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NINE YEARS WITHOUT SALARY

Maid narrates her ordeal

By Ben Garcia

Nine years trapped in an abusive household without pay might sound like a nightmare, but it was all too real for one domestic helper working in Kuwait. Nena, not her real name, worked for a Kuwaiti family for more than nine years without receiving her salary. She's now patiently awaiting the resolution of her case, which is being heard by a Kuwaiti court.

Speaking to the Kuwait Times, Nena,

35, said given she had already spent nine long years in Kuwait without salary, a few more years to reach a resolution was not an issue. Nena's ordeal reached its lowest point when her family thought she was dead after several years of her being unable to communicate with them.

There are more than 600,000 domestic helpers in Kuwait. While the majority are treated fairly, thousands more face regular abuse, unpaid salaries, harsh working conditions including isolation

from family and friends, no days off and no paid overtime.

In January 2016, Kuwait became the first state in the Gulf to pass a domestic labor law offering modest protections for domestic laborers' rights. Current rules grant domestic helpers a minimum salary, weekly day off, 30 days annual leave, a 12 hour working day and end-of-service benefits. But the law is unevenly enforced and human rights groups point out that abuse remains common. (See Page 6)

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Local Spotlight

GHAZALI STREET



By Muna Al-Fuzai

muna@kuwaittimes.net

When an authority decided to shut a vital highway in Kuwait - Al-Ghazali Road - with a stroke of a pen, it made people angry, because they were forced to spend hours on the roads due to the resulting traffic jams. This is surely a big mistake and the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Works and the Traffic Department. Closing any street for development is acceptable, but doing it without preparations will lead to complaints, so it is necessary to have alternative plans before proceeding, while the opening of additional routes is essential.

Traffic to and from Kuwait City is heavy all the time and on all roads. The contractor said the closure will last for a year, until the development of Al-Ghazali Road is complete. We have become accustomed in Kuwait to poor planning by officials and disregard for the people, so this project may end up taking two years. This is possible, and I really wonder what it will be like until the end of this mess.

Shuwaikh Industrial area is usually one of the busiest locations in town, let alone after the closure of this vital artery. The important question is - what are the alternative routes provided to users of the road? I

This is surely a big mistake
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the Traffic Department

am not surprised with the action they took, since they haven't taken into account the problem of flying gravel that has shattered the windshields of many cars.

The problem is not with the large number of cars, but the poor planning and road system. The United Arab Emirates has a wonderful system, so why not learn from the systems they have adopted? Some reports mentioned the opening of alternative routes, but two days ago, I was stuck there for an hour and a half, where the cars did not move due to the severe congestion caused by the mix of cars, trucks and buses. It's very annoying when you are stranded in the car in the middle of the road for long hours.

The Ministry of Public Works announced it will open a new tunnel on Jahra road opposite Kuwait Club with a length of more than half a kilometer after almost two weeks. The opening of the main bridge on Airport Road should be by March. I advise everyone to be extra careful when using the new roads as a result of changes in the level of traffic and speeds.

There is a need for urban planning, with a focus on expanding the integrated network of roads. Tunnels and bridges must be ready to adapt to the increase in vehicles and future growth. Also, cooperation between the ministries of public works, interior, transportation, electricity and water and the road engineering department is a must.

Congestion exists in all countries of the world, but it becomes a problem in the absence of preparation and planning.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



A walking track or pathway cuts through a local community garden in residential Shuwaikh in this 2016 file photo. Recent rain has encouraged a flourishing of fresh grass, greenery as well as the popular native plant, Al-Nowair in local parks and public spaces.— Photo by Yasser Al Zayyat

IMPRINT

AIN'T LOVE GRAND?



By Nejouad Al-Yagout

local@kuwaittimes.net

We judge ourselves and others very harshly. We believe we should behave in certain ways, and when we stray from society's obligations, we feel guilty, anxious and afraid. What if we cut ourselves some slack? When we begin to love ourselves, suddenly all that we perceived was wrong in others begins to dissolve too. Many people spend limitless energy being upset at those they love for being late, for canceling plans at the last minute or for not being there. And we end up punishing ourselves for doing so as well.

When we practice self-love, though, we give others permission to be themselves. We cut the cord of expectations and let them be. We get angry at others for not making time for us, but time is an illusion. It is always this moment when a person is in your life. Why condemn the moment for something that has passed or is yet to come? Who are we to vent to others about them, consequently, or hold grudges? Who is that is holding a grudge? Have you asked yourself who it is? And who is aware of it?

We are all free to be with who we want, when we want. If we allow ourselves to spend time with those we cherish when we choose to, then others should be given that freedom as well. We resonate at a higher frequency when we are happy. Why pressure anyone to spend time with us? Why stop adoring them when they do not reciprocate this desire? Love, true love, means allowing others the space to come in and out of your lives as they please. There are no rules. Why do our egos set such stringent boundaries? Why do we punish others for not behaving the way the ego wants them to behave? Ego is not love. Ego will never

be love. Ego can never be love.

People "misbehave" all the time. And it may hurt, but when we evolve, we begin to understand that there is a consciousness governing all that is in place. There is nothing to judge. And in this awakening, we begin to practice love without trying. Suddenly, we begin to love without expecting anything in return. And, amazingly, when we stop judging others, they transform, we transform.

There is nothing we need to do to awaken to this reality. All is exactly as it should be. And this is a promise: When we open up to love, it will come running to us,

forcefully. The universe will reward us with kind souls who are open and ready for love. And this is not done for reward, ever. It is something that arises naturally within us when we are ready. When it is done for reward, we are still operating at a low frequency, but this is accepted too, as part of our journey, as a result of conditioning. But when reward takes a backseat and love reigns, magic begins. We

are finally ready to love unconditionally.

How sexy is it to love someone exactly the way they are? Where society sees flaws, we see beauty. Where society sees erratic behavior, we see possibility. Where society defines someone's character, we see the natural flow. Where society sees fear, we see the potential for a love so potent, we are ready to surrender.

Love is too open for rules, labels and expectations. Way too open. And love can never be confined to a day, a time or a place. Love is too grand. Tell me, ain't love grand?

Love, true love, means
allowing others the space
to come in and out of your
lives as they please

Nejouad Al Yagout - Photo by Djinane Alsuwayeh



The value of language tourism

By Jeri Al-Jeri

Language acquisition is considered to be a highly dignified and respected goal worldwide, whatever the language might be. The learner is considered to be a successful person with an admired character because of the strength of her intelligence and the hard work involved in learning a second (or third, or fourth) language.

However my perception, as an Arab Open University graduate from the discipline of English literature, is that most people fail to realize how wonderful it is to tour different types of civilizations through language - without the filters of your native language's dogmatic traditional conformities, challenging ideas is impossible without bilingually stepping into the realm of a language novel to oneself.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to experience such invisible dimensions via the confines of a single language conversation. Therefore, to the best of my ability, I will attempt to bring the reader closer to the marvelous experience of "cognitive tourism".

In my previous article, 'Bridging Minds', published in Kuwait Times in 2016, I technically explained how a language's grammar yarns a person's chain of thought. And what I felt missing was stress on the quality and quantity of vocabulary, because words are actually the only rings of anyone's chain of thought. Case in point, a language will ultimately paint our scope of life and even manipulate how more or less we get to zoom in

"Challenging ideas is impossible without bilingually stepping into the realm of a language novel to oneself."

and out of this narrow scope of ours.

Layers of meaning

Therefore, it is unquestionably logical to say that this is the best way to absorb the nectar of all the "orientational juice" of any society. In other words, each society enjoys its puns and layers of meaning for phrases that are impossible to extract clearly for non-speakers of that language.

Sociocultural complications are too sophisticated for even university professors' strategies, such as Prof Raphael, who refuses to believe that all languages in the world share a parallel vocabulary, and that a translator ought to syntactically explain a source language's sentence to the target language. Yet, being a bilingual person and a level 2 Turkish student, and an amateur in Farsi, I deny the possibility of languages mincing syntactically.

Irkcigili yok et, panda gibi ol, o siyah, o beyaz, o Asyalı! - this was a translation of a hilarious American joke from English to Turkish that always

fails to win a giggle from all the Turks I share it with. It means, "Be a panda! It's black. It's white. It's Asian!" In Turkey, it is not racist to refer to anyone's origins, but in Western countries, it seems to give an impression that one of the interlocutors is about to make a racist remark. In translating that very simple joke, the crucial element of anticipation was lost, and yet it is worse when translated to Arabic, because Chinese stereotypes are irrelevant in all of Arabia, unlike the United States.

I ought to clarify that the punch line did not contain any form of insult to any Asians, but it completely debunked the intelligence of the two-colored creature. The punch line defeated the whole purpose of that intelligent metaphor, and this style of comedy is not popular in "Turk Komik".

Crossing the language barrier

How is it possible to achieve such a goal? It is safe to say that any attempt of verbal communication between two individuals from different cultur-

al and linguistic heritages carries different types of ideas and emotions that are all attainable via crossing the language barrier. And the only way to not miss any of these "outside the box" ideas and emotions is to learn these fellow human beings' languages, and to accept the sad reality of the limitations of translation.

Linguistic tourism

Yet, on the bright side, all the cultural puns and deep concepts can only be packaged and safely stored within the language itself, meaning that this cognitive tourism is not simply a gateway into experiencing others' chains of thought from the starting point in which a learner has entered, but a reception of a society's total collective conscious! This is what made me call both my Turkish and English language acquisition a mental tour. Any inquisitive reader is surely intrigued to learn the perfect way to become bilingual or multilingual.

Seeking to find the answer is similar to a plunge into an infinite abyss. Ironically, a plunge into the randomness of awkward conversational projects with native speakers and/or with your teacher and fellow learners is the only way to have a fortified "word bank" and sound grammatical skills for your desired language.

Passion and sheer fortitude are the only requirements needed. Stitches and shreds of letters and words will be automatically bricolage-d by the unconscious, ensuring a newly yarned brain. In conclusion, cognitive tourism is the sincerest form of humanism.



A pioneering food bank in Kuwait

By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

Can you imagine the fate of unsold food nearing the end of its shelf life? At cooperative societies and supermarkets, food companies offer products at a discount before they expire. The rest end up incinerated or buried in landfills. In Kuwait, solid waste goes up each year by more than two million tons, 50 percent of which is foodstuff, according to a 2013 World Bank Report.

These numbers spurred Maryam Al-Eisa to action, leading her to set up re:food, a food bank in Kuwait. Eisa hopes that her project becomes the spark that leads to an initiative to set a law limiting commercial food waste, and impose levies on food surpluses to decrease the amount dumped in landfills.

Kuwait Times spoke with Eisa to learn more about her non-profit project. Some excerpts:



“ More than 700 individuals and families benefit from the 'redistribution' of food via this local food bank. ”



Kuwait Times: What is re:food?

Maryam Al-Eisa: re:food is a licensed non-profit organization. The main goal of it is to re-channel food and beverage industry waste to local beneficiaries. So basically, we collect excess food that is nearing expiry and distribute it locally. I started looking into what other countries do to manage their waste, and I was blown away with what Sweden and South Korea do.

In Sweden, they recycle 99 percent of their waste, while we can't even recycle 1 percent in Kuwait. In South Korea, on the other hand, the government imposes a tax based on the amount of waste generated. An individual can't open a garbage bin without swiping their civil ID.

KT: After doing your research on solid waste, what other steps did you need to take before establishing re:food?

Maryam: Our research took around a year. We went to two major food banks. At the Greater Boston Food

Bank in Massachusetts, we learned how a food bank is operated in the US. We also visited the Food Bank of Saudi Arabia, the most advanced food bank in the region. However, the latter specializes in cooked food. But we decided to go with unprepared food because it's more cost efficient.

KT: On your site, there's a list of sponsors and partners. What are the main differences between them?

Maryam: We receive different kinds of sponsorships and partnerships. The partners right now are food and beverage companies, such as Al-Yasra Food, Nutrina, Boushahri Group, Mohammed Al-Hajery, GTRC and Alghanim. Our sponsors are Al-Quraishy, Abdulhameed Al-Sarraf and Ooredoo. They donated money to buy refrigerators, while Ooredoo provided us with an Internet connection and laptops. The partners are responsible for providing us with a consistent supply of food. We receive it frozen, chilled or dry.





KT: The holy month is round the corner. What are your plans for Ramadan?

Maryam: We don't have a dedicated plan for Ramadan. re:food is a consistent part of the food and beverage industry and not a temporary campaign, and we intend to continue this way. Our non-profit is operated completely by volunteers.

KT: Volunteers may not be available under certain circumstances. Have you experienced a similar problem?

Maryam: We only distribute once a week. In my opinion, that's manageable. But the number of volunteers is increasing, and we have a good retention rate. Unlike other non-

profit organizations here in Kuwait, we don't experience a high turnover rate among volunteers. Whether for registration or packaging, our tasks are really simple. Plus, we don't pressure them to work at certain hours.

KT: The health of beneficiaries is important, and must take safety and the validity of the food products into account. What are your health standards of evaluation?

Maryam: Once we receive the products, we enter information into our POS system as stock in our inventory. Then a certified person examines their validity for consumption. We have transparency in our procedures. We make sure that all the data is available, from the moment the stock is received to its distribution.

KT: How many people are registered with re:food and how did you approach them?

Maryam: There have been over 700 individual beneficiaries. Initially, we asked a Kuwaiti woman who's known for her food charity to link us with them. She cooks and gives food to the needy in Kuwait. She has built many relationships with unfortunate families and people with low incomes.



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DOMESTIC HELPER KEPT PRISONER, UNPAID FOR NEARLY A DECADE

Nine years without her salary

By Ben Garcia

Nine years trapped in an abusive household without pay might sound like a nightmare, but it was all too real for one domestic helper working in Kuwait. Nena, not her real name, worked for a Kuwaiti family for more than nine years without receiving her salary. She's now patiently awaiting the resolution of her case, which is being heard by a Kuwaiti court.

Speaking to the Kuwait Times, Nena, 35, said given she had already spent nine long years in Kuwait without salary, a few more years to reach a resolution was not an issue. Nena's ordeal reached its lowest point

when her family thought she was dead after several years of her being unable to communicate with them.

