

SUBSCRIPTION

Kuwait Times



55

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THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

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TRUMP PHONES AMIR, INVITES EXCHANGED

LEADERS HAIL DEEP-ROOTED RELATIONS



Min 08°
Max 23°



KUWAIT: Revelers take part in the Hala February 2017 carnival in Salmiya as the annual festival got off to a colorful start yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Pages 4 & 5)

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a phone call from US President Donald Trump Thursday evening. The Amir congratulated Trump on his election victory and assumption of the top US post, wishing him full success in his mission, a statement by the Amir Diwan said. During their conversation, the two leaders discussed the deeply-rooted and distinguished relations between the two friendly countries.

They expressed eagerness to upgrade bilateral cooperation in various domains, particularly those related to the economy, security and military, to reach new heights to better serve the interests of the two nations. They underlined the importance of continuing mutual consultations over different issues within the framework of the strategic partnership. The two leaders also touched upon several issues of mutual concern and the latest regional and international developments. They stressed the need to boost security and stability in the region and to support joint efforts to counter extremism and terrorism.

In this regard, Trump reiterated commitment to the security and stability of Kuwait, and applauded Kuwait's important humanitarian efforts. Trump also invited HH the Amir to visit the US, and the Amir invited the US president to visit Kuwait, which he accepted, and promised to make this visit in the near future. HH the Amir thanked President Trump for his call and wished him everlasting wellbeing and the US more progress and welfare. — KUNA

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KUWAIT: A picture taken from an elevated window shows a Chinese cargo ship passing by Souq Sharq Marina on its way towards Shuwaikh Port, in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT DONATES \$100,000 TO ANTI-CORRUPTION ACADEMY

VIENNA: In contribution to its activities, Kuwait donated yesterday a sum of \$100,000 to support the activities of International Anti-Corruption Academy (IACA). This announcement was made by Kuwaiti Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN and International organizations headquarters in Vienna, Sadiq Ma'rafi. After a meeting with IACA's head Martin Kreutner, Ma'rafi said that such financial contribution came to bolster international cooperation between Kuwait and various international and specialized organizations, namely the IACA, noting that Kuwait joined the organization in May of 2015, after UN General Assembly decision to launch the organization globally in 2011.

Ma'rafi added that the academy's Inaugural Conference "From Vision to Reality" took place in Vienna in 2010 and witnessed the participation of over 1,000 delegates from UN Member States, international organizations, NGOs, the private sector, civil society, and academia. The ambassador noted that IACA's various training programs were vital for the development of several bodies in Kuwait including the Finance Ministry, general prosecution, audit bureau, and the Public authority for combating corruption. IACA is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, allowing the Academy to host a variety of conferences, seminars, and programs.

It offers a number of seminar rooms of various sizes, all equipped with computers and interactive smart boards, creating an ideal environment for interactive lectures and meetings. Strolling around campus, students can soak in that imperial spirit of Laxenburg, which continues to attract large numbers of visitors each and every year. In the summer, for example, participants



VIENNA: Kuwaiti Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN and International organizations headquarters Sadiq Ma'rafi presents donation to IACA's head Martin Kreutner. — KUNA

from all around the world arrive at the Academy to take part in the annual International Anti-Corruption Summer Academy or a module of the Master program, converting the IACA campus and the picturesque town into a "global village" for anti-corruption experts. — KUNA

KUWAIT HIGHLY ACTIVE IN ANTI-ORGAN TRAFFICKING

VATICAN CITY: Chairman of Kuwait Transplant Society (KTS) Dr Mustafa Al-Musawi has affirmed Kuwait's keen interest in countering human organs trafficking, as well as high action on supporting all international efforts to combat this crime and find other practical solutions that meets the patients' needs. Al-Musawi made his remarks on the sidelines of his participation in the 2017 Pontifical Academy of Sciences' Summit on Organ Trafficking in Vatican City. He has represented Kuwait during the two-day event, which kicked off on February 7th under the auspices of Pope Francis.

Kuwait has been actively involved in anti-organ trafficking efforts since 2006, when the country hosted a founding meeting to crystallize these efforts, he said. These early Kuwaiti-led efforts have, eventually, paved

the way for the declaration of Istanbul on organ trafficking and transplant tourism in 2008, and later for World Health Organization's 2010 resolution (WHA63.22) on optimizing organ donation and transplantation practices.

He also mentioned that Kuwait's contribution and scientific worksheet on the issue were widely welcomed by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, pointing out such greeting as a source of pride for the country and its efforts. Pope Francis has expressed his keenness on sponsoring this year's summit, which coincides with the International Patient Day, meeting with the participants, and signing the event's concluding communique, Al-Musawi said. He described the Pope's action as an ethical support for all international efforts, led by the

Transplantation Society (TTS) and the International Society of Nephrology (ISN), against organs trafficking.

The 2017 Pontifical Academy Summit on Organ Trafficking aimed at describing the widespread extent of transplant tourism and organ trafficking and preparing a statement referable to the Pontifical Academy Summit that would be signed by the participants and distributed worldwide. The event's main objectives were to engage a group of stakeholders, including government officials, prosecutors, investigators, justices, and journalists, who can be influential in the long term in combating organ trafficking in an alliance with transplant professionals, and develop an alliance of individuals committed to combating organ trafficking and transplant tourism. —KUNA

News

In brief

MoE underlines the need for effective partnership

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Mohammad Al-Fares has underlined the need for effective partnership with all society institutions to ameliorate education in Kuwait. In a ceremony held by Kuwait International Law School to celebrate the graduation of 294 undergraduate students and 15 post-graduate students, Al-Fares he noted that this partnership could help build new private world-class universities and colleges. He pointed out that the state development plan prioritizes education development and considers it backbone of any future development to the country. The development plan aims to create high-quality education process with outstanding outcome, he said. The minister called for focusing more on the scientific specialties required by the labor market.

Kuwait 17th camel race begins today

KUWAIT: Kuwait's 17th Camel Race will begin today with an unprecedented large number of participating best-of-breed 3,000 camels. The race, which was previously held for five days, would be extended to six days for holding 124 rounds, said Dr Humoud Flaiteh, the commission chairman and Deputy General Director of the Public Authority for Sports (PAS), in a statement yesterday. Large participation in the race, patronized by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, affirms that camel racing has become an internationally recognized sport, he said. PAS will offer 124 cars and cash as prizes for winners and His Highness the Amir will honor winner of the grand prix race with the Golden Sword. The race logo is "11 years of giving," referring to His Highness the Amir's 11th reign anniversary. It will be held at Martyr Fahad Al-Ahmad Track at Kuwait Club for Camel Race. A heritage village depicting ancestors' livelihood will be held on the sidelines.

Pan Arab Hematology Conference kicks off

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health said that the 6th Pan Arab Hematology Association Conference will kick off today. Chairman of the higher committee of the conference Dr Nagat Roh Al-Din said in a press conference, the three-day gathering will be held in cooperation between the Pan Arab Hematology Association and the European Hematology Association (EHA). Dr Nagat added that 24 lecturers from Arab and foreign countries will participate in the Conference, in addition of specialist representatives for EHA. She added that the event will discuss a variety of medical issues including stem cell, kinds of tumors and blood diseases of premature babies, unlike previous sessions of the conference which discussed blood related diseases only. A number of workshops will be conducted to improve the level of diagnosing and treatment of blood diseases, with discussions being moderated by international experts.

EPA, KISR sign cooperation deal against air pollution

KUWAIT: The Environment Public Authority (EPA) and Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) inked on Thursday a cooperation accord for developing gases' emission monitors. EPA Director General Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said in a statement that the agreement aims at increasing cooperation and paving way for mapping out integrated schemes and training cadres on environment protection. It is in line with Article 148 of the Environment Protection Law which stipulates that EPA takes charge of regular monitoring and assessment of the air quality to limit poisonous gases. EPA and KISR will coordinate for collecting data about emissions from various sources. KISR Director General Dr Samira Omar said the project centers on upgrading air quality monitors. The KD 200,000 program, funded by Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), is valid for three years. It can be renewed for two years more.

Crime

Report

TWO DRUG SUSPECTS NABBED

KUWAIT: Jahra police arrested two citizens with five envelopes of shabu. One of them was also wanted to serve a jail sentence. The arrest was made in Saad Al-Abdullah, and both suspects were under the influence of drugs. They were sent to concerned authorities.

18 bottles of liquor

A Bangladeshi was caught with 18 imported bottles of liquor. The suspect was known for selling imported liquor, and asked to meet his customers in Mina Abdulla, where he was caught by Ahmadi police. He told officers that he sold liquor to workers and camp owners.

'Missing boy'

The father of missing boy Mohammad Moheb Abdelwahab said his son took his sister to her school, which is adjacent to his, but hasn't returned home since Monday, adding that he looked for him everywhere but did not find him. Detectives are intensifying their search for Mohammad. He said the latest information is that two of his son's friends (both bedoons) were questioned, but nothing has materialized so far. Mohammad is in 11th grade and his house is only 600 meters from his school.

Policeman driving recklessly

A security source said a person who was driving recklessly until his vehicle flipped over, and who then resumed his reckless behavior, was found to be a policeman. A locally made liquor bottle was found with him, and he was held at Firdous police station holding cell. The source said the suspect will face several charges including endangering others' lives, and driving while intoxicated.

Ministry warns citizens, expats

An official source at the Interior Ministry warned citizens and expats from falling into the trap of some calls urging them to donate to charity projects, adding only licensed bodies can collect donations. Some citizens and expats responded to some of these calls asking them to donate for Syria and elsewhere, and a representative was sent to them to receive the donation. But others refused and called the police. An interior ministry official said there is direct contact with the social affairs ministry for such cases, and concerned authorities deal with them.

Under the influence

A citizen was compelled to call police about a woman who had too much drugs and disturbed neighbors. The woman used to get out of her Jabriya flat under the influence of drugs and harassed passersby and neighbors. But she went further by obstructing traffic and placed herself in harm's way, so the man called police. Police found the woman in a very bad shape and unaware of what she was doing. A police source said she is an ex-convict and known to security authorities.

Wanted citizens arrested

Mubarak Al-Kabeer detectives arrested two wanted citizens to serve jail sentences in two different cases. The first case is of a 27-year-old citizen sentenced for five years for violent theft. He was arrested in his house following resistance. The second case is of a citizen sentenced to five years in a felony case, and wanted by information affairs prosecution. He also was arrested in his house, where he attempted to attack them.

— Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa



KUWAIT: Impressive display of lights at the Amricani Cultural Center in Kuwait. — KUNA

KUWAIT TO BOOST INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

BOURSA KUWAIT WITNESSES UNSTEADY ACTIVITY

KUWAIT: Kuwait will witness in foreseeable future qualitative leap for boosting the industrial sector, said the Minister of Commerce and Industry yesterday. The forecast's major step will be in light of the State strategy for diversifying income resources, said Khaled Al-Roudhan, also the Minister of State for Youth Affairs, in a statement after inaugurating the international industrial fair, "Maker Faire." The minister affirmed keenness on supporting industrial ventures, in general, innovative projects in particular, indicating that some national projects in display at the exhibition need financial support. He also pledged to back young Kuwaiti industrialists. The three-day "Make Faire" exhibition is held at the fair ground.

Unsteady activity

Meanwhile, stock trades at Boursa Kuwait in the passing week sessions were largely unsteady amid noticeably purchases targeting small and inactive chips. In the past five sessions, portfolios and funds targeted stocks under umbrella of Kuwait-15 index, thus reflecting on its closing, which was low in value as compared to other shares, by 20-25 percent. Traders namely "small ones" were affected by local and geopolitical events, however these effects were short lived as the trades partially revived despite speculations, profit bagging and selling pressure on most stocks. Continuing disclosures of operational profits by some enlisted banks positively impacted on many banking stocks, namely those of Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait, earnings of which rose by seven percent reaching KD 32.5 million (2016).

Investment groups' activities were visible throughout the past week session, namely Al-Madina and National Investments, although these groups' portfolios targeted their companies' stocks to alter their prices, many of

which were at reasonable levels. As to today's session, it witnessed further pressure on small and large chips, amid renewed rumors regarding financial disclosures' delay by operating companies, thus resulting in greater profit bagging operations during the auction period (two minutes ahead of the closing).

Some stocks of operating companies, namely Americana and Agility, faced selloffs' pressure due to their operations in some Arab countries. Kuwait Bourse ended Thursday's trading with the main indices in the red zone. The benchmark dropped by 72.78 points to settle at 6,582.75 points. The weighted index shed 5.52 points to stand at 420.28 points. The third key index, KSX 15, which reflects blue chips' trades, went down by 16.98 points to stand at 962.07. Value of shares was KD 55 million with

stock turnover amounting to 531 million, done in 10,573 deals.

e-networks safe

In another development, governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel has re-affirmed that banking accounts are well protected and secured. There has been no "illegitimate entries into the accounts of the Kuwaiti banks; except for the Commercial Bank of Kuwait where there have been very limited entries," he said in a statement on Thursday, responding to some social media reports. The CBK is coordinating with the Commercial Bank and other local banks to contain the irregular act and ensure sound status of the banks' electronic networks, he said, noting that a CBK special team is examining the situation. — Agencies

KUWAIT 'SUPPORTS SYRIAN REFUGEES'

HATAY: Kuwait has given tremendous support to the Syrian refugees since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, Turkish health official said yesterday. Director of Emel Hospital in Reyhani town Dr Nabil Al-Muridin made this remark to KUNA while meeting Kuwait's 'Shifa' humanitarian medical team. He lauded Kuwaiti medical teams of surgeons who have visited Turkey numerous times to offer high quality medical services, including surgeries.

Having those highly qualified surgeons of all medical fields - general Surgery, orthopedics, neurosurgery and urology, ophthalmology, and constructive surgery - is a blessing to this under-equipped and understaffed hospital, he

said. He urged for more support to be given to the hospital to allow it to continue treating many injured Syrian refugees. Member of the 'Shifa' humanitarian team Dr Bashar Al-Hashash said, in his second visit to the hospital, that despite the limitedness of this hospital yet the size of medical services given to the Syrian refugees is unfathomable. Kuwaiti medical teams have conducted 62 surgeries on 27 Syrian refugees in November 2015 - their first visit to the hospital. This visit the medical team, arrived yesterday to Reyhani, included specialty physicians and surgeons in pediatrics, digestive diseases, internal medicine, endocrinology, urinary surgery, and general surgery. — KUNA

HALA FEBRUARY KICKS

KUWAIT: Hala February 2017 Carnival kicked off yesterday as Kuwaitis, expatriates joined the colorful parade. Some government ministries, agencies and foreign embassies participated in the parade. The Hala February Festival is aimed at promoting tourism as lots of people from GCC countries come to Kuwait with their families to celebrate. Activities include; concerts, shopping, sports and poetry seminars. Festivals play a vital role in promoting tourism in Kuwait. Visitors who arrive during the springtime in Kuwait, get to experience the Hala February, one of the most dazzling festivals in Kuwait. The Hala February is an annual event, celebrated in the spring season every year. It is basically a month-long commemoration of liberation of Kuwait, and runs from 1st February to 28th February.



Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



OFF WITH A BANG



KFH RAISES ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) exerted remarkable efforts to raise the environmental awareness in the community in an attempt to keep the environment safe, healthy and clean. This comes in collaboration with the concerned authorities such as the Environmental Mabarrah and Kuwait Dive Team. KFH participated in the launch of the implementation phase of the plastic bottles recycling environmental project (Omnia) as an environmental partner and the first sponsor for this national project. KFH is the first bank to embrace this idea that aims at increasing the awareness of the importance of collecting and recycling the plastic bottles in Kuwait.

In collaboration with KFH, Omnia installed plastic bottles collection boxes at the main Cooperative Societies in different areas including Aledayliah, Alsalam, Sabah Alsalem, Mubarak Alkabeer, Saad Alabdallah, and Abdullah Almubarak. Moreover, The

Environmental Voluntary Foundation has received a number of Whaly Boats from Kuwait Finance House (KFH) as part of the bank's endeavors to optimally assume the social responsibility and support the efforts of Kuwait Dive Team. The Whaly Boats help in lifting waste and neglected materials, not to mention assist in the protection and rehabilitation mission of Kuwait's aquatic world and the safety of the marine environment.

KFH is keen on supporting programs that serve the community and spread awareness among people in efforts to keep the environment safe, healthy and clean. The bank organized many events for children in collaboration with schools and the Ministry of Education to raise their awareness of the importance of the environment. KFH attaches great importance to the environmental issues in Kuwait, and calls for boosting the synergy among all respective authorities to keep Kuwait clean and pollution free.



—photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

A CULTURAL SYMPOSIUM ON SIGNIFICANCE OF MASHHAD

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: On the occasion of choosing Mashhad as the Capital of Islamic Culture for 2017, the Iranian Embassy in cooperation with the Kuwaiti-Iranian Friendship Union held a cultural symposium on the historical significance of Mashhad on Wednesday, the 38th anniversary of Iranian national day. Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Ali Reza Enayati expressed his happiness that Mashhad was chosen as the capital of Islamic culture, after Kuwait last year. "The Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) selected Mashhad due to its great cultural, religious and art value, and because tens of the most popular scientists, Islamic scholars, writers, astronomers and others who hail from there," he noted during the symposium.

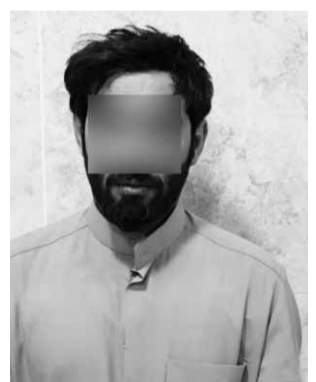
He mentioned the popular imams from Khorasan province, whose capital is Mashhad. "Mashhad wasn't popular earlier, but after Imam Ali bin Mousa Al-Reza came to this city and died there, it transferred into a huge Islamic center that contains many religious centers and universities. Over 20 million visitors from all over the world visit the shrine of Al-Reza every year," added Enayati. Cleric Sheikh Murtaza Faraj spoke about the religious role of Iran in general and Mashhad particularly. "Since Islam entered Iran, it plays a great role in preserving Islamic culture and heritage. Different nations converted to Islam, applied it and tried to spread it, but the Iranians played a major role," he said, pointing out the great role of Imam Al-Reza in developing the civilization of the city. Dr Faisal Taha, professor of history at Kuwait University, highlighted the

cultural role of the scholars of Khorasan during the fifth and sixth century after hijra. "At that time, this region was one of the most important regions of the Islamic world. Arab libraries need to include more studies of the cultural life and political situation of Khorasan.

The rulers and ministers there were very interested in education, and various families there supported the scientists, so paper manufacturing increased there and more shops opened. Linguistic and religious studies became very popular," he explained. Academic researcher Dr Khalid Al-Saleh spoke about the geographic and historical value of Khorasan region and its role in Islamic civilization. "One of the main reasons this region flourished was due to its huge size, which was rich in natural resources and agriculture, which resulted in rising trade," he noted.

EMBASSY URGES KUWAITIS TO AVOID INDONESIA PROTESTS

KUALA LUMPUR: Kuwait Embassy in Indonesia urged fellow citizens yesterday to stay off places and areas in Jakarta where political demonstrations are scheduled to take place later this month. In a statement, the embassy called on Kuwaitis in Indonesia to maintain a high level of vigilance, precaution, and safety, stressing the importance of staying away from certain areas in central Jakarta such as Gambir district, Hotel Indonesia, Indonesian House of Representatives, Shura Council, Jakarta International Expo, the National Monument (MONAS) in Merdeka Square, and Istiqlal Mosque. It also urged all fellow citizens to stay in touch with the embassy, in case of any emergency situation, through the following emergency phone numbers: +62081290992638, +62081513252597, and +62081281813758. The embassy wished safety for everyone, and lasting stability and security for Indonesia. Around 212 Indonesian Islamic organizations are planning to hold new grand demonstrations in Jakarta four days before electing a new governor for the city, scheduled for February 15th, demanding the current Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama to withdraw from the elections race for "insulting Islam". — KUNA



CAR THIEVES NABBED

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Salmiya detectives have arrested two Kuwaitis and a Syrian for stealing more than 15 cars from different areas in Kuwait. The suspects used to sell the spare parts of the stolen cars and burn the vehicles. The culprits confessed that they have been doing this for a long time. They have been referred to the concerned authorities for further investigations.



International

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battle IS, social stigma**

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MANILA: An activist holds an anti-US banner during a protest in front of the US embassy in Manila yesterday.—AFP

US COURT RULES AGAINST TRUMP ON TRAVEL BAN

LOS ANGELES: A US court on Thursday unanimously refused to reinstate Donald Trump's ban on refugees and nationals from seven Muslim-majority countries, dealing the new president and his controversial law-and-order agenda a major defeat. The San Francisco federal appeals court's ruling on Trump's executive order issued on Jan 27 with no prior warning and suspended by a lower court a week later-capped a turbulent first three weeks of his presidency. A defiant Trump quickly pledged to battle on, tweeting within minutes of the decision: "see you in court, the security of our nation is at stake!" "It's a political decision," he told reporters later.

The Justice Department had asked the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to restore the measure on an emergency basis, but the three-judge panel instead maintained the suspension ordered by a federal judge in Seattle. "We hold that the government has not shown a likelihood of success on the merits of its appeal, nor has it shown that failure to enter a stay would cause irreparable injury," the judges ruled. Trump's decree summarily denied entry to all refugees for 120 days, and travelers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen for 90 days.

Refugees from Syria were blocked indefinitely. The new Republican administration

argued the ban was needed to prevent Islamic State and Al-Qaeda fighters from reaching US soil, but it prompted travel chaos and was roundly rejected by immigration advocacy groups. Critics say the measure targeted Muslims in violation of US law. Now the case could end up in the Supreme Court.

Court's logic

The San Francisco court said aspects of the public interest favored both sides, highlighting the "massive attention" the case had drawn. "On the one hand, the public has a powerful interest in national security and in the ability of an elected president to enact policies," the ruling said. "And on the other, the public also has an interest in free flow of travel, in avoiding separation of families, and in freedom from discrimination." While acknowledging that the Seattle judge's ruling "may have been overbroad in some respects," the panel said it was not their "role to try, in effect, to rewrite the executive order."

"The government has pointed to no evidence that any alien from any of the countries named in the order has perpetrated a terrorist attack in the United States," the court said. Civil rights campaigners and state officials applauded the decision, vowing to fight on until the executive order is permanently

scrapped. For now, it means travelers with valid visas can continue to enter the country. Washington Governor Jay Inslee, whose administration sued for the measure to be blocked, hailed a victory for his state and the country, arguing that the ruling showed "no one is above the law, not even the president."

Human Rights Watch senior researcher Grace Meng called the decision "an important declaration of judicial independence, which is crucial for checking harmful overreach by the president." Trump had blasted the original suspension in a series of fiery tweets and public statements. Republican lawmakers jumped to Trump's defense, with Senator Tom Cotton calling the ruling "misguided," while Democrats hailed it. "President Trump ought to see the writing on the wall, abandon proposal, roll up his sleeves & come up w/ a real, bipartisan plan to keep us safe," Senate Democratic minority leader Chuck Schumer tweeted. Trump's election rival Hillary Clinton tweeted simply: "3-0."

There was praise from those who had been denied entry to the US when the ban was first imposed. A Sudanese pharmacist in Khartoum, Mohamed Al-Rashid, 38, said the decision "confirms all that America stands for." He was among those taken off a flight in Doha last month after the ban was first announced, and

now plans to head to Washington for a conference this month. "The court order shows that America and the American people believe in freedom to live, freedom to travel and in freedom to share ideas."

New era of justice

Ahead of the ruling, and with tensions high between the executive and the judiciary, Trump defended his hard-line policies, declaring a "new era of justice" in America as he swore in Attorney General Jeff Sessions. "We face the menace of rising crime and the threat of deadly terror," he said, doubling down on his dystopian vision of America. "A new era of justice begins and it begins right now." Trump's tough talk belies a political and legislative agenda that has been beset by missteps and legal challenges.

Even his own Supreme Court nominee, Neil Gorsuch, described the president's comments about the judiciary as "disheartening" and "demoralizing." Despite experts' criticism of Trump's message, it appears to be resonating among his supporters. The billionaire won the election last November with 46 percent of the popular vote, and the RealClearPolitics average of polls shows his job approval at about the same level, with the split largely along Republican-Democratic lines. — AFP



RAQA: Jihan Cheikh Ahmad (Left), spokeswoman for the "Wrath of Euphrates" campaign and an Arab commander in the Syrian Democratic Forces, made up of US-backed Kurdish and Arab fighters, talks with other fighters near the village of Al-Torshan, 20 km on the outskirts of Raqa. —AFP

SYRIAN ARAB WOMEN BATTLE IS, SOCIAL STIGMA ARAB FEMALE FIGHTERS DISOWNED BY FAMILY

NEAR AL-TORSHAN, Syria: They are fighting the world's most feared jihadists, but hundreds of Arab female fighters battling the Islamic State group in Syria are also confronting the disapproval of their relatives and society. "I braved my tribal clan, my father, my mother. Now I'm braving the enemy," says 21-year-old Batul, who is part of an Arab-Kurdish alliance battling to capture IS's Syrian stronghold of Raqa. She is one of more than 1,000 Arab women who have joined Kurdish male and female fighters in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alliance, according to a spokeswoman.

Standing in the desert some 20 kilometers from Raqa, Batul speaks passionately about her decision to fight IS, which holds the nearby village of Al-Torshan. "My parents told me: 'either you put down your weapons or we disown you,'" she says, wearing an ammunition vest and a floral scarf around her shoulders. Her parents have not spoken to her since. Batul comes from the Al-Sharabiyeh tribe, one of the best-known of the conservative Sunni Arab tribes of northeast Syria.

Her family views her as a rebel, who removed the headscarf worn by many Muslim women and refused her father's orders to pray in front of him. But she is proud of the decision she took two years ago to join the YPJ, the female counterpart to the Kurdish People's Protection Units, which is a key component of the SDF alliance. "I joined the YPJ to liberate my homeland, but also to free women from slavery," she says. "We must no longer remain cloistered behind four walls."

My weapon is part of me

Syrian Kurds and Arabs has been fighting IS since late 2015, with air support and other backing from the US-led

coalition against the jihadist group. But the current battle for Raqa is the first time Batul has been on the front line, where warplanes roar overhead carrying out strikes, and mortars boom in the distance. "The first time I held a weapon, I was very afraid," she admits. "But now, my weapon has become part of me. It frees me and protects me." She speaks in Arabic, but her sentences are peppered with Kurdish words picked up from her fellow fighters.

"The relations between us and the Kurdish women are good. We don't speak the same language, but we're all here to free the country and women." Jihan Sheikh Ahmad, spokeswoman for the campaign on Raqa, said the SDF now counts more than 1,000 Arab women in its ranks. "The YPJ's experience has had a positive impact on society," she said. "The more territory we liberate, the more Arab female fighters have joined us." In a tent near the front line, six young Arab female fighters joke and share secrets as they sip tea.

Same rights as men

"My goal is to liberate women from the oppression of Daesh (IS), but also societal oppression," says Hevi Dilirin, an Arab woman who adopted a Kurdish nom de guerre when she joined the YPJ. "In our society, women have no say. But they should have the same rights as men," she says, dressed in a camouflage jacket and white-and-grey sneakers. Syria's Kurds have emphasized gender equality in both their militias and nascent autonomous institutions. Since the outbreak of the conflict in March 2011, they have sided with neither rebels nor government forces, concentrating instead on developing a semi-autonomous region in north and north-eastern Syria, as well as fighting IS.

But the Arab tribes there are among

the more conservative segments of the population, and 21-year-old Doza Jiyan says most Arab families find the concept of female fighters "hard to accept." "In our Syrian society, we find it bizarre for a woman to take up arms," adds Jiyan, from the town of Ras al-Ain in Hasakeh province. But she speaks confidently as she discusses the military situation with male colleagues. "IS is no longer invincible, they're only fighting on motorbikes and mining the villages," she says.

IS's extensive use of IEDs and mines has slowed the SDF's progress towards Raqa, the jihadist's group most important remaining bastion in Syria. The SDF announced a new phase in their bid to capture Raqa on Feb 4, pressing towards the city gradually from the north and northeast. Jiyan is convinced that the SDF's military successes will eventually sway the opinion of her relatives and society, and she has no plans to leave. "I'm very happy here," she says. —AFP

REMOVE IRAQ FROM TRAVEL BAN LIST, PM TELLS TRUMP

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi asked US President Donald Trump in a phone call to remove his country from a contentious travel ban list, a statement said yesterday. Iraq is one of seven Muslim-majority countries whose citizens are barred from entering the United States for 90 days under an executive order the newly sworn in US president signed on Jan 27. The ban was suspended by a lower court a week later and a federal appeals court on Thursday refused to reinstate it but Trump vowed to continue the legal battle for his order to stand.

"The prime minister stressed the importance of a review of the decision on the right of Iraqis to travel to the United States," Abadi's office said in a statement after the phone call. Abadi urged Trump to "lift Iraq from the list of countries mentioned in the executive order," the statement said. The statement said: "Mr Trump stressed the importance of coordination to find a solution to this issue as soon as possible and that he will direct the US State Department in this regard." Washington is a key economic, political and military ally for Baghdad, including in the war it has been waging against the Islamic State jihadist group for almost three years.

Abadi had argued when the decree was first issued that the measure, which Trump has billed as an effort to make America safe from "radical Islamic terrorists", was tantamount to punishing those fighting terrorism. The statement said Abadi had expressed his wish to further develop relations with the United States and Trump had renewed an invitation for him to visit. Trump's attempt to impose travel restrictions on Iraqis comes after an assertion that the United States should have seized the country's oil before withdrawing its forces in 2011. —AFP

ASSAD DISMISSES AMNESTY REPORT ON MASS HANGINGS

WASHINGTON: Syrian President Bashar al-Assad dismissed a report by Amnesty International accusing the authorities of hanging up to 13,000 people over five years in a government prison, in an interview published yesterday. The human rights group on Tuesday alleged the gruesome mass executions amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity, saying they are probably still taking place at the Saydnaya prison near Damascus.

The report "put into question the credibility of Amnesty International," Assad told Yahoo News. "It's always biased and politicized. And it's shame for such organization to publish a report without a shred of evidence." Amnesty said it had interviewed 84 witnesses, including guards, detainees and judges, and alleged a pattern of regular summary executions. Asked about the report's contention that the hangings were authorized by officials at the highest levels of government, Assad replied: "It's not true, definitely not true."

"We're living in a fake news era," he added. "Everybody knows this." Syria's justice ministry dismissed the report as "completely false" earlier this week. More than 310,000 people have been killed in Syria since the conflict began with anti-government protests in March 2011, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. —AFP

QATAR SLAPS TRAVEL BAN ON RIGHTS LAWYER

DUBAI: Authorities in Qatar have barred a prominent human rights lawyer and former justice minister from leaving the country, a rights group said yesterday. Najeed al-Nuaimi was also a lead defence lawyer in ousted Iraqi president Saddam Hussein's trial and has since voluntarily defended prisoners of conscience in the Gulf state. "Authorities in Qatar prevented... Nuaimi from travelling without informing him about any possible reasons," the Gulf Centre for Human Rights said in a statement. It said he had been placed on a list of individuals banned from leaving the state, without giving "prior clarification or directing any charges against him".

One of Nuaimi's clients, poet Mohamed Rashid Al-Ajami, was given a life sentence in 2011 for a poem he wrote criticizing the Gulf

state's ruler, which authorities said incited violence against the state. Ajami was released in 2016 after serving more than four years in jail. Nuaimi was also head of an international committee in 2003 to defend suspected Islamist militants imprisoned by the US military in Guantanamo. The Gulf Centre for Human Rights urged Qatar to revoke the travel ban "immediately and without any conditions", and to guarantee rights defenders in Qatar the freedom to operate "without fear of reprisals".

Qatar, like most Gulf states, has been spared much of the unrest brought in by the Arab Spring uprisings that have rocked the Middle East since 2011. But activists throughout the region have resorted to social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube to advocate human rights. —AFP

TURKEY SETS APRIL 16 FOR VOTE TO EXPAND ERDOGAN POWERS

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday rubber-stamped controversial constitutional changes that will boost his own powers, paving the way for a referendum on the legislation in April. The government says the proposals to create an executive presidency will simplify the government structure, but opponents fear they will lead to one-man rule in Turkey. "People will have the final say," Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus said in comments carried by the Anadolu news agency, announcing that the referendum would take place on April 16.

Parliament in January approved a new 18-article constitution to create an executive presidency in the NATO member state along the lines of the

system in France and the United States. Brawls erupted between lawmakers during debates over the bill, highlighting the divisive nature of the changes, the most far-reaching constitutional shift since the creation of modern Turkey in 1923. Erdogan approved the legislation six months after an attempted coup against him by a rogue military faction in July last year.

Under the new constitution, the president will have strengthened executive powers to directly appoint top public officials including ministers. The post of prime minister, currently held by Erdogan loyalist Binali Yildirim, would be replaced with one or more vice presidents. Erdogan's supporters say the changes are necessary for

effective government and to avoid fragile and unstable coalitions that were a feature of Turkey's political scene in the past. The bill also calls for parliamentary and presidential elections to be held at the same time, with the draft giving November 3, 2019 as the date of the next ballot.

