police officer Lt Col Hassan Omar Abdullah said the recruits made him feel hopeful despite their lack of experience.

Abdullah was in Mosul the day IS overran the city and fled as he saw other officers and units around him do the same. The old police force was corrupt, which is in part why Mosul fell to IS so easily, he said. He warned that IS will likely remain a threat for a long time ahead in Iraq, so having a well-trained police force is critical. "This will be the biggest challenge," he said. — AP

ISRAELI SETTLERS BRUSHES OFF TRUMP'S WARNING

JERUSALEM: The group representing Israeli settlers yesterday brushed off a White House statement warning Israel about constructing new settlements in West Bank territory that Palestinians claim for their future state, saying instead that it looks forward to "working closely with our friends" in the Trump administration.

President Donald Trump has been perceived as sympathetic to the settlements, an issue at the heart of the Israel-Palestinian conflict that was a frequent source of friction between his predecessor and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Israeli nationalists now believe they have an ally in the White House, and have made no secret they will push for more settlements in the West Bank.

But on Thursday, the White House said that the administration doesn't "believe the existence of settlements is an impediment to peace, the construction of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements beyond their current borders may not be helpful in achieving that goal." The US statement came just several hours after Netanyahu vowed to establish the first new West Bank settlement in over two decades "as soon as possible," promising to make up for a court-ordered demolition of an illegal settlement outpost. Israeli security forces dismantled Amona earlier in the day amid clashes between police and dozens of hard-line settlers who had barricaded themselves inside a synagogue.

Two state solution

The Palestinians claim all of the West Bank and east Jerusalem along with the Gaza Strip - areas captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war - for their state. The Palestinians and much of the international community consider all Israeli settlements illegal and view them as an obstacle to reaching a two state solution to the conflict.

Oded Revivi, the chief foreign envoy of the Yesha settlers' council, said his group "thanks the White House for asserting that our communities were never an impediment to peace." Using the biblical name for the West Bank he said "nothing is more natural and morally just than Jews building in Judea." "We look forward to working closely with our friends in the new Trump administration to build a brighter future all," he added.

The settler movement is a potent political force in Israel, and Netanyahu's narrow nationalist coalition government is dominated by settlers and their allies. Trump has said he wants to broker a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians, but has given no indication of how he plans to accomplish it. His campaign platform made no mention of a Palestinian state, the cornerstone of U.S. Mideast policy for decades, and he has surrounded himself with advisers with deep ties to the settlement movement.

A day before the evacuation of the Amona outpost, Netanyahu approved 3,000 homes in West Bank settlements in addition to earlier approvals of 2,500 homes in the West Bank and 560 in east Jerusalem. Netanyahu's government had unsuccessfully tried to block the evacuation of Amona. But Israel's Supreme Court rejected all appeals after determining the outpost was built illegally two decades ago on private Palestinian land. The White House said on Thursday that the Trump administration hasn't taken an official position on settlements and the president looks forward to continued discussions on the issue, including when he meets with Netanyahu at the White House on Feb 15. — AP

ANGOLA'S DOS SANTOS TO END 38 YEARS IN POWER

LUANDA: Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos confirmed yesterday he will not run in this year's presidential election, calling an end to 38 years as head of state, but he will retain control of the powerful ruling party. Dos Santos, aged 74, said in March last year he would not run in elections due in August but opponents remained suspicious given he had reneged on similar pledges during nearly four decades running Angola.

The ruling People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) approved 62-year-old Defence Minister Joao Lourenco as its presidential candidate at a meeting on Dec. 2, dos Santos said in a televised speech. Dos Santos, a communist-trained oil engineer and a veteran of the guerrilla war against Portuguese rule, will remain president of the MPLA, retaining sweeping pow-

ers that include choosing parliamentary candidates and appointing top posts in the army and police.

His inscrutable public demeanour belies his tight control of Angola, where he has overseen an oil-backed economic boom and the reconstruction of infrastructure devastated by a 27-year civil war that ended in 2002. "The real news is Dos Santos hanging on," said Gary van Staden, political analyst at NKC African Economics. "He is going to stay in a very powerful position in the party, which means he is going to stay in control and the president will defer to him."

Dos Santos dynasty

Despite its oil wealth, most of Angola's 22 million people live in poverty and they have become increasingly frustrated in recent years as low

crude prices hammered growth in sub-Saharan Africa's third largest economy. Critics accuse Dos Santos - Africa's second longest-ruling leader after Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo - of mismanaging Angola's oil wealth and making an elite, mainly his family and political allies, vastly rich in a country ranked amongst the world's most corrupt.

Married to former model and air hostess Ana Paula, 18 years his junior, dos Santos has been accused of trying to build a family dynasty to control Angola beyond his lifespan. Isabel dos Santos was appointed by her father as head of the state oil company Sonangol last year and his son Jose Filomeno is chairman of Angola's sovereign wealth fund. "He's pursuing a legacy plan with family members retaining control of key financial insti-

tutions," said Darias Jonker, Africa Director at Eurasia Group. "We see signs that he plans to retain some power behind the throne."

The MPLA won parliamentary majorities in the three elections since the end of the war. Lourenco, a former soldier and deputy president of the MPLA, is a close ally of dos Santos. Also a veteran of the independence struggle, Lourenco studied history in the Soviet Union from 1978 to 1982 before starting a long career in politics. "Lourenco has proven himself as competent technocrat without major scandals in his past and he's probably the best selection the party could have made," Jonker said. As well as being a MPLA stalwart, Lourenco speaks Russian, Spanish and English, plays chess and practises Shotokan karate in his spare time, a personal biography says. — Reuters

HUNDREDS LIKELY KILLED IN ROHINGYA CRACKDOWN: UN

GENEVA: Myanmar's military crackdown on Rohingya Muslims has likely killed hundreds of people, with children slaughtered and women raped in a campaign that may amount to ethnic cleansing, the UN said yesterday.

A report from the United Nations Human Rights office, based on interviews with 204 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, also found it was "very likely" that crimes against humanity had been committed in Myanmar, echoing previous UN accusations. The so-called "area clearance operations" launched by the military in northwest Rakhine state on October 10 "have likely resulted in several hundred deaths", the report said.

Rohingya refugees recounted gruesome violations allegedly perpetrated by members of Myanmar's security services or civilian fighters working in collaboration with the military and police. "An eight-month-old baby was reportedly killed while his mother was gang-raped by five security officers," the rights office said in a press release, citing witnesses. Three children aged six or younger were "slaughtered with knives", according to the report. "What kind of hatred could make a man stab a baby crying out for his mother's milk," UN rights chief Zeid bin Ra'ad Zeid al-Husseini said in the statement.

"What kind of 'clearance operation' is this? What national security goals could possibly be served by this?" he added. A full 47 percent of those interviewed by the UN said they had a family member who had been killed in the operation, while 43 percent reported being raped.

Ethnic cleansing?

Rights office spokesman Ravina Shamdasani told reporters in Geneva that "the kind of systematic and widespread violations that we have documented could be described as ethnic cleansing", but noted that was not a legally defined offence provable in court. The report said the violence was the result of "purposeful policy" designed by one group to remove another group from an area "through violent and terror-inspiring means".

The Rohingya Muslims are loathed by many among Myanmar's Buddhist majority. Myanmar refuses to recognise the Rohingya as one of the country's ethnic minorities, instead describing them as Bengalis-or illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh-even though many have lived in Myanmar for generations.

Witnesses told the UN they had been taunted while they were beaten and mocked over the failure of "Allah" to help. The military crackdown in Rakhine, home to more than one million Rohingya, was triggered by October 9 attacks on border guard posts, which Myanmar and the International Crisis Group say were carried out by foreign-backed militants. Nearly 70,000 Rohingya have fled the ensuing crisis to Bangladesh. — AFP

FRANCE'S FAR-RIGHT UPS ATTACKS ON SCANDAL-HIT, HOPEFUL FILLON DAMAGING NEW TELEVISION REVELATIONS

PARIS: France's far-right National Front called on scandal-hit presidential hopeful Francois Fillon to withdraw his candidacy yesterday as they sharpened attacks on the conservative following damaging new television revelations. "I wish Francois Fillon would take responsibility and withdraw from this presidential election... so we can get back to a debate about the real issues," deputy FN leader Florian Philippot told RTL radio yesterday.

On Thursday, the France 2 channel aired newly discovered footage of Fillon's wife Penelope, who was reportedly paid more than 800,000 euros (\$860,000) as a parliamentary aide amid suspicions she never worked. In the interview filmed in 2007, Penelope can be heard talking about how her children have only ever known her as a mother and saying "I've never been actually his (Fillon's) assistant." The 62-year-old Fillon, candidate for the rightwing Republicans party and formerly the frontrunner ahead of April's first round of the presidential election, is determined to try to ride out the scandal which he has called a "plot" against French democracy.

Marine Le Pen, who leads the anti-establishment and anti-immigration FN, would win the first round if it were held today, according to the latest polls, but would lose in the second round on May 7. Le Pen is seeking to benefit from the tarnishing of ex-prime minister Fillon, who previously had a sleaze-free reputation and who takes a hard line on immigration and Islam.

"The bond of trust has been broken," Le Pen said on Wednesday. "It's up to him to draw the conclusions or his political family." But Le Pen has her own expenses scandal after she refused this week to meet a deadline to repay nearly 300,000 euros which the European Parliament budget says was incorrectly used to pay a long-time aide. The anti-EU leader is an MEP. Several senior party members also face trial in France over alleged misuse of public money after an investigation into allegedly fraudulent funding of their parliamentary election



CHARLEVILLE-MEZIERES: French presidential election candidate for the rightwing Les Republicains (LR) party Francois Fillon (C) stands on stage at the end of his public meeting. — AFP

campaign in 2012. Le Pen is convinced that Donald Trump's victory in the United States and Brexit in Britain mean the time has come for her own anti-elite, anti-immigration and nationalist leadership in France. She has fought to try to rid her party of its image of racism and anti-Semitism, while proposing to scrap the euro and withdraw France from the European Union. The violent ejection of a journalist from one of her events this week threatened to draw attention to the thuggish, intolerant underbelly of the party that Le Pen has fought hard to overcome.

Fillon clings on

One of the beneficiaries of the Fillon scandal could be Emmanuel Macron, the 39-year-old independent centrist who was seen advancing to the second round to face Le Pen in a poll this week. The surprise winner of the Socialist nomination, the leftwing Benoit Hamon, is also gaining the polls and is eyeing gains from Fillon's troubles.

Fillon, who was premier under former president Nicolas Sarkozy from 2007-2012, shows no sign of planning to

step aside to make way for another candidate from his Republicans party. On Thursday afternoon, he used a rally in the northeastern town of Charleville-Mezieres to lash out at the left, which he accuses of being behind the revelations. "They are not looking to see justice done but to take me down and, beyond me, take down the right and steal its vote," he said.

His wife's lawyer, Pierre Cornut-Gentille, also insisted that Penelope's remarks aired on Thursday evening had been "taken out of context". Fillon's fate will depend on his ability to rally his party's lawmakers behind him amid signs of anxiety ahead of parliamentary elections in June which will follow the presidential vote. A small minority of lawmakers have already broken ranks and criticised him publicly, but he appears to be retaining support-for now-partly because of the difficulty of drafting in a last-minute replacement. "We give Francois Fillon our complete support because his commitment to France is vital," a group of senior Republicans figures wrote in the rightwing Le Figaro daily on Thursday. — AFP

MORE LIVES LOST IN UKRAINE

AVDIIVKA: Clashes between Ukrainian forces and Moscow-backed rebels left two more dead in a flashpoint town yesterday and five others elsewhere in bloodshed that has prompted the US to condemn Russia's "aggressive" stance. The latest reports from both sides take the death toll in fighting since Sunday in the eastern war zone to 32 — a figure that has not been reached since the height of the war in 2014 and 2015.

The US criticism of Moscow will be welcomed in Kiev, particularly worried about losing Washington's support as new President Donald Trump seeks to mend ties with Russia's Vladimir Putin. Ukrainian forces and the rebels have been exchanging mortar and rocket fire near the front

line town of Avdiivka just north of the pro-Russian rebels' de facto capital of Donetsk.

The Ukrainian army said the latest fatal victims were a local woman and an emergency worker in Avdiivka. The toll in the blue-collar town where a giant coke plant employs almost the entire population of 25,000 people now stands at 27. Authorities said that three soldiers had also been killed in other parts of eastern Ukraine in which pro-Russian insurgency has raged since April 2014. The rebels also said that shelling by the Ukrainian army had reportedly killed two civilians in Donetsk.

Sporadic mortar fire

Ukraine and Russia have traded blame over who

started the violence and who was responsible for the deaths. AFP reporters in Avdiivka said yesterday the shelling had died down considerably in the town itself and that only sporadic echoes of mortar fire could be heard on its outskirts.

The separatists' sudden assault came after a month-long spell of relative calm in the 33-month war and sharpened the world's focus on the bloodshed in the European Union's back yard. The conflict began less than two months after Ukraine ousted its Russian-backed leader in February 2014. Moscow responded by annexing Ukraine's Crimea peninsula in March 2014 and then allegedly plotting the eastern insurgency to keep Ukraine under its thumb after its tilt toward the West. —AFP



VALLETTA: German Chancellor Angela Merkel arrives for an EU summit. — AP

EU LEADERS SAY TRUMP A WORRY AS RHETORIC BECOMES POLICY

HOLLANDE SAYS PRESSURE FROM TRUMP IS 'UNACCEPTABLE'

VALLETTA: European Union leaders yesterday sought a common stand on US President Donald Trump, now that they increasingly fear that campaign rhetoric will be turned into policy and further tear their troubled bloc apart. At a summit in Malta, several of the 28 leaders highlighted the fundamental gap between the EU position and how Trump wants to plug migration and refugee flows from certain mostly Muslim nations, one of many potential flashpoints undermining trans-Atlantic relations.

French President Francois Hollande said it was unacceptable that the US president could put pressure on the EU through his declarations. And Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė pointed out that it was almost impossible to build a bridge with Trump because "today we're communicating with the United States mainly on Twitter." EU Council President Donald Tusk already moved the U.S. into a "threat" category for the EU in the run-up to the summit, following several negative comments about the bloc.

Unpredictable partner

For France and Germany, there is only one solution to facing an unpredictable partner. "Many countries have to realize that their future is first in the European Union, rather than who knows what bilateral relation with the United States," said

Hollande upon arrival at the summit. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that "the more strongly we are clear about how we define our role in the world, the better we can tend our trans-Atlantic relations."

It didn't take away any of the worries which have been increasing by the day since Trump took office on Jan 20. Even though he has called Hollande and Tusk and hosted British Prime Minister Theresa May, Europe keeps searching for how to get a grip on Trump. "Who know what the president of the United States really wants," notably when it comes to NATO, Hollande said of the military alliance uniting most EU member nations with the United States.

Summit leader Tusk was hoping that the debriefings from May and others to EU leaders would not turn into another Trump-bashing session. On Tuesday though, Tusk himself said that Trump was contributing to the "highly unpredictable" outlook for the bloc with a slew of "worrying declarations." The message had seeped through the ranks of the member states. "Trump must be judged by his actions and not by his rhetoric and his election campaign. But now he has delivered enough actions that are worrying," Austrian Chancellor Christian Kern said. His Luxembourg counterpart Xavier Bettel added that "What happened the last days are really not the values I'm fighting for." — AP

ROMANIANS DIG IN OVER CORRUPTION STANDOFF

BUCHAREST: Demonstrators in Romania geared up for more protests yesterday over what they see as a worrying backsliding in the fight against corruption, as the political crisis showed no sign of easing. Around 120,000 people took to the streets nationwide overnight, according to media, in a third night of protests against an emergency government decree decriminalising a string of graft offences.

This was down from an estimated 200,000-300,000 the previous night, the most since the fall of communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu in 1989, but protestors vowed to press on. "I am going to come back every night," architect Carmen told AFP on Thursday at a chilly downtown Bucharest protest made up mostly of young people. The left-wing government "thinks it can do whatever it likes with full impunity," the 31-year-old said.

Demonstrators said they would return every day until February 10 when the contentious decree, issued by the left-wing government late Tuesday, is due to enter into force. The measure makes abuse of power punishable by prison only if sums involved exceed 44,000 euros (\$47,500). A separate bill would free some 2,500 prisoners on short sentences. The government says it is bringing legislation into line with the constitution and that it wants to reduce overcrowding in prisons.

But critics say that the main beneficiaries will be the many bent officials and politicians ensnared in an anti-corruption drive of recent years that has won Bucharest kudos abroad. Yesterday, the national ombudsman vowed to invoke the constitutional court, saying it was unclear why the abuse of power decree was urgent and citing "imprecision" in the legislation. Between 2014 and 2016, 1,171 people were found guilty of abuse of power and prosecutors are investigating more than 2,000 other cases.

In 2015, 27 officials, including then prime minister Victor Ponta, faced justice. Aside from Ponta, five ministers, 16 lawmakers and five senators went on trial. Washington added to the chorus of alarm Thursday, saying it was "deeply concerned" that the new measures "undermine rule of law and weaken accountability for financial and corruption-related crimes."

"To sustain Romania's credibility in the international community, and to remain attractive to investment and ensure continued economic growth, the United States calls on the Romanian government to reverse these actions," said State Department spokesman Mark Toner. Earlier this week, European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker and his deputy Frans Timmermans warned against "backtracking" on graft-only a week after an EU report praised the government's efforts.

PM defiant

But despite signs of some cracks, the ruling Social Democrats (PSD) — who bounced back in elections in December barely a year after protests forced them from office — have remained defiant. "We took a decision in the government and we are going to press ahead," Prime Minister Sorin Grindeanu said after a PSD meeting on Thursday. PSD leader Liviu Dragnea, currently on trial for abuse of power involving a sum that falls below the new ceiling, hit out at a "campaign of lies and disinformation".

"I talked to my lawyers. The decree does not put an end to my trial," he told reporters. Dragnea, 54, is seen as the real power within the PSD. A previous conviction for voter fraud bars him from office. Centre-right President Klaus Iohannis, who has been in an open battle with Dragnea, has welcomed the protests and sought to get the constitutional court to block the government's decrees. — AFP

SIDHU GOES INTO BAT IN INDIAN ELECTION

JALANDHAR: As a Test cricketer and the brash commentator on Indian television, Navjot Singh Sidhu got under the skin of some of the sport's biggest names and offended millions of fans. Now the 53-year-old jester is hoping to shake up India's political scene by fronting the opposition Congress party's bid to win back power in the state of Punjab, ridiculing opponents in his inimitable style.

"I'm here to hit them out the ground and out of our state," he told a rally last week in the north of the state, smacking an imaginary six into the raucous crowd with a wafted bat. The chief target of Sidhu's sledging is Punjab's current leader Prakash Singh Badal, an 89-year-old ally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi whose son Sukhbir Singh Badal is the state's deputy chief minister.

Using laughter

The crowd roared with laughter when he quipped that "their roads are so full of potholes they turn the curd in your stomachs into lassi". "You promised 24-hour free electricity but we only have power for 12 hours a day-the remaining 12 hours are free of power." Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, whose anti-corruption party also has designs on the state, was denounced as a reboot of Britain's colonial era East India Company for wanting "to rule Punjab by remote control".

It's entertaining stuff, but commentators and critics say Sidhu is mainly motivated by a desire to damage former colleagues in Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party and is vague on policies. Sidhu was furious when he was dumped as a BJP candidate in the 2014 general election, forced to make way for Modi's top lieutenant Arun Jaitley who then lost the seat.

The centre-left Congress, which has floundered since losing power at the national level, was delighted for such a crowd-pleaser to join its ranks and become the face of their campaign in the state. Supporters hope victory in Punjab could spur a wider revival for the party which is also hoping to defeat the BJP when the giant state of Uttar Pradesh begins holding elections later this month. "What has worked for him from the start, from his playing days, is the image of an independent, eccentric person," Hartosh Singh Bal, political editor of The Caravan current affairs magazine, told AFP. "Even when he batted, on some days you'd see a totally defensive Sidhu and on others he'd only deal in sixes. I think maybe the word maverick fits him better than just an eccentric."

Warne nemesis

During his international career, Sidhu is largely remembered as a doughty opening batsman but he also famously spanked Shane Warne to all corners at the start of the great Australian spinner's Test career. With his razor-sharp wit and colorful turbans-usually paired with a matching blazer-pocket handkerchief-Sidhu forged a successful career as a pundit after retirement before also becoming a gameshow host.

His shoot-from-the-hip style has frequently landed him in hot water such as when he threatened to club Pakistan's Aamer Sohail with a bat during a Test match. He got up the nose of England legend Geoffrey Boycott, telling him on air that "you are like a ship stuck in a fog. You just keep blowing your horn. You know nothing of what you are talking." His regular digs at Bangladesh's team have made Sidhu a bete noire among fans of Test cricket's newest nation who set up a website during the last World Cup to allow visitors to virtually whack him with a shoe. — AFP



JALANDHAR: In this photograph taken on January 26, 2017, Indian cricketer-turned-politician and current Congress Party candidate for the Punjab Legislative Assembly Navjot Singh Sidhu (C) greets supporters at an election rally. — AFP



KENT: Buta Singh (2nd L), a Punjabi asylum seeker, is pictured with his nephew Sahibjot Singh, 5, and sister Davinder Kaur at their home. — AFP

THE LONG, ARDUOUS TREK TO FIND THE AMERICAN DREAM

TALE ILLUSTRATES COMPLEX NATURE OF EVOLVING US IMMIGRATION

SEATTLE: In the spring of 2013, Buta Singh, a 34-year-old Sikh from India's Punjab state, fled his homeland out of fear of religious and political persecution, hoping for a new start in the United States. It has been a bewilderingly long and brutal quest, spanning a traumatic 10-week journey, 11 months in detention and several years in legal limbo, with no immediate end in sight and new US President Donald Trump now looming large.

On a recent afternoon in a busy immigration courtroom in downtown Seattle, Singh's appeal for asylum was finally scheduled for trial on October 8, 2020. "I can't do anything without patience," he said afterwards. "I just want a safe place-my life in India is all done." Trump has begun his term with headline actions on immigration, temporarily barring the arrival of all refugees and citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries, and beginning the process of building a wall along the country's southern border with Mexico.

Singh's tale illustrates the emerging and complex nature of the ever-evolving US immigration landscape. Although small in number compared to the hundreds of thousands arriving annually from Mexico and its neighbors, migrants and refugees from beyond the region like Singh now make up a significant and steadily rising proportion of those reaching America's southern doorstep.

And they have stretched its sprawling immigration system, from border enforcement to asylum adjudication, with no signs of abating. Last year, the US detained more than 32,000 individuals from countries beyond Mexico, Central America and Cuba either trying to cross illegally or deemed inadmissible at entry ports, according to a review of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) data. The largest number came from Haiti (6,503), followed by Brazil (4,665), India (3,622), Ecuador (2,996), China (2,595) and Romania (2,569).

'Tidal wave'

"I'd always represented people

smuggled through Latin America... what was a trickle many years ago is now a tidal wave," said John Lawit, a Texas attorney representing Singh and many other such asylum-seekers. The spike over recent years includes thousands of people from countries Trump has included in his visa ban-such as Somalia, Syria and Iraq-and other nations the US has long considered particularly vulnerable to terror-related activity and recruitment, like Pakistan.

The overwhelming majority presented themselves at official crossings where they could claim asylum-rather than attempting to enter illegally. So far, no terror-related incidents on American soil have been linked to any such arrivals. But an executive order issued last week by Trump, ordering authorities to start building a wall on Mexico's border, said: "Continued illegal immigration presents a clear and present danger to the interests of the United States."

It added: "Among those who illegally enter are those who seek to harm Americans through acts of terror or criminal conduct." Congressman Ted Poe, a Texas Republican who serves as chairman of the House's subcommittee on terrorism and trade, noted that during a visit to his state's southern border, officials had detained three people from Ukraine.

"How did Ukrainians ever find Texas?" he said. "Word needs to get out that you're not getting into the United States across the southern border because we're going to have border security." Experts say criminal networks and South American emigrants forged this increasingly well-trodden route over decades. They give various reasons for the recent surge, from word-of-mouth and recruitment by traffickers to recession in Brazil and natural disasters in Haiti.

Roads, rivers and jungles

Singh's journey highlights the perils of the path. After his father sold land and paid smugglers in India about \$40,000, he flew via Europe and South America to Nicaragua. From there, he was hidden in suffocating bunks in truck cabins, trav-

eled on rivers using ramshackle rafts and trekked through jungles. A smuggler in Suriname stole his passport; Honduran military police demanded bribes, he said. A vegetarian by faith, Singh found little he could eat, and often went long periods without water. "I think nobody treats an animal like this," he recalled tearfully. "I thought, 'I may die'." Singh finally reached the American border at El Paso, Texas, to claim asylum.

Under US law, arrivals without entry visas join those apprehended crossing illegally in expedited removal proceedings. However, officials interview anyone expressing fear of persecution back in their home countries. If deemed credible, they can then appeal deportation in a lengthy asylum process. Those who can prove their identity and ties to a community-through a relative, sponsor or employer-can also win relocation of their case and bonded parole. Courts in southern border states saw a 21 percent rise in non-Central American cases last year, according to Justice Department data.

'Felt like a criminal'

Singh, who has a sister living in Seattle, passed his asylum interview three weeks after arriving. But an El Paso immigration judge repeatedly denied him parole, transfer, and appeals against deportation. So after 10 months, Singh joined a nine-day hunger strike with dozens of other Indian detainees. "I felt like a criminal there," he said.

After a diplomat from the Indian consulate in Houston visited the group, Lawit got Singh's case reopened and transferred to Seattle. Within a month, he was paroled on a \$7,000 bond, living with his sister's family, and working first at a gas station and then as a driver for his brother-in-law's trucking company. The transfer improved his asylum chances. In El Paso, judges approved on average just three percent of asylum appeals between 2011 and 2016; in Seattle, it was nearly 40 percent over the same period, the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) at Syracuse University shows. — AFP



SEOUL: US Defense Secretary James Mattis (R) attends an honor guard ceremony with his South Korean counterpart Han Min-Koo (L) at the Defense Ministry. —AP

US DEFENSE CHIEF MATTIS REASSURES JAPAN, S KOREA

FIRST OVERSEAS TOUR BY A SENIOR TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

TOKYO: US Defense Secretary James Mattis said yesterday that the United States stands “100 percent” with Japan on a visit to reassure Asian allies rattled by President Donald Trump’s isolationist rhetoric. Mattis spoke in Tokyo on the first overseas tour by a senior Trump administration official, as concerns rise about the direction of US policy in the region under the protectionist and fiery leader. He arrived earlier in the day from Seoul, where he warned nuclear-armed North Korea that any attacks by their forces would be met with an “effective and overwhelming” response.

Japan and the US have a decades long security alliance and US-South Korea military ties date back to the 1950-53 Korean War. But on the campaign trail, Trump threatened to withdraw US forces if they do not step up their financial support. Some 28,500 US troops are based in South Korea to defend it against the North, and 47,000 in Japan. “I want there to be no misunderstanding during the transition in Washington,” Mattis told Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, referring to the changeover to Trump from former president Barack Obama. “We stand firmly, 100 percent, shoulder-to-shoulder with you and the Japanese people.”

He added: “I wanted to make certain that Article Five of our mutual defense treaty is understood to be as real to us today as it was a year ago, five years ago and it will be a year and 10 years from now.” Article five commits each country to repel attacks against the other in Japan or territories it administers. The US has said that includes the uninhabited islands in the East China Sea administered by Japan but also claimed by China.

Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters after his separate meeting with Mattis that the US defense chief also reconfirmed that commitment. On the campaign trail, Trump also raised the possibility of Japan and South Korea arming themselves with nuclear weapons, particularly

sensitive in Japan — the only country to ever be attacked by atomic bombs-but later drew back from the remarks. “I do have a hope, and also I am convinced, together with you and President Trump we will be able to demonstrate the unwavering alliance between Japan and the United State both to the public inside Japan as well as outside Japan,” said Abe, who is set to hold a summit with Trump next week in the US.

‘Effective and overwhelming’

Abe has repeatedly argued that Japan bears an appropriate share of the costs of the alliance, which he stresses benefits the US, Japan and the broader region. A senior South Korean defence ministry official told reporters that defence cost sharing did not come up at Mattis’ meeting his South Korean counterpart Han Min-Koo.

A Japanese foreign ministry official also said that Mattis made no mention of base support costs in Tokyo. Mattis’ visit comes amid heightened fears over North Korea’s nuclear ambitions, a major concern for both South Korea and Japan. Before leaving Seoul, he sought to warn Pyongyang against violent adventurism.

“Any attack on the United States or our allies will be defeated and any use of nuclear weapons would be met with a response that would be effective and overwhelming,” Mattis told reporters ahead of a meeting with Han. North Korea carried out two atomic tests and a series of missile launches last year, and casts a heavy security shadow over the region. Leader Kim Jong-Un said in his closely watched New Year speech that Pyongyang was in the “final stages” of developing an intercontinental ballistic missile, prompting Trump to tweet: “It won’t happen!” On Thursday Mattis and South Korean Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-Ahn agreed to push through with the deployment of a US missile defense system strongly opposed by China. —AFP

AUSTRALIA RATTLED AFTER TRUMP BLAST

SYDNEY: Australia yesterday was scrambling to come to terms with the realization that decades as one of the closest of US allies may count for little in the “America First” vision of President Donald Trump. Australia has fought alongside the United States in most major conflicts since World War II, including Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq, and the current campaign against the Islamic State group.

But it took only a heated phone call from Trump to confirm Australia could expect to be treated no different to Mexico, Canada, Iran or anyone else who has felt public humiliation from Trump’s tongue and social media feed. Trump’s ire was triggered by a vague agreement entered into with former president Barack Obama last year to take in refugees Australia has parked on remote Pacific islands.

Canberra is also one of the trusted “Five Eyes” countries with which the US routinely shares sensitive intelligence, but the Washington Post said Trump abruptly cut short a fiery conversation with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on Sunday after slamming the refugee agreement. Soon after leaks emerged Thursday of “the worst call by far” Trump had with Turnbull, the new president got to work.

“Do you believe it? The Obama Administration agreed to take thousands of illegal immigrants from Australia. Why? I will study this dumb deal!” Trump tweeted. Canberra, used to cosy security and political ties with successive US governments, did not see it coming despite plenty of warning, notably the uncomfortable time British Prime Minister Theresa May endured in Washington and the diplomatic crisis with Mexico.