There are more than 600,000 domestic helpers in Kuwait. While the majority are treated fairly, thousands more face regular abuse, unpaid salaries, harsh working conditions including isolation from family and friends, no days off and no paid overtime.

In January 2016, Kuwait became the first state in the Gulf to pass a domestic labor law offering modest protections for domestic laborers' rights. Current rules grant domestic helpers a minimum salary, weekly day off, 30 days annual leave, a 12 hour working day and end-of-service benefits. But the law is unevenly enforced and

human rights groups point out that abuse remains common.

Why so long?

In Nena's case, it's reasonable to ask why she waited so long. Who would go nine years+ without receiving a salary and yet continue to work? According to Nena, she was too weak and afraid to decide for herself. Originally from Compostela Valley, Philippines, she arrived at her employer's house on June 8, 2005. One month later she took an advanced two-month salary to pay some of her loans from relatives. The employer granted her request and receipts were provided to her. Her salary was KD45 a month.

"I have to pay some of my loans back home in Compostela so I asked for the advance two-month salary. It was sent back to the Philippines because they provided me with the receipts. For me, it was a demonstration of goodwill from my employer, so I owed that to my employer," she said.

Nena borrowed another two-month salary in advance. "My family in Compostela is poor. We are used to eating whatever we can get from our small family farm and that's it," he said. She arrived in a Kuwaiti family house when she was 26. "I only got four months of the nine years with my employer," she claimed.

"The following months when I was getting my salary they told me that money was put in my bank account. I never believed because I never signed any bank documents, so how come I would have an account? They told me they would surrender my ATM when I finally decide to go back to Philippines. I used to ask for my salary, but they said, it's in the bank already," she said.

Five months into her two-year contract, Nena's circumstances suddenly changed. Her employer prohibited her from leaving the house and padlocked the main gate. She was even banned from her routine of throwing the garbage out. When they go out in the malls, she was being closely monitored by a male member of the family.

"I heard their mother telling her sons that if I tried to escape, [it was] better to kill me, or hit me hard on my head. Then, I heard abusive words from my madam. If she noticed a few specks of dust on the sofa, she would hit my head. Physically she would hurt me with sticks or any hard object," she said.

Isolated and imprisoned

Nena was also prohibited from talking with other domestic helpers in their neighborhood. "After the fifth month of my stay in Kuwait, I didn't use mobile phones. They prohibited it. So from the fifth month, I lost communication with my family. They told me to write letters but no replies were sent to me because I suspect they were not actually sending them," she said.

When her contract ended two years later, Nena decided to ask permission to go



Nena

home for good. But the employer told her to stay. She initially agreed for another six months, but after that time elapsed, she was still not allowed to leave. She continued to be locked in the house with no way out and no way to communicate with her embassy or her family or even other domestic helpers in the neighborhood.

"When my employer asked me to stay for another year when I finished the two year contract, I told them if they could buy me two small washing machines and two refrigerators out from her salary. They bought it. So the refrigerators and washing machines were delivered to me in my sponsor's house. I asked them to buy it for me because I need them in Compostela, I was thinking of using them for business. But three years, four years, nine years passed. I wasn't able to leave that house. I was stuck there," she said.

Then in April 2015, another Filipina domestic helper hired by the same sponsor helped Nena escape. "I thought the Kuwaiti family would let me go, but there was no intention of releasing me at all. So even if a new Filipina came, I was not allowed to leave their house."

An opportunity for escape came along when Nena and the new housemaid were taken by their sponsor along when the sponsor visited a relative. The new helper managed to get a hold of a mobile and using a SIM card she'd brought from the Philippines, called her family and explained the situation and asked for help. The new helper's family called the Philippines embassy in Kuwait as well as various government offices in Manila.

They were advised to wait until an opportunity to escape. Finally, on August 25, 2015, Nena and her compatriot fled from the home while their employer was busy and were rescued by the Assistance to Nationals Unit of the Embassy. Nena is still in the embassy as we speak. A Philippine embassy official who asked to remain anonymous confirmed Nena's account and noted that her case is being heard in the Kuwaiti court and awaiting a resolution soon.

VIVA Launches New Initiative to Enhance Interaction with Customers

"More" Activities and Prizes are Held

in Various Locations and Malls across Kuwait

VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, recently launched a new initiative, 'more' with VIVA, that brings the true essence of 'more' to life and elevates the way it communicates with customers. Local and international residents are guaranteed more fun, more prizes, more challenges and possibilities through a wide range of interactive activities tailored to every segment of the society. Commenting on 'more' with VIVA, Mr. Andrew Hanna, VIVA's Chief Commercial Officer said: "This initiative is built on a very simple concept. We come where you are. This is the latest in a long series of innovative initiatives VIVA has undertaken to enhance face-to-face interaction with our customers, who are absolutely at the heart of everything we do."

Mr. Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA said: "Celebrating the National and Liberation Days will be different this year with VIVA. The initiative included special sport activities and competitions that grant the youth the chance to participate in VIVA Real Madrid Soccer Academy and VIVA Manchester United Soccer Academy."

The two-month initiative is part of VIVA's innovative customer engagement endeavors and it has been an instant success. Thousands of people have already partaken in the various activities VIVA hosts five times a week and engaged with on-site VIVA representatives, as the company cements its commitment to always delivering 'more', whether it is more excitement or more shared moments of happiness.

Under 'more' with VIVA, the public will continue to enjoy local and international shows featuring world renowned magicians, football performers



that delight kids and adults alike, who can also participate in different games from basketball to cricket and from darts to ring games. A number of fantastic surprises will be revealed throughout the course of this journey alongside many gifts. Activities are held in various locations across the country, as testimony to VIVA's philosophy that every customer matters. Some of the main sites include Avenues, Boulevard, Al Muhallab and Marina Malls, Arabella, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village, Al Shaheed Park, University Campuses and Diwanis across Kuwait.

By providing more happy moments in our everyday lives, 'more' with VIVA is delivering on the promise that life has a lot to offer and reiterating VIVA's commitment to being at the forefront of innovation not only as a technology leader, but also as a truly customer-centric company.



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KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah poses for a group photo during the Kuwaiti Diplomatic Institute graduation ceremony. —KUNA photos



PM PATRONIZES DIPLOMATIC INSTITUTE GRADUATION CEREMONY

KUWAIT: Under the auspices of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, a Kuwaiti Diplomatic Institute graduation ceremony was held yesterday - celebrating the fifth class of diplomats. After the national anthem and verses from the holy Quran, Director General of the Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute Ambassador Abdullatif Al-Sharekh addressed the 24 graduates, where he noted that the institute aims to instill national values in pupils.

Meanwhile, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said that the new diplomats will now foray into foreign affairs to serve the nation's best interests. Moreover, he wished every success for the new diplomats as they embark on their diplomatic

careers, urging them to pay heed to His Highness the Amir's advice and to keep the country's best interest at heart.

One of the graduates, Fahad Al-Ajmi, heaped praise on the institute for allowing the trainees the opportunity to hone their skills. Similarly, His Highness the Prime Minister applauded the institute's efforts, saying that diplomacy is essential to preserve national security and stability, at a time where the region has plunged into upheaval. He also encouraged the new diplomats to protect Kuwait's interests in regional and international affairs. The ceremony was attended by former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, along with other senior Foreign Ministry officials. —KUNA

KUWAIT OIL PRODUCTION HITS 2.75 MILLION BPD

KUWAIT: Kuwait's total oil production has reached around 2.75 million barrels per day (bpd), CEO of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) Jamal Jaafar said yesterday. In a statement to the press on the sidelines of Kuwait's International Health Safety and Environment (KIHSE) Conference and Exhibition, Jaafar underscored Kuwait's commitment to an OPEC deal to cut oil output, which has no bearing on production. On Kuwait's production of natural gas, he revealed that free gas output totals out to be 180 million cubic feet per day, while production of associated gas is at 40 million cubic feet per day for every 100,000 barrels. The KOC official noted that the company is eyeing a boom in natural gas production to around 800 or 900 million cubic feet per day, adding that KOC's production capacity amounts to 3.1 million bpd. Moreover, Jaafar said that the company has launched a plethora of monumental projects that aim to ratchet up production capacity, all of which are environment-friendly. —KUNA

BLACKMAIL AND ROBBERY

KUWAIT: A policeman was sent to the Public Prosecution at the order of Criminal Security Affairs Maj Gen Abdelhameed Al-Awadhi for blackmail and robbery using his uniform. The suspect was caught in Mahboula with a victim in his car after blackmailing him, a security source said. The source said the suspect may be responsible for various thefts in the area. After confessing to seven, the office was charged with three. A security source said criminal detectives received tips about a policeman who blackmails expats, particularly roaming vendors. According to sources, the suspect always harasses vendors - asking them to pay money or face deportation.

Controversial video clip

A Tunisian woman and two citizens were arrested following the broadcast of a video clip that could harm national

unity. The three were charged with promoting vice, instigating strife and violating Kuwaiti societal customs and traditions. A security source said the Tunisian expat will be deported when investigations by the prosecution are complete. Detectives checked the tape, which was the subject of multiple complaints, and agreed it contained illegal content. The three were subsequently arrested for disseminating the material.

Bedoons arrested for drugs

Jahra police sent two bedoons to Drugs Control General Department after they were caught near Naseem with drugs. A security source said police stopped a car at dawn Wednesday, and found the driver and a companion confused. Officers then noticed drugs, and searched the car where they found hashish and other drug paraphernalia.

Kuwaiti beat girlfriend

A citizen accused his wife of damaging his 2015 model car, after insulting him. In another development, a man beat his girlfriend after he discovered that she has relations with another person. The woman complained to police and submitted a medical report, stating that she suffered bruises on her body and face. The Kuwaiti man confessed to beating her.

'Prostitutes' nabbed

Two Chinese women practiced prostitution under the cover of unlicensed medical massage inside a Salmiya flat. A security source said police received tips about their illegal practices in a Salmiya flat and, upon confirmation, raided it. The women said they publicized their activities on the internet, and charge customers KD 50 per hour. They were sent to concerned authorities.

—Al Rai/Al Anbaa

KUWAIT AFFIRMS ITS KEENNESS ON PROVIDING JOBS FOR YOUTH

MANAMA: The Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) of Kuwait affirmed yesterday keenness on finding solutions and providing job opportunities for young Kuwaitis in various fields, particularly in small and medium enterprises. MGRP has keen interest in qualifying and employing national labor through holding specialized training courses for the youngsters that prepare and qualify them for employment and running their own small and medium enterprises, MGRP's Secretary-General Fawzy Al-Majdaly stated to KUNA.

Al-Majdaly made his remarks after taking part in a workshop, entitled "Developing small enterprises in GCC States", to discuss and address subjects related to supporting young businessmen and businesswomen in the field of small enterprises. The workshop aimed at exchanging expertise, reviewing Gulf States' experiences, discussing future developments, and finding ways to reform policies and laws in the field of supporting small enterprises at GCC countries, said the MGRP chief. —KUNA

KUWAIT 'COMMITTED' TO PAN-ARAB COORDINATION

ARAB LEAGUE CHIEF CALLS FOR SPEEDY TRADE ZONE

CAIRO: A ranking Kuwaiti official yesterday affirmed the Gulf State's keenness on bolstering pan-Arab coordination. In remarks to KUNA on sidelines of the opening meeting of the 99th session of the Arab Economic and Social Council, Finance Assistant Undersecretary Sami Al-Sagaabi said participants in the meeting discussed implementing resolutions of the Arab-African summit held in 2016. He noted that His Highness the Amir had allotted one billion dollars for development enterprises in Africa. Kuwait had also allocated an annual award worth one million dollars for development research in Africa.

Al-Sagaabi added that the conferees discussed a report by the Arab League chief on following up on implementing resolutions of the 98th session of the council, the social-economic file for the 28th Arab summit due in Jordan on March 23-29, Al-Riyadh declaration of the fourth Arab-Latin America summit, held in Saudi Arabia, in 2015.

Meanwhile, Arab League Secretary General Ahmad Abul-Gheit yesterday called for speedy steps to launch the great joint Arab commercial zone. Abul-Gheit, addressing the opening of the 99th ministerial session of the Arab Economic and Social Council, said that "a lot had been done for launching the grand Arab commercial zone and only some matters have remained unresolved." The league chief, in the statement addressed on his behalf by his deputy Ambassador Ahmad Bin Helli, said issues that need to be thrashed out are related to the product origin terms, enacting competition regulations,



Finance Assistant Undersecretary Sami Al-Sagaabi

consumer protection and some commercial topics.

On the custom federation, he said the relevant regulations had been finalized. However, he indicated that negative global economic conditions have impacted on the inter-Arab trade which declined by 13 billion dollars last year. Citing estimates by the Arab Monetary Fund, Abul-Gheit said Arab exports dropped from 1.199 billion dollars in 2011 to 827 billion dollars in 2015. However, inter-Arab exports rose from 104 billion dollars in 2011 to 110 billion dollars in 2015. Abul Gheit cited hurdles standing in face of development in the Arab world; namely terrorism and Israel's occupation of Arab territories. —Agencies



ELITE STORMING TEAMS

By Hanna Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: International Elite Storming Teams (4) event ended yesterday at the Special Forces ranges. The event was attended by top officials including; Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt General Suleiman Al-Fahad, National Guard Secretary Lt General Eng Hashim Al-Rafaie in addition to representatives from UAE. Lt General Al-Fahad distributed cups and prizes to the winning teams. Team of the late Abdelrahman Al-Sumait secured the first position, while the



elite team booked the second place. The third place went to the team of Brig Yousuf Al-Huwaidi.

Power to be cut off

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Relations and Security Information Department said power will be cut off at the Fintas services center on Monday - from 8:00 am until 11:00 am for maintenance.

Forged salary certificates

Criminal detectives arrested a Sri Lankan for forging salary certificates and bank statements along with a group of persons in exchange of money. The suspect was caught red handed in his house.

Exercise at hospital

Jleeb and Farwaniya fire centers carried out an exercise at Farwaniya hospital. The exercise was about a fire at the second floor in the laboratory. Two teams were formed for the rescue mission.