Unpredictable adventure

The referendum campaign is due to formally kick off on February 25, with Kurtulmus expressing hope that it would reflect "the maturity of Turkish democracy." "Everyone—those who say 'yes' and those who say 'no' will express their views," he said. The main opposition has accused Erdogan—seen as increasingly autocratic after 14 years in power as

both prime minister and president—of trying to decapitate parliament. "Now we will take power from the parliament and give it to one man," Kemal Kilicdaroglu, head of the secular Republican People's Party (CHP), said in a televised speech.

"Can Turkey be dragged into an unpredictable adventure? Did we find the republic for this," he said. Erdogan, the most powerful Turkish politician since founding father Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, became president in August 2014, in the first ever direct elections for a Turkish head of state. But there have been suggestions that the clock on his presidency will start from zero from 2019 as the new constitution creates a new presidential role.—AFP

YEMEN LOYALISTS RETAKE RED SEA COASTAL TOWN

ADEN: Yemeni government forces took full control of the Red Sea coastal town of Mokha yesterday after weeks of deadly fighting with Shiite rebels and their allies, a spokesman said. Before the 19th Century, Mokha was Yemen's main port and export hub for coffee grown in the highlands and its historical symbolism meant it was fiercely fought over. "We have done with the Battle of Mokha," armed forces spokesman Mohammed al-Naqib said, adding that the rebels had been forced to flee the town. Another loyalist military source confirmed that government forces were in "full control".

The rebels had put up fierce resistance in the town. Twenty-four rebels and eight loyalist troops were killed in fighting on Wednesday alone. Tens of thousands of civilians were trapped in the fighting. Many of them had sought refuge in Mokha after fleeing their homes in towns to the south as government forces pushed up the coast. The UN humanitarian coordinator in Yemen, Jamie McGoldrick, said late last month that "scores of civilians" had been killed or wounded by shelling and sniper fire around Mokha or by air strikes carried out in support of government forces by a Saudi-led coalition. He said most services in the town had ground to a halt, including the mains water supply.

Next target Hodeida

Government forces had already taken Mokha's docks earlier this month but there was heavy fighting in other parts of the town before the rebels withdrew north towards the main Red Sea port city of Hodeida, which they still control. "We now preparing for the second phase of the battle for the coast, which is to advance towards Hodeida," the loyalist armed forces spokesman said. Before the government launched its offensive on January 7, the rebels controlled virtually Yemen's entire 450 kilometer Red Sea coastline.

But with the support of the Saudi-led coalition, the loyalists have made their biggest advances in months in heavy fighting that has seen more than 400 combatants killed. Despite nearly two years of coalition air and ground support, government forces had previously been almost entirely confined to the south and areas along the Saudi border. The rebels hold the capital Sanaa and most of the northern and central highlands as well as the coast around Hodeida. The coalition has enforced an air and sea blockade of rebel-held territory that prevented the rebels making any use of Mokha's small docks.

All deliveries of basic goods are under UN supervision and those by sea pass through Hodeida making the port city vital to the rebels. Late last month, the rebels carried out a rare seaborne attack on a Saudi frigate on patrol in the Red Sea, killing two sailors. Last year, there were missile attacks from rebel-held territory on two US warships in the Red Sea and a United Arab Emirates vessel contracted to the coalition.—AFP

IRANIANS MARCH AGAINST TRUMP THREATS ON REVOLUTION DAY

'ANYONE THREATENING IRAN WILL REGRET IT'

TEHRAN: Millions of Iranians marched on the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic revolution yesterday in what the president described as a response to the new US administration and a rejection of "threatening language". President Hassan Rouhani joined hundreds of thousands at an anniversary march through the capital, one of dozens of such events around the country. "This turnout is a response to false remarks by the new rulers in the White House and the people are telling the world through their presence that the Iranian people must be spoken to with respect," Rouhani said.

"Iranians will make those using threatening language against this nation regret it. "Anyone threatening Iran's government and armed forces should know that our nation is vigilant." US President Donald Trump has taken an increasingly strident line towards Iran since taking office last month, warning that it was "playing with fire" and "on notice".

Last week, he imposed sanctions on Iran over a Jan 29 ballistic missile test and officials warned more might follow. Last weekend, new Pentagon chief James Mattis described Iran as "the single biggest state sponsor of terrorism in the world." Placards bearing slogans against Trump were brandished by the marchers as they weaved their way through the streets of the capital in the wintry fog to the central Azadi (Freedom) Square.

Not scared of threats

One placard showed a caricature of Trump being punched by a hand wearing a bracelet of the Iranian flag. "Thanks Mr. Trump for revealing true face of the US," said another placard echoing comments made by supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a speech this week. "Iranians are not scared of threats," said another, bearing the faces of Trump, British Prime Minister Theresa May and her Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu. The United States and Britain have long been derided by the regime as the "great Satan" and the "little Satan". Iran does not accept Israel's right to exist.



TEHRAN: Iranian school girls wave national flags during an annual rally commemorating the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic revolution, which toppled the late pro-US Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, in Tehran, Iran, yesterday.—AP

The rhetoric had been toned down after a July 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers including the United States. But at yesterday's marches, the traditional "Down with America" slogans were everywhere. Some marchers made a distinction between the American people and the Trump administration and carried placards thanking those who had opposed the president's controversial visa ban on the citizens of Iran and six other predominantly Muslim countries. The ban was suspended by a lower court a week later and a federal appeals court on Thursday refused to reinstate it but Trump vowed to continue the legal battle for his order to stand.

"Down with US regime, long live American people," said one placard in English. "Thanks American people for supporting Muslims," said another. "American people are welcome and invited to visit Iran," said a third. The posters were following a Twitter hashtag #LoveBeyondFlags started by Iranian users to thank Americans who protested against the visa ban. Trump has made no

secret of his opposition to the nuclear deal agreed by his predecessor Barack Obama under which Iran agreed to tight controls in return for the lifting of international sanctions. He said Iranians "don't appreciate how 'kind' President Obama was to them," in one tweet.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who negotiated the nuclear deal was among the top officials who attended the Tehran march alongside Rouhani. Also present was Major General Ghasem Suleimani, head of the foreign operations arm of the elite Revolutionary Guards and one of the most controversial regime figures for Western governments. Iran's leading reformist, former president Mohammad Khatami whose two terms of office, from 1997 to 2005, saw a rapprochement with the West, was absent. He has been under a strict media ban since mass protests against the 2009 reelection of hardliner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. But he too urged supporters to join yesterday's anniversary commemorations the "neutralize the conspiracies" faced by Iran.—AFP

KREMLIN SAYS TURKEY GAVE TARGET FOR SYRIA STRIKES THAT KILLED TROOPS

MOSCOW: The Kremlin said yesterday that Turkey had provided Russian forces with the target location for air strikes in Syria that accidentally killed three Turkish troops. "The situation is obvious, unfortunately. Our military while launching strikes on terrorists followed coordinates that were given to us by our Turkish partners," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told journalists. Three Turkish soldiers were killed and 11 wounded on Thursday when a Russian air strike targeting jihadists in Syria hit a building where the troops were deployed, the Turkish army said.

Peskov stressed that the "causes of the incident are clear. There is no debate." "There should not have been Turkish soldiers within the limits of these coordinates. That's why these strikes took place," Peskov added. Asked if this was a mistake by the Turkish intelligence, Peskov said the incident was caused by a communications failure. Russian President Vladimir Putin has expressed condolences in a telephone conversation with Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan.

The Kremlin said that the leaders agreed after the incident to "enhance military coordination in

the course of the operation in Syria against the Islamic State fighters and other extremist organizations." Russia and Turkey have joined forces against the Islamic State group around Al-Bab, where Ankara's forces are fighting the jihadists on the ground. Moscow has been flying a bombing campaign in Syria in support of the forces of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad since 2015. Ankara and Moscow had a ferocious falling-out after a Turkish jet shot down a Russian plane on the Syrian border in Nov 2015, but have since mended ties and begun cooperation over Syria. —AFP



DONETSK: A portrait of Mikhail Tolstykh, a leading commander of the self-declared Donetsk People's Republic, is carried during his funeral ceremony in the eastern Ukrainian city of Donetsk yesterday. —AFP

UKRAINE'S REBEL REGION BIDS FAREWELL TO SLAIN WARLORD

REBEL COMMANDERS CONSIDERED TO BE A THREAT

DONETSK, Ukraine: Thousands of Ukrainians stood in line with flowers yesterday in the separatist fiefdom of Donetsk to bid farewell to a field commander who was slain in a rocket attack on his office. Kiev and the insurgents have traded blame for the death of Mikhail Tolstykh with investigators saying a portable rocket launcher was fired at his office in a suburb of Donetsk on Wednesday morning. The 36-year-old whose nom de guerre was "Givi" was head of the powerful "Somali" battalion and a leading commander

of the self-declared Donetsk People's Republic in the east of Ukraine.

Tolstykh's body was laid out in the city's opera theatre with the battalion's flag covering his closed coffin. AFP reporters saw about 2,000 people—most of them pensioners and rebel fighters—line up with flowers and orange-and-black ribbons expressing their support for Russia to get inside the theatre and say their final goodbyes. Another well-known Donetsk military chief called Arseny Pavlov was killed in a bomb attack in Oct last year.

Several rebel commanders considered to be a threat to the separatist authorities—or those who have become too powerful—have been killed in car bombings and ambushes far from the scene of the fighting in eastern Ukraine. Tolstykh took part in major battles with Ukrainian government forces in a conflict that has been going on for 33 months despite Western efforts to forge a truce. He was born in eastern Ukraine and served in the army as a tank commander before working in various manual jobs and then joining the rebel cause when the war broke out in April 2014.

He and Pavlov—better known as "Motorola"—had been the most recognized faces among the rebels during the worst of the fighting. They both starred in viral video clips from the combat zone and were often interviewed by Russian state channels. More than 10,000 people have been killed since Ukraine's mostly Russian-speaking eastern industrial regions revolted against Kiev's pro-Western government after the ouster of the former Soviet republic's Kremlin-backed president. Kiev and the West have accused Russia of supporting the rebels and deploying troops across the border—claims that Moscow denies. —AFP

DUTCH POLICE FIND INGREDIENTS TO MAKE 1 BN ECSTASY PILLS

THE HAGUE: Dutch police probing a suspicious vehicle parked in a deserted parking lot found a huge stash of chemicals for producing an estimated one billion ecstasy pills, officials said yesterday. "The truck-and-trailer most probably served as a storage facility for an ecstasy laboratory," a police statement said. Agents had on Thursday received a tip-off that a truck had been parked "for a while" in a parking lot in the country's southwest that was "hidden from the road".

Inside, police discovered 100 bottles of hydrogen, 15 tons of caustic soda and 3,000 liters of excipients such as methylamine, acetone and dichloromethane, estimated to worth several hundred-of-thousands of euros. Police did not mention arrests but have launched a probe to try and trace the truck's origin and destination, noting that it was registered in The Netherlands. —AFP

SECURITY FEARS DICTATE NEW ROUTE FOR NICE CARNIVAL

NICE: For the first time in living memory, carnival revelers will not parade down Nice's Promenade des Anglais this year, seven months after the Bastille Day truck massacre that left 86 people dead. The famous seafront avenue was ordered off-limits for major public events for at least a year after the July 14 jihadist attack, with the southern French city instead deploying unprecedented security along an alternate route this weekend.

"Never has the level of security been so high for an event of this kind in Nice," top regional administrator Georges-Francois Leclerc told a news conference ahead of the Feb 11-25 carnival, one of the biggest in the world. This year Nice's boisterous street party, which in past years has drawn up to a million revelers, will take place along a new stretch of parkland, the Promenade du Paillon. Inaugurated in 2013, the zone stretches 1.2 kilometers from the Promenade des Anglais northeast to the historic Place Massena.

Some 200 police will man 36 entry points to the venue, which will be totally enclosed for the event. Carnival-goers will pay five euros (\$5.30) to attend—more for seats in the stands. The frenzied "battle of the flowers"—when revelers vie to catch blooms thrown from elaborate flower-bedecked floats—will take place in the Place Massena, the city's main square. Last year's carnival was already the object of heightened security in the wake of the November 2015 jihadist attacks in Paris, with attendance way down at some 400,000.

Speaking at Friday's news conference, the right-wing president of the Riviera region, Christian Estrosi, said cancelling the carnival would be "unthinkable". "That would be a sign to the barbarians, to the terrorists, that they would have scored another victory." After Tunisian jihadist Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel rammed a truck into crowds enjoying fireworks on the Promenade des Anglais for France's national day, both the Socialist government and Nice's right-wing city authorities came under severe criticism for perceived security lapses. Since the July 14 attack, the Israeli company that provides security for the Tel Aviv airport has been among the city's advisors. —AFP



NICE: French soldiers patrol in Nice, southeastern France, yesterday, ahead of the 133rd edition of the Nice Carnival. —AFP

HUNT FOR TWO RED CROSS WORKERS AFTER DEADLY AFGHAN AMBUSH

KABUL: The Red Cross said yesterday it was desperately searching for two employees who went missing after their convoy came under insurgent fire in northern Afghanistan, leaving six other workers dead. The aid workers were ambushed in northern Jowzjan province on Wednesday while they were en route to a remote snowbound area to deliver much-needed relief supplies. Six employees were killed on the spot, many of them shot from close range, in one of the worst attacks on the international charity in the country for years.

"Unfortunately, there's no news yet on our two colleagues unaccounted for," Thomas Glass, a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), said. "We are actively trying to locate them."

No militant group has so far claimed responsibility for the killings, but Jowzjan's police chief Rahmatullah Turkistani has blamed local Islamic State jihadists. The ambush underscores how aid workers in Afghanistan have increasingly become casualties of a surge in militant violence in recent years.

"This event demonstrates the urgent need for all parties to respect their obligations under International Humanitarian Law to (provide) aid workers with a safe environment to work in," the UN said, noting that those killed were travelling in a clearly marked ICRC vehicle.

The attack comes at a time when Afghanistan is in dire need of humanitarian assistance, with more than 100 people killed in recent avalanches and tens of thousands displaced by the wrenching conflict.

The ICRC, which has been working

in Afghanistan for three decades, said it was putting its nationwide operations on hold, but there were no plans for now to withdraw staff. The Taliban, the largest militant group in Afghanistan which promptly distanced itself from the attack, has assured ICRC of security in areas under their control. "The (Taliban) calls on the officials of ICRC to refrain from suspending their services as the Afghan nation is (in) need of humanitarian aid and health services more than ever before," the group said on their official website on Thursday.—AFP

INDIAN PM MODI VOWS TO CLEAN UP POLITICS

LUCKNOW: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised to clean up politics. The man running the ruling party's campaign in a crucial state election, who is facing 11 criminal cases, says it will take a while. "At a time of elections, one has to forget every other aspect and just focus on victory," said Keshav Prasad Maurya, as his three-vehicle convoy carrying police with automatic rifles sped through the countryside. Polls open today in Uttar Pradesh, with a population of some 220 million, and on the ground Modi's loftier aims for a new India seem far away.

Maurya, the state's president for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), says the charges against him are false and politically motivated; unless he is convicted, they do not prevent him from holding office. His bosses are not concerned. An official at the prime minister's office referred questions about Maurya and his criminal cases to the BJP, where an aide to party president and Modi confidant Amit Shah said there was no problem.

The charges are related to Maurya protesting on behalf of Hindu causes, said the aide, and anyone who does so "is not a criminal in the party's eyes." "Slowly," Maurya told Reuters, "the BJP will be moving towards a direction where it will only have politicians who are absolutely clean and have no cases of corruption against them." Modi stormed to power in 2014 vowing to sweep away corruption and vested interests from business and politics.

Late last year, he abruptly abolished 86 percent of cash in circulation, in a bid to crush the shadow economy, force Indians to declare their wealth and empower the poor. Ahead of the world's biggest scheduled election this year in Uttar Pradesh, though, the BJP is sticking to an old formula: elite with rap sheets and swelling bank accounts who pit religious communities and caste against each other. The party's manifesto for the state poll, for example, mixed development with a set of right wing Hindu causes likely to upset the sizeable Muslim population.

Win at all costs?

As Maurya criss-crossed Uttar Pradesh by helicopter and sport utility vehicle ahead of a month-long election, voters were doubtful of wholesale reform to the way Indian politics work. "That's not going to change - the corrupt and the criminal are able to get votes," said Rakesh Kumar Gupta, as he sold bread, cigarettes and snacks from the same cramped stand his father tended before him in Uttar Pradesh's capital, Lucknow.

Ashutosh Mishra, head of the political science department at the University of Lucknow, said he saw no sign that Modi or any other major Indian politician was serious about overhauling a system he described as "feudal." "Why should they? They are enjoying the perks of power, they are living the lives of modern gods," Mishra said. The biggest of five state polls held in India this spring points to a central dilemma for Modi.

If he loses the poll in Uttar Pradesh, he risks dissent in the ranks of his support base and a weaker position for his bid for re-election in 2019. But analysts say that if Modi wins through divisive politics driven by men with controversial backgrounds, it undermines his populist narrative of a rising India. Also at stake in Uttar Pradesh is the number of seats Modi controls in the upper parliamentary chamber, where the opposition has managed to delay some economic reforms. —Reuters



PUNJAB: In this file photo, Indians stand in a queue to cast their votes outside a polling station in Amritsar, in the northern Indian state of Punjab. —AP

FREEBIES, SYMBOLS, FUNDING: INDIA'S KEY ELECTION FEATURES

SYMBOLS USED TO HELP THE UNLETTERED VOTE

NEW DELHI: At 1.3 billion people, India is the world's largest and arguably the most chaotic democracy. Elections are a complicated logistical exercise that blends colorful pageantry with more serious political issues. A village fair atmosphere takes over rural India as people troop to the nearest voting stations. Five key states - Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Goa, Manipur and Uttarakhand - are currently in the middle of elections to choose local legislatures. The voting began Feb 4 and ends on March 8. Votes from all the state polls will be counted on March 11. A look at some of the key election features:

Election symbols

A bottle, an air conditioner, a television set, a lantern, an arrow, a bicycle, a loaf of bread - these are not shopping items but some of the many objects voters will see on the electronic voting machines as symbols for the dozens of political parties and independent candidates in the fray. Symbols have been allocated to political parties since India's first national election in 1951.

Since barely a fifth of the population could read or write in the early 1950s, the symbols were introduced on ballot papers to help the unlettered cast their votes. Nearly three-quarters of Indians

can now read but the icons remain evocative symbols of the major political groups. India's best-known political symbols are the lotus flower for the governing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the outstretched hand or palm for the main opposition Congress party.

The newest political party in the country, the Aam Aadmi Party, or the Common Man's Party, chose the broom as its election symbol, reflecting their claim that they mean to sweep clean the political system. The choice of symbols still available for selection with the country's independent Election Commission includes an electric pole, cricket bat, pliers and even food items including a coconut and a cauliflower. Also available: a toothbrush and nail clippers.

Freebies

Election season in India is the time when political parties offer freebies in return for the votes. On offer this year are promises of laptops, smartphones, spice grinders, fans and loan waivers. The governing BJP is even offering sugar and clarified butter at low prices in northern Punjab state. In the past, farm workers got cows and goats in a southern state. Freebies are a fact of life in Indian politics. Some 270 million people

- nearly 22 per cent of the country's population - live in poverty, making giveaways particularly attractive to voters.

The election-season freebies, however, raise questions about a fair playing field for smaller parties and independent candidates. In the absence of laws barring such campaign promises, the practice continues. In India's northern Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, the state's top elected official, is promising free smartphones. In the previous 2014 election, he fulfilled his promise of free laptops for students after winning the vote. His main challenger, the BJP, also promised laptops, free internet and cooking gas to those who vote for them.

Election funding

Anonymous cash donations to political parties, running into billions of rupees (hundreds of millions of dollars) are seen at the heart of India's endemic corruption. Only a quarter of the annual income of the two main political parties, the BJP and the Congress party, comes from known sources and are declared in their tax returns. The rest is from anonymous donors, according to the Association of Democratic Reforms, a non-political group working for governmental and electoral reform. —AP

PHILIPPINE COMMUNIST LEADER SEEKS RENEWED PEACE TALKS

MANILA: The leader of the Philippines' communist insurgency has called on President Rodrigo Duterte to revive collapsed peace talks as his rebels launched new attacks. On Saturday, Duterte angrily scrapped talks with communist insurgents aimed at ending their decades-long conflict after both the government and the rebels called off unilateral ceasefires. "Even if the armed conflict between the armed forces of the two parties has resumed, peace negotiations can and must continue," Jose Maria Sison, rebel leader and Communist Party of the Philippines founder, said in a statement issued from exile in the Netherlands late Thursday.

Sison, a former university instructor of Duterte, asked him to "encourage and allow back-channeling efforts to clarify misunderstandings and solve immediately the current problem". On Thursday communist rebels killed a man, kidnapped a policeman and another man, and burned construction equipment in the southern island of Mindanao, a military report said. They also burned a mining company's trucks in a northern mountain region.

Duterte, a self-described socialist who once boasted of his links to the communist rebels, had jump-started the 30-year-old peace process, initially vowing to end over four decades of fighting. The president released captured rebel leaders and both sides had called separate ceasefires to pave the way for peace talks overseas. But Duterte called off the peace talks after communist attacks left four soldiers dead last week. Duterte has since called for the arrest of the rebel leaders he released as clashes between the 4,000-strong communist New People's Army and government forces have increased.

"There should have been a measure of restraint in his reaction in order to preserve the (government-communist) peace process," Sison said in the statement posted on his Facebook page. There was no immediate response from the government. The communist insurgency in the poverty-stricken country began in 1968 and is one of the longest running in the world. It has claimed an estimated 30,000 lives, according to the military.—AFP



MANILA: This photo shows volunteer firefighters dousing a truck with water which was burned allegedly by members of the communist's New People's Army in Itogon town, Benguet province, north of Manila.—AFP



JAKARTA: A motorist rides past the wreckage of a truck partially buried under the mud following a landslide in Songan village on Bali island, Indonesia, yesterday.—AP

12 DEAD IN LANDSLIDES ON INDONESIA'S BALI

EXTREME RAIN TRIGGERED LANDSLIDES

JAKARTA: Twelve Indonesians, including three children, have been killed on the holiday island of Bali after landslides triggered by heavy rains engulfed several villages, an official said yesterday. Several houses were also buried and badly damaged in the incident, which took place overnight from Thursday to Friday in Kintamani district in central Bali. "The extreme rain that occurred all day on Thursday has triggered landslides in three villages and 12 people have died," disaster agency spokesman Sutopo Purwo Nugroho said.

Three children, aged one, seven and 10, died in two of the villages. Five people were injured, three of them seriously. Local disaster agency officials said villagers had been evacuated from the affected areas—far from the popular beach resorts of southern Bali—and no one else was believed to be missing. Landslides and flooding are common across the sprawling Indonesian archipelago, particularly during the months-long rain season which peaks in Jan and Feb.

In Dec, 29 people died and 19 others were left missing when floods and landslides hit Garut in the west of Indonesia's main island of Java. Bali, a pocket of Hinduism in Muslim-majority Indonesia, is a popular tourist destination that attracts millions of foreign visitors to its palm-fringed beaches every year.—AFP

US, CHINESE AIRCRAFT IN UNSAFE ENCOUNTER OVER S CHINA SEA

BEIJING: A Chinese early warning aircraft and a US Navy patrol plane had an "unsafe" encounter over the South China Sea this week, the US Pacific Command said yesterday, in the first such incident known to have taken place under President Donald Trump's administration. The interaction between a Chinese KJ-200 and a US Navy P-3C plane took place on Wednesday in international airspace, Pacific Command spokesman Robert Shuford said. He did not say what was unsafe about the encounter, although the term usually implies planes flying too close to one another.

Shuford says the US plane was on a routine mission and operating according to international law. The Department of Defense and the Pacific Command "are always concerned about unsafe interactions with Chinese military forces," he said. The Chinese Defense Ministry did not immediately respond to a faxed request for comment. However, the website of the Communist Party newspaper Global Times quoted an unidentified ministry official as saying that the Chinese pilot had responded in a "legal and professional manner."

"We hope the US side will focus on the relationship between the two

countries and two militaries in their entirety, adopt concrete measures and eliminate the root causes of accidental incidents between the two countries on sea and in the air," the unidentified official was quoted as saying. Philippine Defense Department spokesman Arsenio Andolong also expressed concern because the incident happened near Scarborough Shoal, which is located within the Philippines' 200 mile exclusive economic zone but claimed by China, which seized it in 2012 after a tense standoff with Philippine vessels.

"We're worried of possible miscalculation and it's good to know that nothing untoward happened," Andolong said by telephone. If such foreign aircraft venture into Philippine airspace, "we deserved to be told out of courtesy." Such incidents have occurred occasionally over and within the South China Sea, which China claims virtually in its entirety. Although China says it respects freedom of navigation in the strategically vital area, it objects to US military activities, especially the collection of signals intelligence by US craft operating near the coast of its southern island province of Hainan, home to several military installations.—AP

S KOREA PROSECUTORS PUSH AGAIN TO SEARCH PARK'S COMPOUND

SEOUL: South Korean prosecutors filed a suit yesterday to try to force aides of impeached President Park Geun-hye to stop blocking searches of the presidential compound. Prosecutors tried last week to enter the Blue House with a court-issued search warrant to check for material connected with a corruption scandal involving Park and a confidante. Park's aides turned them away, citing a law that can block searches of sites containing state secrets. The suit was filed with the Seoul Administrative Court to determine whether blocking such searches is legal, prosecution spokesman Lee Kyu-chul said.

He expects the court to make a ruling next week. The court confirmed the filing of the suit but gave no further details. The move came after prosecutors said Park scrapped plans to let authorities question her on Thursday, to protest media leaks about the timing and location of the interview. The two sides had agreed not to disclose such information before the questioning was over. Prosecutors said they did not leak the information. By law, South Korean presidents have immunity from prosecution while in office, except in cases of grave crimes such as treason.—AP

DAKOTA PIPELINE WORK RESUMES, US TRIBE HEADS TO COURT

CHICAGO: Construction has begun on the final segment of the controversial Dakota Access oil pipeline in the northern United States, prompting a court challenge from a

Native American tribe which says its religious rights are under threat. Energy Transfer Partners, the developer of the 1,172-mile (1,886-kilometer) oil pipeline, now expects to

begin operation "in approximately 83 days," spokeswoman Vicky Granado told AFP on Thursday. The segment's route under the Missouri River and man-made Lake Oahe in

North Dakota was the subject of months of protests, as Native Americans and their supporters argued it ran the risk of potentially polluting the water.—AFP



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TRUMP BACKS 'ONE CHINA' POLICY IN FIRST CALL WITH XI

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump reaffirmed Washington's 'One China' policy on Thursday in his first conversation with Xi Jinping, an apparent effort to ease tensions after angering Beijing by questioning a major plank of Sino-US relations. During a phone call with China's leader, the US president agreed to "honor" a position that effectively acknowledges Taiwan is not separate from China. "President Trump agreed, at the request of President Xi, to honor our 'One China' policy," the White House said in a statement, adding that the two leaders had "extended invitations to meet in their respective countries."

The White House called the phone discussion—which came on the eve of Trump's slated meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe—"extremely cordial", saying the leaders "look forward to further talks with very successful outcomes". Xi, who took the helm of the Communist Party-ruled country in 2012, welcomed Trump's gesture. "Xi Jinping appreciates Trump's emphasis on the American government's commitment to the One China policy and pointed out that the One China principle is the political foundation of US-China relations," according to a Chinese foreign ministry statement.

Trump's insurgent campaign for the White House included frequently lashing out at China, which he accused of currency manipulation and stealing American jobs. He raised eyebrows in the wake of his election victory with a protocol-busting telephone conversation with Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen. He later threw doubt on the "One China" policy, suggesting that it was up for negotiation and could form part of talks on trade, drawing rebukes from official Chinese media.

Backed Down

Ashley Townshend, an expert on US-China relations at the University of Sydney said Trump's apparent capitulation was an indication of the moderating influence of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Defence Secretary James Mattis. "Everyone will be surprised at the speed with which Trump has backed down on this issue," he said. The change was unlikely to be conciliatory, he added, but could be read as a sign of pragmatism in the new administration's approach to its powerful adversary.

"There was a real risk prior to this clarification that the two sides would be unable to even find a way to speak," he said. "This removes an obstacle to relations, but it doesn't advance them in any meaningful way." —AFP

VENEZUELA HEADING FOR CUBA-STYLE VOTE

CARACAS: Venezuelan opposition leaders said Thursday the country is heading toward Cuban-style elections, with no real challengers to the ruling party, thanks to burdensome new rules governing how parties renew their registration. The accusation comes as the opposition stands to make major gains in upcoming regional elections, with Venezuela's economy imploding and President Nicolas Maduro's popularity plunging.

The new rules, announced this week, set up a challenging series of hoops for parties to jump through in order to participate in this year's vote, which has not yet been scheduled. Maduro's United Socialist Party is exempt, as is the main opposition coalition, the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD), since both won more than one percent of the vote in the past two elections. But the catch, for the MUD, is that it is not in fact a single party: It is a coalition of some 30 parties, each of which will have to go through the renewal process.

Under the new rules, that means gathering signatures from 0.5 percent of voters in at least half the country's 24 states, in just 14 hours—roughly half a million people, in a country with some 20 million registered voters. Signatories will have to prove their identity with fingerprint scans—with only 390 scanners set up for the process. That, say opposition leaders, is an all but impossible set of constraints.

A vote but no choice

"They're trying to fraudulently set up elections with no challengers," the MUD said. "They want to turn the Venezuelan electoral system into a copy of the Cuban or Nicaraguan electoral system... in which people can vote, but not choose." Even some parties allied with the Maduro camp protested. —AFP



BRUSSELS: This file photo shows Afghan Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani (Left) talking with Commander of Allied and Command John W. Nicholson and French Air Force Chief General Denis Mercier during a Foreign Affairs meeting at the NATO headquarters in Brussels.—AFP

US GENERAL SAYS NATO NEEDS MORE TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN

WASHINGTON: The US general commanding NATO forces in Afghanistan warned Thursday that he needs thousands more troops and accused Russia of seeking to prop up the Taliban. US-led forces have been fighting in Afghanistan for 16 years, making it already America's longest-ever war, but General John Nicholson told Congress: "I believe we're in a stalemate." The question of whether to double down in the seemingly endless conflict will now become one of the first major military strategy questions of President Donald Trump's term.

Trump has not laid out any detailed new strategy for Afghanistan in his first weeks in office, but during the campaign, he reluctantly accepted that US troops would remain. And last month, the Wall Street Journal reported that Trump had suggested in a call to Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani that he would consider sending more soldiers. The pair spoke again on Thursday. "The leaders discussed opportunities to strengthen the bilateral relationship in areas such as security, counterterrorism cooperation, and economic development," the White House said.

Trump's spokesman Sean Spicer told reporters that the president would seek the advice of Defense Secretary James Mattis before deciding on Nicholson's request for reinforcements. "I think the president will heed the advice of the generals and Secretary Mattis. That conversation has yet to happen," he said. Testifying before the US Senate Armed Services Committee, Nicholson said he

has a "shortfall of a few thousand" troops needed to train, advise and assist Afghan government forces. The NATO alliance has 13,300 troops in Afghanistan, about half of them American, assisting a much larger Afghan force in a war against the Taliban and other Islamist militants.

Afghan casualties

Afghan government police and armed forces now take the lead in the battle against the Taliban, which was forced from power in Kabul after the 2001 US-led invasion. US battlefield deaths are relatively rare since the transfer of primary responsibility to Afghan forces. But the Afghans are facing mounting casualties—their losses in 2016 were up by a third over 2015, with 6,785 killed in the first 10 months of the year and losing ground. Last year was also particularly deadly for Afghan civilians. A UN report found that 11,500 were killed or injured in 2016, the most since it began keeping records in 2009. Nicholson told the committee that having more US and allied troops would allow him to train and advise Afghan units down to a brigade level and in ministries in Kabul. The general said he was discussing the request for reinforcements with his own chain of command and that Mattis would talk to the NATO allies.

False narrative

The Senate panel, led by hawkish committee chairman John McCain, were also keen to hear more about the alleged malign influence of Russia and Iran in the Afghan conflict. Trump has

repeatedly said he hopes to mend ties with Russia's President Vladimir Putin so that Russia and the United States can work together against "radical Islamic terror." But according to Nicholson, Russia is instead giving the Taliban encouragement and diplomatic cover in order to undermine American influence and to defeat NATO.

The general told the senators that Russia was trying to "legitimize" the Taliban by promoting a "false narrative" that the rebels are fighting the Islamic State group. Reports say Russian officials held several meetings with Taliban representatives in Tajikistan and Moscow in recent months. Russia also hosted talks on Afghanistan with officials from Pakistan and China in Moscow without inviting Ghani's government, harming efforts to build an Afghan-led peace process. "When we look at Russia and Iranian actions in Afghanistan, I believe that in part they're to undermine the United States and NATO," Nicholson said.