Australia has to wake up to the new dynamic where “alliances don’t mean much to him (Trump)”, politics professor John Hewson told AFP. “We’ve seen it in his comments about NATO, the UN, China and many more countries. “While we aren’t going to give up on the alliance, we should realistically say, ‘Look, what can we expect this guy to do moving forward?’” And Trump had shown “it’s not just America first but also America only”, the former Liberal opposition leader said.

‘Blinkered reliance’

The difficulty of handling Trump was on display again within hours and his unpredictable pendulum seemed to swing as he declared his “love for Australia”. “I have a lot of respect for Australia, I love Australia as a country,” Trump said, suggesting people should not “worry” about the “tough” calls he was making to world leaders.

“We simply have no idea what’s going to happen,” said political scientist Belinda Edwards, but foresaw “contingency planning around the notion that the (US-Australia) alliance is no longer reliable. “We have had a somewhat blinkered reliance and set of assumptions about the alliance which we have often tended not to look past,” she told AFP.

“Suddenly Australian policymakers will be giving really serious credence and consideration to how would we organise ourselves in a world where we couldn’t rely on the alliance.” As the dust settled, Turnbull told reporters in Sydney yesterday he still thought he had a deal, despite everything. “The (White House) spokesman said that we had a very cordial conversation,” the prime minister said.

“The president made a commitment to honour the deal that had been entered into by his predecessor. “That’s been confirmed now several times and it’s very important that it goes ahead.” Hewson doubted Washington would end up taking any of the 1,600 refugees on Manus and Nauru but saw real difficulties ahead while “world leaders are scrambling for an effective response.

“Trump will soon learn that he can’t run a government as he ran his businesses and will be progressively eaten by detail and the practical difficulties of administration. “He can’t govern by tweets.” However former prime minister Kevin Rudd said the relationship with Washington was “big enough, old enough and ugly enough” to handle the latest flare-up. “I think this snafu will blow over and we’ll get back to the fundamentals of the relationship,” Rudd told CNN. —AFP

DUTERTE ENDS TRUCE WITH MAOIST REBELS

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday lifted a ceasefire with communist rebels, jeopardizing a peace process he launched last year to end a decades-long insurgency. The move comes two days after the Communist Party of the Philippines announced the end of its own self-declared ceasefire and claims by the military that Maoist fighters had killed six soldiers this week.

The communist insurgency in the Philippines,

which began in 1968, is one of the longest running in the world and has claimed an estimated 30,000 lives, according to the military. “Because I have lost so many soldiers in just 48 hours, I think to continue with the ceasefire does not or will not produce anything,” Duterte said in a speech. “I really do not want to do this but if that is what the communists want, there is nothing I can do. So let’s fight. Let’s give it another 50 years.”

Duterte did not say whether the fourth round of peace negotiations set to start in the Norwegian capital Oslo in April would be stopped. Talks in Italy last week ended with no deal on a permanent cessation of fighting. A self-styled socialist, Duterte said he was disappointed by the ceasefire decision because his administration had provided a “golden opportunity” to a reach a peace deal with the rebels.

The two sides separately declared ceasefires in August, and the informal arrangement largely held as they continued discussions in Rome. But the Communist Party said Wednesday it was ending its ceasefire and accused police and soldiers of human rights abuses in rebel-influenced rural villages. Armed Forces of the Philippines Chief of Staff, General Eduardo Ano, welcomed Duterte’s announcement. —AFP

AMERICA'S LOVE-HATE STANCE ON IMMIGRATION

WASHINGTON: America's distinction as a nation of immigrants—that bedrock of its national identity—has helped fuel the outpouring of outrage over President Donald Trump's travel ban. But it's hardly the first time that its borders have slammed shut. A look back in time reveals that the history of immigration in America has been far from clear-cut, with many swings and contradictory messages.

"On the one hand, taking pride of being a nation of immigrants," says July Greene of the University of

Maryland. "But at the same time, a long and complex history of trying to figure out whom to allow in and whom to exclude." It story begins nearly 150 years ago, long before Trump unleashed the current storm by closing America's borders to refugees and travelers from seven predominantly Muslim countries.

The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act marked a radical shift for a young nation that had until then largely opened its arms to "your tired, your poor, your huddled masses," in the words of the poet Emma Lazarus about the Statue of

Liberty beckoning from New York Harbor. "There was really no policy, anybody could come, you just had to show up," says Columbia University's Mae Ngai. The first federal law excluding a specific group, the measure barred entry to all Chinese workers following racist incidents on the West Coast. It remained in place for decades until 1943. That was the product of the so-called manifest destiny philosophy," Ngai says, "according to which Americans claimed that the whole continent should belong to the Anglo-Saxons."—AFP



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MELANIA TRUMP: THE LOW-PROFILE FIRST LADY

'WHERE IS MELANIA?'

NEW YORK: Two weeks after her husband's inauguration, questions are mounting about what kind of first lady Melania Trump will be. The 46-year-old former model wowed the crowds at his swearing-in ceremony and inaugural balls dressed in Ralph Lauren powder blue and a vanilla crepe, ticking fashion boxes and suggesting that the mother of one was anxious to step up to her new role.

Since then, however, she has not been seen at official events, is not liv-

already moved from New York with her husband, White House advisor Jared Kushner. Asked in December if he would be lonely rattling around the White House on his own, then president-elect Donald Trump told Fox News: "No, I'll be working." Never in modern times-when Americans are accustomed to having visible and active first ladies-has a president's wife not moved straight to Washington. "Certainly in that time we haven't seen a phenomenon such as this where the

together a professional and highly experienced team which will take time to do properly," the first lady said in the statement. Still, first ladies tend to maintain low profiles at the start. Hillary Clinton and Rosalynn Carter proved exceptions to the rule. "The first lady often sets out her policy agenda in March or April, complementing and reinforcing the 100-days agenda of the president," said Connecticut College government professor MaryAnn Borrelli. But beyond admiring Michelle Obama and Jacqueline Kennedy and mentioning a potential campaign against cyber bullying, Melania has given little indication so far of what kind of first lady she wants to be.

Reframing the job?

Since Trump assumed office, her official Facebook and Twitter accounts have issued just one update-on January 21 — proclaiming her "deeply honored" to serve. Just one appointment to her staff has been revealed besides Reynolds: longtime friend and New York event planner Stephanie Winston Wolkoff as senior adviser. Other positions such as press and social secretaries have yet to be filled.

The absence is not helping her lackluster approval ratings, partly a by-product of her husband's deep unpopularity among half the electorate. She was also mocked during the campaign for a major speech that plagiarized Michelle Obama.

But Borelli believes her unpopularity is not entirely unusual. "I think that first ladies often enter the White House with a mix of support and suspicion and then the job is-because they do public outreach-how to capitalize on the support and manage suspicion," she said. Michelle Obama, the first African-American first lady, and Clinton and Eleanor Roosevelt, who both defied the meek housewife stereotype, also came in for heavy criticism particularly at the start.

Others say it is time for an independent first lady who reflects reality in the 21st century, when few American women are defined by their husbands. Should Melania continue to keep a low profile, future generations may credit her as a modernizer who broke free from the confines of her position. "It may lower expectations for the next woman," Jellison said. "She won't feel that she has to be the perfect American wife and mother role model." —AFP



WASHINGTON: This file photo taken on January 20, 2017 shows US First Lady Melania Trump speaking with Ivanka Trump during the presidential inaugural parade for US President Donald Trump. —AFP

ing in the White House and is still putting together her staff. She was last spotted by the president's side at an inter-faith church service on January 21 before making the reported 90-minute commute home to New York by helicopter, plane and motorcade the following day.

With no imminent plans to move to Washington, she's said to want the couple's 10-year-old son Barron to stay at his school at least until the end of the academic year. On Tuesday, she was conspicuously absent when Trump announced his Supreme Court pick. Vice President Mike Pence and Neil Gorsuch brought their wives. Even Trump's sons Donald Jr and Eric made the journey from New York.

On Wednesday, the president's daughter Ivanka accompanied him to Delaware to honor a fallen Navy SEAL. Unlike her stepmother, Ivanka has

first lady delays for at least several months moving into the White House," said Katherine Jellison, history professor at Ohio University.

Quiet start common

Melania's absence has prompted speculation in the media, which Trump's senior advisor Stephen Bannon has likened to "the opposition" for its tough, critical coverage of the president's campaign and his first two weeks in office. "Whither Melania Trump?" 12 days without a public sighting," CNN said. "Where is Melania?" asked The Washington Post. "Separate Lives," ran a headline in celebrity magazine US Weekly.

The White House announced Wednesday that the first lady had appointed a chief of staff-Lindsay Reynolds, who previously served there under George W. Bush. "I am putting

POLITICAL ACTIVISM RISES IN US MUSLIM SCHOOL CURRICULUM

MANSFIELD: The students at Al-Noor Academy, a Muslim school outside Boston, bombarded their government class speaker with questions: How do you start a political discussion? How do you use social media in politics? And how do you influence elected leaders? The group of mostly 16-year-olds was too young to vote but seemed eager to find ways to counter the rhetoric of President Donald Trump who last week issued travel restrictions to the United States by citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries.

"Before this election happened, I really didn't know much about politics at all," said Sarah Sendian, a sophomore student at the school in Mansfield, Massachusetts. "With the new president and all of the things that are happening, it sparked a lot of interest in a lot of young people."

The class is one of the first actions of newly formed Muslim political organization Jetpac - standing for Justice, Education, Technology, Policy Advocacy Center - to encourage political activism among the 3.3 million Muslims who make up about 1 percent of the US population. "This is the time when Muslims should step forward," said Nadeem Mazen, the group's founder and a city councilor in Cambridge, Massachusetts. "What's going on at the national level only emphasizes what we've known prior to Trump being elected, and it's that we need really good leaders."

Thursday's lesson at the 116-student junior and senior high school was heavy on how to build networks of like-minded people and turn them out at public meetings, rallies and elections to amplify the voices of US Muslims. About 824,000 of them were registered to vote as of 2016, a figure that had risen by about 60 percent over the past four years, according to national Muslim advocacy group the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

'Know what you're doing'

The class's teacher, Joe Florencio, reminded his students that generations of immigrant populations have gone through the same process of becoming politically active. "To be effective politically, you have to know what you're doing," said Florencio, the sole non-Muslim faculty member in a building that once housed the Roman Catholic church where his parents were married.

Students at the school, founded in 2000, study both standard US academic subjects including science and math as well as Arabic and the Koran, a model similar to the many parochial schools in the northeastern United States. Jetpac, which hopes to eventually offer versions of the class to private and public schools across the United States, faces an uphill climb. The number of anti-Muslim attacks reported to the FBI last year spiked to their highest level since 2001, the year that al Qaeda-backed hijackers destroyed New York's World Trade Center.

While the group acknowledged that it will take time for political newcomers to win elections, even the act of campaigning could help Muslims, simply by making people more familiar with politics, said Faiza Patel, of the NYU School of Law's Brennan Center for Justice.

"It allows them to meet lots of people, people that they might not otherwise meet and that has the effect of reducing prejudice," said Patel, who studies interactions between Muslims and the U.S. justice system. "You start to see people as human beings." Almost half of respondents to a 2016 Pew Research Center poll said they believed that at least some US Muslims harbored anti-American views, but respondents who knew a Muslim personally were less likely to believe that than ones who did not.

Yousef Abuallaban, a member of the Al-Noor school committee whose two eldest sons have attended the school, said he hoped the class would help the children of Muslim immigrants overcome a bias held by some of their parents against getting involved with politics. "We were raised in a different culture where our belief is that people who get involved in government are corrupt people. At all levels. So if you are a decent person, you should never get involved in politics," said Abuallaban, who immigrated from Syria in 1989. "That's not the case in the United States and this mentality has to be changed." —Reuters

TRUMP ADVISER IN NEW 'ALTERNATIVE FACTS' FLAP

WASHINGTON: A top adviser to President Donald Trump found herself embroiled in a new "alternative facts" controversy yesterday over her unfounded claim that two radicalized Iraqis had masterminded a US massacre that never took place. Kellyanne Conway, who managed Trump's presidential campaign and is now a White House counselor, made the remark Thursday in an interview with MSNBC

while defending Trump's ban on refugees as similar to steps taken by former president Barack Obama.

"I bet it's brand new information to people that president Obama had a six-month ban on the Iraqi refugee program after two Iraqis came here to this country, were radicalized and they were the masterminds behind the Bowling Green massacre. It didn't get covered." There

was no massacre at Bowling Green.

Two Iraqi men from Bowling Green, Kentucky were indeed indicted in 2011 — but for trying to send money and weapons to Al-Qaeda, and for using improvised devices against US soldiers in Iraq. Both are now serving long prison sentences. After that incident, Obama did order more extensive background checks on Iraqi refugees but never

stopped or banned the refugee resettlement program, the Washington Post reported. Conway introduced the term "alternative facts" to the US political lexicon last month in defending White House press secretary's Sean Spicer's specious claim that Trump's inauguration drew "the largest audience to ever witness an inauguration-period-both in person and around the globe." —AFP

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BUSINESS

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WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump holds a policy and strategy forum with top business executives in the State Dining Room of the White House yesterday. —AFP

TRUMP ROLLING BACK KEY REFORMS

DIRECTIVES TARGET DODD-FRANK, FIDUCIARY RULE

WASHINGTON: US economic growth slowed sharply in the fourth quarter as a plunge in shipments of soybeans weighed on exports, but steady consumer spending and rising business investment suggested the economy would continue to expand. Gross domestic product increased at a 1.9 percent annual rate, the Commerce Department said yesterday in its first estimate of fourth-quarter GDP. That was a deceleration from the 3.5 percent growth pace logged in the third quarter.

As a result, the economy grew only 1.6 percent in 2016, the weakest pace since 2011. Growth last year was constrained by cheap oil and a strong dollar, which hurt company profits and undercut business investment. An inventory correction also eroded growth. Those impediments to growth are mostly out of the way. The economy expanded 2.6 percent in 2015.

In the fourth quarter, exports fell at a 4.3 percent rate, reversing the 10 percent increase notched in the third quarter. The fourth-quarter drop in exports was the biggest since the first quarter of 2015. Trade

sliced off 1.70 percentage points from GDP growth in the fourth quarter after adding 0.85 percentage point in the prior period. That was the biggest drag since the second quarter of 2010. Most of the hit came from soybean exports, which fired up GDP growth in the third quarter after a poor soy harvest in Argentina and Brazil.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast GDP rising at a 2.2 percent rate in the fourth quarter. Prices for US government debt rose and US interest rates futures turned flat after the data. US stock index futures pared gains while the dollar fell against the euro and yen.

OUTLOOK FAIRLY BRIGHT

With a labor market at or near full employment starting to lift wages and supporting consumer spending, the outlook for the economy is fairly bright. Growth this year could also get a boost from President Donald Trump's pledge to increase infrastructure spending, cut taxes and reduce regulations.

Although Trump has offered little detail on his economic policy, his promises have been

embraced by consumers, businesses and investors. Consumer and business confidence have soared, while the US stock market has rallied to record highs. But uncertainty over the Trump administration's trade policy poses a risk to the economy. A stronger economy would also mean further interest rate increases from the Federal Reserve. The US central bank has forecast three rate hikes this year. It raised its benchmark overnight interest rate in December by 25 basis points to a range of 0.50 percent to 0.75 percent.

Consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, increased at a 2.5 percent rate in the fourth quarter. It rose at a 3.0 percent pace in the third quarter.

Income at the disposal of households increased 3.7 percent in the fourth quarter after a robust 4.1 percent rise in the prior period. Savings dipped to \$791.2 billion from \$818.1 billion in the third quarter. With domestic demand increasing steadily, businesses continued to restock. They accumulated inventories at a rate of \$48.7 billion in the last quarter, up from \$7.1 billion in the third

quarter. Inventories added 1.0 percentage point to GDP growth, double the contribution in the third quarter.

Business investment shifted into higher gear, with spending on equipment increasing at a 3.1 percent rate after four straight quarterly declines. The gain reflects a surge in gas and oil well drilling, in tandem with rising crude oil prices. Spending on mining exploration, wells and shafts increased at a 24.3 percent rate after declining at a 30.0 percent pace in the third quarter. Energy services firm Baker Hughes said last Friday that US energy companies added 29 oil rigs in the week to Jan. 20, bringing the total count to 551 - the most since November 2015.

Investment in nonresidential structures, however, fell at a 5.0 percent pace in the fourth quarter after rising at a 12.0 percent rate in the prior period. Investment in home building rebounded after two straight quarterly declines, contributing to growth. Government spending picked up as a rise in state and local government investment offset a decline in federal government expenditures. — Reuters

WORLD BUSINESS GROWS AS IT FACES RISKS

LONDON: Global businesses started 2017 on a solid footing, surveys showed on Friday, thriving ahead of a myriad of political risks in the coming year. Fears of a growing protectionist agenda in the United States, whether national elections across Europe upset the status quo and just how fractious Britain's divorce proceedings from the European Union become, are all expected to weigh in the months ahead. Yet so far those risks seem to have been mostly ignored with firms from Asia to Europe to the United States increasing or at least largely maintaining activity.

Euro zone businesses started 2017 by increasing activity at the same multi-year record pace they set in December while the US non-farm payroll report showed job growth surging more than expected in

January as construction firms and retailers ramped up hiring. "Overall while this report is further evidence that the (US) labour market is buoyant the continued slow pace of wage growth means that the (Federal Reserve) will feel under no great pressure to step up the pace of monetary tightening," economists at Lloyds Bank told clients in a note.

China's factory activity grew for a seventh month and while India's services business contracted for a third month as firms struggled to recover from a government crackdown on currency in circulation, the pace slowed. "The outlook for this year is reasonably bright despite all the risks. The numbers for January have generally been quite positive," said Andrew Kenningham, chief global economist at Capital Economics.

Growth in Britain's services sector slowed for the first time in four months in January, dipping just below its long-run average, as businesses battled the sharpest rise in costs in more than five years. But on Thursday the Bank of England sharply revised up its growth forecast for 2017 to 2.0 percent, a view held by only the most optimistic forecaster in a Reuters poll of 50 economists taken last month. Britain's economy unexpectedly outpaced all its major peers last year, wrongfooting those who expected an immediate hit from June's Brexit vote.

The Markit/CIPS British services Purchasing Managers' Index dropped to a three-month low of 54.5 last month from December's 15-month high, at the bottom end of a range of forecasts in a Reuters poll of economists, but

Markit said the PMIs still point to first quarter growth of 0.5 percent. "Despite the slightly disappointing outcome this remains a very strong report," said James Knightley, senior economist at ING. IHS Markit's final composite PMI for the euro zone, seen as a good guide to growth, held at 54.4. It has not been higher since May 2011 and has remained above the 50 mark dividing growth from contraction since mid-2013. That points to first quarter expansion of 0.4 percent, Markit said, matching the median prediction in a Reuters poll. A similar survey from the US showed non-manufacturing growth dipped marginally last month.

China's factory activity expanded for the seventh straight month in January, giving Beijing more room to tackle chronic imbalances in the economy. — Reuters

US JOB GROWTH ACCELERATES IN JANUARY, BUT WAGES LAG

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE RISES TO 4.8%

WASHINGTON: US job growth surged more than expected in January as construction firms and retailers ramped up hiring, which likely gives the Trump administration a head start as it seeks to boost the economy and employment. Nonfarm payrolls increased by 227,000 jobs last month, the largest gain in four months, the Labor Department said yesterday. But the unemployment rate rose one-tenth of a percentage point to 4.8 percent and wages rose only by three cents, suggesting that there was still some slack in the labor market.

Revisions to November and December showed the economy created 39,000 fewer jobs than previously reported. Still, the labor market continues to tighten, which could soon spur a faster pace of wage growth. Federal Reserve officials view the labor market as being at or near full employment. Prices for US government bonds rose as traders focused on the disappointing wage growth, which was seen keeping the Fed on a gradual path of interest rate increases. The dollar was little changed against a basket of currencies. US stocks were trading higher. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast payrolls rising 175,000 last month and the unemployment rate unchanged at 4.7 percent.

"While there's a great deal of anticipation surrounding steps that President Trump and the GOP-led Congress are expected to take to boost the economy, that's going to take more time," said Mark Hamrick a senior economic analyst at Bankrate.com in Washington. President Donald Trump vowed during last year's election campaign to deliver 4 percent annual gross domestic product growth, largely on the back of a plan to cut taxes, reduce regulations, increase infrastructure spending and renegotiate trade deals in the United States' favor.

Although details on the policy proposals remain sketchy, consumer and business confidence have surged in the wake of Trump's election victory last November.

But with the economy near full employment, some economists are skeptical of the 4 percent growth pledge. Annual GDP growth has not exceeded 2.6 percent since the 2007-08 recession.



WASHINGTON: This photo taken on Jan 12, 2017 shows workers as they prepare the stage in front of the Lincoln Memorial. The US economy continued to pump out new jobs in January, adding 227,000 positions, while the unemployment rate rose a tenth to 4.8 percent. — AFP

Disappointing Wage Growth

Average hourly earnings edged up 0.1 percent last month, well below expectations for a 0.3 percent rise. December's wage gain was revised down to 0.2 percent from the previously reported 0.4 percent increase. January's marginal rise in average hourly earnings is a surprise given that minimum wage increases took effect in at least 19 states last month. The small gain lowered the year-on-year increase in earnings to 2.5 percent from 2.8 percent in December.

Sluggish wage growth, if it persists, would suggest little urgency from the Fed to tighten monetary policy. The pace of rate hikes will, however, probably depend on how much inflation is generated from Trump's proposed measures to boost economic growth. The US central bank, which raised rates in December, has forecast three rate increases this year.

"The inability of wage gains to gain any solid momentum remains one of the perplexing labor market characteristics in this expansion and the key factor for the Fed's stated willingness to proceed at a very gradual pace in its planned rate normalization process ahead," said Anthony Karydakis, chief economic strategist at Miller Tabak in New York. On Wednesday, the Fed kept its benchmark overnight interest rate

unchanged in a range of 0.50 percent to 0.75 percent. It said it expected labor market conditions would strengthen "somewhat further". With its January employment report, the government published its annual "benchmark" revisions and updated the formulas it uses to smooth the data for regular seasonal fluctuations. It also incorporated new population estimates. The government said the level of employment in March of last year was 60,000 lower than it had reported. As the labor market nears full employment, the pool of workers is shrinking, which is slowing job growth.

The shift in population controls mean figures on the labor force or number of employed or unemployed in January are not directly comparable with December. The labor force participation rate, or the share of working-age Americans who are employed or at least looking for a job, was at 62.9 percent in January, the highest level since September. The employment-to-population ratio was at 59.9 percent last month, the highest level since March 2016. A broad measure of unemployment that includes people who want to work but have given up searching and those working part-time because they cannot find full-time employment rose two-tenths of a percentage point to 9.4 percent last month. — Reuters

STOCKS HIGHER ON JOBS SURGE

LONDON: European and US stock markets advanced yesterday on data showing a surge in new job creation in the United States last month, but the dollar slumped as it didn't boost the case for a quick hike in interest rates. With hiring up in retail, construction and the financial sector, the US economy added 227,000 net new nonfarm jobs in January, the biggest jump since September.

However, analysts said the data was mixed overall as the unemployment rate crept up by a tenth of a percentage point to 4.8 percent and wage growth stalled. While the job creation rate was considerably higher than the average in recent months, "the bad news was that wage growth was virtually non-existent and the unemployment rate was higher than thought," said Neil Wilson, senior market advisor at ETX Capital. "All in all, it was a mixed bag and the rather whippy dollar price action reflected the uncertainty with which the markets are treating this," he said.

The dollar quickly lost gains that it had made against the euro before the announcement of the jobs report, with the single European currency trading at roughly \$1.0760. "It's a report that will do nothing to make the Fed raise rates quicker, despite the strong-than-expected headline number" of jobs created, said Wilson. The US Federal Reserve on Wednesday kept its benchmark interest rate unchanged and said it still expects to need only gradual rate increases.

The Fed last month adopted only its second interest rate hike in a decade - putting the target range for the overnight lending rate at 0.5 percent to 0.75 percent. And it indicated it expected to implement three interest rate increases this year. "January's employment report won't convince the Fed to hike rates again just yet," said US economist Andrew Hunter at Capital Economics. "We still expect the next rate hike to come in June." Higher interest rates would support a stronger dollar as overseas investors would want to buy US bonds.

However, investors in stocks were happy with jobs numbers which largely confirm the health of the US economy, which has seen a slow but steady recovery from the 2008 financial crisis. US stocks moved higher at the opening bell, with the Dow moving back above the 20,000 points level. Meanwhile in Europe, London's benchmark FTSE 100 index was up 0.8 percent compared with the close on Thursday. In the eurozone, Frankfurt's DAX 30 grew 0.3 percent and the Paris CAC 40 climbed 1.0 percent. Asian traders moved cautiously ahead of the US jobs figures, at the end of a volatile week and following another tepid lead from Wall Street.

Tokyo's main stocks index ended flat yesterday having swung in and out of positive territory owing to fluctuations in the yen, while Hong Kong slipped 0.2 percent. Shanghai closed down 0.6 percent as investors returned from China's week-long New Year break unimpressed by data showing factory activity in the world's number two economy had stabilized. Markets have struggled to find stability over the past five days following US President Donald Trump's controversial ban on travellers from seven Muslim-majority countries and claims that China and Japan were currency manipulators. — AFP

ECUADOR NEXT BIG SCORE FOR INVESTORS?

NEW YORK: After seeing big payoffs in Brazil and Argentina following market-friendly leadership changes, some fixed-income investors are betting on a similar bonanza in Ecuador where a presidential election takes place this month. Outgoing President Rafael Correa is one of the few remaining left-wing leaders in South America after Brazil's Dilma Rousseff was ousted in August and Argentina's powerful Peronist bloc was voted out of the Casa Rosada in 2015.

Both countries, while still struggling economically, turned to leaders who championed the private sector and have worked to undo the policies of their predecessors, backing austerity measures favored by investors. "Ecuador has the potential to be a breakout story depending on how the elections go," said Arif Joshi, emerging markets debt portfolio manager at Lazard Asset Management, who said Ecuador was one of his top picks for 2017. "If the opposition wins you will likely see the same type of spread

compression that you saw in Argentina and Brazil," Joshi said.

The spread between yields on US Treasury bonds and Argentinian and Brazilian sovereign bonds both narrowed by more than 100 basis points ahead of the election of Mauricio Macri in Argentina and Rousseff's removal in Brazil. Correa's former vice president, Lenin Moreno, leads the field but probably lacks enough support to win in the Feb. 19 election without having to compete in a second-round runoff.

Guillermo Lasso, a conservative former economy minister who served as executive president of Banco de Guayaquil, is second in current polling. But some analysts think Lasso is poised to win the backing of other opposition contenders and go on to beat Moreno in a second round. Combined support for the three main opposition candidates is greater than Moreno's, nationwide polls show. "Should Lasso win as expected, he will move quickly to improve the policy

outlook," Eurasia Group analysts Risa Grais-Targow and Agata Ciesielska said in a note to clients this week. "This includes going to the IMF for a full program and aggressively looking to attract foreign direct investment."

Ecuador's deteriorating economy - it fell into recession last year after posting more than 5 percent growth multiple times during Correa's period in office - is expected to play to Lasso's favor. For Ecuador's widely held bonds maturing in 2022, the spread over US five-year Treasuries has narrowed by more than 300 basis points since spiking on Nov 14. During that time, Ecuador's JPMorgan EMBI bond has risen 13.3 percent, while the JPMorgan EMBI plus, which tracks its overall emerging market index, has gained 4.5 percent.

Edwin Gutierrez, head of emerging market sovereign debt at Aberdeen, said expectations for Ecuador's bonds are "binary" when it comes to the election. If one of the opposition candidates wins, Ecuador's bonds "will definitely get that positive knee-

jerk reaction," Gutierrez said. In addition to several of Ecuador's sovereign bonds, Gutierrez holds debt positions in state-owned oil company EP Petroecuador.

Ecuador's bonds are already attractive to investors on a relative return basis. Those maturing in 2022 offer a coupon of 10.75 percent, compared with 6.875 percent, for example, on Argentina's recently issued five-year sovereign bonds. The Andean nation has a speculative grade B credit rating average, however, and Fitch Ratings Agency, which holds a negative outlook on Ecuador, warned late last year about the negative effects of a buildup of its debt, which has roughly doubled in the past four years.

The country's economy is also highly dependent on oil prices. "It's really an oil story," said Rahmila Nadi, co-head of Deutsche Bank's Enhanced Emerging Markets Fixed Income Fund. "But when you're talking about 8-plus percent yields, it's hard to not be excited about." — Reuters

US AIRLINES RENEW CAMPAIGN TO REIN IN GULF CARRIERS

DALLAS: Leaders of the three biggest US airlines are seeking to meet with new Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to revive their stalled complaint that rivals from the Middle East are getting unfair government subsidies. The issue took on new urgency last month when one of the fast-growing Middle Eastern carriers, Emirates, announced plans to begin a new route between Athens, Greece, and Newark, New Jersey, just outside New York City. Such flights would entirely bypass Emirates' home nation, the United Arab Emirates.

American Airlines CEO Doug Parker said Thursday that Emirates' announcement - coming as the Obama administration was leaving and before the Trump administration was at full speed - "certainly looks like a shot across the bow".

American, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines charge that Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad Airways have received billions of dollars in subsidies from their governments, allowing them to offer below-market fares and violating so-called open-skies treaties. The Middle Eastern carriers deny receiving subsidies, and they have allies in some smaller US airlines, including JetBlue Airways, and cargo carrier FedEx, which oppose renegotiating the airline treaties.

American, Delta and United asked Washington to open negotiations with Qatar and the United Arab Emirates over the issue. The Obama administration promised to hold informal talks but left office last month without taking action. Emirates began flying between Milan and New York in 2013 but didn't add other flights after the US airlines raised their subsidy claims. Parker said that letting Gulf carriers operate more such flights would pose a threat to US airlines.

"If those carriers are allowed to fly routes like Dallas-Fort Worth to Paris, it makes our ability to fly that route incredibly difficult," and shorter flights that feed passengers to Dallas-to-Paris planes could also "begin to unwind," he said in an interview.