Fire at boys school

A fire broke out at Ahmad Al-Humaidhi boys elementary school in Ouyoun area Jahra, and was put out without injuries. The fire center received a call at 12:41 pm about a fire at the school theater, and firemen rushed to the scene within four minutes.

News

in brief

Low temperatures

KUWAIT: Low temperatures are expected over the weekend due to the northwestern wind, executive at Kuwait Meteorological Center Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi said yesterday. The country has been affected recently by the seasonal low-pressure winds coming from the direction of Sudan, leading to clouds and rainfall on some areas, Al-Qarawi said. The lowest temperature recorded today was between 12-10 Celsius while the highest will reach 22 Celsius with light to moderate northwesterly to northern winds between 12-35 kph, according to Kuwait Meteorological Department. Today, the weather will be partly cloudy with wind activities causing dust and a chance of rain, said the official, adding that the maximum temperature will be between 18-15 Celsius with low temperatures between 5-8 Celsius. Meanwhile, Al-Qarawi noted that tomorrow evening will be slightly cold with moderate to light northwestern wind between 20-45 kph, and maximum temperature between 15-20 Celsius. The lowest temperature will be between 5-7 Celsius.

Qatar-Kuwait military drill

DOHA: A Qatari-Kuwaiti joint Amiri Guards drill, known as (Saqr Al-Khalij 2), kicked off yesterday and will last till March first, said the Kuwaiti Embassy's Military Attache, Colonel Nasser Abdulaziz Al-Samhan. Al-Samhan said the drill came to enhance cooperation and exchange experiences among Gulf military personnel, revealing that the exercise was hosted by Kuwait last year. The official noted that such training was strongly supported by the military command of both sides to boost military capabilities for groups and individuals alike based on modern-day technologies in military training.



Students attend the inauguration ceremony of the new school in Al-Latifiah district. —KUNA

Kuwait-funded school

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi Ministry of Education yesterday inaugurated a new school in Al-Latifiah district in Baghdad. The school was funded by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). Kuwait Ambassador Salem Al-Zamanan said that the school was built as part of the second phase of a philanthropic program by KFAED aimed at building up to 23 schools in Iraq. Up to 22 ones had already been constructed. The school includes 18 classes, laboratories, library, parking lot and pitch. Cost of the construction and furnishing amounted to \$2.9 million. In another development, Kuwait Red Crescent Society yesterday distributed relief supplies to Syrian refugees in the eastern snow-blanketed region of Ersal. The delivered supplies included food parcels, each sufficient for a single family for a month, said Yusef Boutros, operations coordinator at Lebanese Red Crescent in a statement to KUNA, noting that the help came at a time the refugees are in high need for assistance, in aftermath of a recent snow storm that hit the region.

Friday Times

International

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2017

Syrian regime, rebels attend Russian-backed talks; bombing kills 24



Sour mood as Kosovo turns nine



All eyes on Tillerson's debut at G20



GAZA: Palestinian rescue members evacuate a man from a flooded home using a fishing boat during a heavy rain storm in Jabaliya refugee camp, northern Gaza Strip yesterday. —AP

ISRAELI JOY, PALESTINIAN ALARM AT 2-STATE SHIFT

TRUMP DROPS US COMMITMENT TO 'TWO-STATE' MIDEAST DEAL

JERUSALEM: US President Donald Trump's shelving of the decades-long goal of a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict has excited Israelis and alarmed Palestinians, though no one is quite sure what it means. The announcement was hailed by ministers in Israel's rightwing government, a number of whom have called for the annexation of Palestinian territory in the occupied West Bank. "The Palestinian flag has come down from the mast and the Israeli flag has taken its place," far-right Education Minister Naftali Bennett said.

Science Minister Ofir Akunis hailed "the end of a dangerous and erroneous idea: the creation of a Palestinian terrorist state in the heart of the land of Israel." Rightwing politicians consider the West Bank, occupied since 1967 in contravention of international law, to be part of historic Israel for religious reasons. In the first meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu since his inauguration, Trump on Wednesday broke with international consensus and decades of US policy insisting on a future that included an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

"I'm looking at two-state and one-state, and I like the one that both parties like. I'm very happy with the one that both parties like," he said. "I can live with either one." The two-state solution has been the cornerstone of US and international policy for decades, but Netanyahu has long wavered on his sup-

port for it. It is the first time Netanyahu's premiership has coincided with a Republican president and Israeli media hailed Trump's policy shift as a major success. Michael Oren, deputy minister in Netanyahu's office, said they could not have hoped for a better statement.

Palestinians, however, were less impressed. President Mahmud Abbas said his government was "ready to deal positively" with the White House, highlighting Trump's appeal to Netanyahu on Wednesday to "hold back" on settlements—seen as illegal by the international community—for a "little while." Hossam Zomlot, Abbas' special advisor, told AFP that while a two-state solution was still preferred, his administration was willing to discuss all options, providing Palestinian rights were protected. "What we retain is that Trump says he wants peace," Zomlot said, adding Israel sought an "apartheid state." Trump has yet to speak to Abbas and officials have quietly expressed alarm.

'Weak' position

Jihad Harb, a Palestinian political scientist, said the leadership was being cautious due to its "weak position" and its past failure to follow through on threats. "The Palestinian leadership has failed to open a dialogue with the US administration. It is afraid that an escalation (in rhetoric) at this stage could

ruin any possibility of dialogue," he said. Ghassan Khatib, a professor and former Palestinian official, said Trump was "very bad for the Palestinians."

The leadership, Harb added, has limited options if Trump continues to freeze them out. It could return to the United Nations or International Criminal Court for another attempt to exert pressure, or instead push for "a movement of popular resistance against the occupation," according to Harb. What a one-state solution would look like in reality remains unclear. Oren implied there was support for what has been dubbed by Israeli media as the "state minus" approach, meaning levels of autonomy for Palestinian areas in the West Bank but never full independence. "(It) may not conform to what we know as a two-state solution but would enable the Palestinians to lead their lives in prosperity and security," Oren said.

Ofer Zalzburg of the International Crisis Group think tank said the Trump administration appeared to have "zero clarity" on the meaning of a one-state solution, leaving the Israelis in prime position to dictate terms. "Essentially Netanyahu was presented with the choice between one state and two," he said. "But he is in favor of one state and a half." Shmuel Rosner from the Jewish People Policy Institute agreed it was unclear what Trump meant. "I don't think what Trump presented yesterday was a realistic vision for Middle East peace," he said. —AFP

AIR RAID KILLS 8 WOMEN, A CHILD AT YEMENI FUNERAL

SANAA: An air strike killed eight women and a child at a funeral reception near the Yemeni capital, witnesses said yesterday, adding to the conflict's mounting civilian death toll. At least 10 other women were wounded in the overnight raid on the district of Arhab, 40 kilometers north of Sanaa, medics sent to the site said. The Iran-backed Houthi Shiite rebels, who seized large parts of the country including the capital in 2014, accused the Saudi-backed Arab coalition supporting the Yemeni government of carrying out the strike.

A coalition statement sent to AFP said the group was "investigating the reports" that civilians were

killed in the raid near Sanaa. Mohammed Al Nakii, whose home medics said was hit, told an AFP correspondent at the site that at the time of the bombing he had been receiving condolences for his brother who died on Sunday. He said his own wife was among those killed. Nakii said he saw four women die immediately at the scene, describing the attack as "barbaric". It was not immediately clear if the house was deliberately targeted. An AFP photographer said the stone building had been totally demolished except for three remaining arches. Bloodstains, clothing and shoes were seen among the rubble. The home had been built on a plot of land with no other

buildings visible in the immediate vicinity.

Yemen's war pits the internationally recognized government of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi against Houthi insurgents allied with forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. The Saudi-led Arab coalition that intervened in Yemen in March 2015 on the side of Hadi says that it does not target civilians. But it has faced repeated allegations of deliberately striking weddings, funerals, schools and hospitals. In October the coalition admitted to killing 140 people in an air strike on a funeral in Sanaa, blaming the deaths on "incorrect information". It had initially denied involvement. — AFP

SAUDI ARABIA BUSTS ISLAMIC STATE CELLS

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia has broken up four Islamic State cells suspected of providing shelter to wanted militants and recruiting fighters, the Interior Ministry said yesterday, according to Saudi state television. Automatic weapons were seized from the four cells, which comprised 15 Saudis, two Yemenis and a Sudanese man, the ministry's statement said. Security forces also seized more than 2 million riyals (\$530,000) in cash.

Among those helped to hide by the cells, which operated in the capital Riyadh and in eastern and northern regions, was Taye' al-Sayari, one of two suspected Islamist militants killed in a security operation in Riyadh last month. Cell members were (also) active in ... choosing and conducting surveillance of targets and passing information to the organization abroad, promoting the deviant group and recruiting members for the organization and inciting them to fight in areas of struggle, the statement said. Local Saudi affiliates of Islamic State, which is based in Iraq and Syria, have carried out several deadly shootings and bombings in the conservative kingdom, the world's top oil exporter. Many have targeted security personnel and Shiite Muslim mosques. Saudi Arabia says it has arrested hundreds of IS members. The Sunni Muslim Islamist group is bitterly hostile to the Gulf Arab monarchies, which suspect it of trying to stoke Sunni-Shiite sectarian confrontation to destabilize and ultimately topple their governments. —Reuters

SAUDI FM VOICES OPTIMISM ABOUT RELATIONS WITH US UNDER TRUMP

BONN: Saudi Arabia's foreign minister says his country expects to have a productive relationship with the Trump administration and is optimistic that US-Saudi cooperation can overcome challenges in the Middle East. "We look forward to working with the Trump administration on all issues," Jubeir said. "We are very very optimistic about our ability to resolve issues in the region." Jubeir made the comments on Thursday at the top of a meeting with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who is on his first overseas trip as America's top diplomat.

Jubeir did not elaborate but Saudi Arabia has deep concerns about Iran's increasing assertiveness in the region and he and Tillerson were to attend larger meetings on the crises in Yemen and Syria on the sidelines of a gathering of foreign ministers from the Group of 20 world powers in nearby Bonn. In a meeting on Yemen with Jubeir and the foreign ministers of Britain, Oman and the United Arab Emirates, Tillerson did not respond to a reporter's question about the Trump administration's proposed travel ban for citizens of seven mainly Muslim nations. Indeed, he made no substantive remarks in the presence of reporters, limiting his comments with to polite chatter about his past business travel experience as CEO of Exxon Mobil.

He will face a blizzard of questions about the US administration's foreign policy from nervous Asian and European allies. And there will be penetrating inquiries from America's watchful rivals like Russia and China, who will be eager to seize on any miscues or gaffes for their own advantage. Tillerson also will be playing defense amid the chaos and turmoil caused by the firing of national security adviser Michael Flynn for misleading officials about his contacts with Russia. — AP



AL-BAB: Turkey backed Syrian opposition fighters walk with their weapons in the northeastern outskirts of the Syrian town of Al-Bab, as fighters advance towards the town which is the last stronghold of the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria's Aleppo's province. — AFP

24 KILLED IN BOMBING

SYRIAN REGIME, REBELS ATTEND RUSSIAN-BACKED TALKS

BEIRUT: Turkish bombardment of an Islamic State group-held town in Syria has killed 24 civilians, a monitor said yesterday, but Turkey's army said only "terrorists" died in the operation. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the dead in air strikes and shelling on the town of Al-Bab in the last 24 hours included 11 children. Turkey's army, quoted by the state-run Anadolu news agency said it had killed 15 "terrorists" in air strikes, artillery fire and clashes.

Al-Bab is IS's final stronghold in the northern Syrian province of Aleppo and has come under fierce attack by Turkish forces and allied Syrian rebels in recent months. The joint force entered Al-Bab over the weekend, and Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said Tuesday that the town had "largely been taken under control." The Observatory however said Turkish forces had made little progress since entering the town from the west. Turkey began military operations in Syria in August, targeting both IS and Kurdish fighters. Initially its forces advanced quickly, but they stalled around Al-Bab in December.

The town is also a key target for

Syrian government forces, who had been advancing towards from the south. But they have yet to enter Al-Bab, instead focused on clearing IS-held territory in the surrounding countryside in recent days. More than 310,000 people have been killed in Syria since the conflict began in March 2011 with anti-government protests. The war has displaced over half the country's population and drawn in jihadists and international militaries.

Russian-backed talks

Meanwhile, representatives from the Syrian government and rebel groups held fresh talks yesterday with key powerbrokers Russia, Turkey and Iran aimed at shoring up a fragile ceasefire. The meeting is the second time key players Moscow, Ankara and Tehran have brought the warring sides together, and comes ahead of a new round of UN-led talks on Syria in Geneva on February 23. The latest round of discussions is expected to focus mostly on bolstering a faltering six-week truce and has been billed as a prelude to broader negotiations in Geneva.

The regional brokers met separately

for talks with regime and rebel delegates on Thursday in the Kazakh capital Astana. It appeared unlikely that the two sides would meet one-on-one, but a plenary session involving all parties was scheduled. A first set of talks on Syria that took place in Astana in January saw the rebels refuse to talk directly to the regime and did not result in any significant breakthrough. Rebel spokesman Yehya Al-Aridi said the opposition was sending a "smaller" delegation than the one it sent for the talks last month.

The rebels, who initially cast doubt over their participation in the latest meeting, will be led by Mohammad Alloush, a leading figure of the Army of Islam (Jaish Al-Islam), he confirmed. The Syrian regime is represented in Astana by its ambassador to the UN, Bashar Al-Jaafari. Moscow has increasingly taken the lead on pushing talks over Syria after its military intervention on the side of leader Bashar al-Assad helped turn the tables in the protracted conflict. While Russia and Iran back the regime with military might, Turkey has supported rebels fighting to oust Assad. — Agencies

SKI DIPLOMACY BOOSTS SWISS-IRAN TIES

DARBANDSAR: As a fierce blizzard sweeps mountains outside Tehran, a team of elite Swiss ski instructors refuses to allow the deep freeze to stand in the way of warming ties with Iran. "The conditions are... interesting," laughed Vincent Pilet, a member of the Swiss team, as snow whipped sideways into the window of the cafe in Darbandsar resort, a two-hour drive from the Iranian capital. He said he could handle the weather—the bigger challenge was dealing with the huge numbers of Iranians who had shown up to be tested by the visitors from Switzerland. Pilet and two other instructors were on a two-week mission, scouting for the best skiers in Iran to receive Swiss-style training and start up a new generation of instructors.