Not the right time

In Moscow, the Kremlin's special envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, said it was "not the right time to withdraw foreign soldiers from Afghanistan, including American soldiers." "The security situation in the country is worsening, and the Afghan forces are unable to resist the armed opposition by themselves," he told the state news agency TASS. Kabulov said there were around 15,000 "extremists" in northern Afghanistan, and warned they could "try to expand into territory in neighboring countries in Central Asia." —AFP

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WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump shakes hands with Southwest Chairman and CEO Gary Kelly during a meeting with airline industry executives in the State Dining Room of the White House on Thursday. — AFP

TRUMP PLEDGES US TAX REFORM

‘PHENOMENAL’ PLAN TO BE ANNOUNCED IN ‘WEEKS’

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump plans to announce the most ambitious tax reform plan since the Reagan era in the next few weeks, the White House said on Thursday. Despite the likelihood of disagreements on tax reform in Congress before tax reform can be enacted, the US dollar rose along with bond yields and stocks on Thursday in response to the announcement.

In a White House meeting with airline executives, Trump promised a “phenomenal” tax plan, but offered no specifics. However, under US law only Congress can substantively change the tax code which has not been overhauled thoroughly since 1986. Both US political parties generally agree on the need for tax reform, but action has been stymied by the complexity of fixing a code riddled with loopholes and subsidies, each with its own political constituency deeply embedded in the U.S. economy.

Trump’s remarks emphasized the need for a change in business taxes. White House

spokesman Sean Spicer told reporters at a later briefing that the Trump plan would include tax cuts for individuals as well. “Lowering the overall tax burden on American business is big league. That’s coming along very well.

“We’re way ahead of schedule,” Trump said at the meeting. “We’re going to be announcing something I would say over the next two or three weeks that will be phenomenal in terms of tax and developing our aviation infrastructure.”

Spicer later said to expect “a comprehensive plan, something we haven’t seen since 1986 ... It’s going to recognize the need to give so many working Americans the relief that they need”. “What he wants to do is create a tax climate that not only keeps jobs here but incentivizes companies to want to come here, to grow here, to create jobs here, to bring their profits back here.”

Investors have been waiting for details on Trump’s election campaign pledge to

stimulate US economic growth through spending on infrastructure projects and tax cuts. The US dollar rose against major currencies on Thursday, posting its best one-day gain against the yen in three weeks, while the greenback firmed against the euro and Swiss franc.

“It’s been a broad-based dollar rally driven by the headlines that Trump plans to announce something phenomenal on taxes in the next few weeks, in his words,” said Kathy Lien, managing director of BK Asset Management. “That was really the crux of the dollar rally shortly after his election, and I think investors are getting really excited about that again,” Lien said.

During last year’s campaign, the president pledged to cut the US business tax rate from 15 percent from 35 percent. The White House and Republicans in the House of Representatives have been in tax reform discussions which has also included a controversial border adjustment proposal that has

come under fire from retailers, oil refiners and automakers. Republicans, who once expected to wrap up tax reform in the first 100 days of the Trump administration, have recently predicted House legislation would instead emerge in mid-2017 and possibly be voted on before Congress’ August recess. Lawmakers have also been considering ways to upgrade US infrastructure such as roads, bridges, airports and rail systems.

At Thursday’s meeting, Trump discussed what he called an obsolete US air traffic control system, as well as out-of-date airport infrastructure, train systems and roads. He told the executives he was determined to “change all of that” and said they would be very happy with his proposals.

“So we want to help you realize these goals by rolling back burdensome regulations, and you people are regulated probably as much as almost anybody, although I can think of a couple of industries that are even worse,” Trump said. — Reuters

SOON TIME TO WATCH FOR RISING GLOBAL INFLATION?

LONDON: The global economy has weathered the new US administration's sweeping challenges to the status quo with surprising aplomb given serious threats made to world trade, but what is not so clear is how much longer inflation will remain stubbornly low. Nearly a decade since the start of the financial crisis and an avalanche of emergency monetary stimulus that ensued, inflation is only just now close to the 2 percent target many of the world's biggest central banks still keep.

But there have been stirring signals on inflation elsewhere in the world, suggesting a turning point may be closer. The Reserve Bank of India just dropped its bias to ease policy, citing global inflation pressures as one reason for a sudden volte-face. Mexico's central bank, grappling with a falling peso, hiked rates on Thursday to a near-eight year high. Key releases on inflation for the United States, Britain and China are due next week, forecast at 2.4, 1.9 and 2.4 percent, respectively, according to Reuters polls.

The worry is with growth holding up and commodity prices giving inflation a nudge up now, the last thing needed with most major central bank rates still near zero is more fuel poured onto an already-raging fire. An expected announcement from the Trump administration on plans for sweeping tax cuts is likely only weeks away, and has again boosted already-lofty stock prices, despite widespread worries about the barriers to trade that may come later.

Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen is due to testify to Congress next week for the first time since Donald Trump moved into the White House. She doesn't appear ready to signal a major step up in the Fed's glacial pace of rate rises yet either. Inflation in the economy is picking up: but so far not because spare capacity has been eaten up in product and labour markets, triggering price rises driven by demand outstripping shortages of supply.

Instead, the latest rise has to do with rising costs, particularly energy costs, leaving central bankers, notably European Central Bank President Mario Draghi, saying they will instead focus on the next round of inflation pressures. The main impediment to higher inflation rests in one of the side-effects from the free flow of labor: A lack of wage pressure. "What had appeared to be a promising trend of stronger wage growth broadening out to include more higher paying industries has reversed since late last year," notes Morgan Stanley US economist Robert Rosener. "Wage pressures remain predominately in low-wage industries, limiting gains in overall aggregate wage growth."

The US unemployment rate is below 5 percent, close to where most economists say is the lowest it can go before shortages start to drive up the cost of labor. Despite this latest setback in the official data, the general expectation is that wage inflation will soon take off, especially given that it is one of President Trump's stated aims to hire

American. The talk of wage inflation has been less robust in the Britain, however.

Britain is facing an imported inflation challenge following Britons' majority vote last June to leave the European Union that caused a 15 percent fall in sterling. That could send inflation to 3 percent or higher later this year. The Bank of England just cut its estimate of the unemployment rate it thinks will generate inflation to 4.5 percent from 5.0 percent based on recent evidence that already-low unemployment isn't boosting wages much.

Its latest agents survey of businesses shows very modest expectations for pay settlements in the coming year, only slightly above 2 percent. Average UK weekly earnings excluding bonuses are forecast to rise 2.7 percent in the three months to December on a year ago, steady compared with the last official set of data. It is clear that going forward, there is still plenty of uncertainty over what Britain's future trading relationship will be with the EU and how long that will take. But if the unemployment rate keeps falling, it should soon be time for a trend of rising wages to re-establish itself, so long as basic laws of economics still apply. "There seems to be a real inconsistency between the way the US is being analysed and the way the UK is being analyzed," said Charles Goodhart, former member of the BoE's Monetary Policy Committee, at a recent conference hosted by Fathom Consulting and Thomson Reuters. — Reuters

JAZEERA REPORTS KD 52.8M REVENUES, KD 10.8M PROFIT

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways today announced its full-year financial results for 2016. The company recorded KD 52.8 million in revenues for the year, an operating profit of KD 8.8 million, and a net profit of KD 10.8 million making 2016 the company's sixth consecutive year of profitability. The board of directors has recommended a 35 percent cash dividend totaling KD7 million.

Full-year results highlights:

- Operating revenue: KD 52.8 million, down 10 percent from the previous year
- Operating profit: KD 8.8 million, down 35.3 percent from the previous year
- Net profit: KD 10.8 million, down 29.8 percent from last year
- Passengers: Up 0.3 percent
- On-time Performance: 94 percent

Jazeera Airways Chairman Marwan Boodai said, "I am pleased to report that the year 2016 was our sixth consecutive year of profitability, however the slowing macroeconomic environment and the continued oversupply of seats on our routes placed pressure on our yields, resulting in a 29.8 percent drop from last year while carrying slightly more travelers. Having said that, with six years of consecutive profitability and virtually no debt, our balance sheet remains strong and cash-rich, making it the healthiest balance sheet in our industry."

"Looking forward, we believe that with the recent investments in on-



Marwan Boodai

ground facilities that we've made - and launched in the second half of 2016 - will attract more travelers in the quarters to come. Our new terminal, which we have announced earlier will differentiate our product and gradually counter the pressure on yields. The terminal is due to start welcoming travelers by year-end."

In 2016 Jazeera Airways broke new grounds by launching services that make the travel experience more efficient for travelers in Kuwait. The airline launched a remote check-in service called Park & Fly, the first in Kuwait, as well as a dedicated business lounge adjacent to its dedicated gates. The airline also upgraded the entire check-in

experience for even faster service. In 2017, the airline will continue to facilitate travelers' check-in, boarding, departure, and arrival experience with the construction of a brand new state-of-the-art dedicated terminal that aims to make the airport experience even more efficient for travelers flying in and out of the airport.

The new Jazeera Airways Terminal building will incorporate smart technology tasked with providing a seamless, congestion-free, check-in process. The automated building will also connect to travelers' devices as soon as they arrive to the terminal and offer immediate assistance such as updating their flight status and navigation to their gate.

DOLLAR RALLIES ON TRUMP TAX PLEDGE

LONDON: The dollar extended a rally yesterday on comments by US President Donald Trump that he would release details of a "phenomenal" tax-cut plan, which also lifted global stock markets. Japan's Nikkei index led the advance, piling on 2.5 percent as the yen sank, while a forecast-busting trade report from China also lifted spirits in Hong Kong and Shanghai, dealers said. European markets were also up, with London receiving a boost also from far better-than-expected UK industrial production data.

At a meeting Thursday with airline executives, Trump said he would release details of a "phenomenal" tax cut plan in the next two or three weeks. The news sent a rocket through Wall Street, where all three main indices ended at record high levels, and the dollar powered higher. They continued rising at the opening bell yesterday, with the Dow gaining 0.2 percent. "US equities are adding to yesterday's rally following a promise of a "phenomenal" tax plan in the next 2-3 weeks by President Donald Trump, helping ease heightened trade and immigration concerns," said analysts at Charles Schwab brokerage.

World stock markets surged in the two months after Trump's November election win, buoyed by his promises to slash taxes, hike infrastructure spending and cut red tape to fan economic growth. But in the three weeks since he took office, sentiment has been consumed largely by a series of controversial Trump measures and comments, particularly over trade, that left dealers worried that his domestic agenda had been put on the back burner.

"Trump has started making the right noises again as far as markets are concerned, with Thursday's promise of a 'phenomenal' tax announcement in the coming weeks certainly hitting all the right notes," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at Oanda trading group. "Investors have become a little apprehensive in recent weeks due to the unpredictable nature of Trump's policies and the timing of the announcements which has taken the edge of moves we saw heading into year-end."

Elsewhere yesterday, oil prices rose as the International Energy Agency watchdog said OPEC countries are largely complying with a landmark deal to reduce the global oil glut. In a monthly update, the IEA added that oil demand was likely to be more vigorous than anticipated this year. — AFP

ENERGY PRODUCTS BOOST US IMPORT PRICES IN JANUARY

WASHINGTON: US import prices rose more than expected in January amid further gains in the cost of energy products, but a strong dollar continued to dampen underlying imported inflation. The Labor Department said yesterday import prices increased 0.4 percent last month after an upwardly revised 0.5 percent rise in December. In the 12 months through January, import prices jumped 3.7 percent, the largest gain since February 2012, after advancing 2.0 percent in December.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast import prices gaining 0.2 percent last month after a previously reported 0.4 percent increase in December. The dollar extended gains against the euro on the data, while prices for US government debt fell. Import prices are rising as firming global demand lifts prices for oil and other commodities, but the spillover to a broader increase in inflation is being limited by dollar strength. The dollar gained 4.4 percent against the currencies of the United States' main trading partners in 2016, with most of the appreciation occurring in last months of the year.

This suggests that the greenback will continue to depress imported inflation in the near-term even though the dollar has weakened 2.9 percent on a trade-weighted basis this year. Prices for imported fuels increased 5.8 percent last month after rising 6.6 percent in December. Import prices excluding fuels fell 0.2 percent following a 0.1 percent dip the prior month. The cost of imported food dropped 1.3 percent after declining 1.5 percent in December. Prices for imported capital goods edged down 0.1 percent after being unchanged in December. — Reuters

RECKITT SWALLOWS US FIRM MEAD JOHNSON

LONDON: British consumer health giant Reckitt Benckiser yesterday gobbled US infant and child nutrition specialist Mead Johnson for \$16.6 billion in a takeover which targets rapid expansion in Asia. The friendly deal, worth the equivalent of £15.5 billion, was pitched at \$90 per share and will "significantly strengthen" its presence in developing markets like China, Reckitt said in a statement. The transaction will also take Reckitt, whose brands include Durex condoms and Nurofen painkillers, into the baby-food market for the first time.

The deal, which values Illinois-based Mead Johnson at \$17.9 billion including debt, is expected to generate £200 million of annual cost savings within three years of completion. "The acquisition of Mead Johnson is a significant step forward in Reckitt Benckiser's journey as a leader in consumer health," said chief executive

Rakesh Kapoor. He described Mead Johnson's "Enfa" baby food brands as "a natural extension" to Reckitt Benckiser's consumer health portfolio. Under Kapoor's leadership, Reckitt has been on the lookout for a major acquisition for some time, and the Mead takeover will boost its US and Asia business and expand its health division. The transaction would strengthen the British group's position in developing markets - which will account for approximately 40 percent of the combined group's sales.

'Tremendous value'

Mead Johnson chairman James Cornelius said the deal would provide "tremendous value" and described Reckitt Benckiser "with its strong financial base, broad global footprint, consumer branding expertise and dynamic business model (as) an ideal partner". Mead Johnson sells 70 products in over 50 coun-

tries, including its flagship "Enfa" line. The US company, which booked a net profit of \$545 million in 2016 on sales of \$3.7 billion, generates nearly half its revenues in Asia.

Mead Johnson belonged to Bristol-Myers Squibb until 2009, when its shares were floated on the stock exchange. It has regularly been the focus of takeover speculation, with food giants Danone and Nestle previously tipped as potential buyers. London-listed Reckitt Benckiser, which generated sales of £8.87 billion in 2015, twice downgraded its forecast for organic, or self-generated, sales growth during last year.

Its diverse portfolio of brands also includes Air Wick air fresheners, Dettol surface cleaners, Finish dishwasher tablets and Strepsils throat lozenges. In early morning London trade, Reckitt's share price rose 0.75 percent to 7,293 pence on the British capital's benchmark FTSE 100 index, which

gained 0.54 percent to 7,268.40 points.

Reckitt profits advance

The British company made the announcement alongside its full-year results. Net profit, or earnings after taxation, rose five percent to £1.83 billion in 2016 on a 2.0-percent increase in revenues to £9.89 billion. "2016 was a good year in which we achieved broad-based growth and excellent margin expansion, despite challenging markets and an unusual number of issues," Kapoor added. "In 2017, we expect macro conditions to remain challenging, and for a number of existing headwinds to persist in the first half." The Mead purchase meanwhile remains subject to shareholder and regulatory approvals. The takeover deal represented a premium of 29 percent over Mead's stock closing price on Feb 1, which was the day before the pair confirmed takeover talks. — AFP

GREECE LENDERS MOVE TO PATCH UP DIFFERENCES

BRUSSELS: Euro zone lenders and the International Monetary Fund have agreed to put aside differences and present a united front at a meeting with Greece in the latest bailout impasse, a step towards agreeing what Athens must do next. The news was enough to bring investors back into the Greek bond market, but whether Athens will go along with the demands is far from clear. The government is under public pressure not to accept any more austerity.

Euro zone officials said yesterday the lenders would ask Greece to take €1.8 billion worth of new reforms by 2018 and another €1.8 billion after then. The measures will be focused on broadening the tax base and on pension cutbacks. In Athens, a source said this amounted to 1 percent of the gross domestic product now and again after 2018. Putting forward a united front would put aside the differences held by the two sets of lenders about the size of the primary surplus - which excludes debt payments - Greece should reach in 2018 and then maintain. The euro zone and IMF have also differed over what kind of debt relief Greece needs.

The differences have hindered efforts to unlock further funding for Greece under its latest bailout program. This has driven yields on Greek 2-year bonds above 10 percent, although they dropped 120 basis points to 8.8 percent after news of the lenders' pact. "There is agreement to present a united front to the Greeks," a senior euro zone official said. "What comes out of it, we will see." Another source familiar with the agreement said the lenders reckoned that Greece still needed to complete between three-quarters to a half of so-called prior actions before it can have the 6.1 billion euros due from the latest instalment of aid.

Battered Greeks

Greece has consistently ruled out further cuts to pensions, which have been cut 11 times since the onset of the crisis in 2010. The country has only just emerged from a multi-year recession brought on by the debt crisis and the austerity demanded in exchange for three bailouts. Greece's unemployment rate is 23 percent and while year-on-year economic growth was 1.8 percent last year's third quarter, it fell at a rate of more than 10 percent earlier in the decade.

The first signs of how far apart the sides remain may come later on Friday when Greek Finance Minister Euclid Tsakalotos meets the chairman of euro zone finance ministers and representatives of lenders' institutions to discuss the size of Greece's primary surplus. Jeroen Dijsselbloem, the Eurogroup chairman, sought to play down anxieties that the debt crisis was about to blow up again. — Reuters

EUROPE FEELS PINCH AS SPANISH FIELDS SUFFER

VEGETABLE PRICES SOAR ACROSS CONTINENT

MADRID: Vegetable lovers across Europe have been making hard choices this winter after storms battered fields in south-east Spain, the continent's main fruit and vegetable patch. Courgette prices are soaring, but shoppers are also thinking twice before shelling out for pricier tomatoes, peppers and aubergines. Some British supermarkets have even resorted to rationing sales of broccoli and lettuce in light of plummeting harvests.

The vast fields along Spain's Mediterranean coast usually stay warm enough to produce year-round, even in winter. But torrential rains hit the region late December, followed by shock snowfalls in January - areas near Murcia, in the heart of the farming zones, had not seen a snowflake in 34 years. For most of the year, Spain supplies around 30 percent of the main fresh fruits and vegetables on European shelves. In winter, this proportion rises to half - and to a whopping 80 percent when it comes to lettuce.

After the bad weather hit, a Spanish federation of agricultural exporters reported a 30-percent drop in European shipments. The COAG farmers' union says output has halved in the worst-hit regions. Some farmers "have lost their entire crop", said Andres Gongora, COAG's Almeria director. The province of Murcia, which exports two-thirds of Spanish lettuce, a trade worth 423 million euros (\$450 million), has been particularly hit.

Young lettuces, growing in open fields after sprouting from seeds in greenhouses, were destroyed. After the foul weather receded, a thick coat of thawed mud held up replanting in many places. "We won't be able to plant here this year," said Javier Soto, manager of spinach and melon growers Agrar Systems near the town of Murcian town of Torre Pacheco, pointing to a field gouged out by a muddy torrent. Adding to the veggie crunch has been heavy snowfall in northern Italy, another major supplier to Europe.



TORRE PACHECO, Spain: Javier Soto, managing director of Agrar Systems, a German capital company specialized in the production of lettuce of different types, shows lettuce devastated by storms on Feb 8, 2017. — AFP

Thousands of growers there have lost their crops, with expected losses of to around 400 million euros, according to Italy's main farmers' union.

Luxury lettuce

The double whammy is now being felt in European stores. Lettuce prices have doubled in Germany, and even tripled in Finland. In France, courgettes fetched four to five times their normal price in mid-January. Spanish supplies of iceberg, romaine and other types of lettuce had already been hit by a dry autumn, and artichoke harvests had fallen by a fourth. Many shoppers have vented their anger on social media, using hashtags like #lettucecrisis and #courgettecrisis.

Laureano Montesinos, a marketing director at Fruveg, a producer near Murcia, said British supermarket chains had not immediately grasped how dire the situation was. In Germany and northern Europe, produce stalls are not as packed as usual, but stores have

managed to avoid drastic measures. "We've had some supply problems with iceberg lettuce these past weeks. But until now, we've been able to offer enough for our clients", said Kirsten Gess, communications director for the Aldi-Sud discount chain.

Spain's agriculture minister expects production to recover in a few weeks, with producers aiming to be back on track by early March. But for lettuce grown in open fields, the wait could extend into April. For Alan Clarke, a strategist at Scotiabank in London, the price increases could spill over into processed food products, such as veggie burgers and other ready-to-eat meals. "More generally, restaurant prices face upside risks, especially because spring/summer menus are due for imminent update", he added. So even though higher produce prices may prove short-lived once Spain's harvests recover, diners may be paying the bill for months. — AFP

90% OPEC OIL CUT COMPLIANCE: IEA

PARIS: OPEC countries are complying almost fully with a landmark deal to reduce the global oil glut, but demand is likely to be more vigorous than anticipated this year, the International Energy Agency said Friday. Under an agreement that came into effect in January, OPEC countries throttled oil output by one million barrels per day to 32.1 million bpd, said the watchdog which analyses

energy markets for major oil consuming nations. "The IEA estimates... a record initial compliance rate of 90 percent, with some producers, notably Saudi Arabia, appearing to cut by more than required," it said.

At the same time, the IEA upgraded its estimates for global oil demand growth for 2016 and 2017. "This first cut is certainly one of the deepest in the his-

tory of OPEC output cut initiatives," it said. At the end of November, the Organization of Oil Exporting Countries agreed to cut output by 1.2 million bpd from January 1, initially for a period of six months. Then in December, non-OPEC producers led by Russia agreed to cut their own output to 558,000 bpd.

The aim was to reduce a glut in global oil supply that has depressed prices,

which currently stand at around \$50-\$55 per barrel. In view of the output cuts, global demand for oil should be more vigorous than initially anticipated, the IEA said. It increased its estimates for third month in row, calculating that demand rose by 1.6 million bpd to 96.6 million bpd in 2016. And it predicted that demand would increase again by 1.4 million bpd to 98 million bpd in 2017. — AFP



LAGOS: Protesters hold placards and banners during an anti-government demonstration on Feb 6, 2017. — AFP

NIGERIA AIMS TO PRESENT PLAN FOR \$1BN WB LOAN

ABUJA SEEKS TO DRAG ITSELF OUT OF RECESSION

ABUJA/LAGOS: Nigeria wants to borrow at least \$1 billion from the World Bank to help haul it out of recession and plans to present the required economic reform proposals to the lender this month, officials and diplomats told Reuters. The oil producer, which has been hit hard by a sharp fall in crude prices since 2014, has been in talks with the Washington-based lender for a year to secure a loan to help plug a yawning budget deficit and fund badly needed infrastructure projects.

But the government has not specified how much money it was looking to borrow from the World Bank, saying only that it aimed to raise \$5 billion abroad. It was previously also unclear when Nigeria planned to present its proposed reforms to the lender - which will not consider a loan before it reviews the plans to make the economy more resilient and attractive to investment.

The government now plans to present its economic reform proposals by the end of February, according to government officials and Western diplomats who declined to be named as they

are not authorized to speak publicly. One senior government official said Nigeria would seek a loan of \$1 billion from the World Bank, while a second senior official said it could seek as much as \$2 billion.

The Nigerian finance ministry declined to comment on the size of the loan being sought or the timing of the submission of the reform proposals. The World Bank also declined to comment on those matters. A spokeswoman said Nigeria's economic proposals would be the "basis of which the World Bank will determine with the government the most appropriate lending instrument to support the implementation of the reform plan". It was unclear what the government's economic reform program would contain.

New roads

Nigeria, which relies on oil revenue for most of its income, is struggling to drag itself out of its first recession in 25 years. It needs money to help plug a budget deficit of 2.2 trillion naira (\$7 billion) for 2016 and help fund a record budget of 7.3 trillion naira for 2017

aimed at stimulating the economy. It had planned to apply for a World Bank loan last year but the process had ground to a halt because it failed to submit its economic recovery plans by the end of December as initially promised, sources told Reuters last month.

The African Development Bank (AfDB), meanwhile, is holding back the second, \$400 million, tranche of a \$1 billion loan because it is also awaiting the reform plans. Nigeria will present its economic proposals to the AfDB at the same time as the World Bank, according to the government officials. A spokeswoman for the Abidjan-based AfDB declined to comment. It is unclear why the government has not previously submitted its reform plans to the two international lenders.

A funding deadlock could throw into doubt badly needed projects planned for this year, including new roads and improvements to power infrastructure. The government is selling \$1 billion of Eurobonds this week but this falls short of the \$5 billion Nigeria said a year ago it wanted to borrow abroad including the World Bank. — Reuters

CAN GOING GREEN HELP PICK SLAVERY OUT OF COTTON?

MAYAPUR, India: Wearing thick gloves and a shawl wrapped around her face, Kanchen Kanjarya is busily picking cotton in the midday sun on her small farm in Mayapur in India's western state of Gujarat. Kanjarya, 42, works up to eight hours a day on the six acre plot, one of millions of small holder farms in India supplying cotton to garment factories making clothes for Western brands. But while the days are long and the heat can hit 35 degrees Celsius, Kanjarya is delighted to be among a small but rising number of farmers being trained to grow sustainable cotton that can cut water and chemical use and improve profits.

With the global cotton industry under scrutiny for using forced and child labor and polluting the environment, more Western companies are starting to work with farmers to clean up fashion's leading natural fibre - and its complex supply chain. "With the extra money we can invest in our children's education, buy equipment, and repair our homes," Kanjarya told the Thomson Reuters Foundation outside her house in the small, dusty village of Mayapur, showing off her new toilet and shower. "I have bought a tractor and also a motorbike for my son to get to his job. Two of my three daughters are teachers. This is good for the whole family and my children now have a future."

Kanjarya is one of 1,250 women farmers in Gujarat, India's biggest cotton and cottonseed producing state, taking part in one of a number of small initiatives led by companies to combat environmental problems and break the cycle of child labor. For the past three years these women farmers have had classes and infield training twice a month in sustainable farming methods such as water efficiency, natural pesticides, and soil health, designed to increase cotton yields and income. The pilot, by social enterprise CottonConnect, India's Self Employed Women's Association and funded by UK budget retailer Primark, has pushed up profits more than two-fold and is expanding to 10,000 farmers over six years, its founders say.

Local sourcing

Elsewhere in India the C&A Foundation, affiliated with global retailer C&A (and in a partnership with the Thomson Reuters Foundation on trafficking), is working with various groups to help 25,000 farmers move to organic cotton. And the non-profit Better Cotton Initiative, set up in 2005, has nearly 1,000 members including retailers like IKEA, H&M, Burberry and Adidas, committed to fair work practices in cotton and regulated use of land, chemicals and water.

"We are seeing an increasing trend for companies to get involved in cotton production," said Alison Ward, chief executive at CottonConnect which was set up in 2009 to work directly with farmers to address social and economic issues. "The world is changing and it is starting to be far more about local sourcing but getting to the middle of the supply chain is a real challenge," she said.

Ward said only 10-12 percent of cotton globally is sustainable and it will take time, effort and investment to shift to farming methods that could boost profits and combat labour abuses in the crop historically plagued by slavery. Industry experts say the cotton supply chain is the hardest to crack as the journey from field to store involves so many stages - from seed production, to cotton growing, to gins to separate seeds and fiber, spinning mills to garment factories. The global cotton industry is also massive, estimated to support about 250 million people in about 85 nations, many poor, with an estimated four million cotton farmers in India. A US Department of Labor report in 2016 said forced labour in cotton had been documented in eight countries - with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan widely condemned for state-sponsored forced labor - and child labor in 17 nations, including India. — Reuters

VENEZUELA FALLS BEHIND ON OIL-FOR-LOAN DEALS

HOUSTON/CARACAS: Venezuela's state-run oil company, PDVSA, has fallen months behind on shipments of crude and fuel under oil-for-loan deals with China and Russia, according to internal company documents reviewed by Reuters. The delayed shipments to such crucial political allies and trading partners - which together have extended Venezuela at least \$55 billion in credit - provide new insight into PDVSA's operational failures and their crippling impact on the country's unraveling socialist economy.

Because oil accounts for almost all of Venezuela's export revenue, PDVSA's crisis extends to a citizenry suffering through triple-digit inflation and food shortages reminiscent of the waning days of the Soviet Union. The total worth of the late cargoes to state-run Chinese and Russian firms is about \$750 million, according to a Reuters analysis of the PDVSA documents. At the end of January, PDVSA was late on nearly 10 million barrels of refined products that the company owes the

firms - with shipments delayed by as much as 10 months, according to the documents. It also failed to make timely deliveries of another 3.2 million barrels of crude shipments to China's state-run China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC).

Shipments to China and Russia are critical for PDVSA's financial health because firms from the two countries purchase about a third of the PDVSA's total oil and fuel exports. The administration of Venezuela president Nicolas Maduro has for years relied on credit from the two nations, particularly China, to finance infrastructure and social investment in Venezuela. PDVSA did not respond to requests for comment. Venezuela's Petroleum Ministry declined to comment.

During the decade-long oil boom that ended in 2014, Venezuela borrowed nearly \$50 billion from China that it agreed to pay back in crude and fuel deliveries to state-run Chinese firms. Venezuela was the seventh largest crude supplier to China in 2016

and the largest in Latin America. Russia's state-run Rosneft lent at least \$5 billion under similar arrangements, but the details of those deals have not been disclosed. Now, PDVSA is struggling to make good on those promises. A total of 45 cargoes bound for Russian and Chinese companies are late for a variety of reasons, according to internal operational reports about shipments of crude and refined products.

The problems include operational mishaps, such as refining outages and delayed cleaning of tanker hulls, and financial disputes with service providers owed money by PDVSA. The backlog of delayed or canceled fuel cargoes represents about three months of the 88,000 barrels per day (bpd) of jet fuel and diesel that PDVSA must deliver under financing deals to Russia's Rosneft, China's PetroChina and ChinaOil. Rosneft, the Kremlin and the Russian Energy Ministry declined to comment.

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said China paid great attention to its relationship with

Venezuela. "What I can tell you is that at present Venezuela's providing of oil to China to repay the loan is basically normal," Lu told a daily news briefing. PetroChina did not respond to requests for comment, and ChinaOil, a unit of PetroChina, declined to comment. The Chinese commerce ministry did not respond to requests for comment.

Operational, financial struggles

The delayed deliveries suggest that PDVSA will struggle this year to meet a planned increase in shipments to China and other countries, as laid out in a broad strategy document seen by Reuters. That document said PDVSA aims to boost crude deliveries to China by 55 percent in 2017, in part by reducing exports to India by 15 percent. Last year, the company produced about 2.5 million barrels a day, lowest in 23 years, and this year's production projections are virtually unchanged, according to the PDVSA strategy document. An internal PDVSA email exchange from Nov. — Reuters

AUSTRALIA HEAT WAVE LEADS FIRMS TO POWER DOWN

SYDNEY/MELBOURNE: Major energy users in Australia shut down yesterday, and the public were asked not to go home and cook or watch television, averting big blackouts amid strained supplies as an extreme heat wave moved from the desert interior to the east coast. The temperature climbed to 47 Celsius in parts of New South Wales (NSW) state and the Australian Capital Territory yesterday, while today is expected to see a record for the hottest February day on record.

The extreme heat caused power prices to soar to an unprecedented A\$14,000 per megawatt-hour (MWh) as power stations struggle to meet skyrocketing demand for cooling. Authorities had been preparing to temporarily suspend power to selected areas of New South Wales late on Friday to prevent overload just days after 40,000 homes and businesses lost electricity in the state of South Australia.

But the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) said late yesterday tight power supply conditions had subsided for the day, without power cuts to residents. "AEMO can confirm that residential load shedding was not required at any point throughout the day ... predominantly due to reduced electricity consumption across the state," it said in a statement.

Earlier, NSW Energy Minister Don Harwin urged households and businesses to save electricity. "Rather than going straight home and turning on the television and cooking, (you might) want to consider going to a movie, going out to a shopping centre, keeping the load low, every bit like that helps," Harwin told reporters in Sydney.

A paper mill, water treatment operations and Australia's largest aluminium smelter, Tomago, were among businesses that halted operations to conserve energy, with many industrial users required to do so under their contracts. The Tomago smelter, which exports to Southeast Asia, Japan and China, is the single largest consumer of electricity in NSW and is jointly owned by Anglo-Australian group Rio Tinto and Oslo-based Norsk Hydro.

Too hot for ice cream

Weather forecaster Olenka Duma said a build-up of heat in the vast interior outback was being pushed east across NSW, the country's most populous state. "It was like the windows and doors were closed for a long time, and now a weather front has dragged the hot air here," Duma, an official of the Bureau of Meteorology, told Reuters. It was even too hot for ice cream. "I'm not doing any business today, I'm just sitting in the air-conditioning at home," said Ned Qutami, owner of six mobile ice cream bars in Sydney. — Reuters

ROBUST CHINA TRADE DATA BOON FOR ASIA

PROTECTIONIST RISKS LOOM

BEIJING: China posted much stronger-than-expected trade data for January as demand picked up at home and abroad, an encouraging start to 2017 for the world's largest trading nation even as Asia braces for a rise in US protectionism under President Donald Trump. Trump criticised China, Japan and Germany last week, saying the three key US trading partners were engaged in devaluing their currencies to the harm of US companies and consumers.