Some consumer advocates side with the Gulf carriers, however, saying the competition would lead to lower fares. Parker said late Thursday that the airlines had not yet heard back from the State Department about meeting Tillerson, who was sworn in only the day before. The US carriers are pinning their hopes on President Donald Trump's campaign promises to put American interests first in matters such as trade deals. — AP

EUROPE WITHOUT MERKEL? INVESTORS PARSE 'SURPRISE'

CHANGE IN CHANCELLOR COULD LOOSEN PURSE STRINGS

LONDON/BERLIN: A serious challenger to German Chancellor Angela Merkel is forcing global investors to parse another potential electoral surprise - removal of a key political constant through years of euro zone turbulence but also an end to Europe's austerity bias. Martin Schulz's appointment as the Social Democrats' (SPD) candidate to run against Merkel has energized Germany's September election race and those in his party daring to think they could unseat her.

He remains the underdog, but polls show him pulling closer by the day. One published on Thursday gave just a six point gap between Merkel's alliance and the SPD. It said Schulz far outstripped her in one-on-one popularity. That is an unnerving prospect for some investors now accustomed to Merkel's generally steady handling of Europe's rolling crises that has contributed to triple-digit gains from German stocks to Portuguese bonds.

Just a few weeks ago, Larry Fink, head of the world's biggest asset manager BlackRock, praised "the moral leadership Chancellor Merkel and Germany have played in an increasingly discordant world," adding that he hoped it would continue. Schulz, a former European Parliament president, though, is looking to shake things up. Having seen his party wither during its time as the junior partner in a 'grand coalition' with Merkel's conservative alliance, he is vowing to fight for fairer tax rules, higher wages, better education and to overcome the "deep divisions" that have fuelled populism.

Financial markets will see that as a nod to loosening the fiscal purse strings - no problem for a major economy with a large surplus and probably good for European stocks, although not so great for bonds if it fuels inflation. One lesson for investors from 2016 was that political shocks from the US election of Donald Trump and Britain's vote to leave the EU did not crash markets. In



VALLETTA, Malta: German Chancellor Angela Merkel speaks during a media conference after an EU summit yesterday. —AP

part that's because growth-friendly fiscal policies have come to the fore, away from an over-reliance on maxed out monetary policy.

A change in Germany could also help ease international strains about its budget and trade surpluses that surfaced again this week when Donald Trump's trade advisor lashed out at the boost German exporters gets from a "grossly undervalued" euro. Another question for international investors will be what happens to Wolfgang Schaeuble's tough stance on financial aid for Greece if the veteran finance minister is replaced. They will want to know if Schulz could end the push for austerity in Europe and take aim at the European Central Bank's money printing programme and the sub-zero interest rates that have been crushing German savers.

"If you read between the lines, the Merkel administration has been very supportive of the ECB's actions," said Tim Barker, Head of Credit at Old Mutual Global Investors. "Were she not to be in power, would that support remain? We don't know the answer."

European DNA

Schulz is unsurprisingly pro-European.

He told Der Spiegel magazine in 2012 the introduction of common 'euro bonds' across the single currency bloc would be the best way to reduce the interest burden on indebted countries in the south, though he said this was "a theoretical debate" as northern countries didn't want them. Greek, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese bonds have all been underperforming this year on nervousness about ECB policy and rising anti-euro sentiment several countries including France. JP Morgan Asset Management's Tilmann Galler said with "European DNA running through his political career," Schulz might be the antidote.

Any rally could easily reverse if it opened the government borrowing spigot again in peripheral euro zone countries. "All things being equal austerity equals fiscal discipline, so if you reverse that, does that open the floodgates of supply?" said Old Mutual's Barker. "You have to reassess your starting point for valuation. It could potentially be quite damaging." The euro could swing too if Germany does start spending. The government has faced international pressure for years - including from the IMF and OECD - to boost economic demand at home to balance its exports. —Reuters

FACING TRUMP THREATS, MEXICO EYES NEW PARTNERS

MEXICO CITY: Facing US President Donald Trump's protectionist threats, Mexico is looking to expand trade ties with Europe and Asia, but reducing its dependence on the massive US market will be tough. Mexico and the European Union agreed on Wednesday to speed up negotiations to modernize an existing free trade pact in which 53 billion euros (\$57 billion) in goods were exchanged in 2015. At the same time, the government said it planned to negotiate a free trade agreement with Britain once the island exits the EU.

"It's good for Mexico to turn toward other places, but I wouldn't declare NAFTA dead," said Gabriela Siller, director of economic analysis at the Mexican financial group BASE. On Wednesday, the government launched a 90-day period of consultations with the private

sector to prepare its strategy for negotiations with the United States and Canada, which are expected to start in May. The negotiations promise to be rough. While Trump said he was willing to renegotiate rather than scrap NAFTA, he called the deal a "catastrophe" for the United States. For his part, Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto promised at a meeting of agricultural industry leaders that he would steadfastly defend the interests of Mexicans during the negotiations.

'Look to the east'

With NAFTA under threat, China appears as an attractive alternative with its massive market of 1.37 billion people. On Wednesday, the government unveiled a \$212 million joint investment between Chinese automaker JAC

Motors and Mexico's Giant Motors to build SUVs in the central state of Hidalgo for the domestic market and exports to Latin America. The JAC deal comes as Trump has threatened to impose stiff tariffs on car companies that ships US jobs to Mexico.

Ford Motors decided last month to cancel a \$1.6 billion new factory project in northern Mexico. Though the company said it was simply a business decision, many in Mexico saw it as a consequence of Trump's threats. "When you can't look only to the north, you can look to the east," said Hidalgo's governor, Omar Fayad. Even though the two countries do not have a free trade pact, China is Mexico's second biggest trade partner, with \$75 billion in goods exchanged in 2015. But the trade balance is unfavorable to Mexico, which

imports 14 times more from China than it exports to the Asian country. "If this was a football game, they outscore us badly," said Enrique Dussel, coordinator of the China-Mexico Studies Center at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Dussel said he was "skeptical and cautious" about the idea of Mexico turning to China to diversify its foreign investments and trade.

The situation has been "extremely tense," with failed investments and disputes at the World Trade Organization related to the textile, steel and toy industries. Pena Nieto has visited China several times since taking office in 2012, while a strategic partnership was signed during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Mexico in 2013. But "neither country has figured out how to fulfill this" partnership, Dussel said. — AFP

BILLION-DOLLAR ODEBRECHT SCANDAL ENGULFS LATAM

MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS PARALYZED

MONTEVIDEO: For years, Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht landed huge public works contracts by paying hundreds of millions of dollars in bribes. Now, the company's dirty dealings have caught up with it - and the fallout is spreading across Latin America, where the scandal has left a trail of abandoned mega-projects, high-profile probes and outraged citizens in its wake. In December, Odebrecht agreed with the US Justice Department to pay a world record \$3.5-billion fine after admitting it paid \$788 million in bribes to win fat construction contracts in 12 countries.

The biggest payouts were for contracts with Brazil's state oil company, Petrobras - the focus of a massive pay-to-play scandal that has upended Brazilian politics, landing a laundry list of powerful people in jail, including Odebrecht's boss, Marcelo Odebrecht. But the company's reach spans far beyond Brazil - and now, so does the scandal. Odebrecht, the biggest construction firm in Latin America, paid bribes in nine other countries across the region - Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Venezuela, Cuba, Panama, Honduras, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic - as well as Angola and Mozambique in

Africa. Most of those countries have now opened investigations of their own, asking Brazilian prosecutors to share information on dirty deals in their jurisdictions. Billions of dollars' worth of infrastructure projects are meanwhile paralyzed. After the scandal broke, the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) - which funded many of Odebrecht's international ventures - froze \$3.6 billion for 16 projects across Latin America.

In Venezuela, six mega-projects being built by Odebrecht have ground to a halt, including an expansion of the Caracas subway. In the Dominican Republic, which received \$2.5 billion from BNDES, unfinished roadworks and a thermoelectric power plant are now in doubt. In Peru, where Odebrecht says it paid \$29 million in bribes from 2005 to 2014, the government sacked the company from a \$7-billion gas pipeline project that is less than one-third complete. That and other aborted Odebrecht projects will likely shave 0.5 to one percentage point off Peru's economic growth this year, the economy minister said last month.

Heads to roll

Investigators across Latin America

now have some heavy-hitting politicians in their sights. In Peru, a congressional commission has summoned President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski to testify, along with former presidents Alejandro Toledo and Ollanta Humala, plus Humala's powerful wife, Nadine Heredia. In Panama, ex-president Ricardo Martinelli's son and brother are under investigation. Likewise Argentina's intelligence chief, Gustavo Arribas, who is close to President Mauricio Macri.

In Colombia, a former deputy transport minister and ex-senator have been arrested. The Venezuelan National Assembly, where leftist President Nicolas Maduro's opponents hold a majority, has launched a probe into the \$98 million in bribes that Odebrecht admitted to paying there - the biggest payoff outside Brazil. And Mozambican prosecutors are investigating who received \$900,000 in bribes to greenlight an airport for the northern city of Nacala. State news agency AIM condemned the project, completed in 2014, as an "embarrassing flop", an "international airport with no international flights." More explosive revelations are likely on the way: Marcelo Odebrecht and 76 other current and former executives have signed tell-all plea deals with Brazilian prosecutors in exchange for lighter sentences.

Mounting backlash

Corruption-weary Latin Americans are meanwhile taking to the streets. After two weeks of violent protests in Peru, authorities there scrapped plans for Odebrecht-operated toll roads. In the Dominican Republic, tens of thousands of people protested last month to demand public officials be held to account for taking bribes. Odebrecht, meanwhile, is still paying the price. Several countries have banned it from bidding for projects or signing contracts. And the \$3.5 billion it has agreed to pay Brazil, the United States and Switzerland under the US Justice Department deal may be just the beginning. — AFP



COTONOU: Workers demolish illegal structures as Benin security forces stand at a busy intersection during an evacuation in downtown Cotonou on Jan 27, 2017. — AFP

CLEANUP TOUGH ON POOR IN BENIN ECONOMIC HUB

COTONOU: Traders and hawkers armed with brooms and bags sweep pavements and scoop up rubble in Benin's economic capital Cotonou, where the authorities have ordered a vast city cleanup. From informal street markets to bars and food stalls illegally built on public land, nothing has been spared, as squads of workers move in to clear the chaos and make the bustling city beautiful again. But the cleanup has made daily life hard for many in Benin, where the vast majority work in the informal sector.

Like other fast-growing west African urban hubs, Cotonou has vendors selling everything from clothing to fast food by the roadside, and restaurants that spring up all over with their plastic chairs and tables. "Nature abhors a vacuum," deputy mayor Florentin Tchaou told AFP. "People will take advantage of any empty space to expand their businesses and increase their visibility so as to improve sales."

Eviction notice

But in July, freshly elected President Patrice Talon decided it was time to give the country a facelift and gave major cities a six-month deadline to clear their chaotic crowded roads. Large red crosses were spray painted on building walls due for demolition and posters added warnings that eviction day was near. Ageline Bocovo, who has been selling clothes in Cotonou for five years, didn't believe it would happen, but was wrong. "We couldn't fight the police with our bare hands, we had no choice," she said, when, on January 5, she was forced to leave. Bocovo personally smashed her stall into smithereens, keeping some of the bricks to build a new stall on a smaller street. "The rest of the rubble will be sold. But it won't bring in much cash," she said. Armelle Choplin, an urban planner at Cotonou's Research Institute for Development, said the "measure affects the little people, who aren't necessarily organised into associations or unions, as is the case in Anglophone countries like Ghana." — AFP



RIO DE JANEIRO: This file photo taken on June 23, 2016 shows a sign of Brazilian construction company Odebrecht at the Olympic and Paralympic Village. — AFP

APPLE TO START BUILDING IPHONES IN INDIA

NEW DELHI: Apple is to start making iPhones in India this year, a local government official said yesterday, as the company seeks to tap into a booming middle class while sales in China slow. Karnataka's IT minister said Apple had agreed to assemble its hugely popular phones in the southern state, whose capital Bangalore is India's technology hub. Apple, which has not commented on the minister's statement, remains a relatively small player in India, where sales of its smartphones lag those of rival Samsung.

But chief executive Tim Cook said this week it would "invest significantly" in the country of 1.25 billion people. "We have an understanding with Apple and we expect them to start manufacturing in Karnataka by the end of April," state minister of information technology and biotechnology Priyank Kharge told AFP. He said the new operation would likely assemble iPhones for the domestic market.

Apple has only a two percent share of the Indian market, well behind rival Samsung on 23 percent, according to research firm Canalys. By pricing itself exclusively at the luxury end, Apple has distinguished its brand from Samsung



SAN FRANCISCO: In this Sept 7, 2016 file photo, Phil Schiller, Apple's senior vice president of worldwide marketing, talks about the pricing on the new iPhone 7 during an event to announce new products.— AP

which has both low-cost and high-end phones. Last year Apple had 48 percent of the premium sector in which phones sell for \$450 and above.

It applied to open Apple Stores in India last year, but was reportedly rebuffed because of a diktat that states foreign retailers must source 30 percent of their products locally. New

Delhi has since relaxed the rules, giving companies up to eight years to meet the sourcing requirements, as part of a push to attract foreign investment and create jobs. It is not clear whether the Karnataka plans would help it clear that hurdle but experts said manufacturing locally would reduce the company's costs and enable it to lower prices.

"They're eager to be here because they've identified India as a strategic focus market," said Jaideep Mehta of research firm IDC. "They had a fantastic 2016 in India and shipped more two million devices to India, and now they're looking to ultimately manufacture here as that gives them more flexibility to respond to market changes."

Apple currently sells through third-party retailers in India, which accounts for only around one percent of global iPhone sales. Experts say India's giant population and low number of smartphone owners relative to its size mean it is a huge potential market. Last year Cook visited India on a charm offensive and was pictured using Prime Minister Narendra Modi's gold iPhone to launch the premier's new app.

Analysts said that if confirmed the move would be a coup for India's government, which has been trying to persuade foreign companies to manufacture in the country. Reports in Indian media said Wistron Corp, a Taiwanese electronics manufacturer, was lined up to assemble iPhones at a plant on the outskirts of tech hub Bangalore. Apple outsources all its manufacturing globally.— AFP



TRACY, California: This file photo taken on Jan 19, 2015 shows an Amazon.com worker moving a stack of containers at an Amazon fulfillment center.— AFP

AMAZON PROFIT JUMPS, REVENUE MISSES MARK

SAN FRANCISCO: Amazon reported on Thursday that profit leapt during the year-end holiday shopping season, but the tech giant saw shares sink as revenue fell shy of high expectations. While revenue rose to \$43.7 billion from \$35.7 billion in a similar year-over-year comparison, Wall Street had expected Amazon to take in more cash during the key holiday shopping season. "Amazon is usually a retailer that operates at full volume, the noise of its sales growth a clarion call in an often muted retail sector," said GlobalData Retail analyst Anthony Riva. "However, this quarter that volume seems to have been turned down a couple of notches."

Amazon shares were down more than four percent to \$805.40 in after-market trades that followed release of the earnings report. Net income for the quarter was \$749 million, compared with \$482 in the same period a year earlier, according to earnings figures. While Amazon is known for its huge online retail operations, it is also a major provider of cloud computing, and is a rival to Netflix in streaming video. It has been ramping up efforts in artificial intelligence with its Alexa-powered speakers and partnerships with makers of connected devices.

Amazon founder and chief executive Jeff Bezos said the company is looking for growth via its "Prime" subscription service, which gives customers access to video, music and other services and free two-day shipping. Bezos said in a statement that Prime Video was now available in some 200 countries and territories.— AFP

UBER CEO QUILTS TRUMP'S BUSINESS ADVISORY GROUP

SERVICE FACED PRESSURE FROM ACTIVISTS, EMPLOYEES

SAN FRANCISCO/WASHINGTON: Uber Technologies Inc Chief Executive Officer Travis Kalanick quit President Donald Trump's business advisory group on Thursday amid mounting pressure from activists and employees who oppose the administration's immigration policies. Critics included Uber drivers, many of whom are immigrants themselves. "Joining the group was not meant to be an endorsement of the president or his agenda but unfortunately it has been misinterpreted to be exactly that," Kalanick, who had planned to attend a meeting of the group on Friday, said in an email to staff that was seen by Reuters.

Uber spokeswoman Chelsea Kohler later confirmed that he had left the group. Social media campaigns had targeted Uber, urging users to delete accounts and opt for rival Lyft Inc. Uber has been emailing users who deleted their accounts to say it shares their concerns and will compensate drivers affected by the ban. Kalanick said he spoke briefly to Trump about the immigration order "and its issues for our community" and told the president he would not join the economic council.

The CEO came under increasing pressure to leave the council after Trump issued an executive order temporarily barring people from seven majority-Muslim nations from entering the United States. "There are many ways we will continue to advocate for just change on immigration but staying on the council was going to get in the way of that. The executive order is hurting many people in communities all across America," he wrote in a note to employ-



HYDERABAD, India: In this Dec 13, 2016 photo, Uber CEO Travis Kalanick poses during the launch of its bike-sharing product uberMOTO.— AP

ees. "Families are being separated, people are stranded overseas and there's a growing fear the US is no longer a place that welcomes immigrants."

The White House said in a statement Thursday evening that did not mention Uber that Trump "understands the importance of an open dialogue with fellow business leaders to discuss how to best make our nation's economy stronger". The move put pressure on other CEOs attending a meeting with Trump yesterday. General Motors Co said its chief executive would attend, while Walt Disney Co said earlier Thursday its chief executive would not attend because of a long-planned board meeting.

Others expected to take part include

the CEOs of JPMorgan Chase & Co, Blackstone Group LP, IBM Corp and Wal-Mart Stores Inc. Others that are part of the council include Tesla Inc CEO Elon Musk, PepsiCo Inc CEO Indra Nooyi and Boston Consulting Group CEO Rich Lesser.

Musk said he would attend the meeting. "In tomorrow's meeting, I and others will express our objections to the recent executive order on immigration and offer suggestions for changes to the policy," he said in a tweet on Thursday.

Kalanick's departure could signal a growing rift between technology companies and Washington. "There is a battle brewing between Trump and Silicon Valley," said Neeraj Agrawal, general partner at Battery Ventures.— Reuters

ADVERTISERS EYE WINNING SUPER BOWL STRATEGY

WASHINGTON: There's the new "Wonder Woman" actress in action and a sexed-up Mr Clean. And some political messages too - but only if you pay close attention. Tomorrow's Super Bowl is not just the biggest US sporting event, it's also the most important event of the year for advertisers. For some, the clash of top marketers overshadows the premier American football game. The Super Bowl is expected to draw more than 110 million US viewers, and a 30-second spot on the Fox network will cost an estimated \$5 million.

This offers both challenges and risks for brands, according to Tim Calkins, professor at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, who leads a Super Bowl ad review with his students. Calkins said the event - a matchup in Houston between the New England Patriots and Atlanta Falcons - draws in many people who are not football fans, giving the ads greater prominence. "A lot of people aren't interested in the game, and many of them focus on the ads more than the game itself," he said. "This is a rare opportunity to reach a huge amount of the US population at one time. There's nothing anywhere that comes close to this for marketers."

Brands are pulling out all the stops to stand out. Hyundai, the South Korean automaker, hired film direc-

tor Peter Berg, known for "Patriots Day" and "Deepwater Horizon", to create a 90-second "documentary" filmed and produced entirely during the game. "We wanted to push the creativity and storytelling even further," said Hyundai marketing chief Dean Evans. Another "live" ad will be created for Snickers with actor Adam Driver, which will follow a 36-hour livestream by the Mars brand on its own site and on Facebook.

An immigrant's tale

Some advertisers also appear to be making an end run around the ban on overtly political ads. One of them is Budweiser, whose ad tells a 60-second story about its founder, Adolphus Busch, and his journey as a German immigrant - a theme set to make waves as debate rages over US immigration policy. "This commercial shows the start of Budweiser's journey, and while it is set in the 1800s, it's a story we believe will resonate with today's entrepreneurial generation - those who continue strive for their dreams," said Ricardo Marques, vice president of the Anheuser-Busch beer brand. The brewer "told us they wanted to celebrate those who embody the American spirit," said Mike Byrne of the agency Anomaly, which created the

ad called "Born the Hard Way".

Ads seen as too political or provocative can be rejected, and home improvement retailer 84 Lumber was forced to revise its original concept, which had depicted a border wall. The ad, which aims to recruit new employees, originally included a wall blocking people looking for work - an image deemed too sensitive in light of President Donald Trump's plan for a wall on the border with Mexico. Audi's "Daughter" ad also offers political overtones with a story of a girl competing in a cart race and a message of equal pay for women.

Mr Clean gets dirty

At the provocative end of the ad spectrum, Procter & Gamble turns Mr Clean into a household sex symbol in the spot dubbed "Cleaner of Your Dreams". "Mr Clean is showing off his strong and sexy side, and hopefully even inspiring men across America to pick up a mop and bucket themselves," said P&G vice president Martin Hettich. "Wonder Woman" actress Gal Gadot joins her "Furious 7" partner Jason Stratham in an action-packed spot for website builder Wix.com created by French director Louis Leterrier, known for his "Transporter" and "Incredible Hulk" films. — AFP



LONDON: Iceberg lettuces are pictured for sale in a supermarket yesterday. — AFP

LETTUCE, BROCCOLI RATIONING IN UK AFTER SUPPLY CRUNCH

BAD WEATHER HITS VEG PRODUCTION

LONDON: Sales of broccoli and iceberg lettuce were being rationed by British supermarket giants Tesco and Morrisons yesterday due to widespread shortages caused by bad weather in southern Europe. Shoppers vented their frustration and the government said it was monitoring the situation after weeks of scarce supplies of broccoli, aubergines and salads that have angered healthy eaters nationwide. "Sorry: Temporarily Out of Stock", read a sign on the lettuce shelf in a branch of Tesco, Britain's biggest supermarket chain, near St Paul's Cathedral.

"Due to bad weather conditions in Spain, we are experiencing some availability issues, but are working with our suppliers to resolve them as quickly as possible," a Tesco spokesman told AFP. "To make sure customers don't miss out, we are asking them to limit the number of iceberg lettuces they buy to three," he said. Morrisons, the fourth largest food retailer, said it too was imposing limits of three heads of broccoli and two iceberg lettuces per shopper. "We have

seen some bulk buying in our stores," a spokesman said. "We have therefore had a cap on sales of broccoli and iceberg lettuce to ensure we maintain good supplies for our regular customers," he said.

At a Morrisons outlet in south London, one frustrated morning shopper, who declined to give her name, said vegetables were already almost out of stock. She said the few courgettes that were available were too expensive at £3.53 (\$4.4) per kilo. "I ain't paying that price!" she said. Prices have risen sharply in recent weeks as supermarkets have resorted to bringing in vegetables from further afield, including the United States.

Asked about the shortages at a daily briefing in Westminster, Prime Minister Theresa May's spokesman said: "Clearly supermarkets are working hard to rectify any sort of supply chain problems". The agriculture ministry "is monitoring the situation," he said. Asked if May was personally concerned, he quipped: "I've not actually spoken to the prime minis-

ter about her vegetable buying habits this morning".

Shoppers went online to vent their anger, using hashtags including #courgettecrisis and #lettucecrisis, while some younger consumers retorted that a vegetable shortage was no crisis at all. The Times and Guardian newspapers quipped that the rationing was only "the tip of the iceberg". The Daily Mash, a satirical blog, joked: "Curry houses face shortage of limp salad for you to ignore".

Southern Spain was hit by heavy rain in December and a particularly cold spell in January including snow, cutting fruit and vegetable production this year. Spain is the biggest producer and exporter of fruit and vegetables in the European Union. Britain and France are its two biggest export markets. "Contrary to popular belief it seems the rain in Spain doesn't fall mainly on the plain and a run of unusually bad weather has resulted in availability issues," said a spokesman for Asda, another large retailer. — AFP

STOCKS LINKED TO BILLIONAIRE FALL

SHANGHAI: Stocks linked to missing Chinese billionaire Xiao Jianhua tumbled Friday as investors ignored a statement saying business at his vast empire was "normal" following reports of his abduction from Hong Kong by security agents. Shanghai-listed companies controlled by Xiao's Tomorrow Holding dropped by their daily limits in the first trading day in China after the week-long Lunar New Year break.

Chemical company Baotou Tomorrow Technology Co, which already was at risk of being delisted due to poor profits, closed five percent lower, the maximum allowed for companies under such warnings, at 10.17 yuan (\$1.48). Sugar producer Baotou Huazi Industry plunged 10 percent, the daily limit for most companies, to end at 12.17 yuan, while cement manufacturer Xishui Strong Year Co also plummeted 10 percent to 17.54 yuan.

However, a statement late Thursday said "production and operations of Tomorrow Holding Ltd and its related companies are all normal". Financier Xiao was last seen at his apartment in Hong Kong's harbourfront Four Seasons hotel, according to reports in the city this week. He was taken by mainland security agents last week, according to overseas Chinese-language media. Hong Kong police said that Xiao had crossed the border into mainland China last Friday.

Three statements purportedly from Xiao - a Canadian citizen - denying he has been kidnapped have appeared on his company's WeChat account and on the front page of a Hong Kong newspaper since he went missing. Xiao's case has sparked new fears that freedoms in Hong Kong, a semi-autonomous city with a separate legal system from the mainland, are under threat from Beijing. It is against Hong Kong law for mainland agents to operate in the territory.

Hong Kong leadership hopeful Carrie Lam - former government number two and considered Beijing's favorite to become the next chief executive - said she had "every confidence" in the city's law enforcement agencies when asked how she would ensure residents remain safe in the wake of the disappearance. Speaking to reporters after an election rally, Lam said one of her prime duties was to safeguard the rule of law. There has been no direct response to the abduction reports by any senior Hong Kong government official. — AFP



Xiao Jianhua

Kuwait Times Weekender

55
Anniversary

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2017

www.kuwaittimes.net

SHARJAH: UAE's a-Noor Mosque is seen adorned with colorful light during the 7th Sharjah Light Festival. — AFP



Creative director Riccardo
Tisci leaves Givenchy

SEE PAGE 25

2017 has country singer **Sam Hunt** looking all the way up

The year 2017 is looking good for Sam Hunt: The country star just released a new single, he's readying a massive summer tour, he proposed to his girlfriend, and the proud Georgia native is watching the Atlanta Falcons compete in the Super Bowl. The Grammy-nominated singer-songwriter was all smiles ahead of his pre-Super Bowl performance Thursday in Houston, where the Falcons will take on the New England Patriots tomorrow at the NRG Stadium.

"I know all my folks back home and all my buddies back home are super pumped. It reminds me growing up several years ago when the Falcons played the Super Bowl," Hunt, 32, said in an interview. "I'm a Tom Brady fan and I would love to see him get his fifth Super Bowl (ring), but I got to go with the Falcons this year." During his performance at Club Nomadic for the EA Sports Bowl - where Snoop Dogg and current chart-toppers The Chainsmokers also hit the stage - Hunt sang his familiar No.1 country hits as well as his new single, "Body Like a Back Road." It's the first song from his upcoming sophomore album, which he is currently writing and recording.

"I recently switched gears in terms of the types of songs I'm writing, so the record has taken a new direction. I didn't start from scratch necessarily, but I kind of hit restart on this new record, so this was one of the first songs, even though I wrote this several months ago, it's a song that's reflective of the new chapter and per-

spective I have on life and my record and music," Hunt said. "It's kind of one of the only songs really I have for the next record. I have a lot of songs, but this record specifically, 'cause I'm taking a new direction, this is one of the songs that fit that mode."

Hunt's 2014 debut album, the double platinum "Montevallo," launched five hits singles and earned two Grammy nominations, including best country album. He'll launch his 15 IN A 30 TOUR this summer - tickets were on sale yesterday- but wedding planning has dominated most of his time. "I'm engaged to be married and that has taken priority over everything, and I'm devoting a lot of time to my fiancÉ and the process of planning a wedding," said Hunt, who will tie the knot this spring. "It feels great 'cause I've known that she was the one for me for some time now, so to confirm it with an engagement is special."

Hunt is a former quarterback for both Middle Tennessee State University and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He performed at the Super Bowl 50 Tailgate Party last year and said at times, he misses playing football. "I've got a lot of great, enjoyable distractions that keep me from missing it too much. I don't want to get too worried about the glory days, but I do miss it from time-to-time," he said. "Just the competition." — AP



'Romiaaaow and Juliet': John Hurt's strangest role in cat film

They could have called it "Cats," if someone hadn't got there first, for John Hurt's strangest movie by far is an obscure Shakespeare adaptation placing him opposite 108 feline co-stars. The British knight of the realm played some of cinema's most iconic characters across 150 movies before his death in January, but even ardent film buffs are unlikely to have seen him in "RomeoJuliet." Hurt is the only human in Armondo Acosta's 1990 movie, playing a Venetian bag lady while the feuding Montagues and Capulets-or should that be Cat-ulets? -- were strays voiced by leading lights of stage and screen.

A sought-after curio, it was never released on home video, but Acosta has made available on the Internet rare footage of Hurt's scenes, not viewed for a quarter of a century, in tribute to the actor. "He adjusted to everything, he moved so sweetly," Acosta, 78, said of Hurt in a telephone interview from Manhattan's iconic Chelsea Hotel, where he has run a meditation workshop for the last 29 years. "He had always a little bit of too much wine, but who didn't, who doesn't in that business? He was just beautiful. He really became a bag lady, he really got it."

Hurt, who turned 77 a few days before his death, is not the only cast member to play against gender; Juliet is portrayed by a white Turkish Angora who in real life was a neutered male called Maria. Almost all of the cats-they numbered 250 at one point-were plucked from rescue organizations in Belgium, where Acosta was living and where he filmed much of the action. "If you're directing an amateur, never rehearse them. If you rehearse an amateur, you're in trouble," Acosta said. "But if you get why you cast them as an amateur and let them do their thing, you've got a shot, you've got a chance. And cats are that way."