They've been inundated. "We expected to have maybe 30 to 40 per day, and we've ended up with more like 70, or even 140 on one day," said Loris Ambresin, another member of the Swiss team. Iran is not an obvious destination for ski aficionados. Fresh powder, bombing snowboarders and wild apres-ski

are not the first images that leap to mind when one thinks of the Islamic republic. But the Alborz mountains above Tehran are home to a clutch of excellent pistes, even if some of the pre-revolution facilities look somewhat dated. "The chairlifts are a bit old but that just adds to the charm," said Pilet.

Skis from tree trunks

Skiing in Iran dates back around 80 years when Germans arrived to dig coal mines in the mountains north of the capital and introduced locals to the sport. "The people of the village began carving skis out of tree trunks," said Morteza Saveh Shemshaki, head of education for the Iranian Ski Federation. Resorts popped up and attracted international investors - at one point in the 1970s, a French-made cable car from northern Tehran was the longest in the world. But the Islamic revolution of 1979 put the industry on ice. Skiing has made a comeback. Whereas the pistes were until the mid-1990s divided by a long rope to segregate the sexes, now every-

one can ski together, although some controls remain. Some "don't like the idea that men and women are having fun together, but there's not much they can do about it up here", said one skier, asking not be named.

When international business ties were rekindled by the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers, easing sanctions on Iran, one Swiss firm spotted an opportunity. Andrea Gabus, who heads the investment company SGCH, believes that building a cadre of world-class instructors will attract more skiers and ultimately more business interest, while also strengthening ties between Switzerland and Iran. "It's currently an elite sport in Iran, but because of the closeness of Tehran to the resorts, there is the potential to make it more democratic and bring it to more than just one social class," he said.

'Shouldn't be afraid'

Gabus knows these are tricky times. Iran's business environment is difficult at best, and

US President Donald Trump threatens to spoil Tehran's return to the world stage with fresh sanctions and instability. "Companies should not be afraid to come to Iran. There are a lot of barriers, but they're not insurmountable," said Gabus. "Although we might have a few very turbulent years ahead of us in terms of what's happening in the USA... the development of infrastructure for winter sports is very long-term. "Investment now doesn't mean dealing with the politics we have now. It means dealing with the politics we'll have in 25 years," he said. Up on the slopes, such concerns seem far away, despite some culture shocks for the ultra-organized Swiss.

"We come from a country where our ski system has been set up for years and years, and we get to a country where they have no structure, nothing. So we've had to adapt quite a lot," said Ambresin. The overall mood was upbeat, with locals grateful for the chance to train with foreigners and the Swiss planning more such missions in coming years. — AFP

SOUR MOOD AS EUROPE'S YOUNGEST STATE TURNS 9

60% OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN KOSOVO UNEMPLOYED

PRISTINA: Kosovo, Europe's youngest state, turns nine today, but 24-year-old Nazim Ahmeti is in no mood to celebrate. "Day after day I must fight just to provide a piece of bread for my child and my wife," says Ahmeti, who like 60 percent of young people in the tiny Balkan state is unemployed. Like others, he defies extreme cold as he waits for hours outside Pristina's vegetable market in hopes of being hired for a day's work that might earn a meager 15 euros (\$16).

Kosovo unilaterally declared independence from Serbia in 2008 and since has been recognized as a state by more than 110 countries, despite Belgrade's fierce opposition. In spite of its diplomatic success, the former southern Serbian province is scarred by poverty and corruption. Official statistics say the jobless rate fell to 26 percent last year. But people believe this is a vast underestimate. World Bank data shows average unemployment at 42.6 percent over the last four years.

A third of Kosovo's 1.8 million people meanwhile live below the poverty line and the average monthly salary is 360 euros—less than a quarter of monthly wages in the European Union, which Kosovo hopes one day to join. The 1998-1999 conflict between Serbian security forces and Kosovo Albanian guerrillas that was ended by a NATO air campaign claimed 13,500 lives, most of them ethnic Albanians.

Massive migration

So analysts believe it is more than radical Islamism that is to blame for some 300 Kosovo Albanians joining jihadists in Syria and Iraq. The same dire poverty and lack of economic progress have also pushed youngsters to emigrate to western Europe, more often illegally than legally. In fact Kosovo's population has shrunk to 1.87 million from an



PRISTINA: Women walk past a graffiti reading Kosovo Republic in the capital Pristina. Kosovo, Europe's youngest state, turns nine today. —AFP

estimated 2.1 million in 2008, and a key subject of talk recently has been winning visa liberalization to ease travel to the European Union countries. "Just look at their faces. There is not a single smile," said political analyst Ramush Tahiri, pointing to a crowd of youngsters at the main Mother Teresa square in central Pristina. "None of their dreams has come true," he said.

Kosovo must provide "an economic perspective to its citizens in order to make them stay here, to prevent the social and other crises that made them look for solutions outside Kosovo," Prime Minister Isa Mustafa said. He said his government was doing its best to attract foreign investment.

But an editorial in the leading Koha Ditore daily said that "the government has not even come close to meeting the expectations of the young." Normalizing ties with Serbia appears to be a necessary step.

Talks between the two that have been underway since 2011 are slowly progressing although tensions return from time to time.

Endemic corruption

Despite strained relations, Kosovars and Serbs have never stopped trading. Excluding allegedly significant amounts of smuggled goods, Serbia in 2016 exported some 400 million euros of goods to Kosovo, notably food, while tiny Kosovo exported 40 million euros worth—or four million more than to its big brother Albania. Another obstacle to development is endemic graft. Kosovo is ranked 95 of 175 countries on the 2016 corruption perception index list of Transparency International. Government's finance department chief Zahir Bajrami was recently suspended on suspicion of corruption.

Economist Mehmet Gjata said Kosovo cannot become a "functional country without developing an economy able to address high jobless and poverty rates, its two major challenges." "The fact that the elite is abnormally rich shows that economic development has not been their priority," he added. But Ahmeti cannot hide his disillusion. "I did not expect independent Kosovo to become America overnight. — AFP

SHETLAND ISLANDS FLIRT WITH INDEPENDENCE AFTER BREXIT

LERWICK: Of all the ramifications of the Brexit vote, the fate of the Shetland Islands in the North Atlantic and their oil fields and fisheries may not top the list for negotiators in London and Brussels. But the prospect of a new bid for Scottish independence as Britain leaves the EU is making some residents of these rugged islands think again about whether they would be better off alone. "It would be wonderful," Andrea Manson, a Shetland councillor and a key figure in the Wir Shetland movement for greater autonomy said at the guesthouse she runs, the Mid Brae Inn. The movement's name means "Our Shetland" in the local Scots dialect, a derivation of Middle English which has replaced the islands' original Germanic language, Norn.

The remote archipelago, already fiercely independent in spirit, is geographically and culturally closer to Scandinavia than to Edinburgh, and politically more aligned with London and Brussels. In the past 1,300 years, Shetland has been overrun by Scandinavian vikings, pawned to Scotland as a wedding dowry by Denmark, subsumed into the United Kingdom in 1707, and dragged into the European Economic Community against its will in 1973. The Shetlands were the only part of Britain, along with the Western Isles of Scotland, that voted against EEC membership in a 1975 referendum.

'Control of the seabed'

Many Shetlanders are sceptical of Scottish separatism. In the final tense days of the 2014 independence referendum, the local MP Alistair Carmichael, who was minister for Scotland at the time, said the islands could try to remain part of Britain if the rest of Scotland left. In the end, 55 percent of Scots voted to stay in Britain. The unionist vote in the Shetlands was 63.7 percent—one of the highest levels in Scotland. Now Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon has warned that a second independence referendum is "highly likely" following the Brexit vote—and Shetland is once again considering its position. "We would like control of the seabed around us, the fishing ground around us, and the freedom to get rid of some of the bureaucracy that comes down from the EU, Westminster and the Scottish parliament," Manson said.

"Our seas are being plundered by foreign boats. We also contribute an enormous amount of money to the national economy through taxes, through the oil revenues, and yet we don't get back our fair share." Scotland has around 60 percent of the EU's oil reserves and the second-largest volume of proven natural gas reserves, most of it located around Shetland. The islands also land more fish than ports in England, Wales and Northern Ireland combined. —AFP

ALL EYES ON TILLERSON'S DEBUT AT G20

BONN: US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson made his diplomatic debut at a G20 gathering in Germany yesterday as Russia pressed the Trump administration to make good on promises of improved relations. All eyes were on Tillerson as he held initial talks with his Saudi, Yemen and British counterparts but he was giving nothing away amid intense

interest as to what President Donald Trump's "America First" policy really means.

America's top diplomat was also due to meet Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov as controversy raged over Trump's possible ties to the Kremlin and the shock resignation of his national security advisor Michael Flynn over contacts

with Moscow's ambassador. Russian President Vladimir Putin meanwhile called for restoring links between US and Russian intelligence agencies to face shared problems. "Restoring dialogue with the special services of the United States and other NATO members is in our mutual interest," Putin told the country's FSB intelligence agency in a televised speech. — AFP

Kuwait Times

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In this Feb 13, 2017, photo, rescue crews search the frigid waters of Conesus Lake in Livonia, NY, for two missing snowmobilers who are believed to have fallen through the ice. — AP

10 SNOWMOBILERS DIE IN THINLY FROZEN LAKES

MOST OF THE ACCIDENTS IN NEW YORK STATE

ALBANY, NY: Ten snowmobilers have died in thinly frozen lakes across the Northeast so far in a relatively mild winter. Most of the accidents happened in New York state, where officials warned that, despite recent snowfalls, many lakes have not had enough cold days to develop ice thick enough for riding. "There is more unsafe ice this winter," said Col. Andrew Jacob of the New York Forest Rangers. "In most places of the state we haven't had the bitter cold, below-zero weather you need to get really thick ice."

Surprisingly, most of the accidents have involved men in their 50s and 60s who have been riding snowmobiles most of their lives. That was the case with Steve Sattler, 67, and his brother Ed, 64, who died this month when their snowmobiles plunged through the ice on Tupper Lake in the Adirondacks as they were riding back to the family's vacation home.

"It was unexpected because they were always very careful when they went out on ice," said Linda Sattler, Steve's daughter. "We think they became disoriented because the weather was bad," she said. "It was snowing and they apparently lost track of the trail that ran along the pond. When they realized where they were, it was too late."

In New Hampshire, a 15-year-old boy drowned but his father was rescued after their snowmobiles fell through ice on Lake Winnepesaukee on Feb. 11. The same day, two men in their 60s died after their snowmobiles went through ice on a different part of the lake. A 54-year-old man was rescued by friends when his snowmobile fell through ice on the Piscataquog River Jan. 21.

In Maine, a 52-year-old Massachusetts man died when his snowmobile went through ice on Messalonskee Lake in early January. A search was suspended after police spent four days looking for

the bodies of two 40-year-old men who disappeared during a snowmobile outing on Conesus Lake in western New York on Feb. 11. All that has been found is their helmets. Meanwhile, a search continues on Lake Champlain for the body of the second of two Vermont men, ages 23 and 32, who rode across to the New York shore the evening of Feb. 9. Their snowmobiles were found in the water Sunday morning. One body was found Wednesday.

Several ice fishermen also have died after falling through ice in the region, including a 62-year-old man who fell into Lake Willoughby in Vermont on Jan.

26 and two men in their 60s who drowned in a bay at the eastern end of Lake Ontario Jan. 23. "This is just not the year to go crossing a lake," said Dominic Jacangelo, president of the New York State Snowmobile Association.

"No matter how good and inviting it looks, it's likely there's going to be a lot of thin ice underneath that snow." That thin ice is due to a statistically mild winter. In Glens Falls, New York, known as the "Gateway to the Adirondacks," the average temperature for January was 29 degrees, 11 degrees above normal, and the temperature rose above freezing on 23 days. — AP

JUDGE: MAN CAN'T BE TRIED IN FORGOTTEN '72 COP-SHOOTING CASE

COLUMBUS, Ohio: An 82-year-old man who was indicted, but never prosecuted, in the nonfatal shooting of an Ohio police officer almost 45 years ago cannot be tried now, a judge ruled yesterday. The case against Charles Hays fell through the cracks, and prosecutors acknowledged the state neglected the case. But they said he never demanded a speedy trial. Franklin County Judge Guy Reece dismissed the case yesterday, saying Ohio had at least two opportunities over the past four decades to bring Hays back for trial. "The right to a speedy trial is a fundamental constitutional right," the judge said.

Columbus police officer Niki Cooper was shot in the left arm in March 1972 when he and his partner interrupted a burglary. Cooper never regained full use of the injured limb, and he died just over three years ago at 71. Hays was shot twice by Cooper and left a paraplegic, according to court records. Hays' attorney, Robert

Essex, argued the state missed opportunities to try Hays over the years, violating his constitutional right to a speedy trial. Two accomplices were charged and pleaded guilty. Both sides agree Hays was properly indicted on counts of intentional shooting, burglary and larceny. What happened afterward is in dispute.

Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien said Hays was aware of the charges even as he continued to commit crimes in Kentucky and Connecticut, where he served time in prison. Hays was hospitalized for his injuries, first in Columbus, then at a veteran's hospital in Cleveland. Afterward, he went to Kentucky and ended up in jail where Ohio authorities were notified of his presence and told an ambulance would be needed to collect him. In the early years after his indictment, Hays highlighted his medical condition as a reason he shouldn't be returned to the state, prosecutors argue. — AP

OFFICERS FATALLY SHOOT NORTH CAROLINA MAN IN CHASE

DURHAM, NC: A man being sought for violating conditions of pre-trial release was shot and killed by officers after he pulled a gun while they pursued him on foot, a North Carolina police chief said Wednesday. Durham Police Chief CJ Davis read a statement saying three officers were attempting to arrest the man at a house. As they approached, the man ran out, she said.