But he has not followed through yet on threats to label China a currency manipulator and slap heavy tariffs on Chinese goods, and took a major step on Thursday to improve ties by holding a phone call with President Xi Jinping. "China's trade data are going to be pretty good in the first part of this year because of the very good run that we had in the last part of 2016," said Louis Kuijs, head of Asia economics at Oxford Economics in Hong Kong. "The worry we have is really about US trade policy, which is undeniably turning more protectionist...It is pretty obvious to me that the climate for exports to the US is going to be much harsher in the coming years."

China's imports in January rose at the fastest pace in four years, fueled by a continued construction boom which is boosting demand and global prices for resources from copper to steel, preliminary customs data showed yesterday. The 16.7 percent bounce easily eclipsed an expected rise of 10.0 percent in a Reuters poll. China's imports from the United States rose 23.4 percent in January, the fastest pace in at least a year, while its monthly trade surplus with the US dipped to \$21.37 billion. Both Chinese and US data show



BEIJING: A vendor smiles as he waits for customers at a market yesterday. — AFP

China's surplus with the US narrowed last year, but it remained well above the sustained level of more than \$20 billion that is one of three criteria used by the US Treasury to designate another country as a currency manipulator. The surplus decreased \$20.1 billion to \$347.0 billion in 2016, the US Commerce Department said Tuesday, while Chinese data put it somewhat lower. Led by electronics, China's January exports climbed the most in almost a year, adding to evidence that Asia's long trade recession may be bottoming out.

January shipments rose 7.9 percent, more than twice as much as expected, after 2016 exports slumped nearly 8 percent. China had been lagging a recent export recovery seen in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, dragging on the regional supply chain. Its integrated circuit shipments rose 14.5 percent last

month, while exports of mobile phones rose 7.9 percent. That left the country with a initial trade surplus of \$51.35 billion for the month, the highest in a year. Customs is due to release updated data for trade on Feb 23.

"The export outlook for China is good, except for the potential risk of a Sino-US trade war. The most important risk for China is what the Trump administration will do," Jianguang Shen, chief economist at Mizuho Securities in Hong Kong. China watchers warned the long Lunar New Year holidays may have distorted the data to some degree, with companies pumping up production or rushing to build inventories before the break, which can last for weeks. But most economists agreed the trend backed the view that manufacturing demand is improving in China and globally. — Reuters

RETAILERS SEEK SILVER BULLET IN AMAZON ERA

NEW YORK: Want a coffee while you shop? A drink? Those are just few of the gimmicks being rolled out by retailers as they fight to boost store traffic - and ensure their survival in the Amazon era. Stores are testing artificial intelligence programs to guide shoppers through their aisles, and swipe-right, swipe-left games, that borrow from dating apps to offer them personalized pickings. Others have added coffee shops, restaurants and even alcohol in an attempt to drag consumers away from their laptops and back in the dressing room.

"It has to be a better experience" and not just "a simple warehouse of goods," said Chris Donnelly, managing director at Accenture Strategy, a business consultancy. "There's got to be more of an emotional, experiential connection." The new tech and add-on perks look set to become even more critical following another bad holiday shopping season that has sharpened focus on the oversized US retail footprint.

Experts predict some brick-and-mortar stores will survive the period of reckoning, but there will be fewer of them, and the survivors will be more customer-friendly. A recent Accenture report predicted the next

decade will be "the golden age of the consumer", offering a "growing array of products and services, often personalized to their specific needs and wants". But with that comes disruption and Accenture warned of a painful shakeout ahead as old-fashioned malls close and jobs are lost.

Experimentation

Retailers are showing signs of the strain. Last week, Ralph Lauren Corporation announced the surprise departure of chief executive Stefan Larsson due to disagreements with the company founder. Tiffany's chief executive resigned this week. Macy's last month announced plans to close 100 stores and eliminate some 10,000 jobs and reportedly has approached rival Hudson's Bay over a potential merger. Those woes have sparked a greater willingness to try new things.

"There's just a lot of experimentation going on," said Steve Laughlin, IBM's general manager for global consumer industries. "I would argue not nearly enough." Industry insiders are bullish on greater use of hand-held tablets so employees can call up a

client's purchase history or parry questions from well-informed customers about pricing and product information.

Retailers also are turning to data analytics, and IBM is working with them to make use of big data from smartphones on customer patterns, for example to see if shoppers are visiting the shoe department but not buying anything. Chains like Target and Macy's have even hired their own engineers to review data. But the new technologies come with risks. Nordstrom in 2013 said it was pulling the plug on a smartphone tracking program after some customers raised privacy concerns.

Retailers also are divided on how to make use of ubiquitous mobile apps. Some view them as valuable tools - notably for sending promotions or coupons to customers in or near their stores. But others say mobile apps can detract from the in-store experience. "When they come to the store, you don't want them to interact with the app," said Ronny Max, a retail industry consultant who specializes in behavior analytics. "The whole point of them coming to the store is so they can interact with the store." — AFP



WASHINGTON: A sign advertising Ivanka Trump products is seen outside the Willard InterContinental hotel on Thursday. (Inset) This photo taken on Jan 27, 2017 shows Kellyanne Conway. —AFP

TRUMP AIDE FACES PROBE AFTER IVANKA BRAND PLUG

CONWAY DRAWS ETHICS COMPLAINTS

WASHINGTON: A key aide to Donald Trump was facing possible investigation Thursday after pitching the clothing line of the president's daughter Ivanka on television, with top lawmakers from both camps denouncing a major ethics breach and urging "disciplinary action". Speaking with the White House seal clearly visible over her shoulder, Kellyanne Conway gave Ivanka Trump's clothing a rave review during a Fox interview early Thursday, urging shoppers to "go buy Ivanka's stuff". "This is just a wonderful line," she said. "I own some of it. I fully - I'm going to give a free commercial here. Go buy it today, everybody. You can find it online."

Conway was clearly channeling the anger expressed a day earlier by the president himself, when he tweeted that Ivanka had been "treated so unfairly" by Nordstrom, an upscale department store chain that dropped her fashion brand. But to Washington traditionalists, Conway's direct pitch from the White House for a product line sold by the president's child seemed a jaw-dropping - and possibly illegal - misuse of presidential prestige.

Democrat Elijah Cummings and Republican Jason Chaffetz - both lawmakers on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, which Chaffetz chairs - led calls for Conway to face rebuke. "Conway's statements clearly violate the ethical principles for federal employees and are unacceptable," the congressmen said in a letter to the federal ethics

chief, Walter Shaub, requesting that he recommend "appropriate disciplinary action" against her. "What she did was wrong, wrong, wrong," said Chaffetz on Twitter.

The Office of Government Ethics, which Shaub heads, separately said it had been "receiving an extraordinary volume of contacts from citizens about recent events". Without mentioning Conway by name, it said it was reaching out to the appropriate government agencies who would decide whether to pursue the matter - the established protocol when the OGE learns of "possible ethics violations."

'The law is clear'

Conway said the Trump team was "aware" of the lawmakers' letter and was "reviewing that internally". She also told Fox News she had spoken with the president about the incident and that he "supports me 100 percent". "All I can say, at some point in your life, you ought to have a boss who treated me the way that the president is treating me today." White House press secretary Sean Spicer said Trump's aide had been "counseled" over the issue, without providing more detail. "Kellyanne Conway's White House Infomercial," as it was dubbed in a scathing New York Times editorial, again fanned debate over the unprecedented level to which the new president - despite his protestations to the contrary - has mixed politics, business and family, raising questions about conflicts of interest. —AFP

TWITTER WOES DEEPEN AS GROWTH SPUTTERS NO TRUMP LIFT

WASHINGTON: Twitter shares plunged Thursday as the social network reported sluggish revenue and user growth - its finances sputtering despite increased prominence from President Donald Trump's extensive use of the platform. Shares sank more than 12 percent to close at \$16.41 as investor hopes faded for a revival of growth at the messaging platform, which has lagged behind its rivals in the fast-moving social media sector. Twitter reported a net loss in the fourth quarter of \$167 million, after a \$90 million deficit in the corresponding period a year ago. Revenue in the quarter rose a modest one percent to \$717 million.

In the critical area of user growth, Twitter said it ended 2016 with 319 million monthly active users, a gain of four percent from a year ago in the closely watched metric and only two million more than the prior quarter. Advertising revenue, which makes up the lion's share of Twitter's receipts, was down slightly from a year ago at \$638 million. Its revenue from the United States was down five percent at \$440 million. For all of 2016, Twitter lost \$456 million on revenues of \$2.5 billion. That represented a narrowing of the deficit from 2015 and a 14 percent increase in revenue. Chief executive Jack Dorsey remained upbeat about Twitter's long-term prospects following its efforts to revamp the platform with more video and other changes.

A growing impact

"The whole world is watching Twitter," Dorsey told a conference call. "While we may not be meeting everyone's growth expectations, there's one thing that continues to grow and outpace our peers: Twitter's influence and impact." He added that Twitter "carries some of the most important commentary and conversations," and is used to mobilize people into action.

But some analysts say Twitter is moving far too slow in the rapidly evolving social media space. Jan Dawson at Jackdaw Research said Twitter has been trying to get more users and improved engagement but that "some of this stuff has been in the works for over two years, and Twitter still doesn't seem to be making meaningful progress".

In a blog post, Dawson called Twitter's revenue picture "pretty awful" and said it may have a hard time keeping advertisers interested. "Twitter's big competitors for direct response advertising - notably Facebook and Google - are just way better at this stuff than they are, and Twitter simply hasn't made anywhere near enough progress here over the last few years. As a result, Twitter is enormously susceptible to competitive threats."

Shebly Seyrafi at FBN Securities lowered his outlook for Twitter, saying it may face tougher competition from other social media players, including Snapchat, whose parent firm is expected to hit the market next month. "Less ad dollars are expected to hit the market next month," he said in a note to clients. Twitter, which has never reported a profit, has been revamping its offerings as it seeks to expand beyond its core base of politicians, celebrities and journalists. —AFP

Weekender

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2017

Iraq's 'cycling girls' ride for freedom

Dog dressed in the fashion of France and contestants in the World Fashion Presents segment pose during the 14th Annual New York Pet Fashion Show presented by TropiClean at the Hotel Pennsylvania. — AFP

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This file photo shows French heavy metal band Gojira performing on the second day of the Rock in Rio music festival at the City of Rock park in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

Gojira's dark eco metal finds unlikely Grammy glory

After two decades growling about the planet's impending environmental collapse, the French death metal band Gojira has some surprise good news—the music industry thinks they're great. Gojira has been an unexpected success story ahead of the Grammy Awards on Sunday. The band has been nominated in two categories including the coveted Best Rock Album for "Magma." "We started playing pretty intense thrash and death metal and I've been mostly growling for the last 20 years, so I wasn't expecting any kind of award," Gojira's 40-year-old frontman and rhythm guitarist Joe Duplantier told AFP with a small laugh.

"I never even thought of the concept of being nominated for the Grammys," he said. Gojira—whose name is the Japanese for Godzilla—edged a small step into the mainstream with "Magma." Previously known for raw, complex songs that built into dark climax, "Magma" is more accessible with chorus structures and Duplantier at times swapping growls for clean vocals. The Grammys are not the only recognition for Gojira. Metal legends Metallica, whom Duplantier counts as a key influence, earlier tapped Gojira as an opening act. Metallica lead guitarist Kirk Hammett in a recent interview with AFP said "Magma" was "incredible" and "the best thing I've heard in a long time."

Humans as 'parasites'

While some metal bands sing of fantasy lands, Gojira's lyricism lies firmly in the real world. On the song "Silvera," nominated for the Grammy for Best Metal Performance, Duplantier unleashes on animal agriculture, singing: "Time to open your eyes to this genocide / When you clear your mind, you see it all." Duplantier is vegan. But adding to his bleak outlook, he doubts how much he can do as he believes the planet has far too many people. "I'm a part of it—I'm also a parasite to the planet. I try to reduce my impact and it seems a drop in the ocean," he said. Duplantier is content if Gojira fans simply bang their heads. But he is even happier if the music is "shaking people up in a good way."

"I love creating songs, I love performing,

but I don't want to just sing something meaningless," he said. "People live without thinking or feeling too much.

They go and buy meat in the store without thinking how it was produced, how it was killed, how much water was needed for that and what it's doing to you," he said. For Duplantier, too many people are caught up thinking about politicians and asking "what can this guy do for me." "I don't believe in politics anymore," he said. "I believe in the revolution, but the revolution needs to come from each individual, from the inside."

Love of oceans

Duplantier's environmental consciousness came at an early age as he grew up on the Atlantic Ocean near the southern city of Bayonne. He recalled how his brother Mario—who is Gojira's drummer—suffered an ear infection from swimming in polluted water. In a youthful bit of activism, Joe Duplantier gathered litter from the beach and scattered it on a parking lot, making local news. "I thought it was weird. People don't mind what's on the beach but when it's on the parking lot it's a problem," he said.

The Duplantiers' mother was American and the brothers have set up a studio in New York. Duplantier sings in English, which he speaks at native level, but said his language choice was more practical than artistic.

"If Spanish were the most common language in the world, I would probably sing in Spanish," he said. "Magma" is Gojira's sixth album and came more than four years after its previous work, the ambitious existentialist opus "L'Enfant Sauvage." Between the albums, the Duplantiers' mother died. Joe Duplantier hesitated to speak of the episode, saying he did not want to appear to be using her death as marketing, but said it brought new darkness to "Magma."

Duplantier said the Grammy glory would not affect Gojira, even if the band risked losing fans if it again went in a more arcane direction. "We're super excited and surprised, but it's not like God telling you you're good and the others are not good," he said. "It's the Grammys." — AFP

The top nominees at the Grammy Awards

Beyonce leads the nominations for Sunday's Grammy Awards with nods in nine categories, including three of the most prestigious. More than 13,000 music professionals in the Recording Academy vote to determine winners of the Grammys, to be announced in a televised gala in Los Angeles. Here is a list of nominees in the most prominent categories:

Album Of The Year:

Adele, "25"
Beyonce, "Lemonade"
Justin Bieber, "Purpose"
Drake, "Views"
Sturgill Simpson, "A Sailor's Guide to Earth"

Record Of The Year (for best overall song):

Adele, "Hello"
Beyonce, "Formation"
Lukas Graham, "7 Years"
Rihanna featuring Drake, "Work"
Twenty One Pilots, "Stressed Out"

Song Of The Year (for songwriting):

Adele, "Hello." Songwriters Adele and Greg Kurstin
Beyonce, "Formation." Songwriters Beyonce along with Khalif Brown of rap duo Rae Sremmurd, Asheton Hogan and Mike Will Made It
Justin Bieber, "Love Yourself." Songwriters Bieber along with English star Ed Sheeran and producer Benny Blanco

Lukas Graham, "7 Years." Songwriters are band frontman Lukas Forchhammer and keyboardist Morten Ristorp along with producer Stefan Forrest and composer Morten Pilegaard
Mike Posner, "I Took a Pill in Ibiza." No additional songwriters

Best New Artist:

Kelsea Ballerini
The Chainsmokers
Chance the Rapper
Maren Morris
Anderson .Paak

Best Rap Album:

Chance the Rapper, "Coloring Book"
De La Soul, "And the Anonymous Nobody"
DJ Khaled, "Major Key"
Drake, "Views"
Schoolboy Q, "Blank Face LP"
Kanye West, "The Life of Pablo"

Best Rock Album:

Blink-182, "California"
Cage the Elephant, "Tell Me I'm Pretty"
Gojira, "Magma"
Panic! At The Disco, "Death of a Bachelor"
Weezer, "Weezer"

Best Alternative Rock Album:

Bon Iver, "22, A Million"
David Bowie, "Blackstar"
PJ Harvey, "The Hope Six Demolition Project"
Iggy Pop, "Post Pop Depression"
Radiohead, "A Moon Shaped Pool" — AP



File photo shows Prince performs during the halftime show at the Super Bowl XLI football game at Dolphin Stadium in Miami. — AP



File photo shows British singer George Michael in concert to raise money for AIDS charity Sidaction, in Paris, France.

STREAMING REVOLUTION REACHES GRAMMYS

Streaming has rapidly transformed the music industry and if there is to be a single moment to confirm the format's arrival, it may be the Grammy Awards. The music industry's most prestigious awards, which take place Sunday in a star-studded gala in Los Angeles, this year for the first time considered releases that were only streamed online. The biggest beneficiary has been Chance the Rapper, whose "Coloring Book" came out in May only by streaming-first through Apple Music and then on other services including the most popular one, Spotify.

The 23-year-old, known for incorporating gospel elements into hip-hop, is in the running for seven Grammys including Best New Artist. The Chicago artist insists he doesn't plan ever to sell his songs. His music giveaways have become part of a social media strategy, with touring his primary source of revenue. "There's so many ways that music moves around now. I feel like trying to fit it into a for-sale album is kind of obsolete now," he told television host Jimmy Fallon on 'The Tonight Show.' "It gives me more space to create and put out stuff," he said.

Variety of strategies

Streaming has brought new optimism to executives of the music industry, which has witnessed its first healthy growth figures since the start of the internet era. In the United States, the world's biggest music market, subscriptions to music streaming services more than doubled in 2016 alone, according to analytical firm BuzzAngle Music. Larry Miller, director of the music business program at New York University's Steinhardt School, said the change by the Recording Academy, the tradition-bound institution that administers the Grammys, would likely lead to more streaming exclusives in the future.

"It's certainly not the first and probably not the last but it is perhaps one of the most important validating statements about the emergence, and maybe domination, of streaming as the way that many, if not most, people are finding and listening to music," he said. The three top-selling albums last year in the United States, which are all up for the prestigious Album of the Year Grammy, show the diversity of strategies on streaming. Beyonce, who leads the Grammys with

nine nominations, sprung her previously unannounced album "Lemonade" onto Tidal, the upstart streaming service led by her husband Jay Z.

Beyonce started selling "Lemonade" on iTunes a day later and within two weeks put it out on CD-but has not streamed it on Tidal's rivals. Toronto rapper Drake released "Views" through Apple for a two-week exclusive period-a triumph for the tech giant as it promotes its young streaming service-before sharing it with other platforms. However, English balladeer Adele released "25"-the top-selling album in recent years-only through CDs, vinyl and digital downloads. It started streaming seven months later. Miller said Adele's move made commercial sense for a singer of her broad popularity. "But that is not a release strategy that can be undertaken by more than a couple of artists who have enormous global, older and moneyed fan bases," he said.

Pitfalls of streaming

Pop superstar Taylor Swift, whose "1989" is the reigning Album of the Year, also resisted streaming initially and waged a campaign against Spotify. She is not alone in her criticism. While the number of artists to boycott streaming has dwindled, many complain that the payback is paltry except for mega-stars. Some artists have seen streaming's possibilities and experienced its pitfalls. Acclaimed hip-hop artist Frank Ocean fulfilled a label contract when he streamed a loosely defined visual work on Apple Music-and a day later, independently, released his long-awaited second studio album, "Blonde."

The audacious move reportedly outraged Lucian Grainge, the head of largest music label group Universal, who was said to ban future exclusives. Kanye West, who is up for eight Grammys, declared "The Life of Pablo" to be a new type of release-a "living album," which he fine-tuned even after its release on Tidal. But Tidal did not report its data, meaning "The Life of Pablo" only entered the charts once the celebrity rapper released it more widely. One major streaming critic-late pop icon Prince, whose music only appears on Tidal-looks to be headed to other services. Spotify has been running teasing Grammy advertisements in Prince's signature color purple.—AFP



This image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Batman, voiced by Will Arnett, in a scene from 'The LEGO Batman Movie'. — AP

Irreverence, affection click nicely in 'Lego Batman'

Turns out, Batman can take a joke. Hundreds, actually. It's not the simplest thing to take a character as embedded in our culture as Batman and make wickedly irreverent fun of him while simultaneously paying tribute to his storied past and keeping him likable for the next round. If a kids movie can do all that AND get in a perfectly placed clip from "Jerry Maguire" - and you know which one we're talking about - well, then, you had us at hello, "Lego Batman Movie."

The laughs at the Dark Knight's expense start early in director Chris McKay's manic romp of a movie - in the first seconds, actually, with a very husky Christian Bale-like voice opining on the importance of starting a superhero movie with a black screen. That gruff voice again belongs to Will Arnett, expanding on a supporting role in the popular 2014 "Lego Movie" (clearly this self-important superhero was not pleased with a mere supporting role). Arnett's Batman is not a happy guy, weighted down as he is by a limitless sense of self-grandeur. Since nobody can do what he does, he has to do everything alone.

And one, as the soundtrack tells us, is the loneliest number. Sure, the bat cave is amazing - but what's a superhero to do after a long day saving Gotham? He comes home to a few trivial pieces of mail - one of them a coupon for Bed, Bath and Beyond. His only companion is his computer voice (voiced by Siri, of course!) His loyal butler, Alfred (a silken-toned Ralph Fiennes) has left some Lobster Thermidor to heat up in the microwave. Alone in his cavernous abode, he munches on his crustaceans, plays a little solo guitar, and watches one of his favorite chick flicks, er, movies - yup, "Jerry Maguire."

Destructive Mischief

We all know that Jerry ends up with a family at the end, but will Batman ever have a family to, um, complete him? A photo of young Bruce Wayne and his ill-fated parents is a sad reminder of his childhood. Batman is being challenged on several fronts. First, old nemesis Joker (Zach Galifianakis, delightful), is up to his usual destructive mischief. But there's something else Joker craves, even more than flattening Gotham: recognition. He wants to be Batman's ONLY bad guy. Thing is, Batman's just not that into him. "I don't do 'ships" - meaning relationships - he says. "I like to fight around." Even worse: "Batman and Joker are not a thing." Joker is devastated. Then there's Barbara Gordon (Rosario Dawson), Gotham's new police commissioner. She's highly qualified - heck, she graduated from "Harvard for Police" - and has sensible ideas about fighting crime. After all, she points out, Gotham is still crime-ridden. Maybe relying on a masked vigilante savior isn't the best strategy; it's gotta be a team effort. Batman does NOT like this idea.

Meanwhile, two key people are trying to soften Batman up, in a personal sense. One is Alfred, attempting to bring out the emotions he knows

are there somewhere.

(A highlight for us old folks is when Alfred reviews the many iterations of Batman over the years, including a precious black-and-white clip of Adam West in the '60s.) And young orphan Dick Grayson (the future Robin, voiced by Michael Cera) manages to get Batman to adopt him - inadvertently. Gradually, our superhero warms to the idea of being a dad. To a point, anyway.

The essential struggle of the movie (besides the constant battling of returning criminals - too many to mention - and defusing of apocalypse-threatening bombs, of course) is Batman's struggle with his own loneliness, and his thorny path toward accepting the help - and companionship, and maybe even love - of others. Will he get there? Perhaps that's obvious. But the fun comes in seeing how it all clicks together. "The Lego Batman Movie," a Warner Bros release, is rated PG by the Motion Picture Association of America "for rude humor and some action." Running time: 104 minutes. Three stars out of four. — AP

Michael Jackson's mom bullied and afraid of nephew

Katherine Jackson, the 86-year-old mother of late pop star Michael Jackson, has won an order against a nephew she accuses of bullying her, getting information on her bank accounts and other emotional abuse. Trent Lamar Jackson, a 52-year-old nephew on husband Joe Jackson's side of the family, worked as a driver for the 86-year-old Jackson family matriarch. A lawyer for Katherine Jackson said in court documents filed in Los Angeles Superior Court this week that she was afraid of her nephew and fears he will use credit cards and other financial information about her for his personal gains.

"Mrs Jackson has to hide in her closet to speak to her kids so she can speak freely," the court papers said. "Trent bullies Mrs. Jackson into submission." "She has had enough, her health is fragile and she is tired of being frightened," the documents said.

Los Angeles Superior Court judge on Wednesday issued a temporary restraining order against Lamar Jackson and ordered him to move out of the guest house at Katherine Jackson's home in Calabasas, near Los Angeles, and stay at least 100 yards (meters) away from her. — Reuters



Singer Beyonce Knowles attends the Tidal X: 1015 benefit concert in New York. — AP photos



File photo shows Adele onstage at the Brit Awards 2016 at the O2 Arena in London.



Summer Strand and her dog April Moon dressed in the fashion of Russia and a contestant in the World Fashion Presents poses during the 14th Annual New York Pet Fashion Show presented by TropiClean at the Hotel Pennsylvania. — AFP photos



Miguel Garcia with his dog dressed in the fashion of Mexico.



Anthony Rubio and Bridilla from England.

The 14th Annual New York Pet Fashion Show



Coraline Diaz, representing Thailand.



Woman with their cats dressed in the fashion of Armenia.



Diana Lucchi, representing Germany.



Yorkies in a remote controlled mini pink convertible arrive for the 14th Annual New York Pet Fashion Show.



Dogs dressed in the fashion of France.



Danny and Amy Cox, representing Mexico.

Hijabi US designer dreams of alternative fashion

Raised in Ohio by a Korean mother and a Palestinian father, Sarah Musa shocked her parents when she decided to wear the headscarf at age 17. Today, the 33-year-old Musa works in New York as a ready-to-wear designer but dreams of creating her own label-modest-looking fashion that will be worn by customers regardless of whether or not they are religious. Ten years into her career, she has worked



Sarah Musa, Senior Technical Design Manager at Club Monaco, poses for photos in New York. —AFP

for Ralph Lauren, Anna Sui, Carolina Herrera and now Club Monaco, where she is a senior technical designer.

"I'm making beautiful clothes and women can choose how they wear it," the elegant young woman told AFP in an interview. "I would rather buy a long top from Uniqlo than from a modest clothes brand that's not good," she says in reference to the genre of fashion that is sometimes referred to as "Islamic fashion." When she decided to wear the hijab as a teenager, she says it took her Christian mother three years to accept the decision. At that age, most teenagers just want to fit in. Wearing the hijab as an American high school student was "going against everything that society is telling you," she says.

"With all these companies saying you have to use make-up, you have to show skin, you have to dye your hair, there's still this billion-dollar industry saying you're never going to be good enough." "If I cover, I can express the power of who I want to be," she says. And whatever controversy wearing the hijab or dressing conservatively can elicit in America, she emphasizes that "for a majority of Muslim women in the world, it's a choice."

'Work extra hard'

At 20, Musa launched her own "modest fashion" label, Haya, but quickly put it to one side to concentrate on her studies. She went to the prestigious Fashion Institute of Technology in New York before going to work for some of the city's great fashion houses. But she is still determined to re-launch her own label, having won a nationwide competition to create an Islamic hijab three years ago. "My message is not going to be religious," she says. She named American designer Ryan Roche, fond of pants and sleeves, or the Olsen twins' label The Row, known for long and loose-fitting clothes, as inspirations. "They're extremely modest but because they're not related to religion, people don't see it that way," says Musa, who covers her hair in an elegant style similar to the cloche hats of the Roaring Twenties.

In the 10 years that she has been in the industry, Musa says she has never seen another hijabi woman work in big ready-to-wear labels. Even if the fashion industry in New York is more open-minded than much of the wider American society, she remembers one job interview in which the recruiter openly ruled her out because of her headscarf. "People are always going to hold me to different standards," she admits. "I have to work extra hard but that's what I signed up for when I made that choice."

It is a difference that Musa feels even more when she leaves the microcosm of New York and goes back to her native Midwest. Since Donald Trump won the presidency, the gulf has become even more pronounced. "As soon as I came to Ohio, I could feel the stares," she says. "I'm not paranoid." But her headscarf can also arouse positive reactions. One day a woman came up to tell her: "Your scarf is beautiful." "I could take off my scarf and blend in," she says. "I see my friends that are African American. — AFP

Eric Steffen works in his shop in the borough of Brooklyn in New York. — AFP photos



FINANCIERS TURNED FASHIONISTAS GET CREATIVE IN NY

His small workshop in a friend's house in industrial Brooklyn is a far cry from the glass skyscraper on Madison Avenue where he worked as an investment banker. But Eric Steffen is happy. Aged 39, he's ditched his career in finance to reinvent himself as a menswear designer. At a table in the low-hanging, window-less basement, he unrolls denim and velvet. In a room on the ground floor stand a dozen sewing machines bought from a factory that went bankrupt.

It may have been a difficult leap and the success of his nascent company, Fitted Underground, far from assured. But in a city like New York, where fashion is a major industry and looking smart is a must, Steffen is not the only well-paid professional dreaming of a more creative job. "I really enjoyed it. It was very fast-paced and I enjoyed the skill-set," the former investment banker says of his previous job. "But I was not happy with a business where the model is maximizing shareholders' values. Productivity was my greatest asset: that's great for a machine, but not so great for a human being!"

But why tailoring? Steffen had always struggled to find the perfect pair of jeans for his former footballer legs. After getting a suit made to measure, he no longer wanted to buy ready-to-wear. But with no design experience, he had to get some training: initially through private lessons and at New York's famous Fashion Institute of Technology, which offers relatively affordable night classes. In April 2014, Steffen resigned from J.P. Morgan with the support of his wife, who was prepared to help financially. Nearly three years later, he has around 100 clients, "all word of mouth," and hopes sales of his \$400 made-to-measure jeans will enable him to take on a staff.

'Word of mouth'

In contrast to his former employer, Steffen says he wants a company with a "more holistic business model" that maximizes "all the

stakeholders' values, not just shareholders." Not all fashion converts share Steffen's idealism, but many of them past the age of 30, are looking for personal fulfillment after slaving away round the clock for years at high-pressured New York companies. That's the case for Gauri Sikka, 38, who is preparing to ditch her 10-year career in banking in April to launch a line of luxury dog clothes.



Spools of thread in the shop of Eric Steffen.

"Ever since I was a teenager, I always wanted to get into fashion," she says. "But back then, it was not considered as a respectable profession." Her father insisted she earn an MBA, so she did. "My husband and I, we don't have any kids, we have dogs," she says. "They're like our kids, so we don't compromise: if I like something, even if it's a \$100 sweater, I'll buy it."

After night classes at FIT and thanks to savings and her husband's support, she can now devote herself to her passion and has founded her own company, The Doggie Days. She sees New York as a perfect niche market with so many well-paid professionals willing and able to spend lavishly on their pets. One of her first creations is a cashmere bandana, which her Maltese Dior has already modeled. She hopes to sell them for around \$50. — AFP



Pieces of denim show practice stitches in Eric Steffen's shop in the borough of Brooklyn.



The Adam Selman fashion collection is modeled during Fashion Week in New York. — AP/AFP photos



TADASHI SHOJI, DESIGUAL KICK OFF NY FASHION WEEK

New York Fashion Week kicked off Thursday in the middle of a snow storm that had some of the usual swans donning parkas, snow boots and ski caps instead of the usual sky-high heels and fashion finery.

The crowds hopped over snow banks and splashed in slush as they turned out at more than a dozen shows that began the eight-day event featuring designers' collections for fall and winter. Some stealthily swapped their messy boots and warm gear once they made it to their destinations, cramming boots and hats in bags as they took their seats.

Ruth Sutcliffe, who works for a company that developed a scent for Tadashi Shoji, made her way into town by commuter train from Greenwich, Connecticut, then hopped a subway and trekked through snow on foot to take in the action backstage before his show. She changed into a dress and heels in a bathroom. "I walked in my Uggs and my fleece pants and my down feather coat," she laughed. "It is what it is. You have to brave the cold. I'm not going to wear high heels in the snow and sludge."

Fashion blogger Lindsy Lane, who lives in Manhattan, didn't have far to go to make it safely inside fashion week's official Clarkson Square venue, but she was weather ready, big labels and all, in fluffy ear muffs, a warm cabled sweater and a fox fur vest to go with her skinny black Missoni patent leather pants and Louis Vuitton snow boots. "At the end of the day, like any true fashionista, we pull it together," she said. "We gotta bring it."



Fashion from the Desigual collection is modeled during Fashion Week on in New York.



**Among the day's highlights:
Tadashi Shoji embraces love,
'70s youth style**

Shoji wasn't sweating the blizzard ahead of his 1960s and early '70s collection of sensuous velvets and brocades inspired by youth revolutions around the world. He lives in Los Angeles, but his team was ready for snowmageddon. Besides, the Japanese designer said in an interview backstage, all the swirling, white, wet stuff was "pretty, and traffic was so quiet. It's good." On the runway, Shoji worked in vibrant forest green, deep reds and splashes of purple. Floor length gowns with keyhole necklines had long bell sleeves, lace insets and velvet ribbon detail. He and some of his models wore white bandannas, embracing an effort by the industry watchers at the Business of Fashion to acknowledge President Donald Trump's immigration ban under the moniker "#TiedTogether." "More than 50 persons in my company are immigrants," Shoji said. The message, Shoji said, was simple: love, liberation, unity.