Fascinating film

The feline cast's reward for their work was homes for life with the crew or in Armondo's "Adopt A Movie Star" initiative-except for Romeo, Juliet and four others taken on by the director. Acosta has worked in various roles on some of the biggest films of all time including "El Cid," "Lawrence of Arabia," "The Birds" and "The Pink Panther" with auteur like Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, David Lean and Roger Corman. He got the idea for a cat movie as an executive at Paramount in the mid-1960s, he said, when he encountered a family of cats on the Hollywood backlot and was struck by their balletic movement.—AFP



This file photo shows British actor John Hurt posing with his award for outstanding British contribution at the BAFTA British Academy Film Awards at the Royal Opera House in London. — AFP

PLAY OF GEORGE ORWELL'S '1984' COMING TO BROADWAY THIS YEAR

A new British stage adaptation of George Orwell's chilling dystopic novel "1984" is coming to an America where issues of "newspeak" and surveillance are quite relevant. Producers Sonia Friedman and Scott Rudin said Thursday that the play will open in June at the Hudson Theatre. Nominated for an Olivier Award, it was created by Robert Icke and Duncan Macmillan. No casting was revealed. First published in 1949, Orwell's classic tale of a society run by Big Brother in which facts are distorted and suppressed in a cloud of "newspeak" has topped the Amazon.com best-seller lists. The renewed interest comes on the heels of the Trump administration's unfounded allegation that millions of illegal votes were cast against him last fall and an adviser coining the phrase "alternative facts." The creative team for "1984" includes Chloe Lamford (Scenic & Costume Design), Natasha Chivers (Lighting Design), Tom Gibbons (Sound Design) and Tim Reid (Video Design). — AP



This undated image shows George Orwell, author of "1984." — AP



In this file photo, actor Ryan Reynolds poses at a ceremony honoring him with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Los Angeles. — AP

Deadpool star **Ryan Reynolds** being honored at Harvard

Ryan Reynolds' superpowers are about to be rewarded by Harvard University's Hasty Pudding Theatricals. The "Deadpool" star will be honored Friday night as the group's 2017 Man of the Year. The nation's oldest collegiate theatrical organization annually presents the award to performers who've made lasting and impressive contributions to the entertainment world. Canada-born Reynolds will be roasted before he collects the group's coveted pudding pot. Last year's Man of the Year was Joseph Gordon-Levitt. Previous winners dating to 1963 include Bob Hope, Warren Beatty and Robin Williams. Actress Octavia Spencer was celebrated last week as the 2017 Woman of the Year. — AP

Angelina Jolie takes on travel ban in New York Times op-ed

Angelina Jolie says that discriminating against refugees for their religion or country of origin "invites the very instability we seek to protect ourselves against." She also says in a New York Times editorial Thursday that the US decision to suspend refugee resettlements and visits from several Muslim-majority countries isn't the American way. "Every time we depart from our values we worsen the very problem we are trying to contain," Jolie writes. "We must never allow our values to become the collateral damage of a search for greater security. Shutting our door to refugees or discriminating among them is not our way, and does not make us safer."

A special envoy for the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees since 2012, Jolie says refugees recommended for resettlement are often survivors of terrorism and torture or may be

in need of advanced medical care. Refugees seeking entry to the US already undergo extensive screening by various federal agencies, she says. "The global refugee crisis and the threat from terrorism make it entirely justifiable that we consider how best to secure our borders," she writes. "Every government must balance the needs of its citizens with its international responsibilities. But our response must be measured and should be based on facts, not fear."—AP

In this file photo, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Special Envoy Angelina Jolie speaks to reporters during a meeting with Secretary of State John Kerry at the Department of State in Washington. — AP



Lady Gaga throws a football as she meets with the press during the Super Bowl LI Pepsi Zero Sugar Halftime Show Press Conference at the George R. Brown Convention Center in Houston, Texas. — AFP

Lady Gaga promises Super Bowl message of inclusion

Lady Gaga is known for her outspoken political views and attention-grabbing outfits but for the Super Bowl, she says her sole message will be inclusion. The pop superstar also did little to temper speculation that Beyoncé, who just announced she is expecting twins, might join her for Sunday's halftime show in American football's title match in Houston. The Super Bowl, traditionally the most-watched television event of the year in the United States, is taking place amid intense divisions over President Donald Trump, of whom Lady Gaga has been a passionate critic.

Asked at a news conference Thursday if she would send a message, Gaga said: "The only statements I'll be making during the halftime show are the ones that I have been consistently making throughout my career. 'I believe in a passion for inclusion. I believe in the spirit of equality and the spirit of this country as one of love and compassion and kindness,' she said. Gaga said her show would feature songs from throughout her career and perhaps multiple outfits, although she promised not to wear her notorious meat dress from the 2010 MTV Video Music Awards.

She voiced hope that her 13-minute performance would inspire her fans, who include a sizable gay following. "That kid that couldn't get a seat at the cool kids' table, and that kid that was kicked out of the house because his mom and dad didn't accept him for who he was—that kid's going to have the stage for 13 minutes and I'm excited to give it to them," she said to applause. Gaga addressed the press conference after posting on Instagram a picture of herself accompanied by an emoji of a bee—seen by some as a hint she would invite Beyoncé, whose fans are known as the Beyhive.

Asked about the bee, a tight-lipped Gaga told reporters not to read into it. She said she sent flowers to Beyoncé, who on Wednesday dominated social media with news of her pregnancy. Entertainment Tonight reported Thursday that Beyoncé was planning to perform at another major televised event—the Grammy Awards. The celebrity news site said Beyoncé was spotted practicing at a secret location in Los Angeles to prepare for the Feb 12 gala, where she leads nominations. Beyoncé is originally from Houston. —AFP

Hockney touches up tabloid logo ahead of retrospective

British artist David Hockney has turned his digital hand to Friday's masthead of The Sun, telling the tabloid of his painting and smoking habits ahead of a retrospective in London. Hockney touched up the logo of Britain's best-selling newspaper by adding black shadowing to its lettering and a white sun, using a painting app on his iPad. "I was delighted to be asked. Once I thought about the idea it didn't take me long. The sun and The Sun—I love it," he was quoted as telling the newspaper.

The 79-year-old's appearance on the front page comes ahead of a retrospective of the artist's work at the Tate Britain gallery in London, which opens on Feb 9. "When I'm painting I feel 30 but when I stop I feel older. I'm a bit slower than I was but I stand up to paint every day," he told The Sun. Hockney appears to have no wish to retire—in Nov he was commissioned to design a stained glass window for London's Westminster Abbey, a month after unveiling a 500-page art book at the Frankfurt fair.

The limited-edition book is so large it comes with its own stand and weighs 35 kilograms. Despite moving to California in 1963, Hockney has kept up with the latest politics across the

Atlantic and said he was unsurprised by Britain's vote last June to leave the European Union. "Brexit didn't surprise me totally because I'd been living in provincial Britain," said the artist, who was raised in a working class home in the northern English town of Bradford. "The power has spread to the people because that's what the iPhone has done," he added, without going into greater detail of how he felt the smartphone swayed the referendum outcome.

Hockney's expansive career has seen him travel the globe painting portraits, while he has also been celebrated for his landscape paintings of the countryside near his hometown. One of his most famous paintings is "A Bigger Splash", which captures the moment after someone has dived into a California swimming pool. But despite his illustrious career, Hockney said he remains frustrated by the constraints his smoking habit has been put under by a ban on lighting up in pubs. "Everywhere now has to be fit for Little Emily with asthma. It's all gone mad," he said. — AFP



A copy of the Sun newspaper, with its masthead modified by British artist David Hockney, is arranged for a photograph in London yesterday. — AFP



In this file photo, Milo Yiannopoulos speaks on campus in the Mathematics building at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Colorado. — AP

Sales soar for Milo book **Dangerous**

Sales are soaring for the upcoming book by incendiary right-wing commentator Milo Yiannopoulos but details of his promotional tour - assuming there is one - is a mystery for now. A spokeswoman for Threshold Editions, the conservative imprint at Simon & Schuster, declined comment Thursday when asked where Yiannopoulos was expected to appear on behalf of "Dangerous." Publishers would usually be anxious to share details about a book just a few weeks from publication, March 14, and in high demand from the public. "Dangerous" was Number 1 on Amazon.com as of Thursday evening.

But the controversy that has driven pre-orders for "Dangerous" has also made promotion unusually complicated. The 32-year-old Breitbart editor, born in Greece and raised in England, is a walking challenge to free speech principles. A vocal supporter of President Donald Trump, Yiannopoulos has made vicious comments about Muslims, women and others, and on his web site offers such products as "Feminism is Cancer" T-shirts and "Fat Shaming Works" hoodies. His harassment campaign last summer against "Ghostbusters" star Leslie Jones led to his banishment from Twitter.

Yiannopoulos' talks have sparked protests, shouting matches and occasional violence at stops around the country. On Wednesday, the University of California, Berkeley cancelled a scheduled talk by Milo after violent protests broke out. A man was shot and wounded at protests outside his Jan 21 talk at the University of Washington. Rowdy protests at UC Davis on Jan 13 prompted campus Republicans to cancel his appearance at the last minute. His final stop was supposed to be UCLA on Thursday but the invitation was rescinded, making Berkeley his grand finale.

Yiannopoulos' book deal was greeted with immediate anger when announced in late December. Hundreds of authors have objected and one writer, Roxane Gay, withdrew a book she had planned for Simon and Schuster. Many independent sellers have expressed uneasiness, saying they will make the book available if asked for, but will not promote it. One store, The Booksmith in San Francisco, has announced it will neither stock the book nor order a copy upon customer request. Booksmith also said it was cutting orders for Simon and Schuster books by 50 percent.

"While we respect Simon's decision to publish any book, we reserve the right to allocate our discretionary inventory dollars with publishers who act with ethical and moral standards consistent with our own," reads a posting from the store. Yiannopoulos' web site lists no future public appearances and information about a possible book tour is hard to find, as it has not been updated lately. A spokeswoman for the country's largest physical bookstore chain, Barnes and Noble, said that Yiannopoulos had no events planned at any of its stores. Simon and Schuster is part of CBS Corporation, but the network said Thursday that it had no interviews scheduled with the author. — AP

George Clooney to get top French film honor

France's film academy said Thursday it will confer a top honorary award on US actor George Clooney when it hands out its coveted Cesar awards, the nation's equivalent of the Oscars, on Feb 24. The Academie des Arts et Techniques du Cinema said that Clooney was their chosen recipient of this year's Honorary Cesar Award as they wanted to fete his "dazzling talent as an actor, director, scriptwriter and producer --- and above all, his artistic and spiritual generosity."

"The most charismatic actor of his generation, George Clooney embodies Hollywood glamour... His charm, humor, personality and engagement stand at the heart of our perpetual and eternal admiration." The academy said Clooney's name "will forever be inscribed in the pantheon of legendary actors." Previous honorary Cesar winners include Kate Winslet and Quentin Tarantino.

The 55-year-old Clooney, who made his breakthrough two decades ago in the TV medical drama ER, has won a slew of top awards including an Oscar for best supporting actor in Syriana in 2006 and a 2013 best picture award as producer for Argo. He also garnered Golden Globes as best actor in the Coen Brothers' O' Brother Where Art Thou in 2001 and Alexander Payne's The Descendants in 2012. Last year's honorary Cesar went to Michael Douglas, who thereby followed in the footsteps of fellow Americans Kevin Costner (2013), Scarlett Johansson (2014) and Sean Penn (2015).--AFP



This file photo shows US actor George Clooney posing during a photo call for the film Money Monster at the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

British band **Coldplay** partners with refugee and migrant charity

British rock band Coldplay has thrown its support behind a Malta-based humanitarian charity that saves migrants in search-and-rescue missions at sea, the charity said on Thursday. The musicians, known for hits such as "Clocks" and "Viva La Vida", kicked off their new role as patrons of MOAS (Migrant Offshore Aid Station) with an online fundraising film.

"We feel duty-bound to raise awareness about this noble mission," the Grammy Award-winning band said in a statement. In the film, entitled "Rescue Humanity", the band's lead vocalist, Chris Martin, sings an a cappella rendition of Coldplay's hit song "Don't Panic" over footage depicting distressed migrants at sea being rescued by MOAS staff. "But for an accident of geography, those people could be us and we could be them," Martin said in a statement.

MOAS has saved the lives of more than 30,000 migrants making perilous journeys from northern Africa and the Middle East to Europe, often on flimsy rafts and boats, the charity said. In 2017 so far, some 5,500 migrants and refugees had entered Europe by sea by the end of January, with over three quarters arriving in Italy and the remainder in Greece, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). More than 250 were believed to have drowned, IOM data shows. Migration flows are expected to increase later this year once the weather warms. — Reuters



Creative director **Riccardo Tisci** leaves Givenchy

Italian designer Riccardo Tisci announced Thursday he has left Givenchy after 12 years as the French fashion house's creative director, in order to focus on his "personal interests and passions." Givenchy, in a statement said it was "a joint decision" not to continue the collaboration and that Tisci had officially left the company Jan 31 "after a very successful twelve year partnership." The Italian creator, a friend to many stars, revived the flagging label with its style mixing street wear and couture, marked by a dark romanticism.

Givenchy chief executive Philippe Fortunato applauded Tisci's "visionary qualities that led to a strong growth of the brand," and thanked him for "his outstanding contribution to the international development and appeal" of the fashion house. Tisci himself, in the same statement, said he maintained "very special affection for the House of Givenchy and its beautiful teams." While thanking Givenchy for giving him a platform to express his creativity over the years, he added that "I now wish to focus on my personal interests and passions".

His latest menswear and haute couture collections for Givenchy, part of the French luxury group LVMH, were presented in Paris last month. Givenchy's next ready-to-wear collection is due to be unveiled on March 5 during Paris Fashion Week. The prestigious fashion house

said the name of Tisci's replacement would be announced soon. Tisci's own future was the subject of immediate speculation with some suggestion that the 42-year-old might find a new outlet for his talents with Versace.

He is friends with the Donatella Versace and in 2015 posed for a Versace advertising campaign. The Italian label had no comment. Trained at Central Saint Martins, a top arts and design college in London, Tisci arrived at Givenchy in March 2005 as a relative unknown. After founder Hubert de Givenchy left the company in 1995 there were a string of British designers at the fashion house: John Galiano, Alexander McQueen and Julien Macdonald. Tisci becomes the latest in a series of designers, who have left major labels of late, with changes in direction also at Dior, Saint Laurent, Valentino, Lanvin, Chloe and Carven. — AFP

This file photo shows Madonna wearing a Givenchy creation, left, and designer Riccardo Tisci at The Metropolitan Museum of Art Costume Institute Benefit Gala, celebrating the opening of 'Manus x Machina: Fashion in an Age of Technology' in New York. — AP



Jenkins and Chazelle: The young directors at center of Oscars

At the forefront of this year's Oscar race are two filmmakers in their 30s with seemingly limitless careers ahead of them: Damien Chazelle, the 32-year-old wunderkind behind "La La Land" and Barry Jenkins, the 37-year-old writer-director of "Moonlight." The combined nominations of their films amount to 22 even while their ages add up to less than that of Martin Scorsese or Steven Spielberg. It's rare for young directors to rise to such heights.

If Chazelle, the favorite, were to win best director, he'd be the youngest winner ever. Should Jenkins pull it off, he'd be the youngest since Sam Mendes won in 2000 for "American Beauty," and, more significantly, he'd be the first African-American filmmaker to win the award. History seems sure to be made, one way or the other. On an awards circuit that has brought them together repeatedly, Chazelle and Jenkins (whose screenplays are also nominated) have expressed mutual respect and admiration for each other. If they are Academy Awards rivals, they don't act like it.

"It's nice to have somebody who's sort of on your side of the age bracket to look across the room and be like, 'This is crazy, right?'" says Jenkins. "Yeah, this is crazy." They've crossed paths before. Both released their first films - "Medicine for Melancholy" for Jenkins and "Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench" for Chazelle - around the same time: late 2008, early 2009. Jenkins' initial plans for his sophomore film stalled. Chazelle, who wanted "La La Land" to be his second film, was forced to pivot instead with "Whiplash," which became his Oscar-nominated breakthrough.

"I've admired Barry Jenkins from afar since 'Medicine for Melancholy,'" says Chazelle. "I definitely feel the future of cinema is in good hands with him. I just think he's one of the finest filmmakers on the planet." They are very different filmmakers. Jenkins, whose film bears echoes of his Miami upbringing, has a rare gift for lyricism and startling intimacy. Chazelle, the Harvard-educated son of college professors

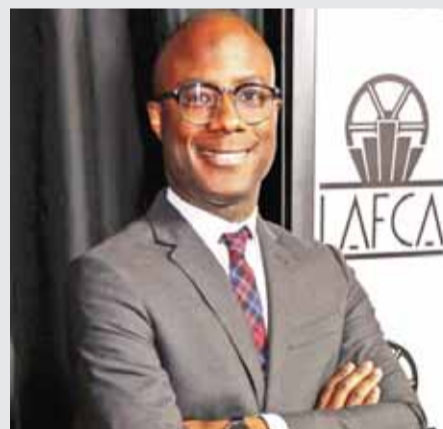


This file photo shows director Damien Chazelle at the premiere of "La La Land" in Los Angeles. — AP

and a former jazz drummer, makes movies with a bright musicality that cloaks darker questions of art and ambition.

Yet both are clearly auteur filmmakers expressing a personal vision with a deep awareness of their place in cinema history. (Just watch Jenkins' recent kid-in-a-candy-store moment at the Criterion Collection offices.) Cameron Bailey, artistic director of the Toronto International Film Festival, has programmed both of Jenkins' films and two of Chazelle's. That each has channeled movie history while finding their own voice, he says, is proof of a "healthy future ahead for movies." "The thing I find most heartening is that they're both cinephiles," says Bailey.

"They've watched a lot of movies, they grew up immersed in movies, and it shows. You can see the classic musicals - and not just Hollywood musicals but French musicals and films from all over the world - in 'La La Land.' And you can see in 'Moonlight' the influence, which Barry's talked about, of Claire Denis, of Hou Hsiao-hsien, of Wong Kar-wai, of a lot of European and Asian cinema." Both Chazelle



This file photo shows Barry Jenkins at the 42nd Annual Los Angeles Film Critics Association Awards in Los Angeles.

and Jenkins are now in that enviable position of being able to get just about anything they want made. But it's less clear what kind of path Hollywood has to offer either.

The last time a number of nascent filmmakers with such self-evident talent were breaking through - the likes of Paul Thomas Anderson, Wes Anderson, Sofia Coppola - the independent film world was booming. But the landscape Jenkins and Chazelle find themselves in is far less hospitable to emerging auteurs. In a Hollywood where blockbusters are the de facto business, landing a franchise has been the trajectory of many young directors, from Colin Trevorrow ("Jurassic World") to Ryan Coogler ("Creed"). Meanwhile, others like Lena Dunham and Steven Soderbergh have gravitated toward television for greater artist freedom.

But "La La Land" and "Moonlight" are both, in their own way, big-screen arguments for the power of movies, whether to entertain or to create empathy. Unlike previous generations of filmmakers, Jenkins and Chazelle became directors at a time when the cultural sway of the big screen was waning. Their movies are

each a kind of a response to those who would sound the death knell for film. "It's not obvious why a lush, romantic musical - something intimate and beautiful and fragile - should be such a blockbuster, except that it is. And it's moving people because Damien felt strongly about it," says filmmaker Robb Moss, Chazelle's film professor at Harvard.

"Currently, success means something that's branded. I think Damien is something else, something other than that. I think there's a desire for something other than that. Whether that can withstand the market forces and our political system, I don't know. I hope it does." So don't expect a comic-book movie from Chazelle, nor from Jenkins. Adele Romanski, friend of 15 years and producer of "Moonlight," says the film originally stemmed from their mutual sense of dissatisfaction. But now, opportunity abounds. "It's a moment of endless possibilities. I don't think there's a superhero movie in it for us, though never say never," says Romanski.

"However far we've advanced things with 'Moonlight,' maybe we'll see if we can move things a little further with the next thing. We're not just creators of entertainment and escapism. I think we feel a responsibility to that." Jenkins hasn't yet announced his next project but he and Romanski have been developing a limited series based on Colson Whitehead's novel "The Underground Railroad." Chazelle is planning to next direct a Neil Armstrong biopic that will reteam him with "La La Land" star Ryan Gosling. Expected to begin shooting early this year, it's Chazelle's first film for a major studio, Universal. The project originated with Clint Eastwood, the oldest to ever win best director. — AP



This handout shows Myanmar commander-in-chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing (front row 3rd right) and Vice President Myint Swe (front row 2nd right) praying with the descendants of Myanmar's last monarch King Thibaw during the wreath-laying ceremony at his grave in Ratnagiri in India. — AFP photos



This handout shows Myanmar Commander-in-chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing (centre left in white shirt) and Vice President Myint Swe (centre right in yellow shirt) standing with descendants of Myanmar's last monarch King Thibaw during the wreath-laying ceremony at his grave in Ratnagiri in India.

Land without history: Myanmar rediscovers its past

With the laying of a wreath at a faraway grave, the last king of Myanmar finally won public recognition after more than a century hidden from view by the country's former colonial masters and military junta. The somber ceremony for King Thibaw in Ratnagiri, western India was a watershed moment for Myanmar as it forges a new sense of national identity under its first elected government in a generation. For half a century its military rulers ran an Orwellian campaign to rewrite the past, casting themselves as the saviors of the nation. Today the country's understanding of its history is starting to change under the young government of Aung San Suu Kyi, which took power nearly a year ago.

"History at school was a kind of government propaganda," Pathein University lecturer Than Htike Aung said. "The textbooks don't give real historical accounts... You cannot read about how the junta seized power in 1962, the 1988 uprising and the 2007 Buddhist-led (Saffron) revolution." Myanmar's former royal family was a primary target of the junta's historical whitewash. A cloak of silence was thrown over the monarchy by successive military leaders who also seized on a campaign, started by the colonial British when they exiled King Thibaw in 1885, to cast the monarch as a drunken monster. His brief reign was barely mentioned in text books.



This photograph shows people browsing at a book stall displaying books on Myanmar history in Yangon.

But at the ceremony in India in December Myanmar's vice president and military chief stood side-by-side with his descendants—the first time they have been allowed to publicly remember their ancestor at his resting place. It followed an inaugural event at Mandalay's Golden Palace the previous month, where the surviving scions of King Thibaw's Konbaung dynasty marked his exile. "I don't see how people can really have a creative view of the future... unless they have this more critical understanding of the past," said historian Thant Myint U. "It would be like trying to think about the future of Germany and not knowing anything about the First or Second World Wars."

Fake history

But the generals' rewriting of history has taken deep root in Myanmar's education system and wider society. School pupils today still learn by rote from junta-era textbooks, taught to repeat a narrative centered around the dominant Bamar ethnic group. History has been so debased as a discipline only the worst-performing students study it—the more successful ones are funneled into medicine and engineering. This year not a single person applied to read history at the prestigious Yangon University.

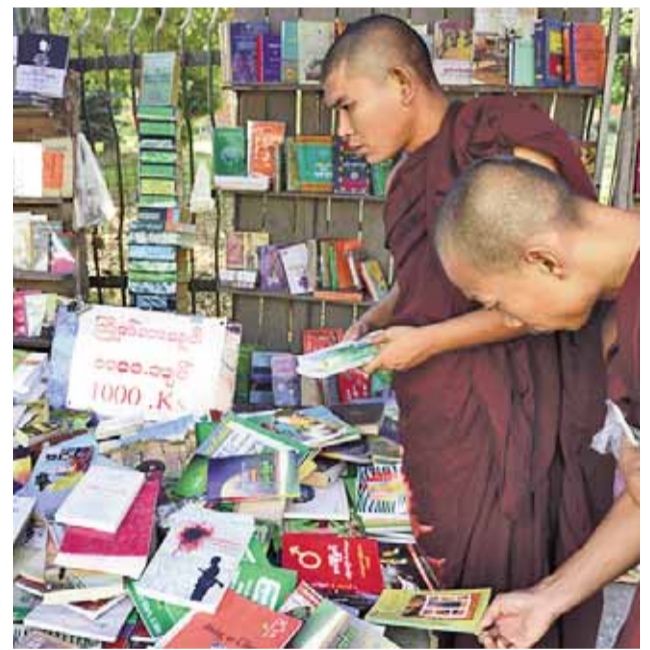
"History has been so politicized and tampered with it has got to the point that people stopped caring," said Alex Bescoby, who has made a documentary about the royal family. Skewed history is exacerbating Myanmar's ethnic conflicts, experts say. Groups such as the Kachin and Karen have long complained the histories of their people taught at government schools are incomplete, oversimplified or plain incorrect. For Myanmar's most hated minority, the Rohingya, the distortions now threaten their future under the new civilian government.

In December, the Ministry of Religion and Cultural Affairs announced plans to publish a "true" account of the Muslim group to prove they are illegal immigrants and write them out of the country's history. Their treatment highlights the complexity of owning the national narrative in a country scored by conflict and division. "When students believe simple stories about the past... they can more easily demonize other groups," said Rosalie Metro, adjunct professor of education at the University of Missouri.

Critical skills

She has spent a decade creating a new textbook for school students that takes a more critical perspective using material considered too sensitive under military rule, including speeches by former ruler General Ne Win and colonial documents. International bodies, including the Asian Development Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency, are also working with the government to help reshape what is taught in school.

Lecturer Than Htike Aung said he now brings in his own materials to teach events outside the curriculum, something he would



This photograph shows Buddhist monks browsing at a book stall displaying books on Myanmar history in Yangon.

have been too scared to do under the junta. Meanwhile the explosion of social media since 2011, when the military ceded power, has given Myanmar's youth new access to information and an avenue to challenge official accounts. The government too has formed a historical committee to help re-evaluate accounts propagated under the junta—though some fear this is also laden with dangers.

"Experts will put these true stories of Myanmar down as a record for future generations," said Aung Myint, of the department of historical research. Still, experts warn it will take a long time for people to come to terms with the past. "What's just as important as giving people material is giving people the critical skills to deal with it, and that's something that only comes over years and years," said Bescoby. — AFP

Emirati desert festival brings tradition back to life

Women clad in emerald green abayas and men in crisp white gandoura gowns, Emirati folk dancers sway to the steady beat of a Bedouin drum against the desert skyline. The show is part of the 11th edition of the Sultan bin Zayed Heritage Festival, held each year in Sweihan, 100 kilometers from the United Arab Emirates capital Abu Dhabi. The festival aims to preserve the ways of desert life and introduce UAE youth to their heritage at a time when tradition is increasingly being overshadowed by glitzy city life.

With the rise of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, "it is very important to keep on with the traditions, with the culture of the country and the people", said Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed al-Nahyan, chairman of the Emirates Heritage Club. "We have to encourage young people to come, (especially) through schools," Sheikh Sultan, a son of the UAE's founding father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, said. The two-week event features artisanal souks, traditional music, camel races and a series of camel beauty contests.

Dromedary contestants are divided into seven categories, including "two-year-old virgin female camels", "pregnant female camels about to give birth", and "five-year-old (and above) male camels". The competition, dubbed camel "mazayna" (beauty) in Arabic, aims to "encourage breeders and owners to breed authentic strains of camels and protect them from hybridization and blood crossing and create an atmosphere of honest competition ... to ensure the breeding of the most beautiful camels", the festival brochure reads.

Eyelash length, sheen of hair

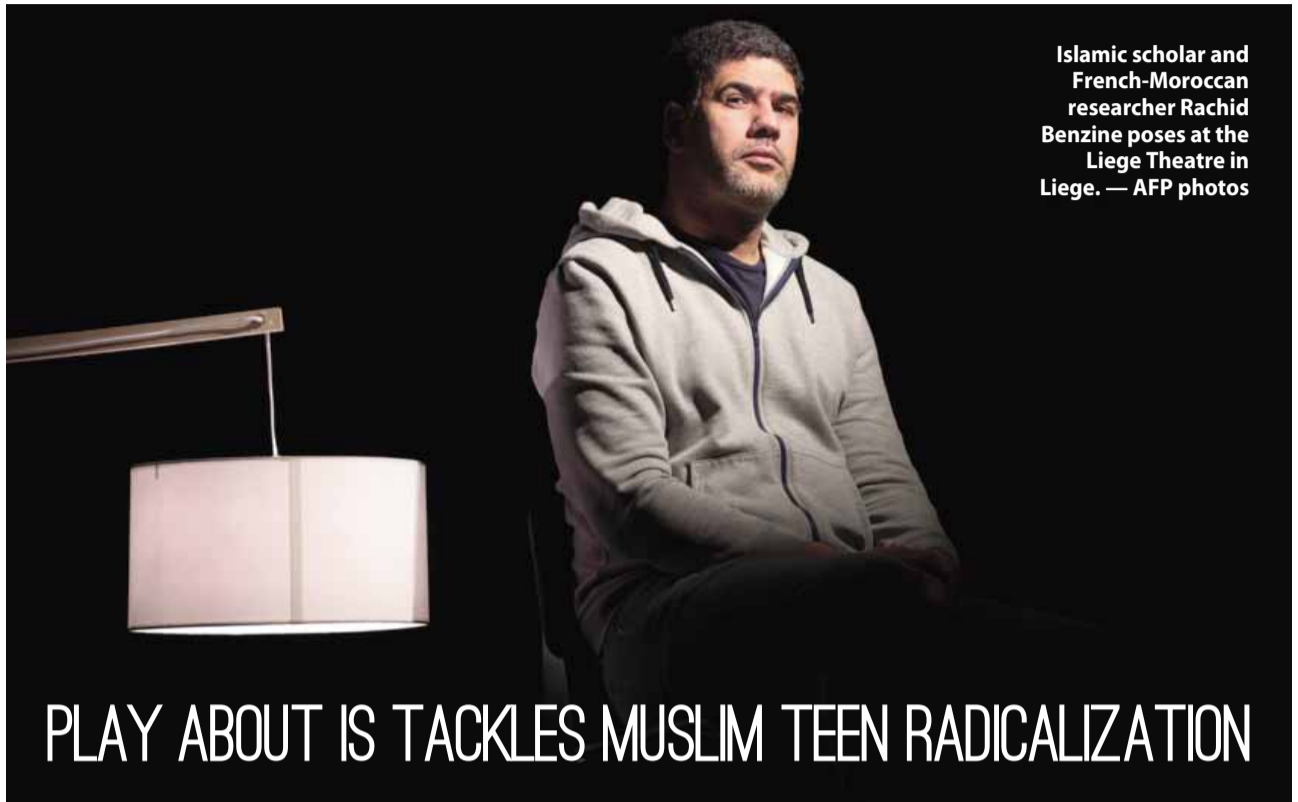
The criteria, as laid out in the brochure, are transparent: jurors base their scores on the shape of the camels' head, neck and hump as well as their posture. Eyelash length and the sheen of the camels' hair also factor into the marks. Awaiting the results, the animals are kept calm by their owners, lined up in front of a fleet of 80 shiny white 4X4 cars beloved of Gulf Arabs to be awarded to the first-place winners. In earth-toned traditional garb, including a floor-length gandoura and turban, Sheikh Sultan watches the contest from a plush oversized armchair.