According to Davis, the man pulled a gun from his waistband and pointed it at the officers, who fired at him. He fell about 30 yards from the home he'd been visiting on the far side of a winding residential street of tidy brick ranch homes. The chief said the officers performed CPR on the suspect, but he was pronounced dead a short time later. Davis didn't identify the suspect but said a gun that had been reported stolen last December was found next to him. Carlos Cates, 22, said the dead man was his half-brother, 24-year-old Kenneth Bailey Jr.

Bailey was under some form of home confinement but had been visiting a relative's house in the public housing community before he ran and was shot, Cates said. Bailey was likely under police suspicion because he had money, Cates said, but the cash was earned through a family construction business where both men worked.

"You can't just judge a man because he got money," said Cates, who said he is a former gang member. "We ain't no bums." He said Bailey left behind two preschool-age sons. An order for arrest was issued Wednesday based on the man having violated his pre-trial release conditions. Davis said the man was awaiting trial on charges of robbery with a dangerous weapon and felony conspiracy. She said the charges were filed in August 2016 and the order for arrest had a preset bond of \$500,000. Davis said the man also was facing an indictment for possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

Melanie Dantzler, 24, said she heard the gunshots coming from outside the house next door but initially didn't stir because it's a common sound in the neighborhood. But her mother commented on the activity next door, so she went outside and ran across the road, where she saw Bailey bleeding from his head.

"I just seen him lying there. Just lying there," she said. Bailey and police had a long, hostile relationship, she said. Three police officers are on paid administrative leave, which is standard operating procedure in a shooting where officers are involved, Davis said.

The North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation is also looking into the shooting, and Davis said her department will complete a five-day report on the incident.

It's the second shooting by law enforcement in Durham in the past three days. On Sunday, a North Carolina Highway Patrol trooper shot a 31-year-old man to death during what officials described as an "armed confrontation" after a traffic stop.

Last November, Durham police shot and killed a 34-year-old man in a public housing complex. A preliminary report said Frank Nathaniel Clark of Durham reached for his waistband while being questioned by two of the officers, and a struggle followed. One officer fell to the ground and a second one shot Clark, who died at the scene. —AP



DURHAM: Neighbors react after a police officer has shot and killed a man Wednesday in Durham, NC. It was the second shooting by law enforcement in Durham in the past three days. —AP

TRUMP VOWS TO CATCH 'LOW-LIFE LEAKERS'

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump vowed yesterday to catch those responsible for intelligence leaks that led to the ouster of his national security advisor over contacts with the Russian ambassador to Washington. "The spotlight has finally been put on the low-life leakers! They will be caught!" Trump declared in an early morning tweet, the latest in a series of Twitter attacks that have portrayed the leaks as part of a campaign to undermine his administration.

"Leaking, and even illegal classified leaking, has been a big problem in Washington for years. Failing @nytimes (and others) must apologize!"

The president on Wednesday decried the treatment of his ousted national security advisor, Mike Flynn, even though Trump himself fired the retired general for misleading Vice President Mike Pence about conversations he had had with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak.

Instead Trump lashed out at the leaks, specifically pointing the finger at the National Security Agency and the FBI as a possible source of the leaks and suggesting that the intelligence agencies were seeking to undermine him. "It's criminal actions, criminal act, and it's been going on for a long time-

before me," Trump said at a White House news conference with Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu.

"But now it's really going on, and people are trying to cover up for a terrible loss that the Democrats had under Hillary Clinton."

Despite Trump's harsh tone on the leaks, White House officials have confirmed that Flynn discussed US sanctions against Russia with Kislyak on the same day that former president Barack Obama was announcing the expulsion of 35 Russian diplomats. But they said Flynn was not fired for the call to Kislyak, but for misleading Pence about

the nature of the discussions. US intelligence agencies concluded in January that Russia had intervened in the US elections to try to favor Trump, who went on to win in an upset against Clinton. The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday that US intelligence officials have withheld sensitive information on sources and methods from the president out of concern it could be leaked or compromised.

A White House official rejected the report, saying "there is nothing that leads us to believe that this is an accurate account of what is actually happening." —AFP

NEWSPAPERS RIDE 'TRUMP BUMP' TO REACH READERS, ADVERTISERS

NEW YORK: The Trump administration's combative view of traditional news media as the "opposition party" and "fake news" is turning out to be the best hope in 2017 for newspapers struggling to attract more digital readers and advertisers.

The New York Times, the Financial Times, The Wall Street Journal and Gannett Co are building on the online readership they gained during the 2016 presidential election by marketing unbiased reporting as a sales strategy. The risk, however, is whether those new readers will attract advertising dollars to the newspapers, some of which have been criticized for having political leanings. An Edelman survey of more than 33,000 people in 28 countries shows trust in the media is at an all-time low at just 35 percent.

So far, there is reason for optimism among newspaper executives and investors. The New York Times, which President Donald Trump has referred to as "failing" in his Twitter messages, added a record 276,000 digital news subscribers in the last quarter and sees digital ad revenue up 10 to 15 percent in the current quarter. The company said it expects to add 200,000 digital subscriptions to its news products in the first quarter.

The Wall Street Journal added 113,000 digital subscriptions in its latest quarter, an almost 12 percent jump. The company said that January's numbers were even higher, but it declined to provide figures. Financial Times digital subscriptions jumped 6 percent in the fourth quarter to 646,000, while digital subscriptions at Gannett's USA Today Network, made up of 109 local newspapers across the country, grew 26 percent to 182,000 in the fourth quarter. — Reuters

DOMINICAN POLICE HUNT ON-AIR KILLER OF JOURNALISTS

SANTO DOMINGO: Police in the Dominican Republic say they are hunting for a man suspected of shooting dead two journalists during a live radio broadcast. An unidentified attacker burst into the 103.5 FM studio as presenter Luis Manuel Medina was reading the news on air on Tuesday and shot him and station director Leonidas Martinez dead, station employees said.

Police said in a statement Wednesday they were seeking a man named Jose Rodriguez, identified as the shooter by a witness, the station's secretary Dayanna Garcia. Police spokesman Nelson Rosario in a news conference urged Rodriguez "to hand himself in to be subjected to investigations, since he is the prime suspect."

Police said they were questioning dozens of other people about the attack. In a video of the broadcast, which was streamed on Facebook, gunfire is heard as Medina reads the news and a woman's voice is heard calling "Shots, shots!" The attacker struck at the radio station's office in San Pedro de Macoris, east of the capital Santo Domingo. Medina was presenting the influential investigative news show "Milenio Caliente," or "Hot Millenium," on Tuesday morning. — AFP



BRUSSELS: US Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis (right), NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (center), and British Secretary of State for Defense Michael Fallon (left), speak prior to a meeting of the counter-Islamic State Coalition at NATO headquarters in Brussels yesterday. — AP

NO MILITARY COLLABORATION WITH RUSSIA NOW: MATTIS

BLOW TO MOSCOW'S HOPES TO REPAIR TIES WITH WASHINGTON

BRUSSELS: US President Donald Trump's defense secretary yesterday said he did not see the conditions for military collaboration with Russia, in a blow to Moscow's hopes for repairing ties with the United States following Trump's election. "We are not in a position right now to collaborate on a military level. But our political leaders will engage and try to find common ground," Jim Mattis told reporters after talks at NATO headquarters in Brussels.

Asked whether he believed that Russia interfered in US presidential elections, Mattis said: "Right now, I would just say there's very little doubt that they have either interfered or they have attempted to interfere in a number of elections in the democracies."

Mattis' remarks came shortly after his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu expressed readiness to resume cooperation with the Pentagon and the same day Russian President Vladimir Putin

said it was in the interests of both nations to restore communications between their intelligence agencies.

"It's in everyone's interest to resume dialogue between the intelligence agencies of the United States and other members of NATO," Putin said, addressing Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB).

"It's absolutely clear that in the area of counter-terrorism all relevant governments and international groups should work together," Mattis told a closed-door session of NATO on Wednesday that the alliance needed to be realistic about the chances of restoring a cooperative relationship with Moscow and ensure its diplomats could "negotiate from a position of strength".

That prompted a terse reply from Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu. "Attempts to build a dialogue with Russia from a position of strength would be futile," Shoigu was quoted as saying by news agency TASS. Mattis shot back: "I

have no need to respond to the Russian statement at all. NATO has always stood for military strength and protection of the democracies and the freedoms we intend to pass on to our children."

The back-and-forth was the latest indication from the Trump administration that rebuilding US ties with Moscow could be more difficult than Trump might have thought before his election. US intelligence agencies concluded that Russia hacked and leaked Democratic emails during the presidential campaign as part of efforts to tilt the vote in the Nov. 8 election in Trump's favor. Concerns over the extent of Russian interference have been magnified since Trump forced out national security adviser, Michael Flynn, on Monday. Flynn resigned after disclosures he had discussed US sanctions on Russia with the Russian ambassador to the United States before Trump took office, and that he later misled Vice President Mike Pence about the conversations. — Reuters



CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand: In this photograph taken on June 16, 2013, visitors stand next to a high altitude WiFi internet hub, a Google Project Loon balloon, on display at the Airforce Museum in New Zealand's city of Christchurch. —AFP

CHINA SILK ROAD PROJECT IN SRI LANKA DELAYED

BEIJING SAYS PORT DEAL RELIES ON PROGRESS ON SEPARATE PROJECT

COLOMBO: China will delay a planned \$1.1 billion investment in a port on its modern-day "Silk Road" until Sri Lanka clears legal and political obstacles to a related project, sources familiar with the talks said, piling more pressure on the island nation. Heavily indebted Sri Lanka needs the money, but payment for China's interests in Hambantota port could be held up by several weeks or months, the sources added.

After signing an agreement last December, state-run China Merchants Port Holdings had been expected to buy an 80 percent stake in the southern port before an initial target date of Jan. 7.

Beijing also has a separate understanding with Colombo to develop a 15,000-acre industrial zone in the same area, a deal that Sri Lanka was hoping to finalize later. But Colombo's plans to sell the stake and acquire land for the industrial zone have run into stiff domestic opposition, backed by trade unions and former President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

A legislator close to Rajapaksa is also challenging the government's plans in court. Now Beijing has linked the signing of the port deal with an agreement to develop the industrial zone, saying it would hold off on both until Colombo resolved domestic issues, officials on both sides of the talks said.

"China has said that when they start the port, they want the land also," Sri Lankan Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake said, although he added that China had not made it a precondition.

Yi Xianliang, Chinese ambassador to Sri Lanka, said the two deals were related. "If we just have the port and no industrial zone, what is the use of the

port? So you must have the port and you must have the industrial zone," he said. A source familiar with China's thinking said it may wait until May, when Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe visits Beijing, to sign both deals.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said the Hambantota project was important for both countries. "As far as we understand, at present the project is still progressing steadily," he told reporters in Beijing.

The previously unreported setback for Sri Lanka suggests Beijing is digging in its heels as it negotiates its global "One Belt, One Road" initiative to open up new land and sea routes for Chinese goods.

Speed bumps, mounting debts

President Maithripala Sirisena is struggling to contain popular opposition to land acquisition for the huge Chinese industrial zone, including from Rajapaksa, who remains an influential opposition legislator.

The deal for the port development and industrial zone has also been challenged in court, which means it is stuck at least until the next hearing on March 3.

Asked whether the agreement would be delayed until the court had ruled, Yi, the Chinese ambassador, said: "Oh yes. We will follow the rule of law. We have the patience to wait." Rajapaksa's role, the court case and violent protests by people afraid they could be evicted from their land underlined how Beijing does not always get its own way even in countries that badly need investment.

Sri Lanka wants Chinese money to

help alleviate its debt burden; the government had expected to have the proceeds from the stake sale within six months of signing the agreement before Jan. 7.

Sri Lanka has been under pressure from the International Monetary Fund to cut its deficit, shore up foreign exchange reserves and increase tax revenues as part of a \$1.5 billion loan agreement struck in 2016. At least part of the money from the port deal would have gone toward paying down some of the more expensive loans on the government's books, some of which are from China, a senior Sri Lankan government official said.

Hambantota port and a nearby airport were built from 2008 by the Rajapaksa government with the help of \$1.7 billion in Chinese loans. When Sirisena unseated Rajapaksa in an upset victory in 2015, he froze all Chinese investments, alleging unfair dealings by his predecessor.

Sirisena eventually negotiated a new deal with the Chinese government that involved the stake sale and further plans for the Chinese to develop an industrial zone.

The Chinese government expects to invest about \$5 billion to develop the area within 3-5 years. Sirisena also agreed to give land to the Chinese on a 99-year lease. The terms did not go down well with port trade unions, which have asked the government to reduce the Chinese stake to 65 percent and lease period to 50 years. Hundreds of protesters clashed with police in January when a demonstration against the planned industrial zone turned violent. —Reuters

GOOGLE INTERNET BALLOON PLAN SNAGGED IN SRI LANKA

COLOMBO: Google's venture to beam the internet to remote areas of the world via balloon has hit a legal snag in Sri Lanka that could see the project abandoned on the island, a minister said yesterday.

"Project Loon" uses roaming balloons to beam internet coverage and planned to connect Sri Lanka's 21 million people to the web, even those in remote connectivity black spots. But just a year after testing began in Sri Lanka regulators have been unable to allocate Google a radio frequency for the airborne venture without breaching international regulations. Communications minister Harin Fernando said the Geneva-based International Telecommunications Union (ITU) was opposed to Google using the same frequency as Sri Lanka's public broadcasters to provide its internet.

"It boils down to a legal issue," Fernando told reporters in Colombo.

"The government as well as Google are lobbying the ITU, but if we fail there's a risk Google will go to another country that is not bound by these rules." Google's giant helium-filled balloons act as floating mobile base stations, beaming high-speed internet to areas beyond the reach of ground-based telecommunication towers. The first of three balloons—which roam the stratosphere at twice the altitude of commercial aircraft—entered Sri Lankan air space a year ago after being going airborne in South America.

The government and Google planned a joint venture where Colombo would receive a 25 percent stake, without any capital investment, for sharing its cellular spectrum with the project.

One of the balloons was found in a Sri Lankan tea plantation after its maiden test flight last year, although authorities described it as a controlled landing. About one-third of Sri Lankans have regular access to the internet, a figure expected to swell through the Loon project.