Desigual goes bold

Desigual presented a collection for bold women who do not shy away from vivid



**Adam Selman combines mourning
veils with cowgirl**

Selman, a go-to for Rihanna, sees dark times politically, letting models outfitted with rose-topped mourning veils tell that story. But he wants his brand to uplift, including a shout-out in large pink buttons left on his front-row seats that read: "Fashion Stands with Planned Parenthood," part of an initiative put together by the Council of Fashion Designers of America. Backstage after his show of rose-embroidered tulle, outsize shirt dresses, cowgirl denim and '70s sparkle, Selman explained: "For me, everything has to be joyous, everything has to be uplifting. I wanted it to feel up and triumphant in a way."

His girl is seasonless, and she enjoys fun party dresses. She also enjoys gingham, in a pink and black bustier, open-back looks encrusted to catch the light and red silk pajama pants.

The head pieces are a collaboration with Gigi Burris Millinery. And the folksy roses on denim reflect his love of certain decade. "I always go back to the '70s," said Selman, a Texan still. "I can't help myself." — AFP

prints and colors Thursday, the first day of New York Fashion Week. Inspired by the '60s, '70s and '80s, the Spanish brand put out a fall-winter line that included military jackets, pants and dresses with animal prints, checkerboards, lots of buttons, transparent skirts and wide belts.

The collection evoked a punk, underground philosophy, said Daniel Perez, the brand's communications director. "These were subcultures that would question gender issues and where women would play a relevant role," he said in a backstage interview. "For example, the collection evokes the attitude of the female cartoonist group behind Wimmen's Comix. They wanted to write from their feminine perspective because, until then, that was an underworld with a very masculine vision."

The fashion collection from Tadashi Shoji is modeled during Fashion Week in New York.





Essie Bartels walks at the Makola market in Accra. — AFP photos



Essie Bartels buys spices from her seller Aisha Ibrahim.

'OUR FOOD, OUR STORIES': BRINGING WEST AFRICAN CUISINE TO THE WORLD

'We will tell our story better than anyone else can'

It took a move to the United States from Ghana to convince food entrepreneur Essie Bartels that the world deserved to know more about west African cuisine. "You would always end up having to put on tons of stuff-hot sauce, lots of salt, pepper. Nothing was well-seasoned," Bartels said about her American food experience. "It was literally whiter than white, there was no dry fish, no palm oil, no chillies." Bartels saw a gap in the market and dedicated herself to creating sauces and spice blends inspired by her childhood in Ghana's



Vendor Aisha Ibrahim shows spices in her hand, at the Makola market.



Various spices are displayed at the Makola market.

capital, Accra, through her company Essie Spice. She remembers the flavors of her mother's kitchen, where she helped cook mouth-watering banku, a filling doughy dish made of

fermented corn, and kontomire stew, a savory offering featuring leafy greens sauteed in palm oil.

But Bartels is far from being a purist. The effervescent 31-year-old, who now lives in Englewood, New Jersey, works to take the flavors from her past and reinvent them with ingredients from around the world. The result is a new west African taste—a mango chili sauce is heightened by Jamaican scotch bonnet peppers, while a dry rub for meat has an addictive aroma of rich west African peanuts. It's clear that Bartels sees food as more than just a business—it's a way to promote and claim her heritage. "Our voices as Africans aren't heard as much, we have all this history and culture, but no one is talking about it," she told AFP. "Then someone from the West takes these ideas and profits off them, telling our stories. What I want to do is help Africans tell our story ourselves. "We under-

stand the story, we know where it's coming from, so we will tell our story better than anyone else can."

Peppers and cloves

On a humid, sunny day in January, Bartels was back in Accra to talk with her spice supplier and hunt for new flavors. Wearing a tan geometric necklace by leading Ghanaian designer Christie Brown, Bartels picked up a handful of pungent dried black cloves in a bustling market in central Accra. Her long pink skirt brushed the burlap sacks filled with crimson red peppers, knobs of ginger and alligator pepper—a spice used in herbal remedies as well as local stews. Markets like these are the antidote to the bland food Bartels said she discovered when she moved to the other side of the Atlantic Ocean almost a decade ago.

Her condiments are now being sold in some high-end US supermarkets and she attributes the success of

the brand to a willingness to deviate from tradition and modern packaging, unlike her competitors. "When you're making something to international standards it has to appeal to everyone," said Bartels, whose main market is in the US but also sells her products in Canada and Ghana. "It's not diluting it but I'm presenting west African food in a way that attracts not just west Africans but everyone else."

Ghana's restaurant scene is dominated by informal food stands and simple restaurants. But BMI Research, a London-based market analysis firm, predicts there will be massive growth in the sector with an increase in businesses offering "innovative" dining experiences. "Sustained economic expansion and rising household incomes gave rise to the country's middle class with increasingly sophisticated tastes and diversified diets," BMI Research said in a 2016 report. "The industry is still at early stages of development, which leaves potential investors with a lot of room for growth and innovation."

'Magic happens'

The love of spice is a national trait, explained Ghanaian chef Selassie Atadika, who works at Midunu, a luxury catering service based in Accra that aims to celebrate Africa's culinary heritage. Like Bartels, Atadika says she too spends hours scouring the markets to find "big bold flavors" that are invaluable to both chefs and cooks at home. "They serve as a foundation to building flavors in the Ghanaian kitchen and when combined with our sometimes humble ingredients, magic happens," she added.

Ramping up production and broadening her repertoire of African spices is Bartel's next call of duty. Originally from Ghana's south, she says the north of the country is an unexplored frontier. "This is one of the things I'm trying to do, find all the hidden gems," she said. "This is an introduction to what could be." — AFP



Essie Bartels (left) walks with her mother Fausti at the Makola market in Accra.

Iraq's 'cycling girls' ride for freedom



Iraqi Marina Jaber (center), 25, rides a bicycle among others in Baghdad during an event in defiance of a conservative culture that disapproves of the practice and calling for peace. — AFP photos



Iraqi cyclist Durra Ahmed (second right) gathers with other cyclists during the second Baghdad Marathon for Peace in Iraq, in the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

Her name is Marina Jaber but to many she is "the girl on the bike", a young Baghdad artist inspiring Iraqi women to exercise their rights one pedal at a time. In Iraq's conservative society, the young woman cuts an unusual figure when she rides her red bicycle in the streets of the capital, her long black hair swaying in the wind. What started off as an art project became a social media meme and then a civil society movement. A group of women now gathers regularly to cycle in Baghdad and break new ground. Or is it old ground?

"My mother and my grandmother used to ride bicycles. It used to be normal," Jaber told AFP. She said she questioned why she had felt so proud when she rode a bike during a visit to London last year. "It's only a bike. It's a simple thing. It should be normal," the 25-year-old said. "Does society just not allow us to do certain things or does it start not accepting those certain things because we stopped doing them? That was an important question that had been on my mind for a long time."

To find the answer, Jaber started cycling in her neighborhood and made that a project for a contemporary arts institute called Tarkib—an Arabic word which can mean instal-

lation and assemblage. A picture Jaber posted of herself cycling alongside an old man riding his own bicycle and staring at her in reproving disbelief made the rounds on Iraqi social media last year. "With that old man, I found my answer. For more than five minutes, I was riding next to him and he kept looking at me. He didn't seem to like it," Jaber said.

'I am society'

"Then he stopped looking and went about his business. All the people in the area got used to it, they stopped looking at me... I understood then that I am society. If I want something, I should start doing it." Jaber instantly became an inspiration for many girls and women across the country yearning to lead their lives the way they choose and not bow to more or less recent social, tribal or religious restrictions. Hashtags started spreading on the internet and Jaber was overwhelmed by the response she got.

"I received a lot of messages... mostly from young girls. Maybe they needed somebody to stand up for their rights," she said. Her red bicycle became the centerpiece of her installation at an exhibit in Baghdad last year and Jaber's action joined a long global history of

cycling as a symbol of women's emancipation. In England, suffragette Alice Hawkins once famously rode down the streets of Leicester to promote women's rights—scandalously wearing pantaloons. More than a century later, the symbol is still potent in the Middle East, as exemplified in the 2012 Saudi film "Wadjda" about an 11-year-old girl from Riyadh who defies society and her mother's disallowance by buying the green bike of her dreams with the prize money from winning a Koranic recitation contest.

Jaber's story also echoes that of Bushra Al-Fusail, a photographer from Yemen who started her country's first female cycling group in 2015 to affirm women's rights and protest against the war. In Iraq, women from across the country started posting pictures of themselves on bicycles and dozens have joined group bike rides in the streets of Baghdad, which are closed off to traffic by police who escort the cyclists.

Mosul picture

"It's not illegal for a woman to cycle in Iraq but because of the war we Iraqis stopped doing a lot of things we used to do... we are too busy with death," Jaber said. Jumana

Mumtaz, a broadcast journalist from the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, posted a picture of herself on a bicycle from the edge of the battlefield in December to support Jaber's initiative. "It was a way of challenging ISIS and extremist thought," she said, referring to the Islamic State jihadist group which still controls half of her city despite a three-month-old government offensive.

"Also, a lot of people in Iraq, not just ISIS, think women shouldn't be able to do what they want and think our behavior is shameful... Marina got many very aggressive comments and so did I," Mumtaz said. Most of those comments came from men but they are also welcome when Jaber's group organizes a ride. "It's liberating for a man too. Everyone looks so happy, the city even looks more beautiful like this. It feels like the normal life we want," said Mustafa Ahmed, a young army officer, at a recent rally.

"There were some negative reactions at first but the comment I hear the most now is 'Aah, this is the Baghdad we know'," said Jaber, who has received several offers to help distribute free bikes to Iraqi women. "Now I want to support girls to stop being scared. We can change reality." — AFP



Iraqi cyclists gather during the second Baghdad Marathon for Peace in Iraq, in the Iraqi capital Baghdad.



Iraqi Marina Jaber (center left), 25, rides a bicycle among others in Baghdad during an event in defiance of a conservative culture that disapproves of the practice and calling for peace.



Iraqi cyclists gather during the second Baghdad Marathon.

CANON LAUNCHES NEW I-SENSYS PRINTER

Canon Middle East, world leader in imaging solutions, today announces the release of the i-SENSYS LBP312x, a small footprint, high-productivity printer for use in fast-paced work environments where space is a premium. The new device combines sharp, rich print output at fast speeds with high capacity paper trays, double-sided printing and versatile mobile connectivity, making it ideal for busy workgroups in small office spaces.

Versatile office workhorse printer

The Canon LBP312x is a black and white printer for busy office workgroups, offering advantages in speed, footprint, print quality, paper capacity and running costs. Its high productivity and compact design make it great for all kinds of busy environments where fast, frequent printing is necessary - from client-facing environments, such as healthcare or retail, to fast-

paced environments, such as logistics, finance or legal.

Compact footprint

The Canon LBP312x is based on an innovative, more compact print engine, and also uses smaller toner cartridges. Its small footprint means it can be placed closer to users, providing immediate access to high-speed, top quality, mono print output, wherever work actually happens.

High productivity and fast wake up

At the heart of the Canon LBP312x is an improved print engine that's both compact and also highly efficient, delivering fast A4 and A5 print at speeds of 43ppm and 65ppm respectively. It's ready to print in seconds from power off and sleep when the new Quick Start Up or Recovery modes are enabled, and the high-yield cartridges mean more pages can be printed between refills.

Versatile configuration options

The Canon LBP312x has one 550-sheet paper cassette built in, and can be extended with up to three more standard cassettes of 550 sheets each. So as well as increasing paper capacity to reduce reloading frequency, it's also possible to print on up to four different sizes of paper, or different types of headed paper or forms, without having to reload.

Mobility and easy integration with existing printer fleets

The Canon LBP312x supports a wide range of cloud and mobile technologies, including the Canon PRINT Business app, Apple AirPrint, Mopria and Google Cloud Print. Moreover, it's optimized for PCL and PostScript environments, and compatible with managed services, including our e-Maintenance remote service management system and uniFLOW output

management. Hendrik Verbrugge, Marketing Director, Canon Middle East and Canon Central and North Africa: "Canon builds its products around working with our customers to understand their needs.

The LBP312x is built to address the needs of customers that have high document output requirements for a small workgroup or in a compact office environment. Departments or businesses in the legal finance and logistics sectors regularly need to print large amounts of critical documents while keeping office space to a minimum and I believe this is the perfect device for those needs. Mobile connectivity and network integration makes the device perfect for agile workgroups, and uniFLOW compatibility makes it easy to slot into an existing print infrastructure." The new series will be available from Feb 2017.

HOW GOOGLE CHROMEBOOKS CONQUERED SCHOOLS

NEW YORK: The Google Chromebook, a type of stripped-down laptop, isn't a practical mobile device for many people - mostly because it basically turns into an expensive paperweight whenever it can't find a Wi-Fi connection. Yet Chromebooks have defied expectations and made major inroads in an unexpected environment - US schools. In retrospect, that shouldn't be too surprising. Chromebooks are cheap and easy to manage, making them popular with budget-constrained schools with limited tech-support staff. And Wi-Fi is now common enough in US schools and homes to make an internet-dependent device practical for students.

Google doesn't want to stop there. It's releasing new models in partnership with Samsung that are designed to appeal to a broader range of consumers. They have several tablet-like features, including a stylus, touch controls and a 360-degree hinge that allows you to turn the screen face up. One starts selling Sunday for \$449; a more powerful version comes out in April for \$100 more. Google and its manufacturing partners are trying to shed the Chromebook's perception as underperforming budget devices. But even with premium models, expanding beyond US schools won't be easy.

Chromebooks get schooled

For personal computers and tablets, Chromebook's share of the US education market was 49 percent last year, up from 40 percent in 2015 and 9 percent in 2013, according to IDC figures released this week. But education accounts for just 14 percent of the 110 million devices shipped in the U.S. last year - and Chromebooks make up just 9 percent of that broader total. Their numbers are also low abroad, even in schools. The Chromebook's popularity in US education is also largely limited to grades K-12, analysts say. Macs and Windows laptops are still dominant on college campuses.

Rough start

Chromebooks use a lightweight operating system designed to get people online faster, without having to wait around for the computer to start up. Much of the heavy lifting on Chromebooks gets done on Google's remote servers, so Chromebooks themselves don't need fast chips or lots of storage. Early on, though, that made Chromebooks seem cheap and underpowered, which "soured consumer expectations right off the bat," IDC analyst Linn Huang said. Online storage for photos and documents online was much less common in 2011 when Chromebooks launched, so their limited local storage was initially unappealing. And the few apps available for Chromebooks didn't work offline, at least at the time.

Differing needs

But what constrains consumers can actually be liberating in



NEW YORK: In this photo, a Google Chromebook displays Netflix in New York. —AP

education. Most kids don't need laptops on the bus or other locations where they can't connect to Wi-Fi. And they don't miss business software like Microsoft Office; Google's online apps for documents and spreadsheets do just fine for homework. "What surprised us was how quickly it took off in education," said Kan Liu, who oversees Chromebooks at Google. Apple's iPad was hot at the time, but Google sold the Chromebook on convenience.

They're easier for classrooms to share; just sign in with a Google account, and a student's apps and documents instantly appear. Teachers also have online tools to lock down what apps and sites students can use. And with models available for less than \$200, schools can get a few Chromebooks for the price of an iPad or a rival laptop. "It allows us to put more devices in students' hands," said Aaron Slutsky, chief technology officer for McDowell County Schools in North Carolina.

Far from universal

But Chromebook's success story in schools is largely an American one, and it's likely to stay that way. Gartner analyst Mikako Kitagawa notes that Chromebooks are useless in China because the device depends on Google services that aren't available there. And in emerging countries, where a budget laptop would be ideal, she said internet access isn't reliable enough.—AP

COMPANIES BLUR LINES OVER WHO OWNS DEVICES

NEW YORK: When Samsung Electronics remotely disabled the last of its flawed Galaxy Note 7 smartphones last month, it further blurred the lines between who ultimately controls your phone, or computer, car or appliance: you, or the companies that make it work? Industry executives and analysts say companies are exerting greater remote control over their devices - changing how and whether they work, removing or adding software and content, or collecting personal data from them - not always with permission or with the user's best interests at heart.

"(The Samsung case) is exactly an example of how devices ... are no longer objects we own, but rather services we've subscribed to and which can be revoked at a moment's notice," said Stefano Zanero, an Italian computer security expert. Mahbul Alam, chief technology officer at Movimento, a car tech firm now owned by Delphi Automotive, says manufacturers have moved on from just selling a device and hoping there's no recall to a world where they are in touch with users through internet-connected devices that they can "change, modify, adjust" as they see fit.

"With power comes responsibility," he adds. "It's a new power that the device manufacturers and telcos have. How they exercise their responsibility is very important." Samsung said it retrieved 96 percent of the more than three million Note 7s it had sold and activated. That left more than 120,000 unreturned phones that were put out of action by over-the-air software updates or by telecom operators barring them from their networks. "We assume the majority of unreturned devices are not actually used," said a spokesperson for the South Korean firm.

In another example, HP Inc last year used a software update to prevent unauthorized cartridges being used with some of its printers. After some users complained, HP offered an optional update. HP did not respond to requests for comment. In other cases, manufacturers use so-called firmware updates to stop people using their devices in ways they don't want. Apple, for example, routinely upgrades the firmware on iPhones to outwit users' attempts to open up the software to unapproved apps and functions - dubbed jail breaking - said Bunnie Huang, a hardware entrepreneur.

Gathering data

Bryan Hale of Resin.io, which distributes software updates to connected devices, says gadget makers increasingly realize that connected products are only as good as the software on them. That means they can't afford not to figure out how to update that software. Hacking attacks on appliances like CCTV and webcams highlight the pitfalls of not keeping devices updated.—Reuters

SOPHOS ADDS ADVANCED MACHINE LEARNING TO ITS PORTFOLIO

Sophos, a global leader in network and endpoint security, today announced it has entered into an agreement to acquire Invincea, a visionary provider of next-generation malware protection. Invincea's endpoint security portfolio is designed to detect and prevent unknown malware and sophisticated attacks via its patented deep learning neural-network algorithms. It has been consistently ranked as among the best performing machine learning, signature-less next-generation endpoint technologies in third-party testing and rated highly both for high detection and low false-positive rates.



Kris Hagerman, Sophos

Headquartered in Fairfax, Va., Invincea was founded by chief executive officer Anup Ghosh to address the rapidly growing zero-day security threat from nation states, cyber criminals and rogue actors. Invincea's flagship product X by Invincea uses deep learning neural networks and behavioral monitoring to detect previously unseen malware and stops attacks before damage occurs. With a focus on the U.S. government, healthcare and financial services sectors, Invincea has been deployed in some of the most targeted networks in the world.

"By adding Invincea to our portfolio, Sophos is executing on its vision to assemble the most powerful technologies to provide the very best, cutting-edge defens-

es for our customers," commented Kris Hagerman, chief executive officer at Sophos. "Invincea is leading the market in machine learning-based threat detection with the combination of superior detection rates and minimal false positives. Invincea will strengthen Sophos' leading next-gen endpoint protection with complementary predictive defenses that we believe will become increasingly important to the future of endpoint protection and allow us to take full advantage of this significant new growth opportunity. We are proud to welcome the Invincea team to Sophos and look forward to introducing the benefits of this advanced technology to our customers and partners worldwide."

Sophos is recognized as a leader in endpoint protection today with an expanding set of next-generation technologies such as the signature-less anti-malware, anti-exploit and anti-ransomware technology in Intercept X and the behavior-based analytics, Malicious Traffic Detection and Application Reputation in Sophos Endpoint Protection. The Invincea machine learning malware detection and prevention technology will be fully integrated into the Sophos endpoint protection portfolio, further strengthening Sophos' leadership in this fast-growing market.

The availability of Invincea technology through the Sophos Central security management platform will further enhance the Sophos synchronized security portfolio and real-time intelligence sharing. "We started Invincea with the vision of using non-signature based technologies, including machine learning, in innovative ways to protect organizations against the most advanced forms of cyber-attack," commented Anup Ghosh, founder and chief executive officer at Invincea. "X by Invincea represents a new generation in antivirus

technology based on deep learning and behavioral monitoring.

Joining forces with Sophos presents the perfect opportunity to take our proven, advanced technology to a global audience and make it part of a comprehensive synchronized security system. Sophos is leading the industry in adopting and bringing to market this disruptive new vision for complete, advanced, and integrated security, and we are delighted to join the team and help make it happen." Norm Laudermitch, chief operating officer and head of product development at Invincea added, "Invincea set out to disrupt the traditional approach to antivirus, and even now no single technology is enough to fully protect customers."

"I share the Sophos vision for bringing together a powerful ensemble of next-gen technologies to dramatically improve the overall effectiveness of endpoint protection. Along with our world-class technical team at Invincea, I'm looking forward to joining Sophos and helping deliver on this ambitious and exciting vision." The Invincea endpoint security portfolio including X by Invincea will continue to be supported and sold by Invincea and available via Invincea's network of registered partners. Sophos has agreed to acquire Invincea from its current shareholders for a cash consideration of \$100 million with a \$20 million earn-out. Sophos will retain the company's office in Fairfax. Invincea CEO Anup Ghosh and COO Norm Laudermitch will join Sophos in key leadership positions. Consummation of the transaction is subject to the satisfaction of various closing conditions. Invincea Labs, a division of Invincea that has been separately managed and operated since 2012, has been separated prior to the acquisition and is not part of this transaction.

STICKY, INSECT-SIZED DRONES COULD ACT AS POLLINATORS

MIAMI: Small drones coated with horsehair and a sticky gel could one day help pollinate crops and help offset the costly loss of bee population worldwide, researchers in Japan said Thursday. The miniature robots described in the journal *Chem* are a long way from being deployed in the field, but researchers say they may offer a partial solution to the loss of bees due to disease and climate change.

"The findings, which will have applications for agriculture and robotics, among others, could lead to the development of artificial pollinators and help counter the problems caused by declining honeybee populations," said lead author Eijiro Miyako, a chemist at the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST) Nano materials Research Institute. In 2007, Miyako began experimenting with liquids that could be used as electrical conductors.

One failed attempt produced a sticky gel, like hair wax, which he relegated to a storage cabinet for almost a decade. The gel was rediscovered during a lab cleanup, and its unchanged nature gave Miyako an idea. He began experimenting with houseflies and ants, applying the gel to them to see if it could help pick up pollen from tulips in a box. It worked. Then he moved to drones, coating them with horsehair to mimic a bee's fuzzy coating. He added the gel to their undersides and flew them over pink-leaved Japanese lilies (*Lilium japonicum*).

"The robots absorbed the pollen and then could be flown to a second flower, where the grains were deposited, artificially pollinating the plants and causing them to begin the process of producing seeds," said the study. The United States recently listed the rusty patched bumblebee (*Bombus affinis*) as an endangered species. Meanwhile, colony collapse disorder continues to spread around the globe, with devastating impact on bee populations.

Pollinators contribute some \$15 billion to the value of US crop production each year, and they are needed worldwide for one-third of edible crops. Someday, artificial pollinators might be called on to help. "We believe that robotic pollinators could be trained to learn pollination paths using global positioning systems and artificial intelligence," said Miyako.—AFP



TAIPEI: Uber drivers display placards that read Thank you for letting technology improve the economy and Thank you for letting me return home safely during a demonstration in front of the entrance of the Ministry of Transportation in Taipei yesterday. —AFP

TAIWAN UBER DRIVERS PROTEST FINE HIKE AS APP HALTS SERVICE

TAIPEI: Protesting Uber drivers circled Taiwan's transport ministry yesterday as the ride-hailing app halted operations on the island following an impasse with the government which deems the service illegal. The US firm announced last week that it would suspend business in Taiwan from yesterday after the government raised the maximum penalty for Uber drivers to Tw\$25 million (\$804,000) the highest in the world. The Transport Ministry last week said it was preparing to charge the firm Tw\$230 million in penalties.

Uber has racked up fines for running a business without the proper registration to operate as a taxi service since it

entered the Taiwan market in 2013. About 200 cars, adorned with ribbons and Uber stickers, drove around the transport ministry in downtown Taipei yesterday, according to an alliance of drivers which organized the protest. Single mother Fiona Yang, 38, said Uber had been her main source of income for the past two years as she juggles earning a living and raising two children.

"I can understand why they had to suspend operations. The penalties are outrageous," she said. "It has a big impact on me. How am I going to raise my kids?" Uber said last week it hoped the suspension would prompt action from President Tsai Ing-wen, who is

pushing for the island to foster its own "Asian Silicon Valley". "The current regulatory environment makes it impossible to serve the island the way we know works best," the firm said in a statement.

Taiwan's suspension came after Uber halted services in Hungary last July due to new legislation that stops drivers from making money with their own vehicles. The smartphone app has faced stiff resistance from traditional taxi drivers around the world, as well as bans in some places over safety concerns and questions over legal issues, including taxes. Uber insists it is a platform connecting drivers and passengers, not a transport business like taxi firms.—AFP

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2017



00:50 River Monsters
01:45 Bondi Vet
02:40 Deadliest Snakes Of South Africa
03:35 Tanked
04:25 Great Animal Escapes
05:15 Gator Boys
06:02 River Monsters
06:49 Deadliest Snakes Of South Africa
07:36 Going Ape
08:00 Going Ape
08:25 Deadliest Snakes Of South Africa
09:15 Up Close And Dangerous
10:10 Australia Doesn't Just Want To Kill You
11:05 The Vet Life
12:00 Treehouse Masters
12:55 Bondi Vet
13:50 Almost Human With Jane Goodall
14:45 Escape To Chimp Eden
18:25 Rogue Nature With Dave Salmoni
19:20 Catching Monsters
20:15 Deadliest Snakes Of South Africa
21:10 Australia Doesn't Just Want To Kill You
22:05 Treehouse Masters



00:00 Private Crimes
00:30 Private Crimes
01:00 The Haunting Of...
02:00 My Haunted House
03:00 The First 48
04:00 Private Crimes
04:30 Private Crimes
05:00 The Haunting Of...
06:00 My Haunted House
07:00 Evil Up Close
08:00 The First 48
09:00 Gangs Of Britain...
10:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
11:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
17:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
18:00 Evil Up Close
19:00 It Takes A Killer
19:30 It Takes A Killer
20:00 It Takes A Killer
20:30 It Takes A Killer
21:00 It Takes A Killer
22:00 It Takes A Killer
22:30 It Takes A Killer
23:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence



00:30 Science Of The Movies
01:20 Man v Expert
02:10 The Carbonaro Effect
02:35 The Carbonaro Effect
03:00 Destroyed In Seconds
03:25 Destroyed In Seconds
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 How It's Made
05:05 How It's Made
05:30 Dirty Jobs
06:20 Mythbusters
07:00 Kids vs Film
07:25 Kids vs Film
07:50 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
08:40 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
09:30 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
10:20 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
11:10 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
12:00 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
12:50 Mythbusters
13:40 Mythbusters
14:30 Mythbusters
15:20 Mythbusters
16:10 Mythbusters
17:00 Nextworld
17:50 Nextworld
18:40 Man v Expert
19:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:55 Kids Do The Craziest Things
20:20 Guinness World Records Smashed UK
21:10 Troy
22:00 Destroyed In Seconds
22:25 Destroyed In Seconds
22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
23:15 Destroyed In Seconds



00:40 Mythbusters
01:30 How Do They Do It?
01:55 Food Factory
02:20 Mythbusters
03:10 Alien Encounters
04:00 Da Vinci's Machines
04:48 Mythbusters
05:36 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Food Factory
06:24 Mythbusters
07:12 Alien Encounters
08:00 How Do They Do It?
08:26 Food Factory
08:50 Food Factory
09:14 Food Factory
09:38 Food Factory
10:02 Food Factory
10:26 How Do They Do It?
10:50 How Do They Do It?
11:14 How Do They Do It?
11:38 How Do They Do It?
12:02 How Do They Do It?
12:26 Alien Encounters
13:14 Alien Encounters
14:02 Alien Encounters
14:50 Alien Encounters
15:38 Alien Encounters
16:26 Mythbusters
17:14 Mythbusters
18:02 Mythbusters
18:50 Mythbusters
19:40 Mythbusters
20:30 Space Voyages
21:20 Future Weapons
22:10 How Things Work
23:00 You Can't Lick Your Elbow
23:25 You Can't Lick Your Elbow
23:50 Mythbusters



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

11:40 Disney's Aladdin
13:10 The 7D
13:20 Girl Meets World
13:45 Girl Meets World
15:25 Jessie
15:50 Jessie
16:15 Austin & Ally
16:40 Austin & Ally
17:05 Descendants Wicked World
17:10 Elena Of Avalor
17:35 Stuck In The Middle
18:00 Frozen: Magic Of The Northern Lights
18:25 The Incredibles
20:25 Star Darlings
20:30 Elena Of Avalor
20:55 Liv And Maddie
21:20 Best Friends Whenever
21:45 Austin & Ally
22:10 Dog With A Blog



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

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

06:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
06:55 E! News
07:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
08:10 E! News
09:05 Botched
09:55 Botched
10:45 Mariah's World
13:15 E! News
13:45 Celebrity Style Story
15:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
16:05 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
17:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
18:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
19:00 E! News
20:00 Celebrity Style Story
20:30 Celebrity Style Story
21:00 Mariah's World
22:00 Mariah's World



00:00 The Universe
01:00 Ultimate Guide To The Presidents
02:00 Ancient Discoveries
03:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
03:50 Ancient Aliens
04:40 Engineering Disasters
05:30 The Universe
06:20 Ultimate Guide To The Presidents
07:10 The Universe
08:00 Ancient Discoveries
09:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
10:00 Ancient Aliens
11:00 Engineering Disasters
12:00 The Universe
13:00 Ancient Aliens
14:00 Ancient Aliens
19:00 How 2 Win
20:00 How 2 Win
21:00 How 2 Win
22:00 How 2 Win
23:00 How 2 Win



06:00 Supa Strikas
06:25 Supa Strikas
06:50 Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister 6
07:15 Future-Worm!
07:40 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
08:10 Mighty Med
08:35 Lab Rats
09:00 Supa Strikas
09:25 Supa Strikas
09:50 Supa Strikas
10:20 Supa Strikas
10:45 Supa Strikas
11:10 Supa Strikas
11:35 Supa Strikas
12:00 Tarzan
13:30 Danger Mouse
13:45 Atomic Puppet
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Supa Strikas
14:40 K.C. Undercover
15:05 Gravity Falls
15:30 Gravity Falls
15:55 Gravity Falls
17:15 Kickin' It
17:40 Lab Rats Elite Force
18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
18:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
18:35 Tarzan
20:05 Danger Mouse
20:20 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
20:45 Mighty Med
21:10 Pickle And Peanut
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution
22:10 Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister 6
22:35 Boyster
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA



00:20 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
01:10 Leepu And Pitbull
02:00 Fifth Gear
02:50 Pawn Stars
03:15 Pawn Stars South Africa
03:40 Pawn Stars South Africa
04:05 Pawn Stars Australia
04:30 Pawn Stars Australia
05:00 Mankind The Story Of All Of Us
06:00 Storage Wars Texas
06:25 Storage Wars Texas
06:50 Pawn Stars South Africa
07:15 Pawn Stars South Africa
07:40 American Pickers
08:30 American Restoration
09:20 Leepu And Pitbull
10:10 Fifth Gear
11:00 Shipping Wars
11:25 Shipping Wars
11:50 Ice Road Truckers
12:40 Ax Men
13:30 Battle 360
14:20 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
15:10 The Curse Of Oak Island
16:00 Storage Wars Texas
16:25 Storage Wars Texas
16:50 Counting Cars
17:15 Car Hunters
17:40 Pawn Stars
18:05 Storage Wars: Best Of
18:30 Mountain Men
19:20 American Pickers
20:10 American Pickers
21:00 The Curse Of Oak Island
21:50 Hunting Hitler
22:40 Hunting Hitler
23:30 America's 9/11 Flag: Rise



STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS ON OSN MOVIES HD



00:05 Famously Single
01:00 Famously Single
01:50 E! News
02:50 WAGs Miami
03:45 WAGs Miami
04:40 WAGs Miami
05:30 New Money



00:10 Patisserie With Michel Roux Jr
01:00 Sara's Australia Unveiled
01:25 The Food Files
01:50 David Rocco's Dolce India
02:15 David Rocco's Dolce India
02:40 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
03:05 Maximum Foodie
03:30 Delinquent Gourmet
03:55 Charlie Luxton's Homes By

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2017

The Sea
 04:45 Poh & Co
 05:10 Carnival Eats
 05:35 A Is For Apple
 06:00 A Is For Apple
 06:25 A Is For Apple
 06:50 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
 07:15 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
 08:05 Dog Whisperer
 08:55 The Wine Show
 09:45 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 10:10 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 10:35 Warrior Road Trip
 11:25 Places We Go
 11:50 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
 12:15 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
 12:40 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 13:05 David Rocco's Dolce India
 13:35 David Rocco's Dolce India
 14:00 Chocolate Covered
 14:30 Glamour Puds
 14:55 Maximum Foodie
 15:25 Delinquent Gourmet
 15:50 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
 16:45 Poh & Co
 17:15 A Is For Apple
 17:40 A Is For Apple
 18:10 Chocolate Covered
 18:35 Glamour Puds
 19:05 Maximum Foodie
 19:30 Delinquent Gourmet
 20:00 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
 20:50 Poh & Co
 21:15 A Is For Apple
 21:40 A Is For Apple
 22:05 Chocolate Covered
 22:30 Glamour Puds
 22:55 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 23:20 David Rocco's Dolce India
 23:45 David Rocco's Dolce India