He greets the overall winner and her Qatari owner warmly to thundering applause, as a drone flies overhead to capture the scene. Runners-up in second to 10th place receive between 10,000 and 45,000 dirhams (between \$2,700 and \$12,250) each. In 2005, Abu Dhabi produced the world's first test-tube purebred camel. The oil-rich emirate, one of seven making up the UAE, also began using remote-controlled robot riders in its camel races that year. Camel racing is an extremely popular traditional sport in the UAE, where people spend millions on acquiring the fastest animals.

The Sultan bin Zayed festival is one of the few remaining events at which human jockeys ride camels in races, rather than remote-controlled robot riders. The UAE officially banned child jockeys in 1993 although abuses remained widespread until 2005. According to the United Nations children's fund UNICEF, thousands of boys from Bangladesh, Pakistan and also Sudan have been forced to become jockeys in the Middle East, where their small size is valued on the competitive camel racing scene. — AFP



Sheikh Sultan Bin Zayed al-Nahyan inspects camels during the camel festival, held at the Shweihan racecourse, in Al-Ain on the outskirts of Abu Dhabi. — AFP



Islamic scholar and French-Moroccan researcher Rachid Benzine poses at the Liege Theatre in Liege. — AFP photos

PLAY ABOUT IS TACKLES MUSLIM TEEN RADICALIZATION

Two actors on a darkened stage, playing an erudite Muslim father and his beloved daughter who has left home to join the Islamic State jihadists, read the heartrending letters they have exchanged. "Letters to Nour", a book written and adapted for the stage by French-Moroccan writer Rachid Benzine, recently premiered in the Belgian city of Liege, one of a growing body of works tackling the impact of extremism in Europe. The play will soon move to France for a series of shows, but after that it will return to Belgium's French-speaking Wallonia region to be seen by a very different audience.

From March "Letters to Nour" will be performed at state schools for students aged 16 to 18, part of an effort by Belgian authorities to counter radicalization. The subject strikes close to home in a country where a small cell of young men from Muslim backgrounds plotted together to carry out both the Nov 2015 jihadist attacks in Paris and the March 2016 attacks in Brussels. "The book, and then the play, was linked to a particular event: Nov 13, 2015, at the Bataclan," Benzine said, referring to the Paris concert venue where jihadists shot dead dozens of people.

"I felt there was a double rift. First, because these were young people from my background but who were targeting French society," he said. "And then that these were young people who killed in the name of a god that I believe in." "Our views are always reductive. It seemed to me that fiction would allow us to tell things another way," added Benzine, a professor from the Paris suburb of Trappes, which has produced many jihadists.

Paradise for Muslims

On stage, Belgian actor Charlie Dupont plays the father, a professor of philosophy and Islam who lives somewhere in the Muslim world. He sits at a wooden table reading aloud a letter from Nour—which means "light" in Arabic—his cherished daughter, a philosophy student who has decided to go to Iraq to join the jihadist husband she met on the internet. Nour, played by Belgian Tania Gabarski, admits that she lied to him about making a family visit in order to flee her home country, and says she is now in a "paradise for Muslims."

"I am not a submissive woman, I have chosen to carry out a mission," she says to her father, whom she views as naive. He begs her to return and abandon the life she has chosen. Benzine said he wanted to create "a moment for thought, a conversation with the arguments from both sides, so we can hear the father's point of view but also that of the girl, who doesn't have any economic problems or social problems and is bright, but who has nevertheless decided to join Daesh," the Arabic term for IS.

We didn't see this coming

The story unfolds over the course of 14 letters as Nour realizes that her dream is turning into a nightmare. After giving birth to a baby girl she is confronted with a dilemma that will inevitably have a tragic outcome. "But barbarism will not have the last word. There is no need to lose hope in humanity," said the author, who visited several young people imprisoned after their return from Syria and Iraq while researching the play. But Benzine added that it was essential to understand "why we didn't see this coming and what these youths have to say to us."

"Daesh's ideology is based on four dreams: A unified Muslim world, dignity in the face of humiliation, the dream of purity, and salvation," he said. "Many young people feel that if they can't give meaning to their lives, they can give meaning to their death." But Benzine, who said he has long advocated a "critical reading" of the Quran, cautioned that the appeal of IS ideology also raises difficult questions for those trying to warn against radicalism. "What hope are we able to offer our young?" he asked.—AFP



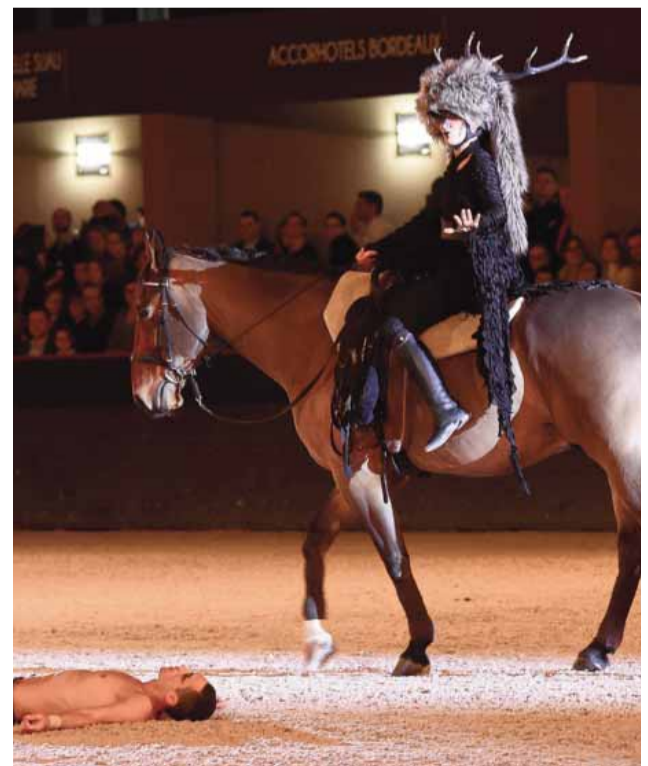
Actors Charlie Dupont and Tania Garbarski perform in the play "Lettres a Nour" (Letters to Nour) by Islamic scholar and French-Moroccan researcher Rachid Benzine at the Liege Theatre in Liege.



Metamorphoses



Horse riders perform with a horse during the new show of the Chantilly Estate Equestrian Company (Compagnie equestre du domaine de Chantilly, entitled "Metamorphoses" in Bordeaux, southwestern France, during the Bordeaux International Jumping equestrian event. — AFP photos





Peru highlands revel in blast of festival color

Peruvian dancers in colorful masks and elaborate headdresses are celebrating the Virgin of Candelaria in what's considered the largest Roman Catholic festival in the Andes. As many as 40,000 villagers are expected to gather for this year's festival and show their respect for the patron saint of the communities along the shores of Lake Titicaca. The festivities start Thursday. Competing groups dance under the intense sun in lovingly crafted costumes. Some wear shoes made with alpaca skin, collars hung with ears of corn, and hats adorned with old coins or the bright-colored feathers of Amazonian birds.

"We have danced this way since the time of our grandparents," said 75 year-old Martin Mamani, who made the trek from the village of Esmeralda. Some dances gesture toward everyday village activities such as grazing llamas or shearing animals. Others depict the Spanish conquest or the conscription of villagers as soldiers. Even young children dance with their families in groups of as many as 400 people, including musicians who play flutes and other traditional instruments. In addition to devotion, villagers have other reasons for dancing on the annual feast.

Some are grateful to have been cured of disease, while others are asking for protection for their crops, or increased political power. It's a rare moment of national focus on an indigenous-dominant



ed village culture. "There's always been a lack of respect for the countryside. But when the villagers participate, they are saying, 'I am present,' and the people from the city are only spectators," said anthropologist Henry Flores, who has studied indigenous dances in the town of Puno. The festival of La Candelaria has been celebrated in Puno every year since the 18th century. UNESCO declared the festival a cultural landmark in 2015.--AP



In this photo, dancers perform during Virgin of Candelaria celebrations in downtown Puno, Peru. — AP photos



SIX REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD LOOK FORWARD TO BUYING HONOR 6X IN KUWAIT

Fuelled by top-of-the-shelf features, Honor 6X has arrived to give excellent internet experience to the digital natives. Honor 6x is the first mid-range phone to introduce dual camera to the region and is designed with filters in mind and artistic features and design that will blow your mind.

Below are 6 reasons why you should grab this hi-tech budget beast which is available at all major retailers in Kuwait for KD 75:

1. Reveal your inner visual artist with the wide aperture mode

Open the camera of the Honor 6X and select wide aperture!

Take a picture focusing on an object/subject in the foreground while blurring the background by setting a aperture value (F/0.95-F/16).

*Tips: take pictures of objects within 2-meter distance to get the best result.

2. Into the dark: Photography in the night

Take a picture at night time, or open the camera of the Honor 6X, swipe the screen to the left to reveal mode, select "Night shot" and follow instructions on the screen. Then take a photo of complex background under Night shot mode.

3. Creative sparks inspired by the Honor 6X camera

Edit the photo taken in "Gallery",

select the "Splash" icon (as show in the right). Tapping the splash icon will automatically convert the picture to monochrome (black and white). Select with a tap of a finger the areas you want to restore color to.

4. No need to spend hours on your make-up when you can just use the Make-up Mode

You turn on front camera. And now, swipe to your right to see the baked-in camera modes. There you find the Make-up Mode waiting for you to make use of it.

It has got themes like Cute, Sweet, Pink, Club, Party etc.

5. High Performance eXperience

The phone boasts a 16nm octa-core Kirin 655 processor and 3GB RAM, providing a 65% performance increase compared to its predecessor.

The phone also has 32GB memory, combined with an expandable storage, offering ample capacity to store music, videos and photos.

6. Long lasting Battery eXperience

Honor 6X comes with a 3340 mAh high-density battery, making it the best battery life of the whole Honor line-up so far. The phone also uses a power-saving technology, leading to an outstandingly long battery life. Honor delivers 2.2 days of usage and 1.5 day of heavy usage on a single full charge.



AMAZON INCREASINGLY WANTS TO BE ITS OWN DELIVERYMAN

NEW YORK: Amazon is not content just being the 'everything store.' Increasingly, it looks like it wants to be its own deliveryman, too. Its Monday announcement of a new air cargo hub in Kentucky is merely Amazon's latest foray into building out its own shipping and logistics unit. If successful, the move could ultimately mean lower costs for Amazon - and possibly faster delivery and low prices for consumers. But it could also pit Amazon against package deliverers like FedEx and UPS.

Amazon has long plowed its profits back into its business investments. In order to speed up its delivery, it has invested in opening new distribution centers and leasing fleets of trucks. In May, Amazon leased 40 Boeing jets from Atlas Air Worldwide Holdings and Air Transport Services Group Inc., a fleet it dubbed "Prime Air." The moves comes e-commerce continues to outpace retail sales. Amazon said Thursday the number of items it sold in the fourth quarter rose 24 percent compared with a year ago. Its revenue rose 22 percent to \$43.74 billion, slightly missing analyst expectations. Meanwhile, profit rose 36 percent to \$749 million, or \$1.54 per share, ahead of expectations.

Next step

On Monday, Amazon took the next step, announcing plans to build a worldwide air cargo hub at a northern Kentucky airport about 13 miles southwest of Cincinnati. The nearly \$1.5 billion investment is expected to create 2,700 jobs. It is an auspicious location, since UPS has a big air hub in Louisville and DHL has an international shipping hub at Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport. Amazon has long batted down rumors that it plans to start its own package delivery service, saying It is just trying to speed up deliveries and lower costs. The company insists it will continue working with the US Post Office, UPS, FedEx and other carriers to deliver packages.

"It is not a big surprise," Cathy Roberson, founder of consulting firm Logistics Trends and Insights, said of Amazon's Kentucky announcement. "By utilizing that location they can reach anywhere in the US in two days."

E-commerce explosion

If Amazon succeeds in building out its delivery infrastructure, it could ultimately reduce package volume for companies like FedEx and UPS, Roberson said. On the other hand, ecommerce volume is growing so fast there may be room for everyone, she said. For example, UPS reported Monday that 55 percent of its fourth-quarter deliveries - and 63 percent of those in December - were directly to consumers, setting records in both cases.

The rub

It is no sure bet that Amazon will succeed in the highly competitive and complex delivery space. "It is hard to scale up, to have a network as built out and mature as FedEx, UPS or DHL," Roberson said. "Amazon is still not mature." To really go up against that big three, she said, Amazon will have to invest "an awful lot of money in networks and more facilities" - at least double what it is already spending, she estimates. — AP

WHY FACEBOOK KEEPS PUSHING YOU TO GO 'LIVE' WITH VIDEO

NEW YORK: From billboards to TV ads to endless notifications, Facebook is furiously promoting its live video feature as it tries to get more users to shoot and watch such videos. But will it be a big business for the social network? The prospects for advertisers are uncertain, and even when users do "go live" - broadcasting their toddler's first steps to family or showing footage from protests around the world, for instance - their friends often don't see it until after the fact, just like any other recorded video. So why all the big fuss?

Fishing for users

Some analysts believe it is just another in Facebook's ongoing efforts to keep people attached to its service as long as possi-

ble. "It is a usage thing - keeping them engaged, keeping them on Facebook, giving them an avenue to share," says eMarketer analyst Debra Aho Williamson. "As long as Facebook can be successful with that, it can show ads to them."

As is its custom, the company is first pushing the service to as many of its 1.8 billion users as possible. Users get special notifications when their friends go live, and ads prompting them to do the same have been prevalent in the last few weeks.

But making money off live streams isn't easy, starting with the fact that they offer few opportunities to display video ads. But that's OK, Williamson says, arguing that now is the time for marketers to experiment with the feature.

Some are already doing just that - not by advertising on other live broadcasts, but by streaming themselves. General Motors, for example, was the first automaker to livestream on Facebook, rolling out its Chevy Bolt EV at the 2016 Consumer Electronics Show.

Live from everywhere

Mobile video, especially live video, is already transforming how we experience the world online, whether that means puppies and kittens or witnessing crime, social unrest and other world events. We can stream official channels and news, as well as individual people's perspectives in a way that was not possible just a few years ago. Last October, Facebook started an ad

campaign featuring real users doing weird, quirky but generally upbeat stuff live with the goal of introducing more, possibly reluctant users to the feature. Think: pile of teddy bears, girl singing with a guitar, someone recording lightning in the distance.

While the company isn't disclosing data on how many users have gone live or watched a live video, anecdotally at least it seems to be catching on - somewhat. The company says people comment more than 10 times more on live videos than on regular ones, and that the number of people broadcasting live at any given minute has grown by fourfold since last May. Facebook gave regular users the ability to create live videos in April. — AP

ARMED WITH SMARTPHONES, CAMEROON FOREST DEFENDERS TAKE ON ILLEGAL LOGGERS

KADEY: In an innovative push to combat illegal logging and the corruption that enables it, community volunteers in Cameroon are being trained to use smartphones to take geo-tagged images of freshly cut stumps and relay the information to the authorities. Under a partnership between the government and environmental groups, young people are using satellite-linked phones to document tree-cutting in areas where logging is not allowed.

They can then upload the photos and make toll-free calls to report the suspicious activity, not just to the police and forest ministry, but also to the National Anti-Corruption Commission, said Bangya Dieudonne, a forestry and wildlife official in Kadey, in the country's East Region. "Getting these three institutions informed makes it difficult for forest exploitation criminals to bribe their way through," he said.

Training frontline forest defenders aims to reduce illegal deforestation, which is depriving the government of billions of CFA francs in income, hurting communities that make their living from the forest, and making the country more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, officials said.

With corruption continuing to hamper forest management, new and stronger measures are needed, Dieudonne said. So far, more than 100 people have been trained as community "forest defenders" in the East Region and other areas where logging has been especially prevalent, officials said.

The training has been organised in collaboration with FODER (Forest and Rural Development), a Cameroonian group that works with communities to monitor forest activities, combat corruption and improve governance of forests. The Rainforest Foundation UK is also supporting the project. Rodrigue Ngozo, FODER's chief of programs, said the forest defenders would act as whistle-blowers under the legal protection of the government.

Such work can be risky, however. Global Witness, an international human rights organization, documented 185 killings of people defending their forests, land or rivers across 16 countries in 2015, the highest annual death toll on record.

Eric Tah of Cameroon wildlife law enforcement organization LAGA, which works with the government, described the forest defenders' work as "a tough job". "You must be committed to do it and the government is aware of the dangers involved," he said. Security has been beefed up by deploying elite soldiers in forested areas to support forest guards and community defenders in their efforts to stop illegal operators, he added.

'In their own best interest'

Despite the danger, involving communities in reporting illegal logging can be an effective way to curb it, not least because most people living in or near forests depend on them and have a strong interest in their protection, experts say. "The forest people are the most vulnerable to the effects of forest exploitation and climate change," said Manfred Epanda, Cameroon coordinator for the African Wildlife Foundation. "They depend on these forest resources for their livelihood and so, when involved in the control of their own resources, they do so in the best interest of their community and the future of their children."

Volunteers say they are expected to pass on what they have learned to others in their communities. "We have been trained not only to monitor illegal and corrupt activities in our forest but also to train others to better fight illegal logging," said Bertrand Eyoum, one of the new forest observers in Kadey. The training has given local people a better understanding of the importance of their forest resources and the need to fight corruption, he added.

A report by the Congo Basin Forest Partnership says corruption is "promoting illegality in the sector with serious consequences for the environment, local communities and the state's budgetary revenues".

Timber is Cameroon's second most important export commodity after crude oil, according to government statistics. In past decades, logging has accelerated, attracting Chinese, Lebanese, French and other foreign companies.

The presence of many timber firms, combined with a failure to apply forestry laws, has fuelled a surge in illegal activities, experts say. Training volunteers is seen as a good step, but much more needs to be done to curb illegal deforestation, they argue. "The government needs to streamline its forest governance reforms by putting an end to impunity," said Richard Eba'a Atyi of CIFOR, an international forest research organization. — Reuters



LOS ANGELES: In this Thursday, October 24, 2013, file photo, Snapchat CEO Evan Spiegel poses for a photo in Los Angeles. — AP

SNAP, MAKER OF TEEN SOCIAL APP SNAPCHAT, FILES FOR IPO

NEW YORK: The company behind Snapchat, a teen-oriented social network famous for its quickly disappearing messages, has filed for what could be one of the largest tech IPOs in years. Snap Inc said Thursday that it's seeking up to \$3 billion in an initial public offering, a figure that could shift based on investor demand. That demand will help determine the price per share sought by Snap in the upcoming weeks. Snapchat has millions of users, and Snap has built a thriving ad business on it. But the company has also made a lot of money - nearly \$900 million - disappear in the past two years.

Snap, crackle, pop

The fast-growing social network for the younger set boasts 158 million daily users. It lets people send photos, videos and messages that disappear a few seconds after viewing. It was created in 2012 by Evan Spiegel, who dropped out of Stanford University just three classes shy of graduation to focus on the app. Spiegel, 26, is poised to become a multibillionaire, along with his former fraternity brother at Stanford, Robert Murphy, 28, who is also a company co-founder.

Each man owns 227 million shares of Snap stock, which was valued at \$30.72 per share nine months ago when the company raised \$700 million from a group of investors, according to its IPO documents filed Thursday. If Snap can fetch the same price in its IPO, Spiegel and Murphy each will be worth \$7 billion.

Snapchat could have died a quick death as a "sexting app," but Spiegel showed a knack for adapting to users' whims and demands, just as Facebook has over the years. This, as both companies have discovered, is key to outlasting social media fads. Snapchat is no

longer just about disappearing messages. Over the years, it has added a "Discover" section where a diverse group of publishers - including People, the Wall Street Journal, CNN, Vice and Food Network - post video-heavy stories aimed at millennials.

Another feature, 'Stories,' lets people create a narrative from messages, videos and photos from the past 24 hours. It is so popular that Facebook's Instagram now has a version of it, too.

And then there's goofy "Lenses," which lets people add animated overlays to photos and videos - animals, for example, or flower crowns and sparkly eyes. The company came under fire a couple of times for adding filters many saw as racist. One had slanted eyes and buck teeth commonly associated with negative Asian caricatures; another, which Snap called a "Bob Marley" filter, darkened people's skin. Snap later got rid of the offending filters. — AP

BOEING'S SPACE TAXIS TO USE MORE THAN 600 3D-PRINTED PARTS

SEATTLE: Boeing Co has hired a small company to make about 600 3D-printed parts for its Starliner space taxis, meaning key components in the United States manned space program are being built with additive manufacturing.

The company, privately held Oxford Performance Materials, will announce a \$10 million strategic investment from advanced materials company Hexcel Corp as early as Friday, adding to \$15 million Hexcel invested in May and lifting Hexcel's equity stake to 16.1 percent, Oxford and Hexcel said.

Boeing's award of the parts for its flagship space program and Hexcel's funding are strategic bets that printed plastics can perform flawlessly even under the extreme stress of a rocket launch and sub-zero temperatures of space.

They offer further evidence of a shift in 3D printing from making prototypes to commercial production of high-grade parts for space ships, aircraft engines and other critical equipment.

Oxford's parts will help Boeing lower costs and save weight on each seven-

seat capsule, compared with traditional metal and plastic manufacturing, Larry Varholak, president of Oxford's aerospace business, said in an interview.

"What really makes it valuable to NASA and Boeing is this material is as strong as aluminum at significantly less weight," he said. Boeing said the weight savings on Oxford's parts is about 60 percent compared with traditional manufacturing.

Boeing is building three Starliner capsules under a \$4.2 billion NASA contract. Entrepreneur Elon Musk's SpaceX is building a competing capsule under a \$2.6 billion NASA contract. Oxford has already shipped parts for the Starliner. The plastic it uses, known as PEKK, also resists fire and radiation, according to Oxford. Boeing declined to say how much of the capsule Oxford's parts represent. "It is a significant fraction of the Starliner from the aspects of design, assembly and reliability of high integrity parts," said Leo Christodoulou, director of structures and materials engineering at Boeing. "Using Oxford's materials takes out a lot of cost." — Reuters

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2017

OSN MOVIES HD
ACTION

- 01:00 Green Street 3: Never Back Down
- 03:00 The Borderlands
- 05:00 Reign Of Fire
- 07:00 Robot Overlords
- 09:00 Seventh Son
- 11:00 Code Of Silence
- 13:00 Reign Of Fire
- 15:00 Harlock: Space Pirate
- 17:00 Six Days Seven Nights
- 18:45 Pompeii
- 20:45 Real Steel
- 23:00 Fury

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:00 Zoltan The Wolfman
- 00:55 Gator Boys
- 01:50 Swimming With Monsters: Steve Backshall
- 02:45 Bondi Vet
- 03:10 Bondi Vet
- 03:40 Deadliest Snakes Of South Africa
- 04:35 Tanked
- 05:25 O'shea's Big Adventure
- 06:15 Gator Boys
- 07:02 Swimming With Monsters: Steve Backshall
- 07:49 Deadliest Snakes Of South Africa
- 08:36 Gorilla School
- 09:00 Gorilla School
- 09:25 Deadliest Snakes Of South Africa
- 10:15 Up Close And Dangerous
- 11:10 Australia Doesn't Just Want To Kill You
- 12:05 The Vet Life
- 13:00 Treehouse Masters
- 13:55 Bondi Vet
- 14:20 Bondi Vet
- 14:50 Into The Dragon's Lair
- 15:45 The Jeff Corwin Experience
- 16:40 O'shea's Big Adventure
- 17:35 Whale Wars
- 18:30 Lair Of The Killer Crocs
- 19:25 Crocodile Feeding Frenzy
- 20:20 Up Close And Dangerous
- 21:15 Deadliest Snakes Of South Africa
- 22:10 Australia Doesn't Just Want To Kill You
- 23:05 Treehouse Masters

BBC FIRST

- 00:30 Doctors
- 01:00 Doctors
- 01:30 In Plain Sight
- 02:15 In Plain Sight
- 03:00 Friday Night Dinner
- 03:25 Poldark
- 04:20 Benidorm
- 05:05 Doctors
- 05:35 Doctors
- 06:05 Death In Paradise
- 07:00 Doctors
- 07:30 Doctors
- 08:00 Doctors
- 08:30 Doctors
- 09:00 Doctors
- 09:30 Doctors
- 10:00 Doctors
- 10:30 Eastenders
- 11:00 Eastenders
- 11:30 Eastenders
- 12:00 Eastenders
- 12:30 Dickensian
- 13:20 The Coroner
- 14:05 The Coroner
- 14:50 Casualty
- 15:45 Doctors
- 16:15 Doctors
- 16:40 Dickensian
- 17:30 The Coroner
- 18:15 The Coroner
- 19:00 Doctors
- 19:30 Eastenders
- 20:05 Death In Paradise
- 21:00 Last Tango In Halifax
- 22:00 Poldark
- 22:55 Silent Witness

ci crime & investigation network

- 00:00 The First 48
- 01:00 Campus Nightmares
- 02:00 The Haunting Of...
- 03:00 My Haunted House

- 04:00 The First 48
- 05:00 Campus Nightmares
- 06:00 The Haunting Of...
- 07:00 My Haunted House
- 08:00 The Richardsons By Fred Dinenage
- 09:00 The First 48
- 10:00 Gangs Of Britain...
- 11:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 12:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 13:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 14:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 15:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 16:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 18:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 19:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
- 20:00 It Takes A Killer
- 20:30 It Takes A Killer
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- 22:00 It Takes A Killer
- 22:30 It Takes A Killer
- 23:00 It Takes A Killer
- 23:30 It Takes A Killer

COMEDY CENTRAL

- 00:05 Ugly Americans
- 00:30 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
- 01:00 Important Things With Demetri Martin
- 01:25 Dave Attell: Road Work
- 02:15 South Park
- 02:40 Another Period
- 03:05 South Park
- 03:30 South Park
- 04:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
- 04:25 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
- 05:15 Key And Peele
- 05:40 Key And Peele
- 06:05 Ridiculousness
- 06:30 Ridiculousness
- 06:55 Ridiculousness
- 07:20 Workaholics
- 07:50 Workaholics
- 08:15 Workaholics
- 08:40 Key And Peele
- 09:05 Key And Peele
- 09:30 Workaholics
- 09:55 Workaholics
- 10:20 Tosh.0
- 10:45 Tosh.0

- 11:10 Ridiculousness
- 11:35 Ridiculousness
- 12:00 Coaching Bad
- 12:50 Tosh.0
- 13:15 Tosh.0
- 13:40 Tosh.0
- 14:05 Framework
- 14:55 Urban Tarzan
- 15:20 Urban Tarzan
- 15:45 Impractical Jokers
- 16:10 Impractical Jokers
- 16:35 Impractical Jokers
- 17:00 Hungry Investors
- 17:55 Key And Peele
- 18:25 Key And Peele
- 18:50 The It Crowd
- 19:15 Ridiculousness
- 19:39 Workaholics
- 20:03 The Jim Gaffigan Show
- 20:27 Idiotsitter
- 20:50 Idiotsitter
- 21:13 Workaholics
- 21:37 Ridiculousness
- 22:00 The Daily Show - Global Edition
- 22:30 Kroll Show
- 22:54 Important Things With Demetri Martin
- 23:18 The Meltdown With Jonah And Kumail
- 23:42 The Meltdown With Jonah And Kumail

Discovery Family

- 00:15 Destroyed In Seconds
- 00:40 Ultimate Survival
- 01:30 Nextworld
- 02:20 Man v Expert
- 03:10 The Carbonaro Effect
- 03:35 The Carbonaro Effect
- 04:00 Destroyed In Seconds
- 04:25 Destroyed In Seconds
- 04:50 Ultimate Survival
- 05:40 How It's Made
- 06:05 How It's Made
- 06:30 Storm Chasers
- 07:20 Mythbusters
- 08:00 Doki
- 08:25 Doki
- 08:50 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
- 09:15 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
- 09:40 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
- 10:30 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
- 11:20 Too Cute! Pint-Sized

- 12:10 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
- 13:00 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
- 13:50 Mythbusters
- 14:40 Mythbusters
- 15:30 Mythbusters
- 16:20 Mythbusters
- 17:10 Mythbusters
- 18:00 Nextworld
- 18:50 Nextworld
- 19:40 Man v Expert
- 20:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 20:55 Kids Do The Craziest Things
- 21:20 Guinness World Records Smashed UK
- 22:10 Troy
- 23:00 Destroyed In Seconds
- 23:25 Destroyed In Seconds
- 23:50 Destroyed In Seconds



- 00:00 Blood Relatives
- 00:50 Dates From Hell
- 01:15 Dates From Hell
- 01:40 Is O.J. Innocent? The Missing Evidence
- 02:30 Southern Fried Homicide
- 03:20 Blood Relatives
- 04:10 Dates From Hell
- 04:35 Dates From Hell
- 05:00 Is O.J. Innocent? The Missing Evidence
- 05:48 I Almost Got Away With It
- 06:36 On The Case With Paula Zahn
- 07:24 Heartbreakers
- 08:12 Nightmare Next Door
- 09:00 On The Case With Paula Zahn
- 09:50 On The Case With Paula Zahn
- 10:40 On The Case With Paula Zahn
- 11:30 On The Case With Paula Zahn
- 12:20 On The Case With Paula Zahn
- 13:10 Killer Confessions
- 14:00 I Almost Got Away With It
- 14:50 I Almost Got Away With It
- 15:40 I Almost Got Away With It
- 16:30 I Almost Got Away With It
- 17:20 I Almost Got Away With It
- 18:10 Bad Blood
- 18:35 Bad Blood
- 19:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 19:25 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 19:50 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 20:15 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 20:40 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 21:05 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 21:30 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 21:55 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 22:20 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 22:45 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 23:10 Reel Crime/Real Story