Sri Lanka was the first country in South Asia to introduce mobile phones in 1989, and also the regional frontrunner when it unveiled a 4G network three years ago. —AP

PAKISTAN RAIDS HIDEOUT OF MILITANTS; SIX DEAD

LAHORE: Pakistani counter-terrorism police raided a militant hideout and killed six suspected members of a Taliban faction that has launched a new campaign of violence against the government, police said yesterday.

Since Monday, several bomb attacks across the country have shattered a period of improving security, underscoring how militant groups still pose a threat in the nuclear-armed country of 180 million people. The Counter Terrorism Department in Punjab province said its officers surrounded a hideout of the Pakistani Taliban's Jamaat-ur-Ahrar faction in the city of Multan late on Wednesday and ordered the suspects inside to surrender.

"But the terrorists started firing at the raiding party and threw explosives," a spokesman for the department, who the unit does not identify for security reasons, said in a statement.

Six militants were killed while three or four escaped under cover of darkness, the department added. Two hand grenades, two automatic rifles and two pistols were recovered. Police acted after getting information that the militants were planning to launch attacks on "vital installations" and the government in the area. The militant faction claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack near the Punjab provincial assembly in the city of Lahore on Monday that killed 13 people and wounded more than 80. The Jamaat-ur-Ahrar said the attack was the beginning of a new campaign of violence against the government, security forces, the judiciary and secular political parties.

Since then, militants have killed two bomb-disposal officers in the western city of Quetta and a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a government office near the northwestern city of Peshawar on Wednesday, killing five people.

Also on Wednesday, a suicide bomber on a motor bike attacked a group of judges in a van in Peshawar, killing their driver. The attacks have underlined the threat militants pose to the government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif despite an army offensive launched in 2014 to push them out of their strongholds near the Afghan border. —Reuters

COURT JAILS ONE, FREES TWO OVER 2005 DELHI BOMB BLASTS

NEW DELHI: An Indian court sentenced one person to 10 years' imprisonment but acquitted two others yesterday over bomb blasts that ripped through New Delhi in 2005, killing 62 people and wounding many more. New Delhi's Patiala House Court sentenced Tariq Ahmed Dar to a decade in jail for his involvement in the explosions that tore through two crowded markets and a bus ahead of the Hindu festival of lights, Diwali, in October 2005.

But the court said that since Dar had already served 12 years behind bars while awaiting the outcome of his case, he could walk free. It also let off two of his alleged accomplices, Mohammed

Hussain Fazili and Mohammed Rafiq Shah, citing lack of evidence from the prosecution.

"The court acquitted two of the three accused in the case and the third one was convicted for unlawful activities," Sushil Bajaj, the lawyer for Fazili, told reporters after the hearing.

"Unless there are any other pending cases against them, the court said they should be released from jail forthwith." All three were reportedly charged with waging war against the state, conspiring, collecting arms, murder and attempt to murder in 2008.

Apart from the 62 dead, 210 people were

wounded in the blasts that hit minutes apart, setting off blazes and turning shops at Delhi's Sarojini Nagar and Paharganj markets into heaps of twisted metal and broken glass. It remains unclear who carried out the bomb blasts, with a little-known group Inquilab (Revolution) claiming responsibility at the time. But New Delhi suspected Islamic guerrillas from Kashmir behind the blasts a claim rejected by Islamabad and pro-Pakistan militant groups including Lashkar-e-Taiba which has been involved in a number of deadly attacks in India.

Kashmir is divided between India and Pakistan but claimed in its entirety by both. — AFP

BIG FAT INDIAN WEDDINGS IN CROSSHAIRS OF THRIFTY MP

NEW DELHI: Extravagant Indian weddings in palaces featuring elephants, foreign dance troupes and seven-course meals could become a thing of the past if one politician fed up with the excess gets her way. Rankled by the obscene sums splashed out on festivities, Ranjeet Ranjan from the opposition Congress Party has proposed a bill that would cap the entertainment budget and redirect any extras to India's poor.

Life savings are poured into weddings in India, with price tags up to \$75,000 not uncommon for affluent urban families hosting sometimes thousands of guests for sumptuous celebrations lasting for days.

The new proposal might force some families to rethink the fireworks and chandeliers, with a requirement that weddings exceeding 500,000 rupees (\$7,500) contribute 10 percent of the overall cost to poorer Indians for their own nuptials. Ranjan—who made headlines herself last year for riding a Harley Davidson to parliament—said growing up with six sisters she was troubled by the pressure on her parents to spend big. "I have seen people spend two million rupees (\$30,000) just on dinner for wedding guests. People boast that we will serve 15 types of sweets brought from four states," she told AFP yesterday. "These days marriages are more about showing off your wealth. Why should poor families be put under pressure to spend so much?"

Her private members bill has been listed for discussion when parliament convenes on March 9, but such proposals must clear many hurdles to become law.

Opulent weddings attract intrigue and disgust in India, where poor families can bankrupt themselves trying to meet the expectations of relatives and friends. A mining tycoon lavished \$75 million on his daughter's wedding in November even as India was reeling from a painful cash shortage caused by a ban on high-value banknotes. Guests received their invitations on digital screens with moving images of the couple, who tied the knot in a royal palace knees-up complete with dancers flown in from Brazil.

The ostentatious affair, covered closely in the press, provoked outrage as banks ran out of cash and Indians struggled to pay for their basic needs. — AFP



NEW DELHI: Newly-married Indian man Rohit Aggarwal (right) is watched by relatives as he leads his wife Shally Aggarwal (second right) to their home after visiting a temple in New Delhi yesterday. —AFP



CHENNAI: All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party leader Edappadi Palanisamy (C) gestures as he pays his respects at the memorial for former state chief minister Jayalalithaa Jayaram after being sworn in as the Chief Minister of the state of Tamil Nadu in Chennai yesterday. —AFP

JAILED LEADER'S ALLY TAKES REINS IN SOUTH INDIA STATE

PALANISAMY MUST SEEK TRUST VOTE IN 15 DAYS

NEW DELHI: An ally of disgraced Indian politician VK Sasikala was yesterday appointed the next leader of Tamil Nadu state, ending a weeks-long succession war marked by bitter in-fighting and plot twists. Edappadi Palanisamy took the reins of the ruling party after Sasikala, who was on the verge of becoming chief minister of the southern state, was spectacularly hauled off to prison for graft.

She had already been nominated for the top job before she was convicted Tuesday of amassing illegal assets worth \$10 million, barring her from holding office for a decade. Palanisamy, 63, was cleared for the top job after receiving Sasikala's blessing and a majority vote from the ruling All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam par-

ty. "The governor has also requested the chief minister designate Edappadi K. Palanisamy seek the vote of confidence of the assembly within fifteen days," the governor's office said in a statement.

Palanisamy, who served as a senior minister in previous governments, will be sworn in later Thursday. He emerged as the frontrunner after Tuesday's bombshell court verdict shattered Sasikala's political ambitions.

Tamil Nadu, one of India's most prosperous states, was plunged into political crisis after its long-serving chief minister Jayalalithaa Jayaram died suddenly in December. Her close aide Sasikala—a one-time video cassette seller who has never held political office or stood for election—emerged as

the heir apparent until a rebellion by an aspirational party colleague blocked her ascent.

She skipped Tuesday's court hearing and instead stayed at a Chennai resort with several dozen legislators over fears her opponents' camp might try and poach them before her investiture.

The corruption case dates back to the late 1990s, when Jayalalithaa and Sasikala were accused of profiting from the chief minister's office and acquiring wealth beyond their income.

They were jointly accused of illegally amassing bungalows, luxury cars, tea estates and vast quantities of gold worth the equivalent of \$10 million. Sasikala had spent nearly a month in the same Bangalore prison in 2014 before being let out on bail. — AFP

UN SEEKS RESETTLEMENT OF ROHINGYA REFUGEES

COX'S BAZAR, Bangladesh: The United Nations' refugee agency has asked Bangladesh to allow it to negotiate with the United States, Canada and some European countries to resettle around 1,000 Rohingya Muslims living in the South Asian nation, a senior official at the agency said.

Tens of thousands of Rohingya live in Bangladesh after fleeing Buddhist-majority Myanmar since the early 1990s, and their number has been swelled by an estimated 69,000 escaping an army crackdown in northern Rakhine State in recent months. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) would push for resettlement of those most in need, despite growing resistance in some developed countries, particularly the United States under President Donald Trump, UNHCR's Bangladesh representative, Shinji Kubo, told Reuters yesterday.

"UNHCR will continue to work with the authorities concerned, including in the United States," Kubo said. "Regardless of the change in government or government policies, I think

UNHCR has a clear responsibility to pursue a protection-oriented resettlement program."

Kubo said 1,000 Rohingya refugees had been identified as priorities for resettlement on medical grounds or because they have been separated from their family members living abroad. "Resettlement will always be a challenging thing because only a small number of resettlement opportunities are being allocated by the international community at the moment," Kubo said in an interview. "But it's our job to try to consult with respective countries based on the protection and humanitarian needs of these individuals."

HT Imam, a political adviser to Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, said the resettlement proposal was "unrealistic" due to reluctance in the United States and Europe to take further Muslim refugees. Reuters reported this month that officials at an Australian immigration centre in Papua New Guinea were increasing pressure on asylum seekers to return to their home countries voluntarily, including offering large sums of money, amid

fears a deal for the United States to take refugees had fallen through.

Canada, Australia and the United States were the top providers of asylum to Rohingya Muslims who came to Bangladesh from Myanmar before Dhaka stopped the program around 2012. A Bangladesh government official said it was feared the program would encourage more people from Myanmar to use it as a transit country to seek asylum in the West.

Canada has said it would welcome those fleeing persecution, terror and war, after Trump put a four-month hold on allowing refugees from seven Muslim-majority countries into the United States, an order since suspended by a U.S. district judge.

Hoping for access

The UNHCR supports around 34,000 refugees living in two government-registered camps in the Bangladesh coastal district of Cox's Bazar, but a greater number of Rohingya live in makeshift settlements near-

by, unregistered and officially ineligible to receive international aid.

Kubo said he had asked Bangladesh to give the UN access to all the refugees who have recently arrived, adding that UNHCR and other international agencies were also willing to provide aid to poor Bangladeshis living near the refugee settlements to counter local resentment at the influx.

Hasina adviser Imam said providing aid to the new refugees and its citizens was the responsibility of the government. Myanmar said late on Wednesday that a security operation that began after nine police officers were killed in attacks on border security posts on Oct. 9 had now ended.

A report released by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on Feb. 3 gave accounts of mass killings and gang rapes by troops during the operation, which it said probably constituted crimes against humanity. Two UN sources have separately told Reuters that more than 1,000 Rohingya may have been killed in the crackdown. —Reuters



This file picture taken on August 4, 2016 shows three orphaned orangutan babies at the International Animal Rescue centre outside the city of Ketapang in West Kalimantan. —AFP

INDONESIAN ORANGUTAN BRUTALLY KILLED, EATEN

THREE MALE WORKERS ARRESTED

JAKARTA: A critically endangered Bornean orangutan has been shot dead, hacked to pieces and eaten by workers after straying onto an Indonesian palm oil plantation, police and activists said yesterday.

Police have formally named three male suspects in the brutal killing in Kapuas Hulu district, in the Indonesian part of Borneo island, while another seven are being questioned as witnesses to the crime. Authorities launched an investigation after media ran stories showing gruesome pictures of the slaughtered ape.

The workers were detained after police found orangutan bones and dried meat in a cupboard at a plantation workers' camp, in a remote part of the jungle-clad island,

local police chief Jukiman Situmorang told AFP. He said the three workers named as suspects stand accused of "shooting, hacking, chopping, cooking and eating the orangutan" on January 27. The men could be jailed for up to five years if found guilty of breaking laws that protect the animals.

Environmental group the Centre for Orangutan Protection (COP) condemned the killing and urged police to target the company that runs the plantation as well as the workers. The head of COP, Hardi Baktiantoro, criticized palm oil companies for introducing rules that see workers punished if there is any damage to plants. This means they view orangutans, who often stray onto plantations accidentally and cause damage, as pests and attack them.

He also said authorities should never have given permission for a plantation in the area: "Why would they give a permit in an area that is an orangutan habitat?"

The rapid expansion of palm oil plantations on Borneo has been blamed for destroying orangutans' natural jungle habitat. They are also attacked by villagers who view them as pests and targeted by poachers to be sold as pets.

The habitat of Bornean orangutans has dwindled by over 50 percent in the past 20 years, and its population has fallen by more than 50 percent over the past 60 years, according to the WWF.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature classifies the animal as critically endangered. —AFP

INDONESIA DIPLOMATS MEET WITH WOMAN ARRESTED IN KIM KILLING

JAKARTA: Indonesian diplomats have met with a woman arrested in Malaysia for suspected involvement in the killing of the North Korean leader's half brother and confirmed she is an Indonesian citizen, officials said yesterday.

Authorities have identified her as Siti Aisyah, 25, originally from Serang in Banten, a province that neighbors the Indonesian capital, Jakarta. She was arrested by Malaysian police early yesterday.

Indonesian Immigration Office spokesman Agung Sampurno said that officials from the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur met with the woman in Selangor state, where she has been imprisoned, and ensured she was safe. "They were allowed to see her but cannot make any questions," said Sampurno. "However, the team can confirm that Aisyah is Indonesian."

He said a passport ID page published by Indonesian media is "the same as the passport held by her."

Lalu Muhammad Iqbal, director of Indonesian Citizen Protection at the Foreign Ministry, said Indonesia would ensure Aisyah's rights are protected and that she has legal assistance. Malaysian police have now arrested two women and one man in the death of Kim Jong Nam, who was reportedly poisoned on Monday by a pair of female assassins as he waited for a flight at the Kuala Lumpur airport.