REIGN OF ASSASSINS ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD



00:30 Superstore
 01:00 Baby Daddy
 01:30 High Maintenance
 02:00 High Maintenance
 02:30 The Big C
 03:00 Black-ish
 03:30 Kevin Can Wait
 04:00 According To Jim
 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 05:30 Cougar Town
 06:00 George Lopez
 06:30 The Bernie Mac Show
 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
 08:00 According To Jim
 08:30 Cougar Town
 09:00 Black-ish
 09:30 The Goldbergs
 10:00 Fresh Off The Boat
 10:30 The Bernie Mac Show
 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 12:00 George Lopez
 12:30 According To Jim
 13:00 Cougar Town
 13:30 The Bernie Mac Show
 14:00 Kevin Can Wait
 14:30 The Goldbergs
 15:00 Fresh Off The Boat
 15:30 Superstore
 16:00 Baby Daddy
 16:30 George Lopez
 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
 18:00 2 Broke Girls
 18:30 Life In Pieces
 19:00 The Goldbergs
 19:30 The Mindy Project
 20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 21:00 Baby Daddy
 21:30 Baby Daddy
 22:00 Man Seeking Woman
 22:30 Man Seeking Woman



00:00 House Of Cards
 01:00 Frequency
 02:00 Timeless
 03:00 Mr. Robot
 04:00 Once Upon A Time
 05:00 Good Morning America
 07:00 The Catch
 08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 09:00 Drop Dead Diva
 10:00 The Art Of More
 11:00 The Catch
 12:00 Once Upon A Time
 13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 14:00 Drop Dead Diva
 15:00 Timeless
 16:00 Live Good Morning America - Weekend

17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 18:00 Grey's Anatomy
 19:00 The Blacklist
 20:00 The Blacklist
 21:00 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
 22:00 Supernatural
 23:00 Grimm



00:00 The Gallows
 02:00 Tracers
 04:00 S.W.A.T.
 06:00 Echo Effect
 07:45 Reign Of Assassins
 09:45 Tracers
 11:30 S.W.A.T.
 13:30 Double Team
 15:30 Forbidden Empire
 17:30 Divergent
 20:00 Momentum
 22:00 Mercury Rising



00:00 Screwed
 02:00 Shanghai Noon
 04:00 Superfast
 06:00 Twins
 08:00 Shanghai Noon
 10:00 Superfast
 12:00 Coneheads
 14:00 Ride
 16:00 Forces Of Nature
 18:00 Pixels
 20:00 Awful Nice
 22:00 Cyrus



01:00 Falsely Accused
 03:00 Wildlike
 05:00 The Yellow Handkerchief
 07:00 Matters Of The Heart
 09:00 No God No Master
 11:00 Wildlike
 13:00 The Yellow Handkerchief
 15:00 Don't Wake Mommy
 17:00 No God No Master
 19:00 The Disappearance Of Eleanor Rigby: Her
 21:00 The Zero Theorem
 23:00 Madame Bovary



01:00 Gulliver's Travels
 03:00 Peter Pan
 05:00 Captain Sabertooth And The

Treasure Of Lama Rama
 07:00 Charlotte's Web
 09:00 Brave
 11:00 Captain Sabertooth And The Treasure Of Lama Rama
 13:00 Frozen
 15:00 The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement
 17:00 Confessions Of A Teenage Drama Queen
 19:00 Pirates Of The Caribbean 2: Dead Man's Chest
 21:30 Tuck Everlasting



00:30 Captive
 02:30 Star Wars: The Force Awakens
 05:00 Hotel Transylvania 2
 07:00 Me And Earl And The Dying Girl
 09:00 Kindergarten Cop 2
 10:45 Star Wars: The Force Awakens
 13:15 Alvin And The Chipmunks: The Road Chip
 15:00 Before We Go
 17:00 The Intern
 19:00 Nina
 21:00 The Meddler
 23:00 Insidious: Chapter 3



00:45 Scooby-Doo! And Kiss: Rock And Roll Mystery
 02:30 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
 04:00 Looney Tunes: Rabbit's Run
 05:45 Alpha Dogz: Pups United
 07:45 Bamse And The City Of Thieves
 09:15 Barnyard
 11:00 Scooby-Doo! And Kiss: Rock And Roll Mystery
 12:30 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
 14:00 The Boxcar Children
 16:00 Barnyard
 18:00 Scooby-Doo! And The Beach Beastie



00:30 A Clockwork Orange
 02:45 The Rainmaker
 05:00 Ronaldo
 07:00 Get On Up
 09:15 The Rainmaker
 11:30 The Man Who Wasn't There
 13:30 Ed Wood
 16:00 Big Eyes
 18:00 Twelve Monkeys
 20:30 The Assassination Of Jesse James
 23:30 Black Swan



00:16 Team Umizoomi
 00:38 Louie
 00:50 Olive The Ostrich
 01:02 Max & Ruby
 01:25 Wanda And The Alien
 01:35 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 01:46 The Day Henry Met
 01:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 02:20 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 02:43 Zack & Quack
 03:15 Team Umizoomi
 03:37 Olive The Ostrich
 03:46 Paw Patrol
 05:06 Wanda And The Alien
 05:16 Wanda And The Alien
 05:26 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
 05:50 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
 06:15 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 06:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 07:01 Paw Patrol
 07:14 Paw Patrol
 07:37 Dora The Explorer
 08:00 Zack & Quack
 08:22 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
 08:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 09:10 Paw Patrol
 09:35 Shimmer And Shine
 09:58 Dora The Explorer
 10:21 Paw Patrol
 10:45 Little Charmers
 10:57 Bubble Guppies
 11:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
 11:40 Zack & Quack
 11:52 Team Umizoomi
 12:15 Team Umizoomi
 12:38 Louie
 12:45 Louie
 12:53 Olive The Ostrich
 12:58 Olive The Ostrich
 13:03 Max & Ruby
 13:26 Wanda And The Alien
 13:35 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 13:46 The Day Henry Met
 13:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 14:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 14:41 Zack & Quack
 15:16 Team Umizoomi
 15:37 Olive The Ostrich
 15:48 Paw Patrol
 17:10 Wanda And The Alien
 17:19 Wanda And The Alien
 17:30 Dora And Friends: Into The City!
 18:16 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 18:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines



00:10 Locked Up Abroad
 01:00 The Border
 02:00 Final Days Of Anne Frank
 03:50 Megastructures
 04:45 Mega Structures
 05:40 Operation Sumatran Rhino
 06:35 Dog Whisperer
 07:30 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
 07:55 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
 08:25 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
 08:50 Hacking The System
 09:20 Wicked Tuna
 10:15 Highway Thru Hell
 11:10 Dirty Rotten Survival
 12:05 Explorer
 13:00 The Real Saddam Hussein
 14:00 Mega Bridges
 15:00 Air Crash Investigation
 16:00 Mega Structures
 17:00 Megastructures
 18:00 Operation Sumatran Rhino
 19:00 The Border
 20:00 Mega Structures
 20:50 Megastructures



FALSELY ACCUSED ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL



00:10 The Chase
 01:00 Callie-Anne Cooks Into The Wild
 01:30 Emmerdale
 03:55 Coronation Street
 06:00 Vera
 07:35 Murdoch Mysteries
 08:25 Tonight At The London Palladium
 09:20 Grantchester
 11:10 Doctor Thorne
 12:00 Don't Tell The Bride
 14:05 The Jonathan Ross Show
 15:00 Surprise Surprise
 15:55 Together
 16:30 Together
 17:00 Callie-Anne Cooks Into The Wild
 17:25 Murdoch Mysteries
 18:15 Tonight At The London Palladium
 19:00 Don't Tell The Bride
 20:00 Surprise Surprise
 20:50 Doctor Thorne
 21:40 Callie-Anne Cooks Into The Wild
 22:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
 23:05 Coronation Street



00:20 Fatal Attraction
 01:10 Urban Jungle
 02:00 Rescue Ink
 02:50 Incredible! The Story Of Dr. Pol
 03:45 Wildebeeste: Born To Run
 04:40 Deadly Instincts
 05:35 Urban Jungle
 06:30 Monster Fish
 07:25 Monster Fish
 08:20 Unlikely Animal Friends
 09:15 Ultimate Animals
 10:10 World's Weirdest Extreme Body Parts
 11:05 Dr. Oakley: Yukon Vet
 12:00 Shark Men
 12:55 Rescue Ink
 13:50 The Invaders
 14:45 Wild Canada
 15:40 South Africa
 16:35 Maneater Manhunt
 17:30 Super Pride
 18:25 Dangerous Encounters
 19:20 Wild Canada
 20:10 South Africa
 21:00 Maneater Manhunt
 21:50 Super Pride
 22:40 Dangerous Encounters
 23:30 Shark Men



ASSE KUWAIT CHAPTER ORGANIZES THE 4TH SESSION OF CONTRACTOR SAFETY MONTH

American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) Kuwait Chapter is Kuwait's premier voluntary & non-profit organization providing professional guidance, training and consultancy; in the field of Health, Safety and Environment; to the industrial and social sectors in the region. Continuing its constant efforts towards social responsibility and commitment, American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE), Kuwait Chapter, in collaboration with Kuwait Oil Company organised Third session of the Contactor Safety Month 2016. The event was conducted at KOC Hubara Assembly Hall at Ahmadi Township.

The event started with a safety moment and welcome address by Sunil Sadan and, Chapter Treasurer & Acting Secretary. In his opening address CH. Rama Krushna Chary,

President ASSE Kuwait chapter, informed that the chapter is organizing the Contractor Safety month for the benefit of contractors in state of Kuwait who are exposed to various safety risks. He mentioned that these technical meet events are open to everyone, so that the contactors who have a major role in industrial sector are updated to the best HSE practices and latest technologies in the personal protective equipment.

Jignesh Shah, Director of ASSE GCC HSE Excellence Award 2017 briefed about the award scheme. Ashok Garlapati, Advisory Committee Member of ASSE Kuwait Chapter, in his speech spelled the importance of the day's topic which is covering the importance parts of the body Head. Vincent Lee, Head Sales Manager, Asia Pacific, Middle East & Africa of Bullard presented the importance of Head protection. He has

shown the types of hard hats and the uses of them at different work environments. He also explained how to check the expiration date of hard hats.

Adnan Yousaf Head of Technical Events Committee ASSE Kuwait Chapter, in his closing address acknowledged the support of Kuwait Oil Company to ASSE Kuwait chapter in conducting these events. He also thanked the Speakers and the sponsors M/s Raja Company for the presentations. He thanked the all the participants who took their time in the evening to attend and enrich their knowledge. Around 100 persons from different sectors participated in this event. As a token of appreciation, speakers were presented with a memento. Certificate of participation was distributed to all the participants.



MADE IN INDIA EXHIBITION

Indian Embassy is organizing a "Made in India Exhibition" on Saturday, 18 February 2017 from 10:30 am to 8:00 pm at Al Dana Ball Room, Hotel Holiday Inn, Salmiya. The exhibition will showcase several products manufactured in India. During this exhibition, a wide variety of Indian products ranging from tyres, motorbikes, trucks, buses, security solutions, batteries, fans, induction cooker, grills, rice cookers, mixies, television, air compressors, etc., will be on display.

Companies dealing in 30 Indian reputed brands are participating in the Exhibition. Display of Indian automobiles and home appliances will be a special attraction at the exhibition. The exhibition is open to all. The Embassy takes this opportunity to invite Corporate and individuals to visit the same. Both Kuwaitis and foreign nationals will get to see the display of a wide variety of automobiles and home appliances manufactured in India during the exhibition.

MILLENNIUM HOTEL & CONVENTIONS CENTER PROMISES AN UNFORGETTABLE ROMANTIC NIGHT ON VALENTINE'S DAY

Millennium Hotel & Conventions Center Kuwait - one of the finest 5-star Hotels in the state - is offering its guests and visitors an unforgettable Valentine's dining experience at Lamar International Restaurant in celebration of St Valentine's Day on February 14th. The venue has been elegantly decorated, exclusively for this joyous occasion, with splendid arrangements of wonderful red rose petals. Additionally, a premium Valentines buffet dinner has been specially prepared for a magical ambiance that will leave guests with the sweetest romantic memories.

Area General Manager of Millennium & Cophorne Hotels Kuwait, Dani Saleh commented: "Valentine's Day is one of the happiest occasions of the year, and we are fully prepared to create the best romantic and unforgettable reminiscences for our guests at Lamar International Restaurant. So look no further and book your

Valentine's table earlier, for ONLY 18 KD per person, and spend the most enjoyable time with Lamar's fine luxury dining amid the dim lights and soft music. Also, a very special gift from Lamar will be waiting for you the moment you arrive."

Millennium Hotel & Conventions Center Kuwait is strategically located in Salmiya area, overlooking the Fahaheel Expressway, 15 minutes from the airport and from most commercial and financial centers. The magnificent 18-floor building comprises 295 modern and elegant hotel rooms and suites, with full amenities that include a private business center, a concierge services, and several halls and huge ballrooms for meetings, conferences, exhibitions and all kinds of celebrations. A fully equipped health club, with steam rooms, sauna and a swimming pool, is also available for guests, as well as the fancy Lamar International Restaurant and the upscale Library Cafe.



MILLENNIUM KUWAIT

LOVE IS IN THE AIR AT LAMAR

EXPRESS YOUR LOVE..

Enjoy the sweetest moments with Lamar's exquisite buffet dinner, complemented with the finest degrees of service and elegant hospitality, in an ambiance filled with romance and serenity.

KUWAIT EXPAT LEAGUE COMES TO A CLOSE

The Kuwait Expat League came to a close after four months of fixtures involving eight teams from the expat community in Kuwait. Matches take place every Sunday evening at the P.S.A. Everton ground in Bayan. After a closely contested competition the Armenian team Homentmen clinched the runners up spot whilst the American International School team were clear Champions. Top Scorer Award went to JT Walters from VAA team. Everton Academy Directors and League organisers Mike Finn and Baker Al-Nazer presented individual trophies and gifts from the sponsors Sports Direct to all the players and thanked the officials from the Indian Football Referees Association. The defending champions AIS and Runners Up Homentmen will now compete with teams from Salwa School, Everton Youth, VAA, United Nations, Football Legends and Kuwait English School in the 2017 Championship.



'WORLD'S HEAVIEST WOMAN' TO FLY TO INDIA FOR SURGERY

MUMBAI: An Egyptian believed to be the world's heaviest woman will fly to India for weight reduction surgery today after intervention from the country's foreign minister ensured her a visa. Eman Ahmed Abd El Aty, aged 36 and weighing around 500 kilograms (1,100 pounds), is slated to arrive in India's financial capital Mumbai in the early hours of today, Muffazal Lakdawala, her doctor, said in a statement. She will be flown on a specially modified Airbus and will be taken to Mumbai's Saifee Hospital upon arrival, the statement said. "To prepare her (Eman) for the flight, a team of doctors has been in Egypt for the last ten

days to optimise the conditions for her travel," the statement said.

Abd El Aty's sister had approached Lakdawala in October saying her sibling needed urgent medical attention. Her family told the doctor that as a child she was diagnosed with elephantiasis, a condition that causes the limbs and other body parts to swell, leaving her almost immobile. She later suffered a stroke and was rendered bedridden, triggering a series of ailments including diabetes, high blood pressure, hypertension and sleep apnoea.

After hearing about her case Lakdawala had offered to carry out the

procedure free of charge. Her request for a visa was initially rejected, prompting Lakdawala in December to tweet a request for help to India's foreign minister Sushma Swaraj. At the time Swaraj was in hospital awaiting a kidney transplant but was quick to respond with an offer of help. Abd El Aty has had a long wait as no airlines were previously willing to fly her from Egypt to India owing to her health complications.

"...Transporting Eman to Mumbai is a challenging task keeping in mind the complexities of her case as she is a high risk patient who has not been able to move or leave the house for the

past 25 years," the surgeon said. If Abd El Aty's weight claims are proven medically, she will beat Pauline Potter (643 pounds) from the United States to become the world's heaviest woman alive. Bariatric surgery is essentially a stomach-shrinking bypass procedure carried out on those wanting to lose excessive weight.

It is increasingly common in India, which has a growing problem with obesity, particularly in urban areas. India is a key destination for medical tourists because it offers quality services at a fraction of the cost of western countries and no waiting lists. —AFP



MEXICO: View of a group of monarch butterflies in the snow at the Ocampo community, Michoacan state, Mexico on March 11, 2016. —AFP

TRUMP WALL COULD HARM BUTTERFLY'S MIGRATION: MEXICAN OFFICIAL

MEXICO CITY: The monarch butterfly population dropped by a quarter in its Mexican wintering grounds this season and US President Donald Trump's planned wall could affect its migration from Canada, Mexican authorities said Thursday. The orange and black butterfly covered 2.91 hectares (7.2 acres) of pine and fir forest in the 2016-2017 season, compared to 4.01 hectares the previous year, a 27.4 percent decline, the government said. The monarch population is estimated by the area of forest it occupies in the states of Mexico and Michoacan, where it overwinters.

Last year, cold fronts and snow slammed 100 hectares of woods in the central mountains where the butterfly spends the winter months after traveling

4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles) across Canada and the United States. "The causes for this drop are mainly the extreme climate events," Alejandro Del Mazo, Mexico's commissioner for protected areas, said at a news conference. "There were deaths of monarch butterflies in the previous season, and this, without a doubt, is one of the main causes for the reduction" this year, Del Mazo said.

The butterfly's population had rebounded last year, but some seven percent were killed in a storm in March, around the time they make their journey back across the United States. Del Mazo warned that the butterfly's survival could be threatened by the massive wall that Trump says he plans to build across the 3,000-kilometer border. The barrier could

change the natural markers that guide the insect across the border, he said. "Without a doubt, fragmenting the habitats and maybe causing changes to the tributaries and rivers that we share with the United States could have an impact," Del Mazo said.

"Along its route, this insect also needs to identify refuges, climate events and water that, if altered, could have some impact, but it's very early to say," he cautioned. The monarch has been threatened by illegal logging in its Mexican habitat and the use of herbicides in fields of milkweed—the plant that it feeds on when in caterpillar form—in the United States and Canada. Mexico's government has deployed a special police unit in the mountains to find illegal sawmills. —AFP

TRUMP REMARKS LATEST EVIDENCE OF HEALTH LAW REPEAL SLOWDOWN

WASHINGTON: A House conservative leader called Monday for votes "as soon as possible" on legislation voiding and replacing the health care law, even as President Donald Trump's latest remarks conceded that the effort could well stretch into next year.

"Maybe it will take till sometime into next year, but we are certainly going to be in the process," Trump said in an interview with Fox News' Bill O'Reilly that was broadcast Sunday. While saying he expected something "fairly soon," he added, "I would like to say by the end of the year, at least the rudiments. But we should have something within the year and the following year."

The comments come as congressional Republicans continue laboring to deliver on a promise they've been making for years: that they will repeal President Barack Obama's 2010 health care overhaul and replace it with an alternative.

They also come as constituents supporting Obama's law have made life uncomfortable back home for some Republican lawmakers. Reps. Tom McClintock, R-Calif., and Gus Bilirakis, R-Fla., faced pointed questions from voters in recent days in scenes reminiscent of 2009, when tea party voters noisily confronted congressional Democrats at town hall meetings.

Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., chairman of the House Freedom Caucus, said late Monday that there's "growing consensus" among members of the hard-line conservative group for quick votes on repealing Obama's statute and replacing it that would be held simultaneously, or at worst within days of each other.

"Repeal and replace as soon as possible gives us a lot more credibility" with voters, Meadows said in an interview after his group discussed their health care strategy in an evening meeting without approving a formal position. Meadows, whose organization claims around 40 House GOP lawmakers as members, said delays in producing a Republican replacement plan create "unnecessary anxiety on behalf of our constituents."

Tax-advantaged

Meadows said Rep. Mark Sanford, R-SC, is working on legislation similar to a bill by Sen Rand Paul, R-Ky, that's winning support among conservatives. That measure would eliminate requirements in current law that insurance policies cover specified benefits such as maternity and mental health; expand tax-advantaged health savings accounts and let insurers sell policies across state lines.

A House health subcommittee planned Tuesday votes on a pair of minor bills making it harder for people to avoid counting some forms of income - including lottery winnings - used to determine if they qualify for Medicaid, the health program for low-income people. —AP

MANUAL WORK, NIGHT SHIFTS MAY HARM WOMEN'S EGGS

PARIS: Women who work nights and do heavy lifting on the job may have fewer and inferior eggs than nine-to-fivers, said a study yesterday into a potential cause of infertility. Previous research had shown a link between work conditions and fertility, but this was the first attempt to examine how shift work or manual labor might affect a woman's physical capacity to have a baby, the authors said.

The US-based team analyzed data from about 400 women attending a Massachusetts fertility clinic. Their average age was 35. The researchers assessed "ovarian reserve"—the number of remaining eggs a woman had—as well as levels of a hormone which rise as fertility dwindles. They also examined how many eggs were "mature" and capable of developing into a healthy embryo. This data was compared to the women's job conditions—how much physical exertion was required of them, and the hours that they worked.

About 40 percent of women said they had to regularly move or lift heavy objects, while a fifth said their jobs were moderately to very physically demanding. Ninety-one percent worked during normal office hours. "Women with physically demanding jobs had a lower reserve of eggs than those whose work did not regularly require heavy lifting," said a press statement from the journal *Occupational & Environmental Medicine*, which published the study.

Heavy lifters also had fewer mature eggs—even fewer if they worked evening, night or rotation shifts. The effect was strongest in overweight women and those older than 37, the researchers said. Women are believed to be born with a finite number of eggs, which steadily die off over time—a process which can be accelerated by factors such as smoking, for example.

The team merely observed a correlation between work conditions and egg health, and cannot say with certainty that one causes the other. They also cannot be sure that a similar correlation would be found in women not in need of fertility treatment. Other experts not involved in the research pointed out other potential flaws. With fewer than 500 women, the study was too small to rule out other possible causes for reduced egg quantity or quality. "For example, it is possible that they (shift workers and heavy-lifters) were poorer and therefore had different social conditions or diet compared with the nine-to-five workers," said Channa Jayasena of Imperial College London. — AFP



FAREWELL SPIT, New Zealand : This handout photo from the New Zealand Department of Conservation taken and released yesterday shows pilot whales, which beached themselves overnight, at Farewell Spit in the Golden Bay region at the northern tip of New Zealand's South Island.—AFP

HUNDREDS OF WHALES WASH UP DEAD ON NEW ZEALAND BEACH

WELLINGTON: More than 400 whales were stranded on a New Zealand beach yesterday, with most of them dying quickly as frustrated volunteers desperately raced to save the survivors. It was one of the largest mass beachings recorded in New Zealand, where strandings are relatively common, the Department of Conservation said. Andrew Lamason, the department's regional manager, said 416 pilot whales swam ashore at Farewell Spit in the Golden Bay region, on the northern tip of South Island.

About 70 percent had perished by the time wildlife officers reached the remote location and about 500 volunteers pitched in to get the remaining whales offshore. However, he conceded the outlook was gloomy and by late afternoon the majority of the 100-plus whales that were refloated at high tide had swam back ashore. "With that number dead, you have to assume that the rest are in reasonably poor nick as well," he told Radio New Zealand. "So we're sort of preparing ourselves for a pretty traumatic period ahead." Department

spokesman Herb Christophers said there were so many whale carcasses that it was difficult for the volunteers to get living animals into the water.

"The dead ones that are floating around out there are obstructing their course out to sea," he told AFP. "I understand they're concerned about people's welfare... there's quite a safety issue there." The volunteers at the beach were also advised to be wary of the thrashing tails and fins of the distressed whales, which can weigh up to two tonnes. Pilot whales grow up to six meters (20 feet) long and are the most common species of whale in New Zealand waters. They are renowned for tragically swimming back ashore after being refloated in an apparent attempt to rejoin their pod.

Volunteers will again attempt to refloat any survivors on Saturday. In the past, whales that repeatedly re-strand have been euthanized after becoming steadily weaker with every attempt to return them to the sea. —AFP

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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 (09/02/2017 TO 15/02/2017)

SHARQIA-1		KUNG-FU YOGA	8:15 PM
RINGS	12:45 PM	SPLIT	10:30 PM
RAEES- HINDI	3:15 PM	SPLIT	12:45 AM
KAABIL- HINDI	6:00 PM		
AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	8:45 PM	MARINA-2	
AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	10:45 PM	RINGS	1:00 PM
SPLIT	12:45 AM	THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	1:00 PM
		SAT+MON	
SHARQIA-2		THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	3:15 PM
SPLIT	12:15 PM	THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	5:30 PM
THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	2:45 PM	THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	7:45 PM
THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	5:00 PM	RINGS	10:00 PM
THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	7:15 PM	RINGS	12:15 AM
KUNG-FU YOGA	9:30 PM		
SPLIT	11:45 PM	MARINA-3	
		JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	12:00 PM
SHARQIA-3		JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	2:30 PM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	12:15 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	5:00 PM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	2:45 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	7:30 PM
RINGS	5:15 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	10:00 PM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	7:30 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	12:30 AM
RINGS	10:00 PM		
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	12:05 AM	AVENUES-1	
		DANGAL -Hindi	12:45 PM
MUHALAB-1		AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	2:00 PM
RINGS	11:45 AM	AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	4:00 PM
THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	2:00 PM	AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	6:00 PM
THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	4:15 PM	AL MOKHAYAM	(Kuwaiti Film) 8:00 PM
THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	6:30 PM	AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	10:00 PM
RINGS	8:45 PM	AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	12:05 AM
RINGS	10:45 PM		
RINGS	12:45 AM	AVENUES-2	
MUHALAB-2		THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE -3D -4DX	1:00 PM
SPLIT	1:30 PM	THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE -3D -4DX	3:15 PM
RAEES- HINDI	3:45 PM	THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE -3D -4DX	5:30 PM
KAABIL- HINDI	6:45 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 -2D -4DX	7:45 PM
SPLIT	9:45 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 -2D -4DX	10:15 PM
SPLIT	12:15 AM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 -2D -4DX	12:45 AM
		AVENUES-3	
MUHALAB-3		SPLIT	11:30 AM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	12:00 PM	SPLIT	1:45 PM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	2:30 PM	SINGAM III -Tamil	4:00 PM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	5:00 PM	SINGAM III -Tamil	7:00 PM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	7:30 PM	SINGAM III -Tamil	10:00 PM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	10:00 PM	SPLIT	1:00 AM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	12:30 AM		
FANAR-1		360° 1	
SPLIT	12:00 PM	RINGS	12:15 PM
SPLIT	2:30 PM	RINGS	2:30 PM
AL MOKHAYAM	(Kuwaiti Film) 5:00 PM	RINGS	4:45 PM
KUNG-FU YOGA	7:00 PM	RINGS	7:00 PM
SPLIT	9:15 PM	RINGS	9:15 PM
SPLIT	11:45 PM	RINGS	11:30 PM
FANAR-2		360° 2	
RINGS	11:30 AM	KAABIL- HINDI	1:15 PM
THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	1:30 PM	KAABIL- HINDI	1:30 PM
THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	3:45 PM	FRI	
THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	6:00 PM	DANGAL -Hindi	4:30 PM
RINGS	8:15 PM	KAABIL- HINDI	7:45 PM
RINGS	10:30 PM	DANGAL -Hindi	11:00 PM
RINGS	12:45 AM		
FANAR-3		360° 3	
KAABIL- HINDI	12:30 PM	RINGS	1:00 PM
AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	1:30 PM	AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	3:15 PM
DANGAL -Hindi	3:30 PM	AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	5:15 PM
KAABIL- HINDI	6:45 PM	AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	7:15 PM
JOLLY LLB 2 -Hindi	9:30 PM	AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	9:15 PM
AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	12:15 AM	AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film)	11:15 PM
		RINGS	1:15 AM
FANAR-4		AL-KOUT.1	
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	11:30 AM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	11:30 AM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	2:00 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	2:00 PM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	4:30 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	4:30 PM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	7:00 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	7:00 PM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	9:30 PM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	9:30 PM
JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	12:05 AM	JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2	12:05 AM
FANAR-5		AL-KOUT.2	
THE SPACE BETWEEN US	11:45 AM	RINGS	12:45 PM
THE SPACE BETWEEN US	2:00 PM	RINGS	3:00 PM
HEARTBEATS	4:15 PM	RINGS	5:30 PM
THE SPACE BETWEEN US	6:30 PM	RESIDENT EVIL: The Final Chapter	7:45 PM
RAEES- HINDI	8:45 PM	RINGS	10:00 PM
HEARTBEATS	11:30 PM	RINGS	12:15 AM
MARINA-1		AL-KOUT.3	
RINGS	11:30 AM	KUNG-FU YOGA	12:00 PM
SPLIT	1:30 PM	THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE	2:15 PM
RINGS	3:45 PM		
RINGS	6:00 PM		

LOST

I, Nita Kishore Bhatkar, holder of Indian Passport No. Z1171971 have lost my Bachelors in Business Administration degree certificate issued by the Madurai Kamraj University. If you find it please contact 66095560.