- 00:00 Binny And The Ghost
- 00:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 01:10 Hank Zipzer
- 01:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 02:00 Violetta
- 02:45 The Hive
- 02:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 03:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 03:40 Hank Zipzer
- 04:05 Binny And The Ghost
- 04:30 Violetta
- 05:15 The Hive
- 05:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 05:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
- 06:10 Hank Zipzer
- 06:35 Binny And The Ghost
- 07:00 Violetta
- 07:45 The Hive
- 07:50 The 7D
- 08:00 Jessie
- 08:25 Jessie
- 08:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
- 08:55 Rolling To The Ronks
- 09:20 Sunny Bunnies
- 09:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 09:50 Cracked
- 09:55 Jessie
- 10:20 Descendants Wicked World
- 10:25 Elena Of Avalor
- 10:50 Star Darlings
- 10:55 Girl Meets World
- 11:20 Frozen: Magic Of The Northern Lights
- 11:25 Bizaardvark
- 11:50 Liv And Maddie
- 12:15 Disney Cookabout
- 12:40 Ratatouille
- 14:40 Descendants Wicked World
- 14:45 Stuck In The Middle

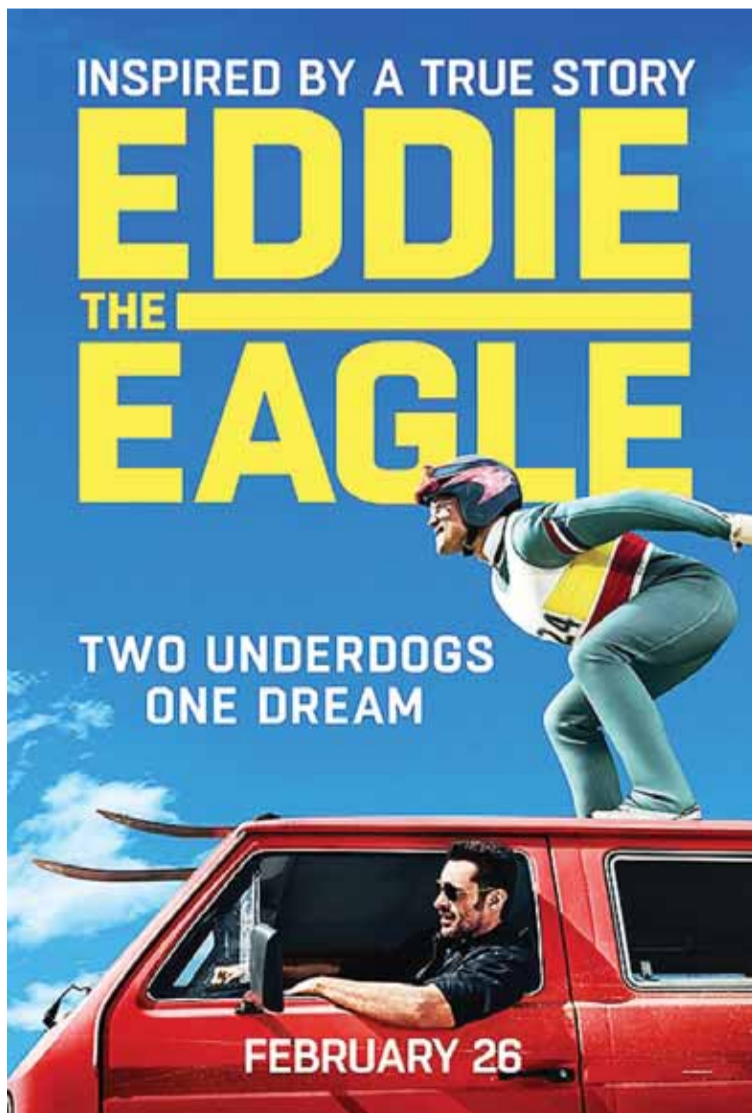
- 15:10 Stuck In The Middle
- 15:35 Stuck In The Middle
- 16:00 Stuck In The Middle
- 16:25 Jessie
- 16:50 Jessie
- 17:15 Austin & Ally
- 17:40 Austin & Ally
- 18:05 Descendants Wicked World
- 18:10 Elena Of Avalor
- 18:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
- 19:00 Gravity Falls
- 19:25 The Little Mermaid
- 21:00 Star Darlings
- 21:05 Disney Cookabout
- 21:30 Elena Of Avalor
- 21:55 Liv And Maddie
- 22:20 Best Friends Whenever
- 22:45 Austin & Ally
- 23:10 Mako Mermaids
- 23:35 Dog With A Blog



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



- 00:30 Sonic Sea
- 01:20 Gold Rush
- 02:10 Fast N' Loud
- 03:00 Misfit Garage
- 03:50 Street Outlaws
- 04:40 How Do They Do It?
- 05:05 How Do They Do It?
- 05:30 How Do They Do It?
- 06:00 How Do They Do It?



EDDIE THE EAGLE ON OSN MOVIES HD

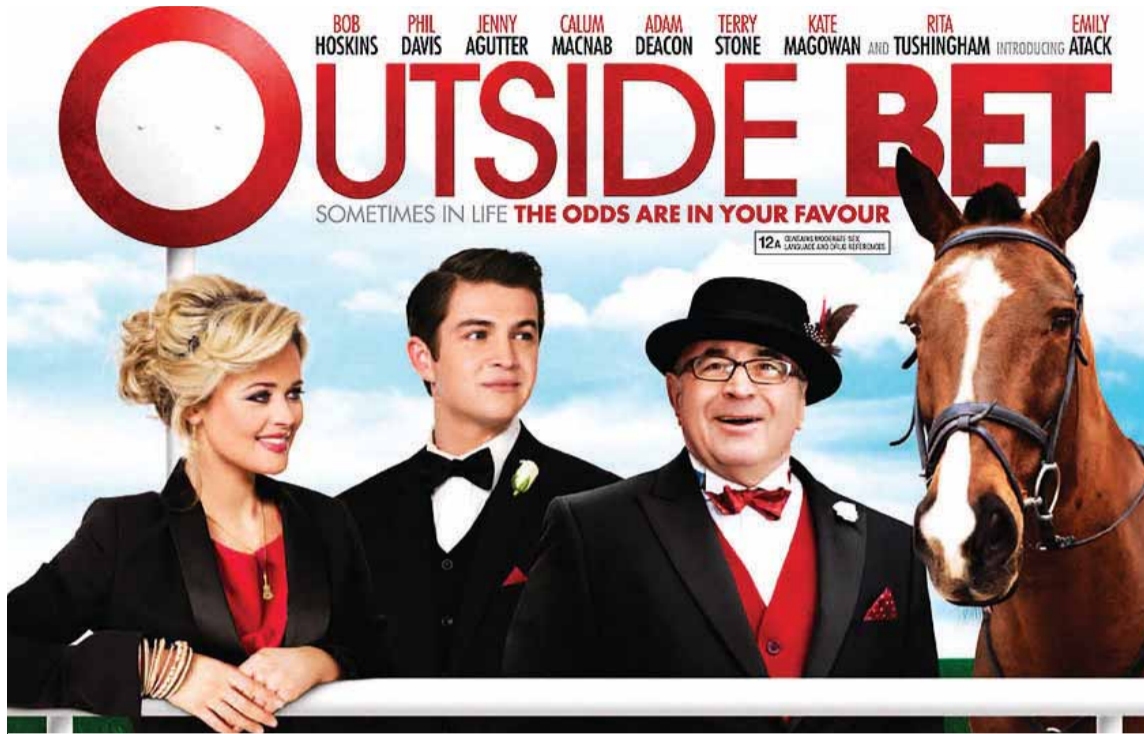
06:30 How Do They Do It?
 07:00 The Liquidator
 07:25 The Liquidator
 07:50 The Liquidator
 08:15 Auction Hunters
 08:40 The Liquidator
 09:05 How Do They Do It?
 09:30 How Do They Do It?
 09:55 How Do They Do It?
 10:20 How Do They Do It?
 10:45 How Do They Do It?
 11:10 Gold Rush
 12:00 Deadliest Catch
 13:40 Fast N' Loud
 14:30 Fast N' Loud
 15:20 Fast N' Loud
 16:10 Fast N' Loud
 17:00 Fast N' Loud
 17:50 The Island With Bear Grylls
 18:40 Bear Grylls: Mission Survive
 19:30 Impossible Engineering
 20:20 Legend Of Croc Gold
 21:10 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
 22:00 Sonic Sea
 22:50 Curse Of The Frozen Gold
 23:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier



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



00:00 E! News
 00:15 Famously Single
 01:05 Famously Single
 01:55 Famously Single
 02:50 E! News
 03:50 WAGs Miami
 04:45 WAGs Miami
 05:40 WAGs Miami
 06:30 Celebrity Style Story
 07:00 LA Clippers Dance Squad
 07:55 E! News
 08:10 LA Clippers Dance Squad
 09:10 E! News
 10:05 Fashion Police
 10:55 Botched
 11:45 Mariah's World
 12:35 Mariah's World
 13:25 Mariah's World
 14:15 E! News
 14:45 Celebrity Style Story
 15:15 Celebrity Style Story
 15:45 Celebrity Style Story
 16:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
 17:05 Live From The Red Carpet
 19:00 Fashion Police
 20:00 E! News
 21:00 Celebrity Style Story
 21:30 Celebrity Style Story
 22:00 Mariah's World
 23:00 Mariah's World



OUTSIDE BET ON OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY



00:00 Man Finds Food
 00:30 Man Finds Food
 01:00 Follow Donal... To Europe
 01:30 Follow Donal... To Europe
 02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 02:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 03:00 Man Fire Food
 03:30 Man Fire Food
 04:00 Chopped
 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
 06:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
 06:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
 07:00 Chopped
 08:00 Barefoot Contessa
 08:30 Barefoot Contessa
 09:00 The Pioneer Woman
 09:30 The Pioneer Woman
 10:00 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
 10:30 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
 11:00 Anna Olson: Bake
 11:30 Anna Olson: Bake
 12:00 Man Fire Food
 12:30 Man Fire Food
 13:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 13:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 14:00 Chopped
 15:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
 15:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
 16:00 The Pioneer Woman
 16:30 The Pioneer Woman
 17:00 Siba's Table
 17:30 Siba's Table
 18:00 Anna Olson: Bake
 18:30 Anna Olson: Bake
 19:00 Man Fire Food
 19:30 Man Fire Food
 20:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 20:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 21:00 Restaurant Stakeout
 22:00 Mystery Diners
 22:30 Mystery Diners
 23:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
 23:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives



00:15 Emmerdale
 00:40 Coronation Street
 01:10 The Chase
 02:00 Tracey Ullman's Show
 02:30 Emmerdale
 02:55 Emmerdale
 03:20 Emmerdale
 03:45 Emmerdale
 04:10 Emmerdale
 04:35 Emmerdale
 04:55 Coronation Street
 05:20 Coronation Street
 05:45 Coronation Street
 06:10 Coronation Street
 06:35 Coronation Street
 07:00 Endeavour
 08:35 Murdoch Mysteries
 09:25 Tonight At The London Palladium
 10:20 Grantchester

11:15 Grantchester
 12:10 Doctor Thorne
 13:00 Don't Tell The Bride
 14:00 Don't Tell The Bride
 15:05 The Jonathan Ross Show
 16:00 Surprise Surprise
 16:55 Endeavour
 18:25 Murdoch Mysteries
 19:15 Tonight At The London Palladium
 20:00 Don't Tell The Bride
 21:00 Surprise Surprise
 21:50 Doctor Thorne
 22:35 Endeavour



00:30 The Curse Of Oak Island
 01:20 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
 02:10 Leepu And Pitbull
 03:00 Fifth Gear
 03:50 Pawn Stars
 04:15 Pawn Stars South Africa
 04:40 Pawn Stars South Africa
 05:05 Pawn Stars Australia
 05:30 Pawn Stars Australia
 06:00 Mankind The Story Of All Of Us
 07:00 Storage Wars Texas
 07:25 Storage Wars Texas
 07:50 Pawn Stars South Africa
 08:15 Pawn Stars South Africa
 08:40 American Pickers
 09:30 American Restoration
 10:20 Leepu And Pitbull
 11:10 Fifth Gear
 12:00 Shipping Wars
 12:25 Shipping Wars
 12:50 Ice Road Truckers
 13:40 Ax Men
 14:30 Battle 360
 15:20 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
 16:10 The Curse Of Oak Island
 17:00 Storage Wars Texas
 17:25 Storage Wars Texas
 17:50 Counting Cars
 18:15 Car Hunters
 18:40 Pawn Stars
 19:05 Storage Wars: Best Of
 19:30 Mountain Men
 20:20 American Pickers
 21:10 American Pickers
 22:00 The Curse Of Oak Island
 22:50 Hunting Hitler
 23:40 President Obama: In His Own Words



00:20 A Is For Apple
 00:45 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
 01:35 Maximum Foodie
 02:00 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 02:25 The Food Files
 02:50 David Rocco's Dolce India
 03:15 David Rocco's Dolce India
 03:40 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
 04:05 Lucky Chow
 04:30 Grandma's Boy
 04:55 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea

05:45 Poh & Co
 06:10 Carnival Eats
 06:35 A Is For Apple
 07:00 A Is For Apple
 07:25 A Is For Apple
 07:50 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
 08:15 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
 09:05 Places We Go
 09:30 Places We Go
 09:55 The Wine Show
 10:45 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 11:10 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 11:35 Warrior Road Trip
 12:25 Street Food Around The World
 12:50 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
 13:15 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
 13:40 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 14:05 The Food Files
 14:35 David Rocco's Dolce India
 15:00 David Rocco's Dolce India
 15:30 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
 15:55 Maximum Foodie
 16:25 Delinquent Gourmet
 16:50 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
 17:45 Poh & Co
 18:15 Carnival Eats
 18:40 A Is For Apple
 19:10 A Is For Apple
 19:35 A Is For Apple
 20:05 Maximum Foodie
 20:30 Delinquent Gourmet
 21:00 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
 21:50 Poh & Co
 22:15 Carnival Eats
 22:40 A Is For Apple
 23:05 A Is For Apple
 23:30 A Is For Apple
 23:55 Sara's Australia Unveiled



00:20 Car SOS
 01:10 Locked Up Abroad
 02:00 The Border
 03:00 Pope vs Hitler
 04:50 Locked Up Abroad
 05:45 The Border
 06:40 Air Crash Investigation
 07:35 Seconds From Disaster
 08:30 Dog Whisperer
 09:25 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
 09:50 Desperate Hours
 10:20 Mission Critical
 11:15 Wicked Tuna
 12:10 Monster Fish
 13:05 Highway Thru Hell
 14:00 Rise Up: The Legacy Of Nat Turner
 15:00 Trekking The Great Wall
 16:00 Air Crash Investigation
 17:00 Mega Factories: Supercars
 18:00 Megastructures
 19:00 Ultimate Airport Dubai
 20:00 The Border
 21:00 Mega Factories: Supercars
 21:50 Megastructures
 22:40 Ultimate Airport Dubai
 23:30 The Border



00:30 Alien Crab
 01:20 Cat Fight
 02:10 Urban Jungle
 03:00 Rescue Ink
 03:50 Wild Galapagos
 04:45 Borneo's Secret Kingdom
 05:40 Deadly Instincts
 06:35 Urban Jungle
 07:30 Monster Fish
 08:25 Monster Fish
 09:20 Unlikely Animal Friends
 10:15 Ultimate Animals
 11:10 World's Weirdest: Animal Taboo
 12:05 Dr. Oakley: Yukon Vet
 13:00 Shark Men
 13:55 Rescue Ink
 14:50 Incredible! The Story Of Dr. Pol
 15:45 Wildebeeste: Born To Run
 16:40 Deadly Instincts
 17:35 Monster Fish
 18:30 Africa's Deadliest
 19:25 Dangerous Encounters
 20:20 Wildebeeste: Born To Run
 21:10 Deadly Instincts
 22:00 Monster Fish
 22:50 Africa's Deadliest
 23:40 Dangerous Encounters



DRAMA

00:00 Jayne Mansfield's Car
 02:00 The Beat Beneath My Feet
 04:00 Extracted
 06:00 Life Of A King
 08:00 The Better Angels
 10:00 6 Ways To Sundown
 12:00 The Beat Beneath My Feet
 14:00 Breaking Through
 16:00 Stolen From Suburbia
 18:00 6 Ways To Sundown
 20:00 Dying Of The Light
 22:00 The Kings Of Summer



FAMILY

00:15 Cars
 02:15 The Lizzie McGuire Movie
 04:00 Mary Poppins
 06:30 Secretariat
 08:30 Home On The Range
 10:00 Cars
 12:00 Secretariat
 14:00 Inside Out
 16:00 Toy Story 3
 18:00 The Chronicles Of Narnia: Voyage Of The Dawn...
 20:00 Pirates Of The Caribbean: Curse Of The Black Pearl
 22:30 Goosebumps



02:00 True Story
 04:00 Ride Along 2
 06:00 The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out Of Water
 07:45 The Best Of Me
 10:00 Ride Along 2
 11:45 Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials
 14:00 The Angry Birds Movie
 15:45 Daddy's Home
 17:30 Point Break
 19:30 Captain America: Civil War
 22:00 Eddie The Eagle



COMEDY

01:00 Please Give
 03:00 The Bad News Bears (2005)
 05:00 Crazy On The Outside
 07:00 The Golden Child
 09:00 The Bad News Bears (2005)
 11:00 Crazy On The Outside
 13:00 Baby's Day Out
 15:00 Outside Bet
 17:00 Parenthood
 19:00 Undercover Brother
 21:00 Playing It Cool
 23:00 The Night Before



TALENT HUNT COMPETITION (KG)

India International School Mangaf, KG Department conducted a "Talent Hunt" competition for their tiny tots to bring out the ocean of hidden talents amongst them. The sole intention was to nurture the intrinsic qualities of students and remove the fear of stage, and true to their talents they came, they

performed and they conquered everyone's heart by singing, acting, dancing, storytelling, making it even more difficult for the judges to perform their duty. With the venue beautifully set by the KG teachers under the guidance of the KG Head Nilofar Qazi the event was a huge success.



ZERO MOTORCYCLES POWERS UP FOR KUWAIT BIKE SHOW

New Generation Motorcycles (NGM) Kuwait's first electric dealership, is revved up and ready to go as the main sponsor of the Kuwait Riders Bike Show 2017 - the biggest motorcycle show in the GCC. NGM has a treat in store for bike enthusiasts at the show, they will be giving away a Zero SR motorcycle as the top raffle prize. The show, back for a seventh straight year, will feature numerous motorcycle brands from Kuwait and beyond. NGM, the region's first high-performance electric motorcycle dealership, is keen to show why the Zero motorcycle is more than a match for its petrol-powered counterparts.

Regarded as a global leader in electric motorcycles, Zero Motorcycles, has gained popularity in recent years. Powered by a lithium-ion power pack and single electric air-cooled motor, Zero Motorcycles have shown their capabilities by going up

against conventional motorcycles in various racing formats. Ali Faisal Al Mutawa, General Manager of New Generation Motorcycles, the exclusive distributor of Zero Motorcycles in Kuwait, said: "We are delighted to be partnering with the Kuwait Riders bike show as the main sponsor".

"The Zero Motorcycles have gained popularity in recent years with riders who appreciate high performance yet are eco-conscious and we are eager to demonstrate that at the show." Thousands of bike fans will converge on the parking area of the of Safir International Hotel for the 7th Kuwait Riders Bike Show, from February 1 to February 4. And New Generation Motorcycles will be on hand to show the advantages the Zero bikes have over their regular counterparts. For more information on the show visit [newgenerationmotorcycles](https://www.instagram.com/newgenerationmotorcycles) and [@kuwait_riderson](https://www.instagram.com/kuwait_riderson) Instagram.





JUMEIRAH MESSILAH BEACH HOTEL & SPA ANNOUNCES 'SPECIAL OFFER'

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa, Kuwait's idyllic resort, is delighted to announce its special offer for Kuwaiti nationals and residents to celebrate the joyous occasion of the National and Liberation days. The luxurious resort presents a special stay offer on 25th and 26th February starting. The offer includes buffet breakfast, lunch and dinner for two persons in Garden Cafe restaurant. Children between six and 12 years old will get a special price per meal while children under six years old will enjoy complimentary meals.

Additionally, the restaurant will showcase an array of traditionally prepared dishes inspired by authentic Kuwaiti cuisine in a vibrant ambiance and decoration reflecting the occasion. Hakan Petek, General Manager, said: "We take this momentous occasion as an

opportunity to offer a full board stay experience to our guests. We look forward to celebrating with them the National and Liberation days of Kuwait and extend our personalized services and traditional hospitality which reflect the values and culture this great country stands for".

With joyful celebrations come fun-packed activities for the hotel's younger guests. There is a lot to discover at The Sinbad Club and The Teen's Scene Club with a range of arts and crafts, the latest board games and video games along with a private cinema for fun movie nights. To commemorate these celebrations, the award-winning Talise Spa welcomes guests to experience the tailored Liberty Package offering 60-minute of therapeutic Thai and Balinese massage to energize and recharge the body.



WHO WANTS FOCUS ON CATCHING CANCER EARLY

LONDON: Late diagnosis of cancer leads to millions of people enduring needless suffering and premature death, and efforts to catch the disease earlier must be stepped up, the World Health Organization said yesterday.

In a report launched ahead of World Cancer Day on February 4, the WHO said it wanted to improve chances of survival for cancer patients by ensuring health services focus on diagnosing and treating the disease earlier. "Diagnosing cancer in late stages, and the inability to

provide treatment, condemns many people to unnecessary suffering and early death," said Etienne Krug, a WHO expert on chronic disease and cancer.

He said early diagnosis of cancer and prompt treatment, especially for breast, cervical and colorectal cancers, would lead to more people surviving the disease and cut treatment costs. "Detecting cancer early ... greatly reduces cancer's financial impact," the WHO report said. "Not only is the cost of treatment much less in cancer's early

stages, but people can also continue to work and support their families if they can access effective treatment in time."

Cancer is responsible for almost one in six deaths globally, according to the report. In 2010, the annual combined cost of healthcare and loss of productivity was estimated at \$1.16 trillion. More than 14 million people develop cancer every year, and this figure is projected to rise to more than 21 million by 2030. Some 8.8 million die of cancer each year.

The WHO acknowledged that the challenges were greater in poorer countries, where diagnostic services such as imaging, laboratory and pathology skills are rarer.

The health agency urged such countries to prioritise "basic, high-impact and low-cost cancer diagnosis and treatment services". It said it was important to reduce the number of cases where patients have to pay for care out of their own pockets - which stops many from seeking help. — Reuters



DENVER: In this Jan 31, 2017 photo, agriculture regulators from seven different states and Guam tour a Denver marijuana growing warehouse on a tour organized by the Colorado Department of Agriculture.— AP

WEED 101: COLORADO AGRICULTURE OFFICE SHARES POT KNOW-HOW A COMMERCIAL CROP IN NEED OF REGULATION

DENVER: North Carolina wants to know if marijuana could one day replace tobacco as a cash crop. Louisiana is wondering how pot holds up in high humidity. And Washington state has questions about water supplies for weed. Colorado agriculture officials this week briefed officials from about a dozen states - some that have legalized weed, others that joked their states will legalize pot "when hell freezes over" - to go over the basics of marijuana farming and swap stories about regulating a crop that the federal government still considers illegal.

The Colorado Department of Agriculture is also working on the world's first government-produced manual on how to grow marijuana. There's no shortage of how-to books catering to pot growers both in and out of the black market, but Colorado's forthcoming guidebook aims to apply established agronomy practices to the production of marijuana.

"When you start with no knowledge at all, it's rough," said Mitch Yergert, head of Colorado's Division of Plant Industry, an agency within the Agriculture Department

that regulates marijuana production. Yergert conceded that Colorado agriculture officials ignored marijuana entirely for more than a dozen years, from the time voters in the state approved medical pot in 2000 until recreational pot shops started opening in 2014.

"Nobody in our agency ever grew marijuana, so how are we supposed to develop best practices?" Yergert said. But marijuana's commercial popularity, coupled with increasing concern over pesticides and unsafe growing conditions, forced the Agriculture Department to stop considering marijuana a running joke and start seeing it as a commercial crop in need of regulation. Colorado sold about a billion dollars' worth of marijuana last year, making it a cash crop, the same as many others.

Now the state agriculture department is sharing what it has learned about weed with other agriculture departments. Speaking at a recent soil-conservation conference in Denver, Yergert briefed agriculture officials from other states about how to inspect marijuana and hemp growers, and just as important, how to regulate a

plant that remains illegal under federal law. "You kinda gotta get your mind around it," Yergert said. Yergert even took the agriculture officials on a tour of a large Denver pot-growing warehouse, where a marijuana grower showed them the plant's entire cycle, starting as clones in one room before getting transplanted to bigger and bigger tubs. The grower, Tim Cullen, also showed the agriculture officials how the plant is trimmed and its psychoactive buds dried for smoking. Finally, the farm regulators saw how marijuana waste - errant leaves and such - are rendered unusable before being thrown away.

'Looking at what's ahead'

"This is blowing my mind right now," said Erica Pangelinan of the Northern Guam Soil and Water Conservation District. Pangelinan was using her cell phone to snap photos of wooden frames used to hold drying marijuana. Guam allows medical marijuana, but many states on the tour don't. Still, the touring agriculture officials say they need to be prepared in case laws change to allow pot-growing at home. — AP

NOW TRUMP STIRS US SCIENTISTS TO MARCH

NEW YORK: US scientists will mark Earth Day by marching on Washington in protest at US President Donald Trump's stance on climate change and on science they consider under threat from ideology, organizers said on Thursday. "This long-simmering history of anti-science is on a freight train that's barreling down on all of us," said Kathleen Rogers, president of the Earth Day Network, the Washington-based non-profit that coordinates Earth Day. Since launching a website for the anti-Trump march on Monday, more than 40,000 people have registered interest, saying they planned to attend the march or a satellite event. Some 325,000 people have also liked a Facebook page announcing the "March for Science".

"The election of President Trump and the Republican party - which has adopted more often than not an anti-science platform - has certainly inspired some of the viral explosion that we've seen come out of this movement for a march for science," Ted Bordelon, acting spokesman for the march, said in a telephone interview with the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The march is planned for April 22 in downtown Washington - centered on the National Mall, a park bordered by Congress and the White House - in conjunction with the long-running, annual Earth Day environmental event.

It is the latest in a line of big protests staged to voice anger at the new Trump presidency and oppose his policies on everything from women to immigration. Last month, hundreds of thousands of people took to the same DC streets to greet the new presidency with a loud rebuke of an agenda many see as demeaning to women, Mexicans and Muslims.

Climate hoax

Organizers said the idea of a science march began as a casual conversation on a discussion website, Reddit, following Trump's surprise election. Scientists were alarmed that science may not drive policy-making under his leadership, said Bordelon, after Trump dismissed global warming as a hoax created by China to weaken US business. During his election campaign, Trump also promised to pull the United States out of the so-called Paris Agreement aimed at curbing global warming. Trump has since told the New York Times he has an "open mind" on the pact.

But Trump then shocked experts by picking Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, who has questioned the science of climate change, to head the US Environmental Protection Agency. Organisers said the march would span other scientific issues beyond global warming. Protesters will also make their voices heard on other areas of science they feel are under threat, from public health to federal funding for research. — Reuters

LAVA STREAM EXPLODING INTO OCEAN IN HAWAII

'THE MOST DRAMATIC FIREHOSE EVENT I'VE EVER WITNESSED'

HONOLULU: A dramatic "firehose" stream of molten lava continued to shoot out of a sea cliff Wednesday on Hawaii Island, splashing into the Pacific Ocean below and exploding upon impact. The massive Kilauea flow is coming from a lava tube at the Kamokuna ocean entry on the southeast side of the Big Island. The lava is gushing from a tube that was exposed when a huge, 26-acre lava delta collapsed into the ocean at the site on New Year's Eve. The collapse of the newly formed land triggered massive explosions and giant waves in the area.

The lava stream, dubbed a "firehose" flow because it shoots lava outward from the source, started out as a drizzle coming down the sea cliffs after the New Year collapse, but has recently increased in intensity. The molten lava is now arching out and falling about 70 feet to the ocean below. When the molten lava hits the cool seawater, it reacts, causing explosions that can throw large chunks of hot rock and debris inland, where people hike in to see the lava, and seaward, where tour boats cruise the shoreline.

Captains are constantly watching the cliffs and lava to keep their passengers safe, said tour boat owner Shane Turpin, who runs Lava Ocean Tours. "We've never had an incident," he said. "We're always watching for what the cliff is doing. Is it moving? Are the rocks rolling down the cliff? We can actually see the changes throughout the day." Turpin described this flow as a "special," saying it "is definitely the most dramatic firehose event I've ever witnessed in the last three decades of viewing lava."

On land, the National Park Service is responsible for visitor safety and has restricted the areas that people can go to view the flow, but Turpin said he sees people on the cliff edge where they shouldn't be on a daily basis. Lava bench collapses can happen at any time without warning and if someone was on the edge during a collapse "it would likely be a fatality," said Cindy Orlando, Superintendent of Hawaii Volcanoes National Park.

'Hot crack'

Despite signs and roped-off areas, people still cross the boundaries and go to the edge of the cliffs near the lava flow, Orlando said. Park rangers have recently issued citations to



In this photo provided by Shane Turpin, a "firehose" lava stream from Kilauea Volcano shoots out from a sea cliff on Hawaii's Big Island, Wednesday, Feb 1, 2017 as seen from a tour boat off the coast. — AP

people who cross into prohibited areas, but Orlando said it is nearly impossible to prevent everyone from breaking the rules. One of the biggest concerns is a large "hot crack" in the rock above the firehose flow, said USGS geologist Janet Babb. The crack runs parallel to the sea cliff and makes the surrounding land susceptible to collapse. When the large delta collapsed on December 31, it sent hot rocks and lava spatter flying into the air and giant waves outward.

"The seaward side of that crack could fall away," Babb, who works at the Hawaii Volcano Observatory, said. "That is of great concern because if it does, it's going to drop a lot of hot rock into the water and hot rock mixing with cool seawater makes for explosive interactions." The steam plume created

by the lava reaching the water is also a concern. "It's superheated steam laced with hydrochloric acid from the interaction with the seawater and has shards of volcanic glass," she said. "It's something to be avoided."