Malaysian police said the first woman they arrested had Vietnamese travel documents. Vietnamese Foreign Ministry's Deputy Spokeswoman Nguyen Phuong Tra said in a statement that Vietnamese authorities were closely coordinating with Malaysia on the case. Kumparan, an Indonesian news portal, said Aisyah lived in the Tambora neighborhood in western Jakarta for about 10 years before moving to Malaysia in 2013 along with her husband and children. It cited interviews with former neighbors and said she had returned to Indonesia in 2014 to arrange a divorce. —AP

THAI POLICE RAID TEMPLE OF BUDDHIST SECT

PATHUM THANI, Thailand: Thai police raided the head temple of a controversial Buddhist sect yesterday but failed to find and arrest the abbot, who faces criminal charges over accepting \$40 million in embezzled money.

The action followed several earlier failed attempts to seize Phra Dhammajayo, 72, head of the Dhammakaya sect. Police were previously thwarted when crowds of monks and followers blocked the way, risking a violent confrontation. The prime minister of Thailand's military government, Prayuth Chan-ocha, this time invoked an emergency order declaring the area around the temple a temporary "restricted area" to stop people from entering. —AP

Friday Times

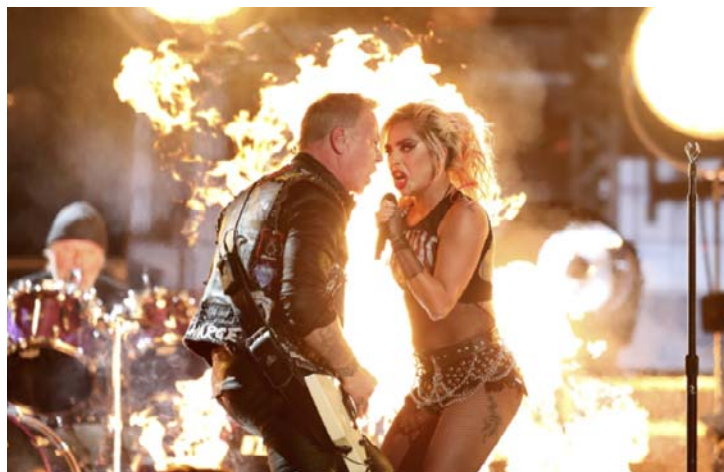
Lifestyle

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2017

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The Delpozo collection is modeled during Fashion Week, Wednesday, Feb 15, 2017, in New York. — AP

Ranye West puts
hijab-wearing
model on catwalk



Lady Gaga, right, and James Hetfield of "Metallica" perform "Moth Into Flame" at the 59th annual Grammy Awards on Sunday in Los Angeles. — AP

Grammy producer apologizes for Metallica, Caesar glitches

The longtime producer of the Grammy Awards is offering apologies to Metallica and Shirley Caesar after a technical glitch and a misprint marred their inclusion on the show. The mic for Metallica's James Hetfield wasn't initially working when the band took the stage to perform with Lady Gaga, and Caesar, a lifetime achievement award honoree, was misidentified during the televised ceremony when a photo of another gospel star, CeCe Winans, was shown instead of her during a montage clip.

"These kinds of things are horrible when they happen," Ken Ehrlich said in an interview with The Associated Press on Wednesday. "That's one of the risks of live television." The Metallica glitch, for which the band has blamed a dead microphone, resulted in Hetfield making a decision to improvise and use Lady Gaga's mic. Ehrlich has heard a different story from his crew about the problem.

"My guys say that the mic cable was connected," he said. "My guys' theory was that ... one of the extras (on stage) accidentally kicked out the cable that went to the mic."

Still, the end result was Hetfield's singing couldn't be heard for the first part of the performance. "Obviously, we apologize to the band," Ehrlich said, calling the mishap "awful." He added that he's worked with Metallica

for years, so to see that happen was personally upsetting to him: "You hurt." In the case of Caesar, the gospel legend, Ehrlich had a better understanding of what happened. When preparing for a clip to run of her for the show, footage of a classic Caesar, Winans and Whitney Houston performance was used, and Winans was mistakenly shown.

Ehrlich said he usually checks such footage but didn't get a chance to this year, since he was busy with the show and the Recording Academy's tribute to the Bee Gees, which taped in Los Angeles on Tuesday and will air at a later date. "We obviously want to apologize to Shirley Caesar," he said. "It's unfortunate that happened."

Caesar released a statement Wednesday thanking Ehrlich for the apology and added, "these things happen sometimes." Ehrlich was also frustrated that the mistakes have overshadowed some of the great performances that occurred on the show, including Beyonce, Bruno Mars and Adele, who had her own hiccup when she restarted her tribute to George Michael. "When you do a three-and-a-half hour live show, it's fraught with danger," he said. "It was an adventurous show in many ways." Ehrlich has produced the Grammys for years and has also produced other events, including the Emmy Awards. — AP

Dr Luke email shows criticism of Kesha's weight in legal case

Music producer Dr Luke said in 2012 that musicians were unwilling to give pop singer Kesha their songs to perform because of her weight, according to court documents filed this week amid the singer's case to get out of her recording contract. Kesha, 29, has been involved in a three-year battle to get out of a multi-album recording deal with Sony Music and pop hitmaker Dr Luke, whom she had accused of rape and emotional abuse during the early stages of her career.

The case has grabbed attention for shining a light on the behind-the-scenes struggles that female artists often face in the music industry, and Kesha has gained support from pop powerhouses such as Taylor Swift, Adele and Lady Gaga. Dr Luke has repeatedly denied the claims and has counter-sued for defamation. Documents filed in New York state court this week show an email chain between Kesha's manager Monica Cornia and Dr. Luke, whose real name is Lukasz Gottwald, in which he chastised the singer for breaking her juice diet by drinking soda and eating turkey.

"We all get concerned when she is breaking her diet plan... we have seen it happen multiple times ... almost every day," Dr. Luke wrote to Cornia on June 28, 2012. "It is also double concerning when the A list songwriters and producers are reluctant to give Kesha their songs because of her weight." Another email chain from May 2012 outlines a dispute between the singer and the producer over the lyrics of a song.

Dr Luke's lawyer, Christine Lepera, said in a statement on Wednesday the emails don't "disclose the larger record of evidence showing the bad faith of Kesha Sebert and her representatives which is greatly damaging to them." She added the documents show "the tremendous support that Dr Luke provided Kesha regarding artistic and personal issues, including Kesha's own concerns over her weight."



Pop singer Kesha

Representatives for Kesha declined to comment to Reuters. Kesha filed a civil lawsuit in 2014 in Los Angeles against Dr Luke with numerous allegations including that the producer's insults to her appearance had caused her to develop bulimia nervosa, for which she underwent treatment. The "Tik Tok" singer later dropped the lawsuit in California but her lawyers said she would continue her case in New York to get out of her contract. A New York judge last year denied Kesha's bid to extricate herself from her recording contract, which sparked an emotional #FreeKesha campaign by the singer's fans on social media. — Reuters

Carlos Santana says praise for Adele wasn't dig at Beyonce

Carlos Santana says he was only trying to congratulate Adele on her big night at the Grammys when he said Beyonce "is very beautiful to look at" but "not a singer, singer." Santana told the Australian Associated Press that Adele can "sing, sing."

He said Adele "doesn't bring all the dancers and props, she can just stand there and she just stood there and sang the song and that's it, and this is why she wins." Santana clarified his stance on Facebook Tuesday, writing that his "intent was to congratulate Adele" and that his comment about Beyonce "was regretfully taken out of context."

He adds that he has "the utmost respect" for Beyonce. Adele beat out Beyonce for the top awards during Sunday's ceremony. — AP



In this January 26, 2003, file photo, Beyonce and guitarist Carlos Santana perform for the pre-game show before the start of Super Bowl XXXVII in San Diego. — AP

Queen Latifah to be honored as an entertainment icon



Queen Latifah will get the royal treatment at the upcoming American Black Film Festival Honors. The Oscar-nominat-

ed actress is set to receive the Entertainment Icon award at this year's ceremony, to be held in Los Angeles on Friday. The star of "Star" on Fox says she is honored to receive the award. "It means so much to me coming from fellow entertainers and my peers."

Queen Latifah got her start as a rapper almost three decades ago. Besides her Oscar nod for "Chicago," she's also been nominated twice in Emmy acting categories and won a Golden Globe. The American Black Film Festival Honors will air on BET and Centric at 8 pm EST on Feb 22. Other honorees include Terrence Howard. Actress Regina Hall will host the event. — AP



File photo shows Justin Bieber performs at the Billboard Music Awards in Las Vegas. — AP

In new report, man claims Bieber punched him in June

A Las Vegas man who says Justin Bieber assaulted him in Cleveland eight months ago has filed a police report about the fracas. Thirty-four-year-old Rodney Cannon claims in the report filed Tuesday with Cleveland police that the pop star took his sunglasses inside a hotel after a Cleveland Cavaliers playoff game on June 8. He says in the report that Bieber and possibly a bodyguard then

punched him. He also says he wrestled Bieber to the ground to restrain him.

Bieber's publicist didn't immediately return a message seeking comment on the accusations. Cannon referred questions Wednesday about the encounter - and why he waited to file the report - to an attorney who also didn't immediately return a message. A Cleveland police spokesman says the episode is under investigation. — AP

At Berlin fest, Palestinian film tackles prison trauma

H haunted by his own time behind bars, Palestinian director Raed Andoni recreates a notorious Israeli interrogation center—and has ex-prisoners re-enact experiences in a bid to set their demons free. In the running for best documentary at the Berlin film festival, Andoni's "Istiyah Ashbah" (Ghost Hunting) examines the rarely documented collective trauma suffered by former Palestinian prisoners. "In Palestinian society, to survive detention and interrogation is like a rite of passage, you either come out a hero or you come out totally broken," the celebrated Ramallah-based filmmaker told AFP this week after the film's Berlinale premiere.

"And then people compare notes: how many days without sleep? How long in solitary?" the 45-year-old said. Having been imprisoned himself in his youth, he said he remained "haunted by flashbacks" such as the sound of doors slamming shut and the feeling of a fabric bag being pulled over his head. Shot over seven weeks in a hangar in the West Bank town of Ramallah, the film brings together around a dozen former detainees of all ages and backgrounds, who are asked to recreate the notorious Russian Compound jail in west Jerusalem from memory.

Role play

The participants rebuild the detention center in painstaking detail, from the size of their cells to the color of the tiles and even the pulley they say was used to lift inmates off the ground during what they described as torture sessions. Slowly they bring the place of their nightmares back to life—and as the walls go up, the memories come bubbling back to the surface, forcing the men to confront their memories and breaking taboos in the process. "I use everything I can in the film to help them dig into their subconscious," Andoni said, explaining that he wanted to peel away layer after layer of repression to find "the ghost inside".

For some of the ex-detainees it was too much and they walked away from the project. "I told everyone from the first day of shooting that you have the right to quit," he said, adding that there were psychologists on set to provide emotional support. His quest to push the men to their limits makes for uncomfortable viewing at times, particularly in the drawn-out torture scenes when the former inmates play the roles of Israeli interrogators or prison wardens.

Having already explored the topic of trauma in his first feature-length film "Fix Me", which delves into his own psychoanalysis sessions, Andoni said this time he wanted to face the painful memories of his detention through the eyes of others. The experience has been cathartic, he said. "When I think about it now I (think) back more to the movie, and that was the idea," he said. His young assistant director Wadee Hanani, who was held at the Russian Compound detention center for 45 days in 2009, said the film had helped him find some closure as well.

"I haven't yet digested everything that happened, I am on the way, I am more connected. But I need time." Israeli NGOs have accused Israel's Shin Bet domestic security agency of abusing Palestinians under interrogation in a manner so systematic it points to official endorsement. The country has also come under fire at the United Nations over allegations of prisoner abuse—charges it rejects. "Ghost Hunting" is being screened in the Panorama sidebar section of the Berlinale film festival. The award for best documentary will be handed out on February 18. — AFP



File photo shows young baseball fans watch as Texas Rangers center fielder Delino DeShields throws the ball away during the team's spring training baseball game against the Kansas City Royals in Surprise, Ariz. —AP photos

Spring break ideas

From beaches to Europe to new museums

Spring break is right around the corner. For some travelers, that means seeking out beaches and sunshine. Others may be tempted by Europe, which has become more affordable for Americans, or by spring skiing.

Airfare, destinations and bookings

Airfares vary considerably this time of year. Travelers not tied to a holiday week may find flights are cheaper at other times. Most colleges schedule a week off in March, but family vacations often revolve around school breaks for Easter (April 16 this year) or Passover (beginning April 10). Booking.com's data shows that travel March 18-April 30 will be 2 percent more expensive overall than last year, but a few domestic destinations are cheaper, including New Orleans, 8 percent cheaper than last spring; Miami Beach, 4 percent cheaper; and Tampa, Florida, 9 percent cheaper. And take a look at Europe: A strong US dollar has made vacations there much more affordable for Americans. Expedia's top 10 destinations for March and April are Cancun, Mexico, followed by Orlando, Florida; Las Vegas; New York; Miami; Los Angeles; London; Punta Cana, Dominican Republic; Phoenix and Paris.

American Express Travel's top five international destinations are London, Cancun, Rome, Paris and Tel Aviv. But American Express reports a few other spots spiking compared with last year, with spring bookings to Iceland up 150 percent, to Auckland, New Zealand, up 129 percent, to Madrid up 114 percent, to Casablanca, Morocco, 103 percent, and Zurich, 101 percent. AAA's bookings have three Florida destinations - Orlando, Fort Lauderdale and Miami - in the top five domestic destinations, along with Anaheim, California (home to Disneyland), and Las Vegas. Internationally, AAA's top five are Punta Cana, Rome, Jamaica, London and the Bahamas.

At StudentUniverse, which caters to travelers 18-26, top spring break destinations are London; Los Angeles; New York; Miami; Paris; Madrid; Orlando; Barcelona, Spain; Cancun; San Juan, Puerto Rico; Tokyo and Dublin. Debbie Sebastian, a Travel Leaders agent in Danville, Kentucky, says she's seeing lots of "groups traveling with Punta Cana being the most popular choice this year. The flight times and charter options make it a great option." March is typically the Miami airport's busiest month for domestic arrivals, with 1.08 million passengers in March 2016. Karen Malone, with Travel Leaders in Woodbury, Minnesota, says in addition to the Dominican Republic, Jamaica is also proving popular, with both destinations offering new resort choices. "We here in the frozen North are attracted to those turquoise blue waters and white sand beaches," she said. Cancun's always big for spring break, but it's not just a destination for the pina colada-and-party crowd. "Cancun also serves as the gateway for more quiet environs like Isla Mujeres, which is growing in popularity, as well as the entire Riviera Maya and all points directly south of Cancun, including Playa del Carmen," said Travel Leaders spokesman Steven Loucks. The region has all-inclusive resorts for every kind of traveler -

couples, families, multigenerational groups.