It is notified for information that my Original Grade Sheet cum Certificate of Performance Certificate for the Secondary School Examination 2013-15 (CBSE 10th) of the year 2015 and Roll No. 8106889 issued by CBSE has been actually lost in Kuwait. Jenny Sara George, C/o George K Thomas, New Khaitan, Kuwait. Tel. 99587315. (C 5264) 8-2-2017

Required Immediately

DRIVER

For a Kuwaiti family
Must have a Kuwaiti driver license
And has knowledge of all Kuwait areas
Must speak Arabic
Employment for one month + Good Salary

TEL: 97932128

CHANGE OF NAME

I Shikha Rana Sham D/o Shamlal Rana holder of Indian Passport No. M6712765 & Civil ID No. 290062302045 has changed my name to Sabah Shahazad Khan hereinafter in all my dealings and documents. I will be known by name of Sabah Shahazad Khan. (C 5269) 9-2-2017

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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



Flight Schedule

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Saturday 11/2/2017

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
CLX	852	Luxembourg	00:15
KLM	413	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:25
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55
RJA	642	Amman	01:05
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15
MSR	1618	Alexandria	01:20
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50
DLH	635	Doha	01:55
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:05
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30
KAC	344	Chennai	05:35
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:45
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55
KAC	364	Colombo	06:05
KAC	384	Delhi	06:05
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:20
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	06:25
BAW	157	London	06:40
PAL	668	Manila/Dubai	07:00
FDB	5061	Dubai	07:15
KAC	204	Lahore	07:15
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50
KAC	302	Mumbai	08:20
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40
KAC	382	Delhi	08:45
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05
KAC	352	Kochi	09:10
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40
FBA	833	Al Najaf	09:45
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00
AVV	653	Sohag	10:10
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40
KAC	774	Riyadh	11:05
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:15
IRM	1188	Mashhad	11:15
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30
FDK	801	Damascus	11:45
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30
JZR	239	Amman	12:45
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50
FDB	075	Dubai	12:50
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00
FBA	831	Al Najaf	13:05
IAW	157	Al Najaf	13:25
BON	101	Sarajevo	13:30
JZR	779	Jeddah	13:35
KAC	564	Amman	13:40
KAC	788	Jeddah	13:45
KNE	231	Riyadh	13:55
KAC	672	Dubai	14:00
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20
KAC	692	Muscat	14:30
GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40
KAC	542	Cairo	14:45
KNE	529	Jeddah	14:55
KAC	618	Doha	15:00
KNE	683	Madinah	15:05
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15
KAC	286	Dhaka	15:20
OMA	645	Muscat	15:35
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:50
KAC	154	Istanbul	15:55
SAW	705	Damascus	16:00
SVA	504	Madinah	16:00
KNE	531	Jeddah	16:05
JZR	535	Cairo	16:10
QTR	1072	Doha	16:10
JZR	787	Riyadh	16:25
JZR	357	Mashhad	16:25
FDB	051	Dubai	16:25
KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	16:35
RJA	640	Amman	16:55
KAC	118	New York	17:00
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
JZR	777	Jeddah	17:45
NIA	251	Alexandria	17:55
UAE	875	Dubai	18:00
SVA	500	Jeddah	18:00
FDB	063	Dubai	18:10
JZR	177	Dubai	18:20
MSR	620	Cairo	18:30
IRA	669	Mashhad	18:55

SYR	341	Damascus	19:00
KAC	512	Mashhad	19:20
ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30
KAC	502	Beirut	19:30
CLX	856	Luxembourg	19:35
KAC	674	Dubai	19:45
FDB	057	Dubai	19:50
KAC	104	London	19:50
KNE	381	Taif	19:55
KAC	166	Rome	19:55
MSR	618	Alexandria	20:05
OMA	647	Muscat	20:10
JZR	189	Dubai	20:15
QTR	1088	Doha	20:35
KAC	562	Amman	20:40
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:45
FDB	5053	Dubai	20:50
KAC	616	Bahrain	20:50
FDB	8053	Dubai	20:55
KAC	786	Jeddah	21:15
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20
MEA	402	Beirut	21:20
ALK	229	Colombo	21:25
UAE	859	Dubai	21:40
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45
KAC	676	Dubai	21:45
KAC	174	Munich	22:00
QTR	1082	Doha	22:00
KLM	415	Amsterdam	22:05
NIA	151	Cairo	22:10
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15
AIC	987	Chennai/Hyderabad	22:25
JZR	241	Amman	22:45
KNE	533	Jeddah	22:45
KAC	1544	Cairo	22:55
KAC	164	Paris	22:55
JAI	574	Mumbai	23:00
JZR	185	Dubai	23:45
FDB	071	Dubai	23:45
JZR	125	Bahrain	23:55

JZR	356	Mashhad	10:25
KAC	411	Bangkok	10:30
FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
QTR	1071	Doha	10:40
FBA	834	Al Najaf	10:55
SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00
KAC	617	Doha	11:10
AVV	654	Asyut	11:10
GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
KAC	501	Beirut	11:55
RBG	554	Alexandria	11:55
KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	12:05
JZR	776	Jeddah	12:05
IRM	1189	Mashhad	12:30
FDK	802	Damascus	12:45
JZR	786	Riyadh	13:10
KAC	511	Mashhad	13:15
MSC	402	Alexandria	13:30
JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
FDB	076	Dubai	14:05
FBA	832	Al Najaf	14:05
UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
IAW	158	Al Najaf	14:25
KNE	382	Taif	14:50
BON	102	Sarajevo	14:55
KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
KAC	561	Amman	15:00
FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
KAC	785	Jeddah	15:15
PAL	669	Dubai/Manila	15:20
GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
QTR	1079	Doha	15:40
JZR	188	Dubai	15:40
KAC	1543	Cairo	15:55
KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
KNE	684	Madinah	16:00
KAC	357	Kochi	16:20
ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
ABY	128	Sharjah	16:30
OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
SAW	706	Damascus	16:55
KNE	532	Jeddah	16:55
SVA	505	Madinah	17:00
KAC	675	Dubai	17:00
JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
JZR	240	Amman	17:15
FDB	052	Dubai	17:25
KAC	615	Bahrain	17:35
QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
RJA	641	Amman	17:55
SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	353	BLR	18:15
GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
NIA	252	Alexandria	18:55
JZR	554	Alexandria	18:55
FDB	064	Dubai	19:05
JZR	184	Dubai	19:10
SVA	501	Jeddah	19:30
UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
IRA	666	Esfahan	19:55
SYR	342	Damascus	20:00
ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
KAC	383	Delhi	20:30
FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
KAC	361	Colombo	20:35
KAC	775	Riyadh	20:45
KNE	232	Riyadh	20:55
CLX	856	Hong Kong	21:05
MSR	607	Luxor	21:05
JZR	124	Bahrain	21:05
OMA	648	Muscat	21:10
KAC	205	Islamabad	21:25
KAC	345	Ahmedabad	21:30
QTR	1089	Doha	21:35
DLH	634	Doha	21:35
KAC	741	Dammam	21:45
FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
FDB	8054	Dubai	21:55
KAC	351	Kochi	22:00
ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:15
MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
KAC	301	Mumbai	22:45
KAC	381	Delhi	22:45
UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
KLM	415	Dammam/Amsterdam	23:05
ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
NIA	152	Cairo	23:10
QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
KNE	534	Jeddah	23:35

Departure Flights on Saturday 11/2/2017

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30
PIA	240	Sialkot	00:40
FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
BBC	044	Dhaka	01:30
CLX	758	Bahrain	01:45
KLM	413	Amsterdam	01:50
KAC	417	Manila	02:00
MSR	619	Alexandria	02:20
KAC	285	Dhaka	02:25
THY	773	Istanbul	02:25
SAI	442	Lahore	02:30
DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:55
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
PGT	859	Istanbul	03:35
KAC	103	London	03:40
UAE	854	Dubai	03:45
KKK	6505	Istanbul	03:55
OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
MSR	613	Cairo	04:10
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:10
QTR	1077	Doha	04:40
FEG	938	HRG	05:00
QTR	1087	Doha	05:00
FDB	070	Dubai	06:30
KAC	153	Istanbul	06:50
THY	771	Istanbul	06:50
KAC	165	Rome	06:55
JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
RJA	643	Amman	07:05
JZR	238	Amman	07:10
GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
KAC	541	Cairo	07:15
KAC	163	Paris	07:25
KAC	773	Riyadh	07:30
KAC	787	Jeddah	07:45
FDB	5062	Dubai	07:55
JZR	778	Jeddah	07:55
KAC	563	Amman	08:00
BAW	156	London	08:40
KAC	173	Munich	08:50
FDB	054	Dubai	08:55
KAC	691	Muscat	09:00
KAC	117	SNN/New York	09:00
KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
JZR	534	Cairo	09:35
KAC	101	London	09:35
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
UAE	856	Dubai	09:55
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10

WORDSEARCH PUZZLE

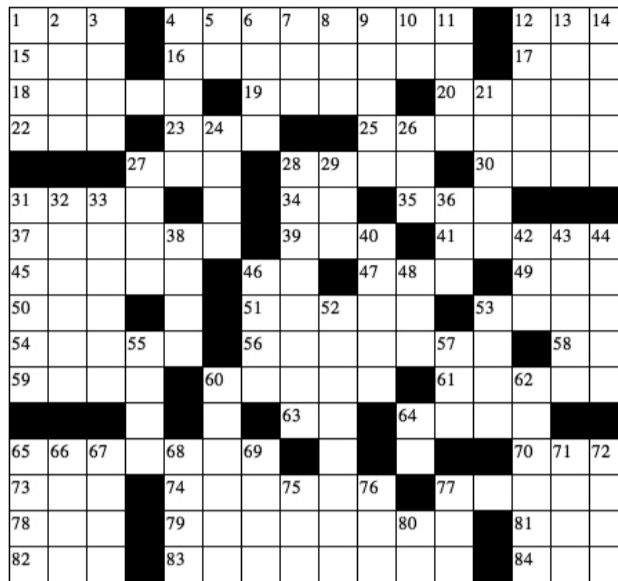
Moods & Emotions 1

Find and circle all of the word that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 12 letters spell an additional word.

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

- | | | | |
|----------|------------|----------|----------|
| AFRAID | ELATION | JADED | PEACEFUL |
| AGITATED | FURIOUS | JOVIAL | PLEASED |
| ANGUISH | GENIAL | LONELY | REMORSE |
| BLUE | GLOOMY | LOVE | SOMBER |
| BORED | GROUCHY | MELLOW | SUNNY |
| CHEERY | HELPLESS | MERRY | SYMPATHY |
| DARK | HOPEFUL | MISERY | UNEASY |
| DOWN | HUMILIATED | OFFENDED | UPBEAT |
| DREAD | HURT | ORNERY | WEARY |
| EDGY | IRKED | PANIC | |

CROSSWORD 1518



ACROSS

- A local computer network for communication between computers.
- Antacid (trade name Prilosec) that suppresses acid secretion in the stomach.
- A protocol developed for the internet to get data from one network device to another.
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- Giant tree-like plant having edible nuts and leafstalks that yield a refreshing drink of clear watery sap.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- A pilgrim who journeys to Mecca.
- Any place of complete bliss and delight and peace.
- Not still wet.
- North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
- (prefix) Bad or erroneous or lack of.
- Regional and archaic.
- An informal term for a father.
- A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
- A nucleic acid that transmits genetic information from DNA to the cytoplasm.
- Any of several short-billed Old World rails.
- Any property detected by the olfactory system.
- The cry made by sheep.
- A close friend who accompanies his buddies in their activities.
- Airtight sealed metal container for food or drink or paint etc.
- Large dark brown North American arboreal carnivorous mammal.
- A republic in the Asian subcontinent in southern Asia.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- Advanced in years.
- A pale rose-colored variety of the ruby spinel.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- A contorted facial expression.
- A light touch or stroke.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- Spanish Catholic theologian and founder of the Society of Jesus.
- A benevolent aspect of Devi.
- An unglazed heavy fabric.
- Primitive predaceous North American fish covered with hard scales and having long jaws with needle-like teeth.
- East Indian tree bearing a profusion of intense vermilion velvet-textured blooms and yielding a yellow dye.
- (printing) Written or printed immediately following another character and aligned with it.
- Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).

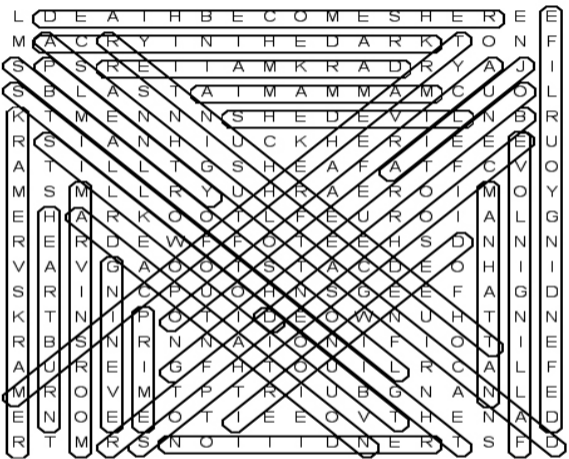
DOWN

- A Loloish language.
- By bad luck.

- A quantity of no importance.
- Indicating the most important performer or role.
- An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
- United States composer noted for his innovative use of polytonality (1874-1954).
- Having leadership guidance.
- Used of a single unit or thing.
- The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
- (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
- Long-tailed arboreal mustelid of Central and South America.
- Any system of principles or beliefs.
- A genus of Ploceidae.
- Measuring instrument in which the echo of a pulse of microwave radiation is used to detect and locate distant objects.
- The content of cognition.
- A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
- A mass of small bubbles formed in or on a liquid.
- A city in northwestern Somalia.
- The compass point that is one point north of due east.
- Philippine tree similar to the breadfruit tree bearing edible fruit.
- Being or having light colored skin and hair and usually blue or gray eyes.
- Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- A unit of current equal to 10 amperes.
- (usually followed by 'to') Naturally disposed toward.
- A Bantu language spoken by the Kamba people in Kenya.
- A republic in southeastern Europe on the southern part of the Balkan peninsula.
- A domed or vaulted recess or projection on a building especially the east end of a church.
- Used of a single unit or thing.
- Salt of potassium (trade names Kaochlor and K-lor and Klovess and K-lyte).
- Heal or recover.
- Severe diabetes mellitus with an early onset.
- The compass point that is one point east of due south.
- Harmony of people's opinions or actions or characters.
- A lake in northwestern Russia north of St. Petersburg.
- A gray tetravalent metallic element that resembles zirconium chemically and is found in zirconium minerals.
- Avatar of Vishnu.
- A republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
- Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
- Opinion or judgment.
- Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
- An aggressive remark directed at a person like a missile and intended to have a telling effect.
- (of securities) Not quoted on a stock exchange.
- Black tropical American cuckoo.
- The money risked on a gamble.
- A radioactive transuranic metallic element.

Yesterday's Solution

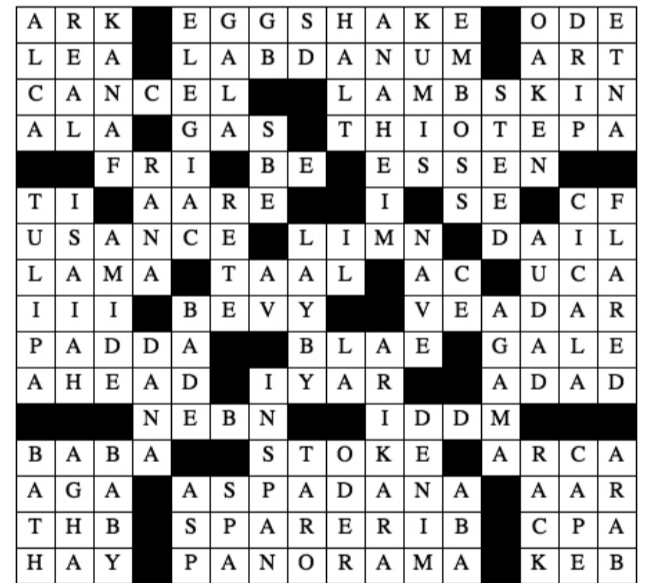
Meryl Streep Movies



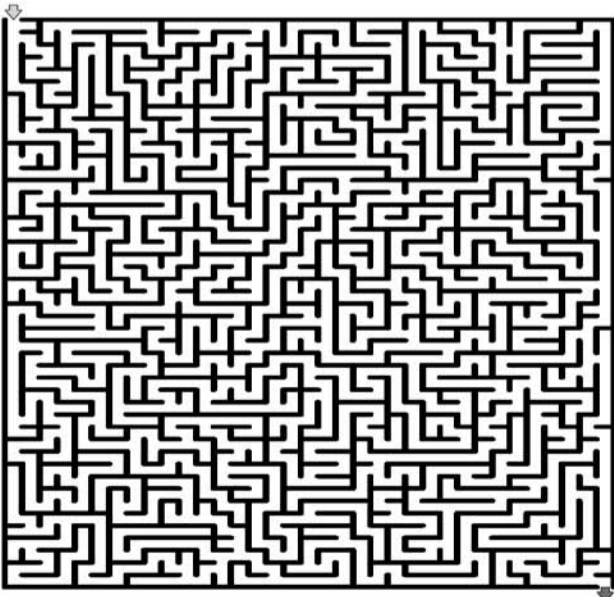
- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| A CRY IN THE DARK | HEARTBURN | OUT OF AFRICA |
| ADAPTATION | IRONWEED | PLENTY |
| BEFORE AND AFTER | JULIA | PRIME |
| DANCING AT LUGHNASA | KRAMER VS. KRAMER | RENDITION |
| DARK MATTER | LIONS FOR LAMBS | SHE-DEVIL |
| DEATH BECOMES HER | MANMA MIA | SILKWOOD |
| DEFENDING YOUR LIFE | MANHATTAN | SOPHIE'S CHOICE |
| DOUBT | MARVIN'S ROOM | STILL OF THE NIGHT |
| EVENING | MUSIC OF THE HEART | THE DEER HUNTER |
| FALLING IN LOVE | ONE TRUE THING | |

The hidden movie is:
 LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

Yesterday's Solution



CHALLENGING MAZE



Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

RIO IS STUCK WITH BIG BILLS AND VACANT VENUES AFTER OLYMPICS

RIO DE JANEIRO: Rio de Janeiro pulled off last year's Olympics, keeping crime at bay and fending off dire forecasts of corruption, environmental degradation, and cost overruns. Six months after South America's first games, the flood gates have burst open. Rio organizers still owe creditors about \$40 million. Four of the new arenas in the main Olympic Park have failed to find private-sector management, and ownership has passed to the federal government. Another new arena will be run by the cash-strapped city with Brazil stuck in its deepest recession in decades.

The historic Maracana stadium, site of the opening and closing ceremony, has been vandalized as stadium operators, the Rio state government, and Olympic organizers have fought over \$1 million in unpaid electricity bills. The electric utility reacted by cutting off all power to the city landmark. There are few players for a new \$20 million Olympic golf course, and little money for upkeep. Deodoro, the second-largest cluster of Olympic venues, is closed and searching for a management company.

The state of Rio de Janeiro is months late paying teachers, hospital workers, and pensions. The state also reports record-breaking crime in 2016 in almost all categories from homicides to robbery. "During the Olympics, the city was really trying hard to keep things together," said Oliver Stuenkel, a Brazilian who teaches international relations at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a Brazilian university. "But the minute the Olympics were over, the whole thing disintegrated."

BETTER IMAGE OR WORSE?

The Olympics - and to a lesser extent the 2014 World Cup - showcased the reality of Rio, a city romanticized for its sprawling beaches, annual Carnival celebration, and sensual lifestyle. It also exposed the city's crime, environmental contamination, and corruption. Some building projects connected to the Olympics and World Cup have been tied to a probe which has led to the jailing of dozens of politicians and businessmen for receiving kickbacks in Brazil's largest corruption scandal.

Three politicians who were instrumental in landing and organizing the Olympics - former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, former Rio governor Sergio Cabral, and former Rio Mayor Eduardo - have been under investigation. Cabral, an early promoter of the Olympics and World Cup, has been jailed on corruption charges. "The Olympics gave people a better sense of the difficulties Brazil faces," Stuenkel said. "Maybe not a better or worse image, but more rounded."

UNPAID BILLS

Sidney Levy, the chief executive officer of the Rio organizing committee, tried to run the games with only private money, and almost succeeded. His \$3 billion operating budget - the budget for running the games, not building the infrastructure - was frugal by Olympic standards. At the last minute, he had to ask for a 250-million-real bailout - \$80 million - from the city of Rio and the federal government to run the Paralympics.

Eventually, he got only 100 million reals (\$30 million), and the shortfall has left organizers owing creditors millions. Today, Levy says he's nearly a forgotten man. "I could call the president of the country, and the call was taken," Levy said. "But try it today. I could call

the IOC and everybody. But now people have other things to handle. We are no longer a priority."

Levy said organizers probably lost about \$200 million in income during the run-up to the games as sponsors backed out of expensive deals as the recession kicked in. Levy said he has not asked the IOC to help pay debts, but acknowledged the Olympic body came up with millions in advance money several times during the run-up to the games. "The whole thing was too painful," Levy told The Associated Press. "We never really enjoyed the games, themselves; 2016 was just extremely hard. It's like we were climbing Everest, and ice is falling on your lips, and you are not seeing."

WHITE ELEPHANTS

The Olympic Park is a ghost town; sleek sports arenas without events, deserted before they were even broken in, and well-tended flower gardens, free from pedestrian wear-and-tear. "The arenas are beautiful," Wagner Tolvai said, walking inside the park with his girlfriend Patricia Silva. "But it's all abandoned, everything has stopped. Nobody is here."

He likened the 2.5 billion real (\$800 million) park to a new shopping mall "without stores, or customers." The park is only open on weekends, and there's not much to do but walk, pedal a bike, or look for shade. Four permanent arenas are being run by the federal government. Among them is the Olympic tennis center, which was used earlier this month for a one-day beach volleyball tournament. This in a city with endless sand and beaches.

Two temporary venues for swimming and handball have yet to be dismantled. The exterior of the swimming venue is falling apart and many translucent tapestries that covered the outside of the building are frayed or falling to the ground. The warm-up pool, which was covered during the games, is filled with muddy, stagnant water. Away from the park, the famous Maracana stadium has drawn the most attention. It was renovated for the 2014 World Cup at a cost of about \$500 million. It was largely abandoned after the Olympics and Paralympics, and then hit by vandals who ripped out thousands of seats and stole televisions.

"The Maracana is the biggest symbol of the way the games were managed," said Mauricio Santoro, a political scientist at Rio de Janeiro State University. "The vast majority of people in Rio will never go to the golf course, or the Olympic venues. But the Maracana is different. It's the jewel of the crown." Up the road from the Olympic Park, the \$1 billion Athletes Village - it housed about 10,000 athletes - is fenced off and empty. The developer says it has sold only 260 of the 3,604 apartments - about 7 percent. Rio's Globo newspaper reported that new Rio Mayor Marcelo Crivella is arranging low-cost loans for public employees to buy the units.

SUBWAY AND BUSES

Transportation projects driven by the Olympics look better than the sports venues. The games led to a subway line extension, though at the reportedly inflated price of \$3 billion. They also produced a high-speed bus network, a light-rail line, and a pedestrian-friendly, renovated port area. Rio's international airport also got a makeover. People



RIO DE JANEIRO: In this Feb 2, 2017 photo, photos of Olympic volunteers hang at Maracana stadium. —AP

using the new subway line have benefited, though city traffic is still badly snarled. But many of the improvements benefit mostly the wealthy south and west of the city. "The gains were unevenly spread across the city," Stuenkel, the political scientist said.

TOKYO 2020 ADVICE

Levy, the CEO, said Tokyo's 2020 Olympics will face completely different challenges. "They have a society that works pretty well

already," he said. "They don't have to prove anything to anybody." Tokyo will face higher costs than Rio, and organizers are already looking for places to cut. Levy suggested reining in sports federations, which all want five-star treatment. He used an example from the equestrian events. "They wanted 15 horse ambulances," Levy said. "We offered nine. In the end, the right number was four. The magic of the games doesn't come from these things." —AP

HAWAII NO-GO AS CZECHS START FED CUP DEFENSE

PARIS: The Czech Republic begin their bid for a fourth successive Fed Cup title this weekend but in eight World Group ties, only two of the world's top 10 players will take part. Both of those will feature in Ostrava with world number three Karolina Pliskova leading Czech hopes of a sixth Fed Cup in seven years and 11th overall against a Spanish squad led by Garbine Muguruza, the seventh-ranked French Open champion. But in Hawaii, the 17-time champions United States will be missing world number one Serena Williams as well as the injured Madison Keys, the ninth-ranked player, against Germany who are without Angelique Kerber, the second highest-ranked player in the world. In World Group II, top 10 players Simona Halep, Dominika Cibulkova and Svetlana Kuznetsova are missing for Romania, Slovakia and Russia respectively.

The Czechs have not lost a Fed Cup tie in almost four years while Spain, five-time winners, haven't made the semi-finals since 2008. Their chances have not been helped by a stomach injury to national number two Carla Suarez Navarro which means that world 70 Laura Arruabarrena will likely feature as the second singles player.

In stark contrast, the Czechs can boast a four-woman team who are all ranked in the top 50 and the squad does not even include two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova who is recovering after being

confronted by a knife-wielding intruder at her home in December. The United States begin their bid for a first semi-final since 2010 in Maui with a new captain in place, Kathy Rinaldi replacing Mary Joe Fernandez.

TEAM EVENT

Without the Williams sisters as well as the convalescing Keys, the United States will be led by world number 20 Coco Vandeweghe, fresh from making the Australian Open semi-finals. Germany's top singles hope will be Laura Siegemund, the world 38 who has yet to play a Fed Cup tie, after Kerber opted not to travel to Hawaii ahead of her return to the tour in Qatar next week.

"Obviously we have a tough opponent in Germany but it's different in the Fed Cup because it's a team event," said doubles world number one and Australian Open champion Bethanie Mattek-Sands of the US. In Geneva, France, runners-up in 2016, tackle Switzerland in a tie which will provide Belinda Bencic with mixed emotions. When these two nations last played in 2014, Bencic was just 16 and defeated Alize Cornet and Virginie Razzano before France saved themselves with victory in the deciding doubles rubber. Three years on, the injury-plagued Bencic has slumped to 81 in the world. — AFP

WIESBERGER GRABS LEAD AFTER NINE BIRDIE BLITZ

KUALA LUMPUR: Bernd Wiesberger reeled off nine birdies in a row in a superb second round of 63 to grab a one-shot lead over Masters champion Danny Willett at the Maybank Championship in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. The 31-year-old lit up the Saujana Golf and Country Club with the birdie blitz from the seventh to 15th holes to go 12-under after 36 to boost his prospects of a fourth European Tour title.

Wiesberger is the first player in European Tour history to card nine straight birdies in a round but

with preferred lies in place, when players are allowed to improve the ball's lie without penalty on certain parts of the course, the Austrian will not make the record books. "I hit really good shots and I just felt calm out there," he said after returning a card that included 11 birdies and two bogeys. "It felt kind of natural, I hit pretty good shots and really only holed two long ones which were the last birdie of the nine on 15 and about a 20-footer on 11. "Apart from that I just hit them pretty close and felt like I had a good idea of what the ball was going to

do on the green today again which was nice," added the Austrian, who began the day six shots off lead.

Englishman Willett hit six birdies and a bogey in his 67 to sit at 11-under, two shots clear of Frenchman Mike Lorenzo-Vera and American David Lipsky. Lorenzo-Vera sank six birdies and an eagle in his 65, while Lipsky was bogey-free in his 67. Marc Warren of Scotland surrendered his overnight lead with a three-over-par round of 75, following three bogeys and a triple bogey on his last six holes. —Reuters



LONDON: In this Aug 11, 2012 file photo Russia's Mariya Savinova, right, reacts as she crosses the finish line ahead of South Africa's Caster Semenya to win the women's 800-meter final during the athletics in the Olympic Stadium at the 2012 Summer Olympics. —AP

RUSSIAN OLYMPIC CHAMPION SAVINOVA STRIPPED OF GOLD

LAUSANNE: Russian runner Maria Savinova was stripped of her 2012 Olympic gold medal for doping yesterday, putting Caster Semenya in line to become a two-time champion. Savinova, who won the 800-meter title at the London Games ahead of Semenya, was also banned for four years by the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

CAS said the 31-year-old Savinova was "found to have been engaged in using doping" from July 2010 until August 2013. In 2014, Savinova was caught in undercover footage filmed by Russian doping whistleblower Yulia Stepanova appearing to admit to injecting testosterone and taking the banned steroid oxandrolone. The footage helped spark a World Anti-Doping Agency investigation into Russia, and led to Savinova's blood samples being re-examined.

Widespread drug use

Savinova has not raced competitively since 2013. She had been preparing for a comeback when she was filmed by Stepanova and then suspended during the investigation. Following further evidence of widespread drug use, the Russian track team was suspended from all international competitions in November 2015 and missed last year's Olympics.

If the International Olympic Committee decides to reallocate the medals from the 2012 final, Semenya will add that gold medal to the one she won last year in Rio de Janeiro. The original bronze medalist in the 2012 Olympic final, Ekaterina Poistogova of Russia, is also under investigation for doping. If she is banned, Pamela Jelimo of Kenya would be in

line for silver, with bronze for Alysia Montano of the United States. Another Russian who originally finished sixth, Elena Arzhakova, was retrospectively disqualified in 2013 over blood doping.

Semenya could also become a two-time world champion by inheriting Savinova's gold medal from 2011. Yvonne Hak of the Netherlands is in line for the 2010 European title. The WADA commission which investigated Russian track and field had originally recommended a lifetime ban for Savinova. She can appeal the CAS ruling. In the footage filmed by Stepanova, Savinova said doping was the only way to succeed in Russian sport.

"What should we do? How should it go differently? That is our system and in Russia that only works only with pharma," she said, according to a transcript produced by WADA. "Oxandrolone is very quickly out of my body out again. It takes less than 20 days." Savinova also said that her husband, former runner Alexei Farnosov, had used "contacts" at a drug-testing laboratory to help cover up her doping. The Moscow drug-testing laboratory was later shut down and its director testified he had covered up hundreds of failed tests by top Russian athletes.

Two top coaches who worked with Savinova, Alexei Melnikov and Vladimir Kazarin, have also faced punishment. Melnikov was banned for life by the IAAF last year, while Kazarin is suspended awaiting the results of an investigation, though he's been accused of breaking that suspension by continuing to coach Russian runners. —AP

HOLDENER LEADS SWISS 1-2 IN COMBINED AT WORLDS

ST MORITZ: Wendy Holdener led a Swiss 1-2 in the combined event at the ski world championships yesterday, winning the race a short time after teammate Lara Gut was taken to hospital following a crash in warmups. Lindsey Vonn was fifth after a gutsy slalom run left her 0.47 seconds from a medal. The American had been only sixth fastest in the opening downhill.

Holdener, a slalom specialist, was 0.05 ahead of teammate Michelle Gisin, who took silver. Michaela Kirshgasser of Austria trailed Holdener by 0.38, and repeated her combined bronze from the 2015 worlds. One hour before the slalom leg, Swiss star Gut crashed in practice and seemed to injure her left knee. She was taken to a hospital in St Moritz. Gut, who won bronze in the super-G on Tuesday, had been third after the morning downhill. She is a doubtful starter for the marquee downhill on Sunday, which is Vonn's main target.

The slalom run in falling snow flipped the standings from the downhill that began in sunshine three hours earlier. First-run leader Sofia Goggia of Italy and second-placed Ilka Stuhec of Slovenia failed to complete the slalom. Stuhec quickly went out just a few gates from the start. Slalom racers seemed to be favored by a decision to shorten the downhill course due to forecasted poor weather on higher sections of the slope.

Holdener, who is third in the season-long World Cup slalom standings behind American Mikaela Shiffrin, was just 0.94 off the lead in downhill. That Vonn was only 0.09 faster in her specialist downhill than Holdener was a surprise, and the American's apparently tentative morning run came back to cost her. Vonn gestured to the finish-area crowd after both runs by holding out her arms as if she could do little more.

Vonn has never won a major championship medal in combined in six starts at the worlds and three Olympics. However, she completed the event on Friday for the first time since the 2005 worlds. Gisin was watched by her older sister Dominique, who took gold in the 2014 Olympic downhill in a tie with Tina Maze of Slovenia. —AP



ST MORITZ: Wendy Holdener of Switzerland reacts in the finish area during the women's combined slalom race at the 2017 Alpine Skiing World Championships. —AP



WASHINGTON: Fatima Al Ali, of the United Arab Emirates, center, takes part in a ceremonial puck drop before an NHL hockey game with Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin (8), of Russia, and Detroit Red Wings left wing Henrik Zetterberg (40), of Sweden. — AP

CAPITALS SPREE CONTINUES IN 11TH STRAIGHT WIN

WASHINGTON: TJ Oshie scored twice and set up John Carlson's go-ahead goal in the third period as the NHL-leading Washington Capitals beat the Detroit Red Wings 6-3 on Thursday night for their 11th consecutive home victory. Detroit's Henrik Zetterberg made it 3-all less than 1 1/2 minutes into the final period. But Oshie stole the puck deep in the offensive end, skated out front and slid it over to Carlson, whose slap shot sailed past goalie Petr Mrazek at the 4:15 mark.

Marcus Johansson, Brett Connolly and Nicklas Backstrom also scored for the Capitals. They have at least five goals in each of their past 10 home games. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, they are only the second NHL team to do that, joining the 1970-71 Boston Bruins, who did it in 11 straight home games. Andreas Athanasiou had two goals in the first period for the Red Wings.

BRUINS 6, SHARKS 3

David Pastrnak scored two power-play goals while Patrice Bergeron had a goal and three assists as Boston beat San Jose in Bruce Cassidy's coaching debut. Cassidy was named Boston's interim coach after Claude Julien was fired Tuesday. Cassidy joined the Bruins as an assistant last May after spending five seasons coaching Providence in the AHL. David Backes added a goal and an assist, and Tim Schaller and Brad Marchand also scored to help Boston end a two-game skid. Tuukka Rask made 23 saves. Joe Thornton, Justin Braun and Timo Meier scored for San Jose. Martin Jones allowed three first-period goals before backup Aaron Dell relieved him to start the second.

PENGUINS 4, AVALANCHE 1

Patric Hornqvist scored twice while Sidney Crosby was held in check and Matthew Murray made 27 saves to help Pittsburgh beat Colorado. Crosby remained stuck on 998 career points in his bid to become the 86th player in NHL history to reach 1,000. Phil Kessel and Chris Kunitz also scored for Pittsburgh. Gabriel Landeskog finally solved Murray on a power play with 3:16 remaining.

BLUES 2, MAPLE LEAFS 1, OT

Vladimir Tarasenko scored 20 seconds into overtime and St. Louis kept rolling under new coach Mike Yeo, beating Toronto. Tarasenko snapped his 26th goal of the season past Frederik Andersen to lift St. Louis to 4-1-0 since Yeo replaced Ken Hitchcock as coach last week. Patrik Berglund also scored, and

Jake Allen stopped 31 shots. Morgan Rielly scored for Toronto, and Andersen made 38 saves.

CANADIENS 5, COYOTES 4, OT

Alex Galchenyuk scored 2:13 into overtime to lift Montreal past Arizona. Max Pacioretty had two goals and two assists, one on the winning play. Montreal had lost four straight and was shut out in its two previous games. Christian Dvorak scored twice for Arizona, his second tying it at 4-4 with 4:52 to play in regulation. Andrei Markov had a goal and an assist for Montreal. Max Domi had a goal and assist for Arizona.

RANGERS 4, PREDATORS 3

JT Miller scored two goals and New York rallied to beat Nashville for its fourth consecutive victory. Henrik Lundqvist stopped 34 shots in the win. Coming off a 43-save performance Tuesday against Anaheim, the star goaltender is 7-1 in his past eight appearances and needs one win for 400 in his career. Michael Grabner and Chris Kreider also scored for the Rangers, and Kevin Hayes added three assists. Cody McLeod opened the scoring, and Calle Jarnkrok and Roman Josi each had a power-play goal for the Predators.

ISLANDERS 3, FLYERS 1

Jason Chimera scored the go-ahead goal early in the second period, and Thomas Greiss made 34 saves to lead New York past Philadelphia. Anders Lee and Casey Cizikas also scored for the Islanders. They have won nine of their last 13 games to move closer to a playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. Wayne Simmonds scored for Philadelphia. The Flyers have lost three straight.

DUCKS 5, SABRES 2

Corey Perry scored twice and added an assist to help Anaheim beat Buffalo and snap a three-game skid. Rickard Rakell scored to break a 1-1 tie 55 seconds into the third period, Antoine Vermette and Andrew Coglian, with an empty-netter, also scored for the Ducks. Jack Eichel and Rasmus Ristolainen scored for Buffalo.