Babb said that this firehose event is unusual because it has lasted so long. Usually when a flow opens up like this, the lava quickly builds new land below and plugs the entry. "In this case, there's no evidence of a new delta is forming, which leads us to believe that the offshore topography there is very steep," Babb said. Kilauea has been erupting continuously since 1983, and the most recent vent flow that is reaching the ocean has been ongoing since last summer. "There's no indication of it slowing down or stopping," Babb said. — AP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم
Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368



**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

ACCOMMODATION

One room for rent in Hawally, kitchen and bathroom. Rent KD 120. Contact 66646229. (C 5263) 31-1-2017

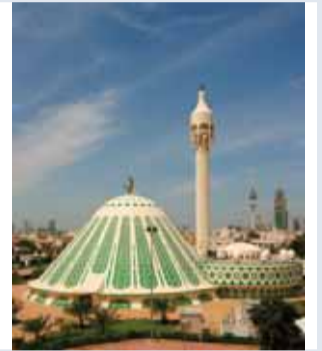
Sharing accommodation for Filipino Bachelor ONLY near Big Jamiya Farwaniya. Available already, Contact 66826412 or 97512782

EMERGENCY
112

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr: 05:15
Shorook 06:36
Duhr: 12:02
Asr: 15:07
Maghrib: 17:28
Isha: 18:47



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

WORDSEARCH PUZZLE

Insects

Find and circle all of the insects that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional insect.

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

- | | | |
|-------------|----------|------------|
| ANTS | EARWIG | MOSQUITO |
| APHID | FIREFLY | MOTH |
| BEDBUG | FLEA | SILKWORM |
| BEEBLE | FLIES | SILVERFISH |
| BUMBLEBEE | HORNET | TERMITE |
| BUTTERFLY | LACEWING | THRIP |
| CATERPILLAR | LADYBUG | TICKS |
| CICADA | LICE | WASP |
| COCKROACH | LOCUST | WEEVIL |
| CRICKET | MAYFLY | WORMS |
| DRAGONFLY | | |

Yesterday's Solution

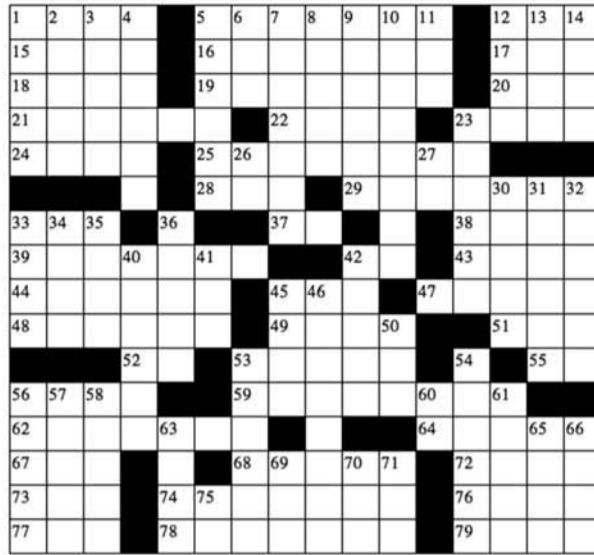
Human Skeleton & Organs

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 E 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 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 P 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 B S M B V R B L E
 A N A C U T R L D I L O R A U S R
 P E L H H 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 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: | Organs: | | |
| - CARPALS | - PATELLA | - APPENDIX | - LIVER |
| - CLAVICLE | - PHALANGES | - BLADDER | - LUNGS |
| - COCCYX | - RADIUS | - BRAIN | - PANCREAS |
| - CRANIUM | - RIBS | - GALLBLADDER | - SKIN |
| - FEMUR | - SACRUM | - GENITALS | - SPLEEN |
| - FIBULA | - SCAPULA | - HEART | - STOMACH |
| - HUMERUS | - STERNUM | - INTESTINES | - VOICE BOX |
| - INNOMINATE | - TARSALS | - KIDNEYS | |
| - MANDIBLE | - TIBIA | | |
| - METACARPALS | - ULNA | | |
| - METATARSALS | - VERTEBRA | | |

Hidden sentence: THE AVERAGE HUMAN ADULT SKELETON HAS TWO HUNDRED AND SIX BONES

CROSSWORD 1511



ACROSS

- The largest continent with 60% of the earth's population.
- A doctor's degree in dental surgery.
- Influential German idealist philosopher (1724-1804).
- Roman general who commanded the fleet that defeated the forces of Antony and Cleopatra at Actium (63-12 BC).
- A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
- Of or being the lowest female voice.
- Deliberately impassive in manner.
- The cry made by sheep.
- 3rd largest island in the world.
- Turn sharply.
- Small buffalo of the Celebes having small straight horns.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Vienna or its inhabitants.
- Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.
- Causing fear or dread or terror.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- A period of time containing 365 (or 366) days.
- Type genus of the Ranidae.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- The cardinal number that is the product of 10 and 100.
- A drug (trade names Atarax and Vistaril) used as a tranquilizer to treat anxiety and motion sickness.
- Capital of modern Macedonia.
- A housing for a radar antenna.
- Made of fir or pine.
- How long something has existed.
- A radioactive transuranic metallic element.
- A period of time equal to 1/24th of a day.
- God of fire.
- A program for a race meeting.
- Thick heavy expensive material with a raised pattern.
- A river that rises in central Germany and flows north to join the Elbe River.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- An alchemist of German legend who sold his soul to Mephistopheles in exchange for knowledge.
- A blemish made by dirt.
- An index of the cost of all goods and services to a typical consumer.
- A genus of Tettigoniidae.
- Any of various edible seeds of plants of the family Leguminosae.
- Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
- Characteristic of a baby.
- God of the Underworld.

DOWN

- Jordan's port.
- Gallery where works of art can be displayed.
- Formally making a person known to another or to the public.
- (music) Characterized by avoidance of traditional Western tonality.
- A city in Veneto.
- One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
- In a grave and sober manner.
- Become broader or wider or more extensive.
- Add to the very end.
- A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
- Imperial dynasty that ruled China (most of the time) from 206 BC to 221 and expanded its boundaries and developed its bureaucracy.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- An administrator in charge of a division of a university or college.
- Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
- A form of whist in which players avoid winning tricks containing hearts of the queen of spades.
- Being one more than one.
- A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.
- The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
- Enough to meet a purpose.
- An unskilled painter.
- The 2nd letter of the Greek alphabet.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- One who is playfully mischievous.
- Humorously sarcastic or mocking.
- An edge tool with a heavy bladed head mounted across a handle.
- With rapid movements.
- The content of cognition.
- Greek film actress (1925-1994).
- Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
- Manufactured in standard sizes to be shipped and assembled elsewhere.
- Perversely irritable.
- Any of various juicy purple- or green-skinned fruit of the genus Vitis.
- A water wheel with buckets attached to the rim.
- A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
- Indigo bush.
- According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
- A rich soil consisting of a mixture of sand and clay and decaying organic materials.
- An inactive volcano in Sicily.
- Make amends for.
- Type genus of the Suidae.
- Anterior pituitary hormone that stimulates the function of the thyroid gland.
- A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

AUSTRALIA TAKE COMMAND OVER CZECHS

MELBOURNE: Nick Kyrgios conceded just seven games in powering Australia to a 2-0 rubber lead over the Czech Republic after the first day of the Davis Cup World Group tie in Melbourne yesterday. The controversial world number 15 took just 95 minutes to reel off a 6-2, 6-3, 6-2 win over the 157th-ranked Jan Satral and consolidate Australia's grip on the tie on hardcourt at Kooyong.

Rookie Jordan Thompson upset Czech number one Jiri Vesely 6-3, 6-3, 6-4 in the opening singles match in two hours and six minutes. Thompson, 22 and ranked 65, made surprisingly light work of the 54th-ranked Vesely to sink the Czech Republic's hopes of

splitting the opening day singles. Kyrgios, who was fined US\$5,500 for swearing and throwing his racquet after a stormy second round exit to Andreas Seppi at last month's Australian Open, showed no signs of such volatile behavior under the watchful eye of Australia captain Lleyton Hewitt.

His big-hitting game overwhelmed the hapless Satral although he needed six match points to finally put away the Czech. Kyrgios won just his third live Davis Cup rubber for Australia following earlier victories in World Group play-off ties against Uzbekistan's Denis Istomin in 2014 and Andrej Martin in 2016. He improved his record to 5-3 in singles

rubbers against Satral, who was making his Davis Cup debut.

Thompson was handed his debut by captain Hewitt after the 27th-ranked Bernard Tomic made himself unavailable, citing scheduling issues, while Vesely took over as the top-ranked Czech player following the unavailability of world number ten Tomas Berdych. The young Australian began well with a break in the opening game and had few problems with the shaky Czech left-hander making five service breaks. "It's the biggest moment in my career, the summer has been pretty good, but playing for your country is amazing and getting us off to a 1-0

lead is even better," Thompson said. "There were some nerves at the start, but I was just glad the balls were coming off the racquet nicely." Vesely said ahead of the clash: "It's something new for me, I've never started a tie before so it's definitely a new experience for me." It is the eighth meeting in Davis Cup for the two nations with Australia leading 7-1. Australia won their last meeting 3-2 at the same stage two years ago in Ostrava. Australia lost in the first round last year, but defeated Slovakia in a play-off to maintain their World Group status, while Czech Republic reached last year's quarter-finals but fell to France. — AFP

IRAN BANS US WRESTLERS

TEHRAN: Iran yesterday banned US wrestlers from participating in the Freestyle World Cup competition this month in response to President Donald Trump's executive order forbidding visas for Iranians, according to an official IRNA news agency report. IRNA quoted Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi as saying a special committee reviewed the case and "Eventually the visit by the US freestyle wrestling team was opposed."

The decision marks the first action taken by Iran in response to Trump's executive order banning visas for seven Muslim countries. Earlier this week, Iran said it would take retaliatory action. Ghasemi said the policy of the new US administration left Iran no other choice but to ban the wrestlers. The competition in the western Iranian city of Kermanshah is scheduled for Feb 16-17. USA Wrestling had said it would send a team to the Freestyle World Cup, one of the most prestigious competitions in international wrestling.

US freestyle wrestlers have competed in Iran since the 1998 Takhti Cup in Tehran following an absence of nearly 20 years. Since then, Americans have attended Iran-hosted wrestling competitions 15 times. Iranians, for their part, have made 16 visits to the US as guests of USA Wrestling since the 1990s. The American athletes were warmly welcomed by Iranians and sport centers were packed as they appeared on the mats to compete. Wrestling is extremely popular in Iran and is rooted in an ancient practice of combining the sport with other physical education and meditation. — AP

WOODS WITHDRAWS FROM DUBAI-WITH BACK SPASM

DUBAI: Former world number one Tiger Woods has withdrawn from the EPGA Dubai Desert Classic before the start of the second round due to a back injury. A back spasm overnight failed to subside forcing the 14-time major winner to concede he could not compete as his comeback struggles continue. The 41-year-old Woods shot a five-over par 77 on Thursday but insisted he wasn't in any pain. "No, I wasn't in pain at all. I was just trying to hit shots and I wasn't doing a very good job," the American said. His manager Mark Steinberg told reporters in Dubai that it wasn't the nerve issue that kept Woods out of the game for 16 months before his return late last year, but back spasms.

"He felt okay coming off the golf course yesterday (Thursday). So he wasn't in pain. I didn't see him at dinner, but he said he was okay," explained Steinberg. "He then went into a spasm in his lower back, fairly late last night after dinner. He tried to work it out last night. Didn't really get it worked out. Had treatment starting pretty early this morning, for probably the past three, three-and-a-half hours, and he can't get the spasm to settle. He says it's not the nerve pain that's kept him out for so long. He says it's a back spasm and he just can't get the spasm to calm down. So that's where we are."

"He talked to Matthew (Fitzpatrick) and Danny (Willett), and he feels terrible for the tournament. "He can move around. But he can't make a full rotation on the swing." Woods was scheduled to take a week off after Dubai and then play two successive weeks on the PGA Tour-at the Genesis Open and Honda Classic. But Steinberg did not comment about Woods' status for those two tournaments. "I think spasms are a funny thing. I'm certainly no doctor but they come and go. And again, the fact that he feels as though it's not the nerve pain, that's very encouraging for him," he added. — AFP



TOKYO: Richard Gasquet of France hits a return against Taro Daniel of Japan during their Davis Cup tennis world group first round match between Japan and France in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

FRANCE BATTER JAPAN IN DAVIS CUP SINGLES

TOKYO: France took an early stranglehold on their Davis Cup first-round tie against Japan yesterday as Richard Gasquet and Gilles Simon dominated the opening day's singles matches. Former Wimbledon semi-finalist Gasquet swept past Taro Daniel 6-2, 6-3, 6-2 in Tokyo before Simon overpowered Yoshihito Nishioka 6-3, 6-3, 6-4 to put the visitors firmly in control of the World group clash. "It was difficult today from the first point," insisted world number 24 Simon, despite considerable evidence to the contrary.

"I was moving good and hitting well and found a good rhythm," he added after giving Yannick Noah's French

team a 2-0 lead. "Two wins in straight sets, nothing to complain about-but we have to stay ready in the doubles tomorrow." World number 18 Gasquet was gifted victory after two hours when Daniel coughed up a seventh double-fault of the match.

"I'm in great shape. Today was a great match for me," purred the Frenchman. "I was the favorite but I've lost a few matches against guys ranked in the 100s. There can always be surprises so you have to get the job done." Japan never seriously posed a threat in the absence of world number five Kei Nishikori.

The home side's hopes now hang

by a thread and Wimbledon champions Pierre-Hugues Herbert and Nicolas Mahut will look to complete the victory when they take on Yuichi Sugita and Yasutaka Uchiyama in today's doubles. "I'm pretty confident for the doubles tomorrow," said Simon.

"But in tennis you never know so we have to stay focused." France have won all three of their previous Davis Cup meetings with Japan, the last of those coming at Roland Garros in 1981. Japan's best Davis Cup result was a runner-up finish in 1921.

They returned to the World Group in 2011 after 26 years languishing at the regional level. — AFP

BLACKHAWKS DOWN COYOTES 4-3

SHARKS' MARLEAU SCORES 500TH GOAL IN WIN OVER CANUCKS

GLENDAL: Patrick Kane had a goal and an assist, Duncan Keith added two assists and the Chicago Blackhawks defeated the Arizona Coyotes 4-3 on Thursday night to stop a three-game slide. Chicago led twice by three goals but gave up three in the second period and had to hold on. Ryan Hartman, Marian Hossa and Artemi Panarin also scored for the Blackhawks, and Corey Crawford made 24 saves. Christian Dvorak and Brendan Perlini each had a goal and an assist for the Coyotes. Oliver Ekman-Larsson also scored for Arizona. The Blackhawks scored twice in 72 seconds during the first period.

SHARKS 4, CANUCKS 1

Patrick Marleau scored his 500th career goal, Chris Tierney tallied twice and the surging San Jose Sharks defeated the Vancouver Canucks 4-1 on Thursday night. Brent Burns added a goal and an assist for the Sharks, and Martin Jones made 32 saves. San Jose improved to 8-1-0 over its last nine games to sit three points up on Anaheim for first place in the Pacific Division. Philip Larsen scored for the Canucks, who got 28 saves from Ryan Miller. Vancouver lost in regulation at home for the first time since Dec 22, snapping a 7-0-1 run at Rogers Arena. The Canucks remained three points back of Calgary for the second wild-card spot in the Western Conference. Vancouver has two games in hand.

FLYERS 3, CANADIENS 1

Matt Read scored the tiebreaking goal early in the third period to end his long drought and lead Philadelphia over Montreal. Claude Giroux also scored and Sean Couturier had an empty-netter in the final seconds for the Flyers, who opened a five-game homestand - their longest of the season - by winning their fourth in the last five. Nikita Nesterov scored for the Atlantic Division-leading Canadiens. Montreal's 16 shots were a season low and marked the fewest Philadelphia has allowed in a game this season. Read scored his first goal since Nov. 3, beating Carey Price off a setup by Couturier. Michal Neuvirth made 15 saves to help the Flyers improve to 10-0-1 in their last 11 home games against Montreal.

RANGERS 2, SABRES 1, OT

Chris Kreider scored 3:56 into overtime and New York beat Buffalo to snap a two-game skid. Mats Zuccarello scored in regulation and Henrik Lundqvist stopped 36 shots, including two in the extra period, for the Rangers. JT Miller assisted on both goals to help New York get its NHL-leading 18th road win, including 11 in the last 13 games away from home. On the winning goal, Kreider took a pass from Miller and buried a wrist shot from the right circle for his 20th of the season. Cody Franson scored and Robin Lehner stopped 42 shots for the Sabres, who have lost three straight. Buffalo beat New York in two earlier meetings this season and was trying for its first sweep of the Rangers since the 2006-07 season.

SENATORS 5, LIGHTNING 2

Mark Stone had two goals and an assist, Mike Condon



ARIZONA: Chicago Blackhawks left wing Richard Panik (14) shields Arizona Coyotes defenseman Luke Schenn from the puck in the first period during an NHL hockey game on Thursday, Feb. 2, 2017 in Glendale, Ariz. — AP

made 19 saves and Ottawa beat Tampa Bay in coach Guy Boucher's return to the area. The Senators, second in the Atlantic Division, also got goals from Kyle Turris, Mike Hoffman and Chris Kelly. Boucher was behind the bench in Tampa for the first time since being fired by the Lightning midway through the 2012-13 season. He led Tampa Bay to the Eastern Conference finals in 2011. Tyler Johnson and Brayden Point scored for the Lightning, who have lost 11 of 14 (3-9-2). Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 25 shots.

PREDATORS 2, OILERS 0

Pekka Rinne stopped 31 shots for his 42nd career shutout, leading Nashville past Edmonton. Viktor Arvidsson and Ryan Johansen each had a goal and an assist to help the Predators win for the second time in three games. Cam Talbot made 25 saves for Edmonton, which has lost two straight. Rinne, who had his second shutout of the season, beat the Oilers for the eighth straight time - including three shutouts.

JETS 4, STARS 3

Mark Scheifele scored two more goals against Dallas to propel Winnipeg to its season-best third straight victory, all

on the road. Dallas led 2-1 until Scheifele tied the game with 53 seconds left in the first period. He gave the Jets a 3-2 lead during a 5-on-3 power play 5:56 into the second. Scheifele has five goals in four games between the teams this season. He has a seven-game point streak against the Stars, with seven goals and seven assists. Bryan Little gave Winnipeg a 1-0 lead 6:50 into the game. Dallas' John Klingberg and Jamie Benn scored barely two minutes apart midway through the first period. Nikolaj Ehlers also scored in the second for the Jets. Patrick Eaves scored at 17:58 to pull the Stars to 4-3. Jets goalie Ondrej Pavelec made 39 saves as the Stars put a season-high 42 shots on goal. Dallas' Kari Lehtonen had 25 saves.

BLUES 5, MAPLE LEAFS 1

Paul Stastny scored twice and Jake Allen stopped 26 shots for his first victory in more than a month to lead St. Louis over Toronto. Vladimir Tarasenko, Alexander Steen and Colton Parayko also scored for St. Louis, which had lost five of six. Mike Yeo won in his first game as Blues coach, a day after he took over when Ken Hitchcock was fired. Mitchell Marner scored for the Maple Leafs, who fell to 1-3 on their season-high six-game road trip. — AP

TOM BRADY - THE GREATEST?

HOUSTON: With four Super Bowl wins in a career which has spanned 16 seasons, Tom Brady has already earned the right to be regarded as one of the quarterback greats. Will one more on Sunday make him the greatest? It's a subjective question, the answer depending on your definition. But a growing band of former players and coaches believe Brady will stand alone if he manages to lead the New England Patriots to victory over the Atlanta Falcons.

One more win on Sunday will take him clear of his boyhood idol Joe Montana and Pittsburgh Steelers great Terry Bradshaw, who also have four Super Bowl rings. "I think if Tom wins this game, and I never thought I'd say this, he surpasses Joe Montana as the greatest ever," said Green Bay Packers legend Brett

Favre. "Right now, in my opinion he and Joe Montana are a dead heat." Others say Brady is already firmly into G.O.A.T territory, irrespective of Sunday's result.

THE GREATEST

"I see the greatest quarterback that's ever played the game of professional football," said former Washington Redskins quarterback Joe Theismann. "And I don't think he needs to win this Super Bowl to be considered that," Theismann added. The Baltimore Ravens' two-time Super Bowl winner Ray Lewis agreed. "People can hate on him, y'all can be mad at him, but he's the best quarterback we've ever seen," Lewis said. Brady himself has declined invitations to join the debate on his place in the

quarterback pantheon. "I don't think anything about, you know, 'personal legacy,'" Brady told reporters. "Those words never even come out of my mouth unless I've repeated them. Those things have never been important to me."

Brady instead has maintained a singular focus on the job in hand as he aims to crown a season which began with a four-game suspension following the Deflategate saga with the sweetest revenge of all. Brady's simmering feud with National Football League commissioner Roger Goodell over the affair has provided the most alluring sub-plot of this year's Super Bowl. Publicly, Brady insists he has put Deflategate behind him, maintaining that loyalty to his team-mates rather than exacting revenge on Goodell is his priority. "This is my motivation-

these fellows right in front of me," Brady said after the Patriots destroyed the Pittsburgh Steelers to seal their place in the Super Bowl two weeks ago. "We'll see if we can write the perfect ending."

RELENTLESS DRIVE

Yet given the quarterback's drive, it is hard to imagine he has simply "moved on" from the scandal, as he told reporters following his return from suspension last October. This is, after all, an individual who has built a career out of a determination to prove others wrong, often successfully. At the University of Michigan, he once threatened to transfer colleges, in frustration at not getting game time, before deciding to stay. — AFP



KUWAIT REIGNS AT THE SIXTH INTERNATIONAL GRAND PRIX

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Sixth International Grand Prix came to a close on Thursday at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex with the participation of more than 650 shooters. Kuwait topped the medals table with a total of 20 (7 gold, 6 silver, 7 bronze), seconded by Saudi Arabia with 9 medals (4 gold, 2 silver, 3 bronze). Qatar took the third position with (2 gold, 6 silver, 3 bronze);

4th - Bahrain with (4 gold, 3 silver, 2 bronze); 5th - UAE with (3 gold, 2 bronze); 6th - Oman with 1 gold (3 silver, 5 bronze); 7th - Tunisia with (1 gold, 1 bronze); 8th- Egypt and Morocco with one gold each; 9th - Lebanon with two silver; 10th - Iraq with one silver and 11th- Jordan with two bronze.

The final day of competitions saw four events including the Double Trap Men teams in which the UAE won the gold medal, while Kuwait took silver while Qatar grabbed the bronze. In the Men's Individual Double Trap, Qatar's

Hamad Almerri took first place and the gold medal while Kuwait's SaadLafi took the silver. UAE's Khalid Al-Kaabi won the bronze medal.

In the 50-Meter Prone Rifle team event, Oman was first with 1824.1 points, followed by Bahrain with 1820.9 points and Saudi Arabia with 1813 points respectively. In the 50-Meter Prone Rifle Men Individual event, Bahrain's Salman Zaman took the first position with 205.3 points; Oman's Esam Al-Beloushi (second) had 202.6 points while his compatriot Younis Al-Hanthali (third) grabbed 181.2 points.



SPURS' POPOVICH TIES NBA'S MARK

WARRIORS OVERPOWER CLIPPERS 133-120

SAN ANTONIO: Gregg Popovich tied the NBA record for the most career wins with a single franchise, earning his 1,127th in the San Antonio Spurs' 102-86 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on Thursday night. Popovich matched Jerry Sloan of Utah for the league mark as San Antonio had 15 steals and forced 23 turnovers, both season highs, in winning its 12th straight at home over Philadelphia and 11th straight overall against the 76ers. Kawhi Leonard scored 19 points and Dewayne Dedmon had 13 points and 10 rebounds for his second double-double for the Spurs. The frontcourts for both teams were depleted, with San Antonio missing LaMarcus Aldridge and Pau Gasol, and Philadelphia without Joel Embiid, Nerlens Noel and Robert Covington. Aldridge and Embiid were both late scratches with minor knee ailments. The 76ers' frontcourt got 25 points and 10 rebounds from Ersan Ilyasova, and Dario Saric added 14 points.

WARRIORS 133, CLIPPERS 120

Stephen Curry scored 29 points despite making just three 3-pointers, Kevin Durant added 26 points and 10 assists, and the Golden State Warriors defeated the Los

Angeles Clippers for their fifth straight victory. Blake Griffin had 31 points, making 11 of 13 free throws, for the Clippers. They have lost nine in a row to their Bay Area opponents, the franchise's longest active skid against a single team. The rematch wasn't the debacle that occurred last weekend when the Clippers lost by 46 points at Golden State. But they still never led and trailed by 21. The Clippers got beat in every category despite Griffin's hard-charging effort. The Warriors were dominant in the paint, on second-chance points and fastbreak points. Golden State has won 11 of its last 12.

HAWKS 113, ROCKETS 108

Dwight Howard scored 24 points and grabbed 23 rebounds in his first game back in Houston since signing with Atlanta in the offseason, leading the Hawks past the Rockets. Tim Hardaway Jr had 33 points for Atlanta, including a driving dunk with less than a minute remaining that gave Atlanta a three-point lead. The Hawks trailed by as many as 20 points and entered the fourth quarter down 13 before Howard led a late comeback. James Harden had 41 points, eight assists and eight rebounds, but the Rockets

struggled to make shots down the stretch. Clint Capela had 22 points and nine rebounds. Howard, who spent the last three seasons in Houston, received a mostly warm welcome by the Toyota Center crowd, with some light, scattered boos.

WIZARDS 116, LAKERS 108

John Wall scored 33 points and had 11 assists, Bradley Beal added 23 points and Marcin Gortat tied his season high with 21 to lead the Washington Wizards to their sixth straight win. It marks Washington's first six-game winning streak since Dec 8-19, 2014. The Wizards have also won 16 straight at home - the second-longest run in franchise history. Jordan Clarkson led Los Angeles with 20 points. Washington had a 14-point lead, 86-72 with 2:37 to play in the third quarter, but the Lakers, who have lost nine of 11, tied it at 91 with 9:10 to play. Wall, who scored 16 points in the fourth quarter, including the Wizards' final eight, sealed the win with a steal with 1:18 to play. He converted a jumper with 1:06 left, another with 38 seconds remaining and added four late free throws. —AP

BASKETBALL TO PERMIT RELIGIOUS HEADGEAR

NEW YORK: The international group that governs basketball is close to eliminating a longstanding ban on religious headgear in competition, clearing the way for athletes to wear hijabs and yarmulkes in international competitions. FIBA told its playing rules committee at a recent meeting to create a proposal that outlines how headgear can be worn safely during games. The goal is to approve the changes at a meeting in May, the organization announced earlier this week.

The move comes following a two-year study and not long after a letter published on social media and sent to FIBA president Horacio Muratore. It called for the end of the rule, and was signed by a dozen WNBA players including Breanna Stewart, tennis greats Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova and US Olympic fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad. "I am a Muslim, and I think anybody should have the right (to wear headgear)," said Nuggets forward Kenneth Faried, who also signed the letter and won a gold medal with the US in the 2014 Basketball World Cup. "Jewish - hey, if you're Gothic, whatever your religion is, Muslim, Christian, Catholic, it doesn't matter. You should be able to support your religion and wear whatever it is part of your religion."

The rule banning religious headgear was enacted 20 years ago and wasn't meant as a ban against any religion, and stood without complaint until recently. Some groups have interpreted the provisions of the rules on uniforms as a ban against the participation of players of certain faiths. According to FIBA, headgear was banned for safety reasons in case it fell off and someone would slip on it or become entangled.



MINNEAPOLIS: East African Muslim girls practice basketball in their new uniforms in Minneapolis. International basketball competitions could have players wearing religious headgear including hijabs and yarmulkes soon. —AP

Other sports have already relaxed such regulations. The International Football Association Board, soccer's governing body, in 2012 approved headscarves for women Muslim players, reversing a ban that had been enforced since 2007. FIFA, soccer's governing body, said the following year that men could wear head covers during matches, provided they were the same color as the jersey, had a "professional appearance" and did not "pose any danger."

"I am against discrimination in all forms and the headgear ban serves to discriminate based on religion and unfairly impacts the participation of

women and girls," Stewart said. "There is no legitimate safety concern, so why have it? Sports should be accessible to everyone and we have the opportunity as a basketball community to lead the way in that effort so we should." Athlete Ally - an organization dedicated to end homophobia and transphobia in sports and educate athletic communities to stand up against anti-LGBT discrimination - joined with Shirzanan, a media and advocacy organization for Muslim female athletes, to send the letter to FIBA on Jan 25, urging leaders to "immediately lift the ban on religious headgear." —AP

NFL PLAYERS ASSOCIATION VOWS TO STAND BY MUSLIM MEMBERS

HOUSTON: The NFL Players Association vowed on Thursday to stand by their Muslim members a day after NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell dodged a question on the matter when asked about US President Donald Trump's temporary travel ban. "Our Muslim brothers that are in our league, we have their backs. We're going to do whatever we can. And I'll go stand with them," NFLPA president and Cincinnati Bengals tackle said at the union's Super Bowl news conference.

"If people want to come and harass their family or whatever I'll be there with them." Winston said it seemed to him "that we're starting to turn away from our values as a country." "These guys that are players in the National Football League, their families are our families. And I take that seriously. They're our brothers and we will stand with them."

NFLPA Executive Director DeMaurice Smith added: "We notified and sent information to all those families who are members of the NFL that if they need anything from their union, that we're there." There are about a dozen Muslim players in the NFL, according to NFLPA assistant executive director George Atallah. Trump issued an executive order last week temporarily banning citizens from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen from entering the United States and placed an indefinite ban on Syrian refugees.

Goodell declined to clarify the NFL's position on the ban at his state of the league address on Wednesday. Wide receiver Mohamed Sanu of the Atlanta Falcons is the only Muslim playing in Sunday's Super Bowl, which also features the New England Patriots. "That's a very tough situation," the 27-year-old Sanu, who spent time growing up in Sierra Leone, said of the immigration ban at the Super Bowl Opening Night event. "I just pray that us as a country and a world can just be united as one." —Reuters

German League Preview

NEUER WARNS MISFIRING BAYERN

BERLIN: Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer has warned misfiring Bundesliga leaders Bayern Munich that they must rediscover their form against Schalke today following lacklustre back-to-back displays in 2017. Bayern labored to 2-1 league wins at both Freiburg and Werder Bremen in the last fortnight to stay three-points clear of RB Leipzig. Carlo Ancelotti's Bayern have failed to fire since flooring Leipzig 3-0 at home in December.