CANUCKS 3, BLUE JACKETS 0

Daniel Sedin had a goal and an assist and Ryan Miller stopped 33 shots in Vancouver's victory over Columbus. Loui Eriksson and Jayson Megna also scored. Sergei Bobrovsky had 21 saves for the Blue Jackets.

KINGS 6, PANTHERS 3

Jeff Carter had two goals and two assists as Los Angeles beat Florida. Dwight King, Tanner Pearson, Tyler Toffoli and Dustin Brown also scored for the Kings, and Peter Budaj made 36 saves. Carter's four points were a season high. Jussi Jokinen, Jonathan Marchessault and Aleksander Barkov scored for Florida. —AP

NHL results/standings

Montreal 5, Arizona 4 (OT); Pittsburgh 4, Colorado 1; St. Louis 2, Toronto 1 (OT); Ottawa 3, Dallas 2; Los Angeles 6, Florida 3; NY Islanders 3, Philadelphia 1; Washington 6, Detroit 3; Anaheim 5, Buffalo 2; Vancouver 3, Columbus 0; Boston 6, San Jose 3; NY Rangers 4, Nashville 3.

Western Conference						
Central Division						
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS
Minnesota	35	12	6	179	125	76
Chicago	33	17	5	156	144	71
St. Louis	28	22	5	157	163	61
Nashville	26	20	8	149	141	60
Winnipeg	25	27	4	163	176	54
Dallas	21	24	10	150	175	52
Colorado	15	34	2	104	172	32
Pacific Division						
San Jose	33	18	4	151	132	70
Anaheim	29	17	10	147	141	68
Edmonton	29	18	8	156	141	66
Los Angeles	28	23	4	138	136	60
Calgary	28	25	3	149	159	59
Vancouver	24	24	6	128	154	54
Arizona	17	28	7	120	166	41
Eastern Conference						
Atlantic Division						
Montreal	31	17	8	163	142	70
Ottawa	28	18	6	140	143	62
Toronto	25	17	11	164	158	61
Boston	27	23	6	149	152	60
Florida	23	20	10	127	149	56
Tampa Bay	24	24	6	149	157	54
Buffalo	22	22	10	133	154	54
Detroit	22	22	10	137	161	54
Metropolitan Division						
Washington	38	11	6	186	117	82
Pittsburgh	34	13	6	190	151	74
Columbus	34	14	5	173	132	73
NY Rangers	35	18	1	185	143	71
Philadelphia	26	22	7	145	167	59
NY Islanders	24	18	10	156	154	58
New Jersey	23	21	10	127	153	56
Carolina	24	21	7	138	151	55

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

WESTBROOK'S THUNDER TOPPLE CAVS

LOS ANGELES: The relentless Russell Westbrook produced his 26th triple-double of the season Thursday to lead the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 118-109 triumph over the NBA champion Cleveland Cavaliers. Westbrook poured in 29 points with 11 assists and 12 rebounds. Victor Oladipo added 23 points and seven rebounds and center Steven Adams of New Zealand added 21 points and 13 rebounds for Oklahoma City, who improved to 31-23.

Kyrie Irving led the Cavs with 28 points. LeBron James chipped in 18 to go with seven assists but was held scoreless in the fourth quarter. Irving's layup tied it at 99-99 with less than six minutes remaining, but two Westbrook baskets put Oklahoma City up 103-99 with 4:59 to play.

Irving answered with a driving layup, but after a Westbrook jump shot, Thunder reserve Jerami Grant blocked a shot at the other end. Westbrook sank another jumper to stretch Oklahoma City's lead to 107-101 with 3:42 remaining. James missed a fadeaway jumper before Westbrook fed Adams for an easy basket. After another block, Westbrook had the ball again, dishing to Oladipo for a layup that gave Westbrook his 10th assist and clinched his triple-double.

Westbrook matched the third-highest total for triple-doubles in a season. Oscar Robertson collected 26 in 1960-61 and 1963-64. Only Robertson, with 41 in 1961-62, and Wilt Chamberlain, with 31 in 1967-68, have posted more in a campaign. The Cavs suffered just their second defeat in their last eight games.

After coach Tyrone Lue said James, Irving and Kevin Love might all sit out to rest, all three stars played, with Lue saying all told him they were feeling "pretty good." After knocking off the reigning champions and Eastern Conference leaders, the Thunder next host the Western Conference leaders Golden State. That game on Saturday will be Kevin Durant's first return to Oklahoma City since he forsook the Thunder for the Warriors as a free agent.



OKLAHOMA CITY: Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook (0) goes up for an unopposed dunk during the third quarter of the team's NBA basketball game against the Cleveland Cavaliers. — AP

ROCKETS 107, HORNETS 95

James Harden had 30 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists as Houston beat Charlotte for its third straight win. It was the 25th time Harden has scored at least 30 points. Harden was just 8 of 21 from the field and had nine turnovers, but turned up his play a notch down the stretch as the Rockets overcame a nine-point, third-quarter deficit. The Rockets forced the Hornets into a season-high 22 turnovers, leading to 27 points. Patrick Beverley had 17 points and Montrezl Harrell added 15 off the bench for the Rockets (39-17). Nic Batum had 15 points and 10 assists for the Hornets, who have lost eight of their last nine.

MAVERICKS 112, JAZZ 105, OT

Harrison Barnes scored 31 points, including eight in overtime to help Dallas rally from a 21-point deficit to beat Utah. Barnes' three-point play ended an 11-0 run that began late in regulation and put Dallas ahead 107-100. Devin Harris scored the first four points of OT. Utah's Gordon Hayward scored a season-high 36 points, but missed a 3-point attempt from the left corner as regulation ended. The Mavericks scored the final four points of regulation, on a dunk by Barnes and a rebound basket from the edge of the foul line by Dirk Nowitzki with 3 seconds remaining. Nowitzki finished with 20 points. Utah's Rudy Gobert scored 15 points and added 15 rebounds before fouling out with 22 seconds left in the fourth quarter.

CELTICS 120, TRAIL BLAZERS 111

Isaiah Thomas scored 34 points, including 15 in the fourth quarter, as Boston rebounded from a loss the previous night to beat Portland. Marcus Smart added 18 for the Celtics, who had seven scorers in double figures. Thomas, who went into the game as the NBA's No. 2 scorer behind Russell Westbrook, has scored 20 or more points in 37 straight games. He surpassed the 10.6 points he was averaging in fourth quarters to lead the league. Damian Lillard had 28 points and seven assists for the Blazers, while Al-Farouq Aminu added 26 points.

76ERS 112, MAGIC 111

TJ McConnell made the go-ahead jumper with 5.8 sec-

onds remaining, Dario Saric came off the bench to score 24 points and Philadelphia beat Orlando. McConnell's basket in the lane came after Ersan Ilyasova won the jump ball against Evan Fournier in the waning moments of a game that featured 10 lead changes and five ties before the Sixers completed their final rally. Moments earlier, Magic center Nikola Vucevic had blocked Ilyasova's shot in the

corner with 13 seconds remaining and Orlando holding a one-point lead. Ilyasova was the only starter in double figures with 16 points for Philadelphia, which snapped a five-game losing streak. Fournier led Orlando with 24 points but accounted for six of the team's 21 turnovers. Vucevic added 21 points and 11 rebounds in the Magic's third straight loss. — AP

NBA results/standings

Boston 120, Portland 111; Dallas 112, Utah 105 (OT); Oklahoma City 118, Cleveland 109; Houston 107, Charlotte 95; Philadelphia 112, Orlando 111.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Boston	34	19	.642	-	Utah	34	20	.630	-
Toronto	32	22	.593	2.5	Oklahoma City	31	23	.574	3
NY Knicks	22	32	.407	12.5	Denver	23	29	.442	10
Philadelphia	19	34	.358	15	Portland	23	31	.426	11
Brooklyn	9	44	.170	25	Minnesota	20	33	.377	13.5
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	36	16	.692	-	Golden State	44	8	.846	-
Indiana	29	23	.558	7	LA Clippers	32	21	.604	12.5
Chicago	26	27	.491	10.5	Sacramento	21	32	.396	23.5
Detroit	25	28	.472	11.5	LA Lakers	18	37	.327	27.5
Milwaukee	22	29	.431	13.5	Phoenix	16	37	.302	28.5
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Washington	31	21	.596	-	San Antonio	40	12	.769	-
Atlanta	31	22	.585	0.5	Houston	39	17	.696	3
Charlotte	24	29	.453	7.5	Memphis	33	22	.600	8.5
Miami	23	30	.434	8.5	Dallas	21	32	.396	19.5
Orlando	20	35	.364	12.5	New Orleans	20	33	.377	20.5

PSG CAN COMPETE ON BARCA'S LEVEL: DI MARIA

MADRID: Paris Saint-Germain should have no fear of another Champions League clash with Barcelona despite a poor record against the Spanish champions ahead of their last 16 meeting on Tuesday, insists PSG winger Angel di Maria. Barca have held the upper hand in six previous meetings over the past five seasons, losing just once and progressing to the semi-finals from their two quarter-final clashes in 2013 and 2015.

However, ahead of Barca's latest trip to the French capital, Di Maria, who experienced plenty of El Clasico highs and lows against the Catalans in four seasons with Real Madrid, believes PSG now have the quality to compete with the Spanish giants for a first ever European crown. "PSG have players of enormous quality. People like Marco Verratti, who is wanted by Real Madrid and Barcelona, give the team something extra," Di Maria told Madrid sports daily Marca on Friday. "When he isn't there, the team feels (his absence). I think that PSG can easily compete with Madrid or Barcelona."

However, to make the last eight, PSG face the daunting task of restricting Barca's fearsome 'MSN' front three of Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and Neymar. Suarez and Neymar did the damage in the last tie between the sides, scoring all five of Barca's goals in a 5-1 aggregate rout, but it is his Argentine international teammate Di Maria fears most. "Barca have great players. The MSN is the best attack right now," he added. "Leo is different from the rest. I think to stop him it requires the whole team because when he doesn't do something magical he leaves a teammate free." — AFP

AL ATTIYAH LEAVES TUNISIA TO GENEVE

TUNIS: Mr Nasser Al Attiyah - FIA Vice president left this afternoon to Geneva to attend FIA meeting, where he will discuss many files related to the promotion of motorsport internationally, besides holding many meetings with the heads of committees and heads of FIA clubs and federations all over the world.

Al Attiyah stated before leaving Tunisia that, Unisia motorsport needs more study as motorsport in Tunisia faces some technical affairs that actually needs more efforts and more hard work, in order to reach fair solutions, confirming meanwhile that the benefit of the motorsport is our target in FIA, he also said that all facilities are available in the best form in Tunisia. But it needs hard work to achieve the maximum benefit, as Tunisia is considered one of the pioneer countries in the field of motorsport in MENA. He continued to say "me personally as FIA Vice president and the first official in MENA work hard in order to reach the best conciliation between all parties, I am quite optimistic to reach it".

Regarding the coming meeting of FIA, Al Attiyah said that there is a self explanatory agenda for the meeting, the most prominent files will be discussed during the meeting, also a follow up program will be designed to follow the activities of the committees of the federation, on the other side.



LEICESTER: Leicester manager Claudio Ranieri speaks to players midway through extra time during the English FA Cup Fourth Round replay soccer match between Leicester City and Derby County at the King Power Stadium. — AP

FIGHT TO AVOID EPL RELEGATION IS AS INTENSE AS RACE AT TOP

LONDON: The fight to avoid relegation from the English Premier League is as intense as the race at the top. With 14 matches and four months of the season to play, the bottom six sides are separated by just two points: Sunderland (19 points), Crystal Palace (19), Hull (20), Swansea (21), Leicester (21) and Middlesbrough (21).

Bournemouth, on 26 points in 14th place but without a league win this year, could yet be dragged into the scrap. Reaching the 40-point mark is regarded as the target to ensure safety, although West Ham was relegated on 42 points in 2003. No team has ever got to 43 points and gone down. Sunderland finished one place above the relegation places in 2016 and 2013, on both occasions staying up with 39 points. In 2014, 36 points was enough for West Brom to stay up. Here is a brief look at the bottom six teams:

MIDDLESBROUGH (15th place, 21 points)

Boro, without a league win since mid-December, do not concede many goals but do not score many either having notched a league-lowest 19 so far. Manager Aitor Karanka signed strikers Rudy Gestede and Patrick Bamford last month in a bid to add potency to an attack led by Alvaro Negredo, who is top-scorer on just six. Boro, which plays Everton at home on Saturday, has been warm-weather training in Spain this week to help foster team unity.

LEICESTER (16th, 21 points)

The storm clouds were circling the champions until manager Claudio Ranieri received a vote of confidence this week, the club offering "unwavering support" to the Italian. The Foxes have won just five league games amid reports of increasing dressing room unrest and a rift between manager and players. A much-needed victory in its FA Cup fourth-round replay on Wednesday against second-tier Derby has at least given some cause for optimism. "The win in the Cup will give us more confidence and we have to keep going," Ranieri said. Leicester plays at fellow struggler Swansea tomorrow.

SWANSEA (17th, 21 points)

Paul Clement has been named the manager of the month for January after wins over Crystal Palace, Liverpool, and Southampton. Clement was appointed only in early January but seems to have galvanized the Welsh side which gave Manchester City a tough match in its last game, only to lose in injury time. On facing Leicester, Clement said: "We go into this game with a lot of confidence and a belief that we are going in the right direction. There will not be a team in that region of the table who don't think they can do it."

HULL (18th, 20 points)

Much improved since Marco Silva was appointed manager last month, Hull plays all the sides in the bottom six between now and the end of the season. A draw at Manchester United was followed by a home win over Liverpool, but the tough run of fixtures continues on Saturday with a trip to Arsenal. "We need to continue to do our work to progress our performances," Silva said. "The same spirit, the same attitude, and the same team performance

need to be shown."

CRYSTAL PALACE (19th, 19 points)

Palace has lost seven of its last 10 matches, and was jeered off in its last game after capitulating at home to relegation rival Sunderland 4-0. "I keep preaching the same thing: If you can't win, don't lose. But we keep losing! We need to get a result, got to pick points up," said manager Sam Allardyce ahead of Saturday's match at Stoke. "I haven't been relegated from the Premier League in my entire career, so it's the last thing I want. This team has a great chance of survival."

SUNDERLAND (20th, 19 points)

The impressive win at Crystal Palace brought some respite for manager David Moyes, who hopes for more of the same from on-loan Manchester United winger Adnan Januzaj. He created both of Jermain Defoe's goals last weekend and is relishing their partnership. "In the last few games, we've linked really well," he said. "We're enjoying playing together and hopefully he can score many more goals." —AP

FA WANTS DORTMUND SOUTH STAND BAN, FINE

BERLIN: The German football association (DFB) yesterday demanded a one-match ban for Borussia Dortmund fans from their south stand and a 100,000 euro fine after crowd trouble in several games including last week's win over RB Leipzig. The DFB's control committee said it had proposed the stand closure and fine given that Dortmund were repeat offenders and had received a suspended sentence last July for similar problems.

Fans last week unfurled banners attacking Leipzig, owned by energy drink makers Red Bull, as well as their sports director Ralf Rangnick and Red Bull owner Dieter Mateschitz. "Slaughter the bulls," read one, "Beer instead of soda" read another in refer-

ence to Leipzig's owner. Dortmund fans lit flares during the game, while outside the 80,000-seat stadium some fans attacked arriving Leipzig supporters. They had also caused trouble in three other matches this season, the DFB said.

Dortmund won the Leipzig game, but club bosses repeatedly apologised to Leipzig for their fans' behavior. "Such a defamation of individuals or clubs by using banners and chants is unacceptable and needs to be sanctioned," said Anton Nachreiner, head of the DFB committee. "The same goes for the flares," he said. The south stand, nicknamed the "Yellow Wall", is the largest standing stand in Europe with a 25,000 capacity.—Reuters



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal v Hull City	15:30
beIN SPORTS	
Manchester United v Watford	18:00
beIN SPORTS	
Middlesbrough v Everton	18:00
beIN SPORTS	
Sunderland v Southampton	18:00
beIN SPORTS	
West Ham United v Albion	18:00
beIN SPORTS	
Stoke City v Crystal Palace	18:00
beIN SPORTS	
Liverpool v Tottenham Hotspur	20:30
beIN SPORTS	

SPANISH LEAGUE PRIMERA

Real Betis v Valencia	15:00
beIN SPORTS	
Alaves v Barcelona	18:15
beIN SPORTS	
Bilbao v Coruna	20:30
beIN SPORTS	
Osasuna v Real Madrid	22:45
beIN SPORTS	

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

Fiorentina v Udinese Calcio	22:45
beIN SPORTS	

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Werder Bremen v Monchengladbach	17:30
beIN SPORTS	
Leverkusen v Eintracht Frankfurt	17:30
beIN SPORTS	
Ingolstadt v Bayern Munich	17:30
beIN SPORTS	
Darmstadt v Dortmund	17:30
beIN SPORTS	
Leipzig v Hamburger	17:30
beIN SPORTS	
Schalke v Hertha Berlin	20:30
beIN SPORTS	

FRENCH LEAGUE

Guingamp v Lyonnais	19:00
beIN SPORTS	
Monaco v Metz	22:00
beIN SPORTS	
Toulouse v Bastia	22:00
beIN SPORTS	
Nancy Lorraine v Montpellier	22:00
beIN SPORTS	
Lille v Angers	22:00
beIN SPORTS	
Dijon v Caen	22:00
beIN SPORTS	



CROTONE: Crotona's Andrea Barberis, right, and Juventus' Gonzalo Higuain vie for the ball during a Serie A soccer match, at the Ezio Scida stadium. — AP

JUVE MARCH ON AS ALLEGRI ENGLAND RUMORS SWIRL

MILAN: The prospect of Massimiliano Allegri following Chelsea manager Antonio Conte to the Premier League appear on the increase as Juventus travel to Cagliari tomorrow looking to tighten their grip on Serie A. Conte led the Turin giants to three consecutive league titles before Allegri took over the helm when former Juventus midfielder Conte took the helm of Italy for Euro 2016.

Juventus hold a seven-point lead on title rivals Roma with Napoli in third at nine points adrift and Allegri is well on his way to securing a record-setting sixth consecutive scudetto. But already, rumors are swirling. Allegri confirmed weeks ago he is learning English and when asked specifically about reported interest from Premier League clubs he said earlier this week: "I'm not confirming and I'm not denying."

Reports suggesting Allegri could be the long-term replacement for Arsene Wenger at Arsenal might be premature, but they appeared the same day Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri denied having met Juventus officials. Sarri, who steered Napoli to second spot in his first season in charge last term when former club striker Gonzalo Higuain hit a new league

record of 36 goals, has a new contract until 2020 waiting to be signed. But he said: "I don't have time to think about the (new) contract. All I can tell you is I've called my lawyer to find out whether to sue the person who wrote that I met with (officials from) Juventus. "This is completely false."

UNSTOPPABLE

With or without the rumors, Juventus look unstoppable in Italy. Allegri's men swept aside a battling Inter Milan to win 1-0 last week and moved further ahead with a 2-0 win at Crotona, postponed due to the Italian Super Cup final, in midweek. Inter are still smarting and host Empoli hoping to get back to winning ways without the triple attacking threat of Mauro Icardi, Ivan Perisic and Marcelo Brozovic.

Croatia midfielder Perisic was shown a straight red card for insulting the referee and was banned for two games. Icardi was handed the same sanction for launching a foul-mouthed tirade at the referee, as well as kicking the ball at him, without hitting him. Inter have appealed the sanctions and are expected to have an answer before tomorrow's afternoon

kick-off, when coach Stefano Pioli will also be without Brozovic after he suffered a broken toe in Turin.

City rivals AC Milan travel to Lazio on Monday buoyed by a precious 1-0 midweek win at Bologna, with nine men, which ended a run of three defeats. "We're very happy but we have to ask ourselves why we went down to nine men," said midfielder Andrea Poli. Milan were without Gabriel Paletta from the 37th minute and also lost Juraj Kucka to a second yellow card on the hour. "There's a good atmosphere, I can't remember a game with so much adrenaline as that," added Poli. "On Monday we have to go to Rome and win."

Lazio, however, are one of a few teams capable of troubling Roma and Napoli for one of the league's three Champions League places. They sit fourth, 14 points behind leaders Juventus and five behind third-placed Napoli. Striker Ciro Immobile has been criticised for a lack of goals against "big" sides, but said: "I'm under a little bit of pressure to score against a big side... it's a very important game against Milan, they beat Bologna with nine men." — AFP

BAYERN TO GET 'GRUBBY' AT PATRIOTS-INSPIRED INGOLSTADT

BERLIN: Strugglers Ingolstadt will take inspiration from the New England Patriots' stunning Super Bowl fightback when they host Bayern Munich today with the Bundesliga leaders expecting a 'grubby' Bavarian derby. Bayern host Arsenal at the Allianz Arena next Wednesday, but before the Champions League last 16 clash, Munich must take care of Bundesliga business and travel 80 kilometres (50mi) north to their neighbours.

Bayern can expect tough times at Ingolstadt's tiny Audi Sportpark, which holds

15,000, against the hard-working hosts—just like at bottom side Darmstadt in last December's scrappy 1-0 win after Xabi Alonso's goal. "We've already seen what it was like at Darmstadt. It will be a grubby game on Saturday," said Bayern's Germany star Thomas Mueller with Ingolstadt second from bottom.

Arjen Robben says this is the "week of truth" for Bayern's European aspirations and Ingolstadt hope Bayern are distracted by the Arsenal clash. "On paper, it's obvious how this game will go," said Ingolstadt's coach Maik walpurgis.

"Anything else would be a surprise, but that is exactly our goal." Bayern have won all three previous league meetings between the clubs and poached a 2-1 win on their previous visit in May 2016. But the hosts hope for an upset-inspired by last Sunday's Super Bowl winners. The New England Patriots fought back from 21-0 down to beat Atlanta in a fairytale display and Ingolstadt's assistant coach Michael Henke took heart. "You can take a lot of motivation from it. The Super Bowl has shown that you have to overcome set-backs and now, like New England,

we have to manage a 'lucky punch'," said Henke.

Bayern will be near full strength, but are reeling from the news club captain Philipp Lahm will be retiring at the end of the season, following Tuesday's announcement, and has refused the vacant sports director role. Bayern's Poland striker Robert Lewandowski, who has scored eight goals in his last seven league games in a tally of 15 for the season. Ingolstadt hope to have Australia striker Mathew Leckie back from injury, but Israel midfielder Almog Cohen is struggling with a knee knock.—AFP

DE GEA CHALLENGES UNITED TO AIM HIGH

MANCHESTER: David de Gea has challenged Manchester United to get as close as possible to runaway leaders Chelsea as Jose Mourinho's side battle to finish in the top four. It is one of the Premier League's stranger statistics that United have not moved from sixth position for three months, despite being unbeaten for 15 matches in the competition.

Yet having beaten Leicester 3-0 last Sunday, Mourinho's men could finally climb a place or two should they beat Watford today, as long as Liverpool and Arsenal slip up. United looked to be back to something near their best at the King Power Stadium, after seeing their progress stalled by a run of three successive league draws. With a glut of cup matches coming up, this weekend's game will be their last league fixture for three weeks, so a win is needed to ensure that the top four do not get the chance to pull too far away.

Spain international De Gea knows United are unlikely to win the title, but having the goal of reeling in Chelsea could bring the added benefit of boosting their bid to qualify for the Champions League. "I think we're in good form. We're on a 15-match unbeaten run in the league," De Gea said. "The team are doing well. We must continue down this route to get into the top four as soon as possible.

"Chelsea? The truth is that they're doing really well. I think they're nine points ahead of second place and they have the title in their hands. "We are all going to fight to get as close as possible but they are very well placed." Mourinho is expected to use his usual 4-2-3-1 formation, despite causing a surprise by starting with a 4-4-2 set-up at Leicester.

BUOYANT

United began that game with Marcus Rashford in attack alongside Zlatan Ibrahimovic, but became far more effective when Mourinho reverted to his favoured formation, with the former Sweden striker playing as the lone forward. Rashford moved out to the wing, with Juan Mata on the opposite side, as Henrikh Mkhitaryan took the number 10 role. There is a separate question as to what part, if any, captain Wayne Rooney will play, having missed last weekend's match because of illness.

Rooney did train on Wednesday, as did defender Marcos Rojo, who was substituted at half-time against Leicester after suffering a knock. Fellow centre-back Phil Jones, though, has a bruised foot and is doubtful. Watford head to Old Trafford in buoyant mood after following the unexpected victory at Arsenal with last weekend's home win against Burnley.

The victories have moved Walter Mazzarri's side up to 10th and silenced suggestions the Italian manager's position was under threat after a run of seven league games without a win. The contributions of M'Baye Niang, Mauro Zarate and Tom Cleverley - the club's January signings - have helped turn things around and Mazzarri is confident there is more to come from his players.

"I'm speaking with Niang every day," said Mazzarri. "I treat him as if he were my son. I'm also asking for suggestions and I think he listens to me as well. "With regard to Mauro Zarate, I'm very happy with him as well because also with Fiorentina he didn't play as much and he did very well against Burnley in a game that was very high intensity." — AFP



KINGSTON: Liverpool's English striker Daniel Sturridge (L) reacts after missing a chance during the English Premier League football match between Hull City and Liverpool at the KCOM Stadium. — AFP

FLOUNDERING LIVERPOOL BRACED FOR SPURS TEST

LIVERPOOL: After a miserable start to 2017, Liverpool are in a sorry state ahead of Tottenham Hotspur's visit in the Premier League today. They have won only one of their last 10 matches, were knocked out of both domestic cups in the space of four days and slipped out of the top four after last weekend's 2-0 loss at strugglers Hull City. It has been some fall for Jurgen Klopp's side, who briefly topped the table in November but now find themselves 13 points behind leaders Chelsea and four adrift of second-place Tottenham.

"If you don't collect a lot of points, if you lose a lot of games and if you don't play the way you played before, I think you lose a little bit of confidence," said midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum. "But now we must make sure we get back on track, play like we did before to get more confidence and start winning games." Worryingly for Klopp, Liverpool's home form has dipped alarmingly since an unbeaten run at Anfield of close to 12 months came to an end against Swansea City on January 21.

They were then defeated on their own patch by Southampton in the League Cup semi-finals and, to great embarrassment, Championship side Wolverhampton

Wanderers in the FA Cup. Chelsea would have made it a fourth successive home defeat for Klopp's team on January 31, but goalkeeper Simon Mignolet saved Diego Costa's late penalty to ensure a 1-1 draw.

Despite his side's poor recent form, Klopp made no signings in the January transfer window. He does have a strong first XI, though, and will be hoping he can get close to fielding it against Tottenham. Dejan Lovren missed the defeat at Hull with a knee injury and fellow centre-back Ragnar Klavan was missing through illness, meaning midfielder Lucas Leiva partnered Joel Matip in the middle of a makeshift defense. Sadio Mane should start in attack for a second successive game following his return from Africa Cup of Nations duty with Senegal.

ROSE 'VERY POSITIVE'

Tottenham have emerged as Chelsea's closest rivals, although they still trail the leaders by nine points despite beating Middlesbrough 1-0 last Sunday. Manager Mauricio Pochettino is aware of the need to keep picking up points in the hope that Antonio Conte's side falter, but he is not taking Liverpool's poor run for granted.

"If we win it will be important, to help

us keep putting pressure on Chelsea," he said. "It's not decisive, but it's important. I'm not thinking about the top of the table. That's not the problem today. "They are not in a good run, but they have very good players, one of the best squads in England and Europe. "They will be motivated as this is always a big match. It will be a very tough game. We are not the only realistic challengers. "We are a contender, but there are a lot of contenders. Nine points is a massive gap, but it's not decisive."

Danny Rose will miss the trip to Anfield as he recovers from a knee injury, but Tottenham have allayed fears the England left-back will be sidelined for two months. Spurs are refusing to put a timescale on his comeback date, but Pochettino said: "Danny's very positive, we are very positive. "We are happy after he saw a specialist. It's not a big issue. It's a minor problem, a small problem. "We hope he can be available again as soon as possible. We need to be patient. He is very optimistic. We are happy and you will see." Tottenham are restructuring their scouting system behind the scenes and have appointed Steve Hitchen as their chief scout. Hitchen worked as a scout for Spurs under former manager Harry Redknapp. —AFP

RESTED REAL MADRID WAIT ON BALE RETURN

MADRID: Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane hopes to have Gareth Bale back before the second leg of his side's Champions League last 16 clash with Napoli. The postponement of Madrid's visit to Celta Vigo last weekend due to storm damage caused to Celta's Balaidos stadium has allowed Zidane to recover a fully-fit squad bar Bale, who is still working his way back from ankle ligament

damage. The Welshman hasn't featured since late November and whilst Wednesday's first leg against the Italians is likely to come too early, Zidane is confident of having Bale back well before the return in Naples on March 7. "The return isn't till March 7 so hopefully he is with us before then," Zidane said on Friday. "He is back on the field and the only step he has left is to train with the

rest of the team. "He is working very hard and I can see the desire he has."

The suspended Toni Kroos is Madrid's only other absentee for Saturday's visit to rock bottom Osasuna. Marcelo, Luka Modric and Dani Carvajal are among those to return from injury. However, Madrid have only won one of their past six league meetings away at Osasuna and Zidane is not

expecting an easy ride despite the fact the Navarrans are yet to win at home in La Liga this season. "We have had time to work, physically we are good and ready to play," added Zidane. "It is a very difficult place to go and we know that it is top against bottom, which I don't like at all. "It has always been difficult for us at El Sadar and that isn't going to change." — AFP

Sports



**Westbrook's
Thunder topple Cavs**

44



HYDERABAD: India's captain Virat Kohli, left, hugs teammate Wriddhiman Saha after scoring a double century during the second day of a cricket test match against Bangladesh.— AP

INDIA PUMMELS BANGLADESH ON SECOND DAY

KOHLI RECORD BREAKING DOUBLE TON TIGHTENS SCREWS

HYDERABAD: Another Virat Kohli double century powered India to a record total against Bangladesh in the one-off Test in Hyderabad yesterday-but only after he had to be persuaded to challenge his dismissal. In reply, Bangladesh were 41 for one at stumps on day two after losing opener Soumya Sarkar for 15 in one of the final overs of the day as their bruising introduction into Test cricket in India continued. Skipper Kohli became the first batsman to score double centuries in four consecutive series as he reached 204, the standout performance in India's 687-6 declared which featured three centuries.

The hosts became the first international team to record three successive scores of more than 600 after posting totals of 631 in Mumbai and 759-5 in Chennai against England last year. Bangladesh's misery was compounded when Sarkar was caught by Indian wicketkeeper Wriddhiman Saha off the

bowling of Umesh Yadav in the third last over of the day. Tamim Iqbal (24) and Mominul Haque (one) were at the crease, with the visitors still trailing India by 646 runs.

The headlines belonged to the Indian batsmen whose big knocks were centered around Kohli's heroics at Hyderabad's Uppal Stadium, which witnessed its highest-ever Test score on a day bursting with records. "Virat backs everybody. He encourages us to play our natural game. He always gives us confidence and it's a big plus for the team," said centurion Saha, who was involved in a 39-run partnership with his skipper. Kohli, whose 246-ball knock was laced with 24 boundaries, surpassed legends including Donald Bradman and Rahul Dravid, who had scored double tons in three consecutive series. Kohli also scored double centuries in his three most recent series against West Indies, New Zealand and England.

DRS TO THE RESCUE

He needed a stroke of luck though to reach his landmark after successfully reviewing a confident lbw shout on 180 from Bangladesh spinner Mehedi Hasan which was initially given out. Saha revealed that Kohli was ready to walk and had to be persuaded to review the decision which was overturned by the third umpire as TV replays showed the ball was sliding down the leg side.

"Virat thought that he was out but I told him that you have probably stretched your front foot more...So he took a call and was saved," said Saha. The 28-year-old skipper was eventually trapped lbw off Taijul Islam, who ended with three wickets, early in the final session which then saw the Indian middle order plunder runs.

Saha (106) shared an unbeaten 118-run seventh-wicket stand with Ravindra Jadeja (60) as they made hay against a tiring bowling

line-up during what is Bangladesh's first-ever Test on Indian soil. Wicketkeeper-batsman Saha scored his second Test century to entertain a raucous home crowd, including seven fours and two sixes, helping India maintain an impressive run rate of over four. Jadeja also raced to his fifth Test fifty as he celebrated the mark with his customary sword dance.

Earlier Kohli's 222-run fourth-wicket partnership with Ajinkya Rahane (82) set the hosts on course as they broke their previous highest score against Bangladesh of 610, set in Dhaka in 2007. Murali Vijay (108) and Cheteshwar Pujara (83) were other notable contributors for the world's number one Test team, who have never lost to the minnows in eight outings. "Our batsmen got big scores in New Zealand and have the self-belief to do it again," said Hasan, whose side lost the the first Test in Wellington after posting 595 in the first innings.—AFP