Neuer says the Bavarian giants must step up before their last 16, first leg, of the Champions League at home to Arsenal in two weeks-starting against his ex-club Schalke, who are 11th. "We know we have important games ahead," said Neuer, who was born in Gelsenkirchen. "We're determined to play better football and want to show it in our first home game of the year." Mid-table Schalke are struggling for form with just one win in their last six games with coach Markus Weinzierl under pressure.

"Schalke are standing with their backs against the wall. This is a dangerous match as, from Schalke's point of view, a win over Bayern would make a lot of things good again," warned Neuer. Bayern could face their Germany defender Holger Badstuber, who is on loan to Schalke, but has been on the bench so far. Bayern are set to welcome back captain Philipp Lahm and midfielder Arturo Vidal after injury, but are without defender Jerome Boateng (shoulder) and Franck Ribery (thigh).

TENSION IN DORTMUND

Tensions will be high for Borussia Dortmund's home clash against second-placed Leipzig. Leipzig, who were only founded in 2009, are sponsored by Austrian energy drinks giants Red Bull. Dortmund's hardcore 'Ultra' supporters are planning protests during the match against the

commercialism RB represent. Leipzig's chairman Oliver Mintzlaff has upped the ante by saying he is 'not sad' Dortmund coach Thomas Tuchel turned Leipzig down in mid 2015. At the start of the season, Dortmund's CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke described RB as 'performing cans', created to sell drinks, words he later had cause to regret as Dortmund lost 1-0 at Leipzig's Red Bull Arena in September.

"If that was true, then 11 'cans' beat 11 'bottles', which in German (slang) means 'someone who played poorly,'" Leipzig's director of sport Ralph Rangnick retorted in December. Leipzig will be without top-scorer Timo Werner, who has netted 11 goals this season. He is laid low with flu, while coach Ralph Hasenhuetl has recovered after also contracting the virus. Dortmund have told star striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang to tone down any talk of leaving in June after giving interviews when he said he may quit to take his career 'to the next level'.

WOLFSBURG'S NEW RECRUITS

Having spent 33 million euros (\$35.7m) on new recruits in January's transfer window-the most in the Bundesliga-Wolfsburg are hoping to see some return at home to Cologne today to climb up from 14th. Coach Valerien Ismael hopes to have ex-Fulham midfielder Ashkan Dejagah, who signed from Doha-based Al-Arabi, available if the necessary paperwork is done in time. Wolfsburg also signed goal-scoring attacking midfielder Yunus Malli from Mainz, central midfielder Riechedly Bazoer from Ajax and France forward Paul-Georges Ntep, but stumbled to a 2-1 defeat at home to Augsburg last weekend. Having been the last team in a European league to lose their unbeaten record with a 2-1 defeat at Leipzig last weekend, fifth-

German Bundesliga table							
BERLIN: German Bundesliga table ahead of this weekend's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Bayern Munich	18	14	3	1	42	11	45
RB Leipzig	18	13	3	2	36	16	42
Eintracht Frankfurt	18	9	5	4	23	15	32
Borussia Dortmund	18	8	7	3	38	21	31
Hoffenheim	18	7	10	1	31	19	31
Hertha Berlin	18	9	3	6	26	21	30
Cologne	18	7	8	3	27	16	29
Freiburg	18	8	2	8	24	30	26
Bayer Leverkusen	18	7	3	8	28	28	24
Mainz 05	18	6	4	8	27	31	22
Schalke 04	18	6	3	9	21	20	21
Augsburg	18	5	6	7	15	20	21
Moenchengladbach	18	5	5	8	18	27	20
VfL Wolfsburg	18	5	4	9	17	26	19
Werder Bremen	18	4	4	10	22	38	16
Ingolstadt 04	18	4	3	11	17	29	15
Hamburg	18	3	4	11	15	35	13
Darmstadt	18	2	3	13	12	36	9

placed Hoffenheim host Mainz today. Hoffenheim are without suspended striker Sandro Wagner, who was sent off at Leipzig, while Mainz's new signing, ex-Barcelona forward Bojan Krkic could make his debut having signed on loan from Stoke City. —AFP

Spanish Copa Del Rey

ALAVES HOLD CELTA 0-0

MADRID: Surprising Alaves moved within a win of its most important soccer moment in nearly 16 years by holding Celta Vigo to a scoreless draw in the first leg of the Copa del Rey semifinals on Thursday. A home victory next week in Basque Country will put the small club back in a major final for the first time since it lost to Liverpool in the decisive game of the 2001 UEFA Cup.

"It was important to get a good result here, and we leave with a very good one," Alaves goalkeeper Fernando Pacheco said. "Now we will be playing in our home, with our fans behind us." Alaves was promoted to the top flight this season after 10 years in Spain's lower divisions, including four in the third tier. "We leave with the feeling that at home we can achieve our goal," Alaves coach Mauricio Pellegrino said. "We are much stronger there." The Basque Country club has never made it to the Copa final. The winner of the return game on Wednesday will face two-time defending champion Barcelona or Atletico Madrid. Barcelona won 2-1 in Madrid on Wednesday.

It was a lackluster start in Vigo, with few scoring chances created by either side under steady rain at Balaidos Stadium. Celta striker Iago Aspas had the best chances for the hosts in the second half, first with a dangerous strike saved by Pacheco in the 58th minute, and then with a powerful shot that struck the crossbar in the 67th. Celta midfielder Pablo Hernandez also was denied by the woodwork in the 87th. Alaves, sitting 12th in the league, had its best opportunity before halftime, when a close-range flick by midfielder Manu Garcia was remarkably saved by Celta goalkeeper Sergio Alvarez. Celta, a four-time runner-up in the Copa, is trying to return to the final for the first time since 2001. —AP

Italian League Preview

NEW-LOOK JUVE AWAIT RESURGENT INTER MILAN

MILAN: Fit-again Claudio Marchisio could be restricted to starting on the bench as Massimiliano Allegri's new-look Juventus bid to stretch their 27-game unbeaten run at home against Inter Milan tomorrow. Allegri has both midfielder Marchisio and key defender Andrea Barzagli back from injury lay-offs that have hampered their bid for a record sixth straight Serie A title.

After conceding only two defeats in a tough two-month period, the Turin giants host Stefano Pioli's resurgent Inter armed with a four-point lead on Roma in second, and a

told Inter Channel. "It's going to be my first match against Juventus and it will obviously be difficult. They're the strongest team in the league but we're going there looking for a result.

"A win would send a message to the rest of the league about our top three ambitions." Napoli will leapfrog Roma who host Fiorentina Tuesday in a fixture moved due to security concerns-into second place to sit three points behind Juventus with a win at Bologna in Saturday's only fixture. Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri welcomes defender Kalidou Koulibaly back from the African Cup of Nations although the fans' biggest cheer could be reserved for Polish striker Arkadiusz Milik, who has fully recovered from a cruciate knee ligament injury suffered last October.

Belgian midfielder Dries Mertens has deputized admirably well after being pushed up to replace Milik, taking his goals tally to 13 in the process, and is likely to start what should be an enticing fixture. Bologna v Napoli traditionally produces fireworks, the sides claiming four wins apiece and playing to a 2-2 draw in their last nine meetings at the Dall'Ara stadium. After dropping a "precious two points" in a disappointing draw with Palermo last weekend, Napoli midfielder Marek Hamsik said: "Not winning that game was a blow, but our focus has be right on the next game, against Bologna."

AC Milan coach Vincenzo Montella meanwhile faces a defensive crisis ahead of Saturday's San Siro clash with Sampdoria, with Luca Antonelli and Mattia De Sciglio both ruled out for up to a month and compounding woes after midfieler Giacomo Bonaventura's season was ended by a torn thigh muscle. Successful losses to Napoli and Udinese have battered Milan's Euro qualification hopes and they sit seventh, 14 points behind Juventus and eight points behind Napoli in third. Lazio are in the same boat, consecutive defeats to Juventus and Chievo dropping Simone Inzaghi's tiring side to fifth at 11 points behind Juve ahead of tomorrow's trip to Pescara. —AFP

Italian Serie A table							
MILAN: Italian Serie A table ahead of weekend fixtures (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):							
Juventus	21	17	0	4	44	16	51
Roma	22	15	2	5	44	21	47
Napoli	22	13	6	3	48	25	45
Inter Milan	22	13	3	6	37	23	42
Lazio	22	12	4	6	35	25	40
Atalanta	22	12	3	7	34	25	39
AC Milan	21	11	4	6	32	26	37
Fiorentina	22	10	7	5	38	29	37
Torino	22	8	7	7	39	32	31
Udinese	22	8	4	10	27	29	28
Chievo	22	8	4	10	22	30	28
Sampdoria	22	7	6	9	25	29	27
Bologna	21	7	6	8	21	26	27
Cagliari	22	8	3	11	32	46	27
Genoa	22	6	7	9	27	32	25
Sassuolo	22	7	3	12	31	37	24
Empoli	22	5	6	11	13	30	21
Crotone	21	3	4	14	20	37	13
Palermo	22	2	5	15	18	42	11
Pescara	22	1	6	15	17	44	9

French League Preview

MONACO PLOT NICE REVENGE

French Ligue 1 Table

PARIS: French Ligue 1 table ahead of the weekend matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Monaco	22	15	4	3	65	22	49
Nice	22	14	7	1	38	15	49
Paris SG	22	14	4	4	42	16	46
Lyon	21	12	1	8	40	25	37
Saint-Etienne	22	8	9	5	24	18	33
Marseille	22	9	6	7	29	27	33
Bordeaux	22	8	8	6	24	27	32
Guingamp	22	8	7	7	28	26	31
Rennes	22	8	6	8	22	26	30
Toulouse	22	7	5	10	22	26	26
Lille	22	7	5	10	21	27	26
Nantes	22	7	5	10	15	29	26
Dijon	22	5	9	8	30	32	24
Nancy	21	6	6	9	16	25	24
Montpellier	22	5	8	9	30	39	23
Angers	22	6	5	11	19	28	23
Bastia	22	5	7	10	19	26	22
Caen	21	6	4	11	24	36	22
Metz	21	6	5	10	21	38	21
Lorient	22	5	3	14	25	46	18

Note: Metz deducted two points.

PARIS: Free-scoring Monaco led by Radamel Falcao and Mario Balotelli's slick Nice side clash at the top of French Ligue 1 this weekend. Early pacesetters Nice have faltered of late allowing Monaco to move top of the table on goal difference on 49 points, with champions Paris Saint-Germain lurking in third on 46 ahead of their trip to Dijon later. In the reverse fixture Monaco were thrashed 4-0 at Nice in September as a rejuvenated and refocused Balotelli scored twice and the visitors cracked with Lucien Favre's young side running rampant.

But Monaco have morphed into a goal-scoring phenomenon this season with 65 goals from 22 league games, and when they went through to the French Cup last 16 on Wednesday opposition coach Bruno Luzi of third-division Chambly made a joke that rang true. "Monaco banged five past us, like they do to everyone else," Luzi said, after his plucky side went down 5-4 in extra time.

Leonardo Jardim's Monaco are still fighting on four fronts at home and abroad and will bring back eight first-choice players that were either rested, suspended or on Africa Cup of Nations duty midweek. "We deserve to be where we are (top of the league)," the Portuguese said after last week's 1-1 draw at PSG. "And nobody could say we are lucky to be in the Champions League last 16." "The title race is going to go all the way to the wire," he added. After four straight league draws Nice won 3-1 last weekend with strikers Balotelli and Alassane Plea both scoring.

Under the Swiss Favre, Nice have the tightest defense in Ligue 1 with just 15 goals conceded and a confident 22-year-

old goalkeeper Yoan Cardinale on solid form. "Monaco is going to be a massive match and we'll need all our focus. We'll need to be organised and score at the key moments," Favre said. PSG play later at Dijon, who are two points clear of the relegation zone. Dijon will be wary of PSG new boy Julian Draxler, who scored twice in a 4-0 away rout of Rennes in the cup this week, and top Ligue 1 marksman Edinson Cavani.

PAYET IN CONTENTION

French internationals Dimitri Payet and Patrice Evra joined the struggle to relaunch Marseille during the winter break and they travel to Metz on Friday. Midfield schemer Payet is likely to play some part but the veteran defender Evra is out injured. "We'll have to adapt from the red-hot atmosphere of the Velodrome and get used to a cold winter night at Metz," Marseille coach Rudi Garcia warned of the trip to the side second bottom.

With the new signings morale will be high at Marseille, where the club shop sold over 1,000 shirts with Payet's name on the evening of his arrival from West Ham. "We needed iconic players and these two arrivals are our signal of intent," club president Jacques Henri Eyraud said on Wednesday. Marseille are sixth going into the weekend. The last of the weekend's big clashes is the bitter derby between fifth-placed Saint-Etienne and Lyon, four points ahead in fourth. Lyon lost their last two games against Saint-Etienne but the visitors kept hold of star striker Alexandre Lacazette in the transfer window to boost their hopes of a European place. —AFP

Spanish League Preview

CUP REVENGE ON AGENDA FOR REAL MADRID, BARCA

MADRID: Real Madrid hope to have Luka Modric and Marcelo back fit as they seek to exact revenge for their recent Copa del Rey elimination at the hands of Celta Vigo when they return to Balaidos on Sunday. Celta weathered a second-leg storm at home after pulling off a surprise 2-1 first-leg win at the Santiago Bernabeu to progress to the last four 4-3 on aggregate just over a week ago. However, the roles from the second leg of that tie look set to be reversed as a far stronger Real side travels north with Celta boss Eduardo Berizzo set to make a series of changes with his side's Cup semi-final, second leg away at Alaves on Wednesday in mind.

Modric and Marcelo have missed the last two games through injury, but both returned to training on Thursday and could feature. The presence of Modric in midfield would be doubly important to Zinedine Zidane's men with Toni Kroos suspended. Berizzo has heavily rotated his Celta side in their past two La Liga outings to prioritise the Cup. And with the Galicians just 90 minutes away from a first Cup final since 2001 with the tie against Alaves delicately poised at 0-0, the Argentine expected to do so again with the likes of top scorer Iago Aspas dropping to the bench.

BARCA HOST BILBAO

Cup revenge will also be on Athletic Bilbao's minds when they travel to face Barcelona at the Camp Nou today. Barca dumped Athletic out of the Copa del Rey for the sixth time in nine years in January and need a similar outcome to prevent Real running away with the title. The champions trail their eternal rivals by four points having also played a game more after a disappointing display in drawing 1-1 at Real Betis last weekend. Barca bounced back to remain on course for a fourth straight Cup final by beating Atletico Madrid 2-1 in their semi-final, first leg at the Vicente Calderon in midweek. And Luis Enrique's men could be handed a double injury boost themselves as Andres Iniesta returned to training on Thursday and Sergio Busquets is nearing a comeback from ankle ligament damage. Enrique has defended his decision to rotate his squad throughout a demanding January and February of league and Cup commitments with a return to Champions League action at Paris Saint-Germain on February 14 also on the horizon. "Between injuries, suspensions and tiredness, there is no other way. I rotate or we don't challenge in all competitions," Enrique said this week. Therefore, Rafinha, Arda Turan and Denis Suarez are all likely to feature after

being left on the bench in midweek. Defeat to Barca in midweek left Atletico's final season at the Calderon in danger of petering out without a trophy. Diego Simeone's men have failed to win in any of their last four games and face a fight just to qualify for the Champions League next season rather than battling Madrid and Barca for the title. Atletico are 10 points adrift of their city rivals and just a point ahead of Real Sociedad in fourth.

However, they will be confident of a return to winning ways when lowly Leganes visit the Calderon today without a win in their last 10 games. Third-placed Sevilla's title ambitions were dealt a blow with a 3-1 defeat at Espanyol last weekend to leave them four points off the pace. And Jorge Sampaoli's men's title credentials face another stiff test when sixth-placed Villarreal visit the Sanchez Pizjuan in the Sunday lunchtime kick-off. —AFP

Spanish La Liga Table

MADRID: Spanish La Liga table ahead of this weekend's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Real Madrid	19	14	4	1	51	17	46
Barcelona	20	12	6	2	52	18	42
Sevilla	20	13	3	4	43	28	42
Atletico Madrid	20	10	6	4	34	16	36
Real Sociedad	20	11	2	7	31	28	35
Villarreal	20	9	7	4	28	14	34
Athletic Bilbao	20	9	5	6	26	22	32
Celta Vigo	20	9	3	8	31	33	30
Espanyol	20	7	8	5	28	27	29
Eibar	20	8	5	7	28	29	29
Las Palmas	20	7	7	6	31	31	28
Alaves	20	5	9	6	17	20	24
Real Betis	20	6	5	9	21	31	23
Malaga	20	5	7	8	28	34	22
Valencia	19	5	4	10	29	36	19
Deportivo La Coruna	20	4	7	9	25	32	19
Leganes	20	4	6	10	15	33	18
Sporting Gijon	20	3	4	13	20	39	13
Osasuna	20	1	7	12	21	43	10
Granada	20	1	7	12	16	44	10

SPL Preview

RANGERS HAVE BIG GAME MENTALITY: WARBURTON

GLASGOW: Mark Warburton insists Rangers can handle the pressure of big games after he faced questions about his side's poor away record. The Glasgow giants were hammered 4-1 by Hearts on Wednesday as they fell to their second defeat at Tynecastle this season. Warburton's side have a poor record at the homes of the teams that are around them in the top six of the Scottish Premiership and have lost away to Celtic and Aberdeen, as well as drawing with St Johnstone. In Warburton's first season in charge, the Ibrox side won the Championship but lost all of their away games against both Falkirk and Hibernian, who finished second and third in the second tier.

Defeat against Hearts left Warburton's side 25 points adrift of rivals Celtic and just two ahead of Aberdeen, who have a game in hand, but the Gers boss says he doesn't think his side have any real issues away from home. "I don't think there is a problem with big games. I don't see it as a big problem," Warburton said. "We went to Aberdeen and I felt dominated and we should have won the game. "We have gone to all these various other venues, Inverness, Partick, Dundee, Motherwell, we have won games of football very convincingly. "The Parkhead game (September's 5-1 defeat by Celtic) was well documented and at Hearts, we had two bad performances, it's as simple as that.

"We then played the same teams at Ibrox and were very convincing in what we did. "So, that's football, and what we have to do is learn. Everyone is human, we make mistakes, and have bad days at the office for want of a better term, but we have to learn from it. "Are we worried about going to those grounds? Not at all, absolutely not." Rangers have little time to dwell on their defeat and will continue their league campaign at home to Ross County today, with the previous meetings of the sides this season ending in draws. "We're looking at the game from last night and we can't sweep it under the carpet," Warburton said. "You look at it, ask some blunt questions and hope you get better for it.

PLAIN AND SIMPLE

"Whether you play the top of the table or the bottom of the table, it's three points. "You don't get five for beating someone and two for beating someone else. "So the fact we are sitting second in the table tells you we are doing some things okay. We have to improve, of course we do, but the fact is the team is growing and we are learning." Runaway league leaders Celtic will be hoping to clinch their 19th consecutive league victory when they take on St Johnstone at McDiarmid Park on Sunday. The Hoops, who are unbeaten in 28 matches since the start of the season, could have Moussa Dembele and Tom Rogic available for the game after injury. —AFP

ARSENAL'S TITLE HOPES ON LINE; FACE CHELSEA



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Chelsea v Arsenal	15:30
BeIN SPORTS	
Everton v Bournemouth	18:00
BeIN SPORTS	
Southampton v West Ham	18:00
BeIN SPORTS	
Crystal Palace v Sunderland	18:00
BeIN SPORTS	
Watford v Burnley	18:00
BeIN SPORTS	
West Bromwich v Stoke City	18:00
BeIN SPORTS	
Hull City v Liverpool	18:00
BeIN SPORTS	
Tottenham v Middlesbrough	20:30
BeIN SPORTS	

SPANISH LEAGUE

Malaga v RCD Espanyol	15:00
BeIN SPORTS	
Barcelona v de Bilbao	18:15
BeIN SPORTS	
Atletico de Madrid v Leganes	20:30
BeIN SPORTS	
Valencia v SD Eibar	22:45
BeIN SPORTS	

ITALIAN LEAGUE

Bologna FC v SSC Napoli	22:45
BeIN SPORTS	

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Hertha Berlin v Ingolstadt	17:30
BeIN SPORTS	
FC Koln v VfL Wolfsburg	17:30
BeIN SPORTS	
Bayern Munich v Schalke 04	17:30
BeIN SPORTS	
Monchengladbach v Freiburg	17:30
BeIN SPORTS	
Hoffenheim v FSV Mainz 05	17:30
BeIN SPORTS	
Dortmund v RB Leipzig	20:30
BeIN SPORTS	

FRENCH LEAGUE

AS Monaco FC v OGC Nice	19:00
BeIN SPORTS	
Montpellier v Bastia	22:00
BeIN SPORTS	
Guingamp v Caen	22:00
BeIN SPORTS	
Lille OSC v Lorient	22:00
BeIN SPORTS	
Girondins v Stade Rennes	22:00
BeIN SPORTS	
Dijon v Paris Saint-Germain	22:00
BeIN SPORTS	

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP

Burkina Faso v Ghana	22:00
BeIN SPORTS	

LONDON: Arsenal will look to shrug off recurring doubts about their mental fortitude and the weight of recent history when they visit runaway Premier League leaders Chelsea today. Chelsea dropped points for only the second time in 17 matches in Tuesday's 1-1 draw at Liverpool, but Arsenal could not take advantage as they crashed to a 2-1 home defeat by Watford.

It means the gap between the teams remains nine points and should Arsenal fall to defeat again at Stamford Bridge, it is likely to spell yet another premature end to a title challenge. "When you play at the top of the league like that, that is the most disappointing," Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger said in the aftermath of the loss to Watford. "It's really worrying the way we turned up in the first half. Of course we want to respond against Chelsea. "When you lose a game, you want to respond straight away and we have to analyse well what happened and respond straight away today in a very convincing way."

The defeat by Watford, who scored twice in the opening 13 minutes, was Arsenal's fourth of the campaign and curbed a resurgence that had seen them take 13 points from a possible 15. Arsenal's season is slipping into familiar territory and if they are to avoid yet another campaign boiling down to the race for Champions League qualification, beating Chelsea would be a good place to start. They have already beaten Antonio Conte's men once this season, but it was to prove the catalyst for a surge to the top of the table for the vanquished, rather than the victorious.

It was in the 55th minute of Chelsea's 3-0 defeat at the Emirates Stadium on September 24 that Conte switched to the 3-4-3 system that revitalized his side's season. The win left Arsenal third, five places above their London rivals, and came amid a run of six straight wins that would culminate in Wenger's men drawing level on points with leaders Manchester City. Four months on, however, Arsenal find themselves back in third, with Chelsea threatening to disappear over the horizon as they go in



Arsenal's French manager Arsene Wenger

search of an 11th consecutive win in front of their own fans.

ARSENAL'S MIDFIELD HOLE

Arsenal's supporters, many of whom took to social media to vent their frustrations after the loss to Watford, will not travel to the Bridge with quite the same spring in their step. They have not seen their team win there since 2011, Arsenal having lost on each of their last four visits, including a humiliating 6-0 loss on the occasion of Wenger's 1,000th game in March 2014.

Wenger will be absent from the dug-out today as he serves the third match of a four-game touchline ban for manhandling fourth official Anthony Taylor during the 2-1 win over Burnley. Further complicating matters for the Frenchman is a raft of missing midfielders, Aaron Ramsey having joined the list of absentees after sustaining a calf strain against Watford. Granit Xhaka is banned, Santi

Cazorla remains injured, Mohamed Elneny is preparing for the Africa Cup of Nations final with Egypt in Gabon and Jack Wilshere is still on loan at Bournemouth. Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, who replaced Ramsey against Watford, is likely to partner Francis Coquelin in the holding roles.

Chelsea are a man lighter after Branislav Ivanovic departed for Zenit Saint Petersburg on Wednesday, but Conte again has a fully fit squad to choose from. His only dilemma concerns whether to persevere with Willian on the right of his attacking trio or recall Pedro, who started on the bench at Liverpool. Conte has urged his side to focus only on their own performances and centre-back Gary Cahill knows victory today would represent a big step towards the title. "We keep going because we want to win the league," he said. "It's as simple as that. This is a very big week for us." —AFP

KLOPP WARNS LIVERPOOL TO BE WARY OF HULL'S THREAT

KINGSTON UPON HULL: Jurgen Klopp has warned Liverpool not to underestimate Hull when they try to revive their title challenge at the Premier League strugglers today. Klopp's side must go one better than Manchester United and beat Hull in the league after the Tigers ground out a goalless draw at Old Trafford in mid-week. In the midst of a difficult period, Liverpool looked back to something approaching their best in a spirited 1-1 draw against leaders Chelsea on Tuesday.

But Liverpool, trailing 10 points behind Chelsea, have won just one of their nine fixtures in 2017 and Klopp believes second-bottom Hull will offer tough opposition despite their lowly position. "I was really impressed by the way they played against Man United," Klopp said. "They did not look like a team one place from bottom of the division. "They played United three times in the league and cup, that's not easy to do, and they did really well against them."

Klopp admits he was fortunate to avoid punishment following his highly publicized confrontation with

fourth official Neil Swarbrick this week—an escape which enraged United manager Jose Mourinho. Klopp belittled aggressively in Swarbrick's face during his team's draw with Chelsea, shouting "No one can beat us". According to Klopp, the official replied: "No problem, I like your passion." Just 24 hours later, Mourinho made reference to the incident while claiming he was threatened with a sending off for similar behavior during United's frustrating draw with Hull. "I think it depends on the fourth official. We all know what we can do," Klopp said.

"When I saw the picture of me afterwards it didn't look too nice but it was not as bad as it looked so that is why I said what happened. "Maybe I was lucky with what the fourth official said because I've never heard something like this before. "There are different ways to handle the situation. It is quite an emotional game and to switch off emotions is not that simple. "We struggle not only myself and Jose but Arsene Wenger and a lot of other people struggle."

BATTLING

Hull manager Marco Silva has urged his players to build on the battling point at United which lifted his side off the bottom of the table.

The Tigers are set to be backed by the KCOM Stadium's biggest crowd of the season—in excess of 24,000 — as they go in search of only a second league win in three months. "The result at Old Trafford is one that will give us confidence to take into another difficult game," Silva said.

"We showed exactly the kind of character, attitude and organization we need for the rest of the season, and showed also that we have some quality in the team. "It was a valuable point, but we know that we need more than that to achieve our goal." Kamil Grosicki, the Poland midfielder signed from French side Rennes on deadline day, is in contention to make his debut for a Hull side four points adrift of safety in their attempts to avoid an immediate return to the Championship. "We have a tough schedule at the moment, but we are improving with each game," Silva said. —AFP

Sports



Kuwait reigns at Sixth Grand Prix

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FRANCEVILLE: Ghana's goalkeeper Brimah Razak (right) tries to block a shot on goal by Cameroon's forward Jacques Zoua during the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations semi-final football match between Cameroon and Ghana in Franceville on February 2, 2017. —AFP

CAMEROON KNOCK OUT MIGHTY GHANA

FRANCEVILLE: Cameroon didn't need its big-name players to make the African Cup of Nations final. Instead, Cameroon's youngsters - described by their coach as a bunch of friends who just like to play football - knocked out mighty Ghana on Thursday and set up a title decider against record seven-time champion Egypt.

Cameroon beat Ghana 2-0 in the second semifinal to return to the final for the first time since 2008, and did it with most of the top stars still in Europe with their clubs. You wonder if they were watching, and regretting their decisions to turn down call-ups to the squad. With the stars unavailable, tired maybe of Cameroon's recent struggles, Coach Hugo Broos brought 14 players who had never been to a major tournament. They responded by knocking out Senegal in the quarterfinals and Ghana in the semis, two strong contenders for the trophy. They played with a free spirit.

Ghana was the more dangerous team throughout the second half, and probably for most of the semi, but the Cameroonians hung in and struck first through defender Michael Ngadeu's goal in the 72nd minute. Christian Bassogog rounded off a counterattack in injury time, running

through on Ghana's goal unchallenged to seal Cameroon's place in the final as a desperate Ghana threw everyone forward in search of an equalizer. Bassogog's goal prompted every member of Cameroon's squad to race off the bench and celebrate on the field at Stade de Franceville. One of them booted the ball high into the stands in delight.

"This is a group of 23 friends. I've never seen this before in a football team," said Broos, himself a fairly low-key manager who had never been in charge of a national team before. Cameroon has won the African Cup four times but not since 2002, and its recent record at major tournaments has been terrible. It lost all of its games at the 2010 and 2014 World Cups, and failed to win a game at the last African Cup in 2015. There have also been regular disagreements between players and their bosses over payments and bonuses. Maybe the big-name players believed they couldn't be bothered with all the problems anymore.

In Gabon, Cameroon's new squad turned it around by just enjoying their soccer and each other's company - that simple, Broos said. "I can count on them and that's because we are a group of friends," the Belgian coach said. For Ghana, it was another miserable experience at the African champi-

onship. Coach Avram Grant's team threw everything at Cameroon in the last 20 minutes after Ngadeu's goal but just couldn't break through.

Even the introduction from the bench of captain Asamoah Gyan, who wasn't fully recovered from injury to start, didn't work. Ghana hasn't won the African Cup for 35 years and has lost two finals and four semifinals in the last six tournaments. "We wanted so much to be in the final," said Grant, who was likely to leave with his contract up. "We did everything to be in the final. We dominated the game, especially the second half ... The first attack, they scored. It is very annoying. "I am not happy, because we were the better side."

Cameroon goes on to Libreville to face Egypt, itself a surprise finalist after failing to qualify for the last three tournaments. Egypt coach Hector Cuper made the trip to Franceville on Thursday to watch the Cameroon-Ghana semi-final. He has created an ultra-solid Egypt team which has conceded just one goal, and has worn each of its opponents down by giving away nothing at the back. Broos said his young Cameroon players, full of natural enthusiasm, had to avoid falling into the Egyptian trap in the final. "How we do that," Broos said, "I cannot tell you." —AP