Some ski resorts schedule fun events to mark the end of winter, from concerts to costume contests and parties with a beach-and-barbecue theme. Vail, Colorado's Spring Back to Vail festival is April 14-16 and includes the World Pond Skimming Championships, where skiers land in the water. Breckenridge, Colorado, has a Spring Fever festival, April 1-23. Baseball fans often schedule trips to catch their favorite MLB teams getting ready for opening day. Late February through April 1, the Cactus League plays in the Phoenix area, the Grapefruit League plays in Florida.

Culture cultures

Not everybody hits the beach for spring break and not every family heads to theme parks. Wendy Perrin, founder of the travel planning site WendyPerrin.com, says her best spring vacations with two boys have been to Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg, Virginia; Paris; and a Panama Canal cruise. This year, she's taking the family to Morocco, "to introduce the kids to a completely different culture." If you like visiting museums, note two important openings this spring: the American Writers Museum in Chicago on May 16 and the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia on April 19.

Other noteworthy events include the Whitney Museum of American Art's Biennial 2017 in New York, a contemporary art survey opening March 17; in Kansas City, Missouri, special exhibitions at the National World War I Museum and an April 6 commemoration of the centennial of America's 1917 entry into the war; and at the Dallas Museum of Art, opening March 12, a survey of 200 works of Mexican modern art by Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo and others. A new attraction opens at Graceland in early March, "Elvis Presley's Memphis," with museum exhibits, a stage and more. — AP



In this file photo, a visitor takes pictures of cherry blossom trees in full bloom on the tidal basin in Washington, DC.



RUNWAY DIVERSITY AT KORS, A DESERT OASIS FOR RALPH LAUREN



Michael Kors put plus-size model Ashley Graham and a live orchestra on his runway, and Narciso Rodriguez presented what he called a "no shenanigans" collection - just sleek, impeccable tailoring on clothes constructed to last a lifetime. Some of the latest highlights at New York Fashion Week:

Plus-sized model Ashley Graham struts the Kors runway

To the accompaniment of a live orchestra, Michael Kors presented a diverse runway that included plus-sized model Ashley Graham rocking a charcoal ribbed tank dress with a silver fox shrug, and 43-year-old supermodels Amber Valletta and Carolyn Murphy. "Since the very beginning, I have always thought that my job really ... is dressing a huge variety of people of all ages, different body types, different heights, different

ethnicities," Kors said backstage, just before launching his 36th fall collection. "And (in this show) we have women and men from their teens to their 40s. We have people who are petite, we have people who are curvy, we have people who are tomboys ... Honestly my job is to make everyone look the best they can look."

Kors' collection, which drew Blake Lively, Amanda Peet and Vogue editor Anna Wintour, among others, focused on sensuality this season. "I really kept thinking about the dichotomy that I think people want to feel strong and at the same time when you're feeling strong and powerful you still want to be sexy, but I don't like the idea of overt sexy," he said. "So we're really thinking about sensuality the season. And how do we express that particularly in a way that I think is great for the city streets?" What Kors came up with, he said, was "a sneaky





The Michael Kors collection is modeled during Fashion Week in New York Wednesday. _AP

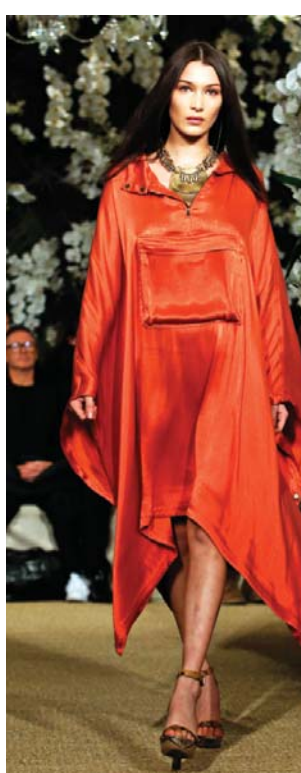


kind of sexiness." Makeup, for example, was minimal. "There's not a miniskirt in sight," he added. "Long sleeves for the most part. But, at the same time, when you walk things unwrap, fringe flies." The collection was heavy on comfy sweaters, camel coats, and colorful furs. But there was also a decent dose of evening glam: A number of items were embedded with crystals, providing their own light source as they traveled down the runway. Celebrity models included Bella Hadid, in a slate-leopard wrap dress, and Kendall Jenner, closing the show in a decidedly glamorous strapless, black fringed dress with black sequin embroidery. Valletta wore a black crepe dress with black and silver embroidery. A 20-piece orchestra was directed by fashion show sound veteran Michel Gaubert. "In my head I guess I'm a bit of a Broadway impresario," Kors said. "I always say that I'd love to produce a Broadway show and I would. I think in so much of today's world, people don't experience the idea of anything live anymore."

Ralph Lauren's oasis getaway

Lauren transformed his Madison Avenue flagship store into an oasis of orchid-adorned walls and treated guests to their scent and the piped-in tweets of birds for a serene show of burnished gold and desert tones that had his models wending their way down a grand staircase through two floors, the crowd tucked away on cozy white couches and chairs. The designer said in a statement that he was inspired by a

"nomadic spirit, an exotic sophistication" contrasting classic shapes with rustic textures. Lauren included gowns and wide-leg trousers of shimmering gold and statement necklaces to match. Other looks included lame gowns that shimmered in metallic prints meant to recall tapestry. He paired some classic silhouettes with python, including towering shoes, and with leopard-printed hair calf. Last September, Lauren offered his collection for immediate purchase and will do so again this time around come Thursday on Madison Avenue, floral walls in place, complete with faux butterflies with wings that move.



The Ralph Lauren collection is modeled during Fashion Week.



Delpozo is true to the brand with structure

Delpozo's craftsmanship on the runway was heavy on architectural dresses, voluminous skirts, curved-pleat peg-leg trousers and inflated sleeves. At Pier 59 Studios on the West Side Highway, couturelike silhouettes seemed to float away in geometric designs under the sounds of xylophones and drums played by musicians on site. Backstage, creative director Josep Font said his fall-winter collection was inspired by Swiss sculptor Max Bill and Hungarian painter Jozsef Rippl-Ronai.

"The colors Rippl-Ronai uses and his subtle way of painting impacted me," he said. "I think this collection is maybe a bit tougher than previous ones, with darker colors. More wintry." The Spaniard dressed some of his models in sweaters that extended into tight-fitting head coverings. They also wore Delpozo's usual contrasting fabrics, which include chiffons, feather-light silks, jacquards and structured satins. "The design is very complicated. These are clothes that are apparently simple but there's a lot of work behind them," Font said.

Bibhu Mohapatra inspired by 'Venus in Fur'

The Indian-born, New York-based designer, with pal Salman Rushdie on his front row, spoke on the runway to a strong trend for the season: complicated, often large and usually interesting sleeves. His overall inspiration: The character Wanda from the two-person David Ives play "Venus in Fur," in

a celebration of women's empowerment and independence. Always elegant, some of his looks included mismatched sleeves, one a solid color and the other with black embellishment carried over into the rest of one dress, for instance. Another included puffs of emerald green at the shoulders and was worn with fur down the arms.

Some of Mohapatra's necks were equally intriguing. A halter anchored around the neck and on one side, for example. He worked in beading and bold color, but included some black looks and other neutrals, along with some tulle trains. A bugle-beaded embroidered black silk twill dress was worn over a beaded white organza top. One wine silk velvet and chiffon gown had a pleated train. There was something for the sparkly party girl in all-around, multicolored embellished in a striped designs.

We've seen some politics on the runway this season. Where does Mohapatra stand? "Absolutely. It's there," he said. "You know I'm an immigrant, I'm a minority and this is my country, so for me and the people that I love and work with, live with and are friends with, people I know, I am for them. And if they're fighting, their fight is my fight and in whatever way I can I will join that force. I will because we all have our individual characteristics, our heritage and we all need to come to terms with that, celebrate it and make more of it and that's how we are defined."— AP





The Delpozo collection is modeled during Fashion Week, Wednesday in New York.

Kanye West puts hijab-wearing model on catwalk

Rap superstar turned designer Kanye West broke boundaries by putting a hijab-wearing Somali-American model on the New York catwalk Wednesday, unveiling a new, more adult Yeezy Season 5 collection. Halima Aden, 19, made her runway debut on day seven of New York fashion week at one of the hottest and most exclusive tickets in town—West's at times experimental collaboration with Adidas. She walked in front of West's reality star wife Kim Kardashian and Vogue editor-in-chief Anna Wintour not long after West was slammed by fans for meeting then president-elect Donald Trump in December.

Born in a Kenyan refugee camp and now a US citizen, her appearance in such a high-profile show will propel her into a much bigger league than did the headlines she first made last year—when she became the first woman to compete in a Miss Minnesota beauty pageant in a hijab. Style bible Vogue said her appearance made her the show's "most talked-about new face" and credited her with starting a "meaningful conversation" by proudly representing Muslim women at fashion week. While finding looks that meet her required modesty can be challenging, Aden told Vogue that so far her experiences had been positive.

"My goal is to send a message to Muslim women and young women everywhere that it's okay to break stereotypes and be yourself," the magazine's website quoted her as saying. "I haven't received any pressure to be anything other than myself," she told Vogue, "and for that, I am so grateful." The Season 5 show saw West apparently bounce back from a reported mental breakdown as his family was still recuperating after Kardashian was robbed at gunpoint in Paris in October. And after a fiasco last season, which saw one model collapse due to extreme heat, West bucked the trend and refused to broadcast it live.

It was a radical departure for the 39-year-old whose shows have been over the top—presenting at locales from Madison Square Garden to New York's Roosevelt Island—since he started his fashion line two years ago. But on Wednesday his latest

collaboration with Adidas was shown in a more traditional, stripped-down industrial space in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood, in an area along the Hudson River used by other designers.

Guests were warned not to use phones, take pictures or videos, and not to post anything on social media—but of course, those warnings appeared on social media anyway, as

did a few photos. The clothes departed a bit from his usual sportswear, though that influence was still present. Denim hit the Yeezy catwalk for the first time, in the form of high-waisted jeans, shirts and jackets. Coats in leather or fur put the label into another sphere, as did an anthracite gray blouse with a decidedly feminine cut. — AFP



A hijab-wearing Somali-American model on the New York catwalk wearing clothing by Kanye West, is projected on a giant screen during the unveiling of the Yeezy Season 5 collection during Fashion Week in New York.



Models in clothing by Kanye West, is projected on a giant screen during the unveiling of the Yeezy Season 5 collection during Fashion Week.

THIS SWEET POTATO AND CARROT DISH SPARKLES WITH VINAIGRETTE

By MELISSA D'ARABIAN

Starchy sides are a mainstay of the classic American dinner. It's easy to get complacent and rely on a trusty, if unimaginative, rotation of mealtime regulars: Rice, potatoes, noodles. The problem with serving essentially the same (white) thing over and over is that we are missing an opportunity to bring a variety of nutrients to the table in that starchy side. And we are missing out on the joys of new colors and flavors if we just stick to the stuff that looks and tastes remarkable similar. So why not add a few colorful and interesting options to the dinner starch repertoire?

Sweet potatoes are a great start, but also consider vegetables like peas, corn, winter squashes (such as spaghetti, acorn and butternut), and sweet root vegetables like carrots and parsnips as potential stand-ins for rice or pasta. One of my favorite ways to prepare these starchy sides in colder months is to toss them in a quick vinaigrette and then roast. The vinaigrette can be quite simple: Even vinegar, salt and pepper and a bit of oil will perk up the flavor.

My recipe today brings together both a starch and a root vegetable. Red-fleshed sweet potatoes (often called "yams" in American supermarkets) and carrots are tossed in a soy sauce and rice vinegar marinade, which caramelizes beautifully in the oven. The resulting side dish is less Asian than the ingredients would suggest, and it marries perfectly with roasted chicken, grilled fish, or alongside spicy lentils or just a hearty salad if you are eating vegetarian.

The sweet potatoes are jam-packed with a variety of vitamins and minerals, most notably vitamin C and K and potassium. The carrots are lower calorie than the starchier sweet potato and they complement the nutrient profile with a ton of vitamin A as well as good quantities of vitamin C and potassium. The two together become a nutrition powerhouse compared to standard starches. Plus, the dinner plate just looks pretty with the gorgeous orange color.



ROASTED SWEET POTATO AND CARROTS IN QUICK SOY SAUCE MARINADE

Start to finish: 40 minutes

Servings: 4

1 medium red-flesh sweet potato, peeled and cut into 1-1/2 inch chunks (about 2 cups total)

2 medium carrots, peeled and cut into 1-1/2 inch chunks (about 2 cups)

2 tablespoon soy sauce

2 tablespoon rice vinegar

2 teaspoons olive oil

1 small shallot, roughly chopped

2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped

1 teaspoon fresh ginger, minced or grated

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Olive oil in a mister

Parsley for garnish, optional

Preparation

Heat the oven to 400 degrees F. Bring a large saucepan of water to boil over high heat, and once boiling, add the sweet potato and carrot cubes and cook just for three minutes. Drain and set aside. Meanwhile place the soy sauce, vinegar, olive oil, shallot, garlic, ginger and lemon juice in a blender and blend until smooth, about 30 seconds. (For chunkier marinade, just mince everything and whisk together.) Pat the sweet potato and carrot dry with a paper towel, and place in bowl. Pour the vinaigrette over the cubes and toss to coat. Let marinate for 10 minutes (or up to a couple of hours), stirring at least once. Cover the bottom of a large baking sheet with parchment paper. Drain the excess marinade and discard.

Scatter the sweet potato and carrot cubes across the baking sheet. Mist lightly with olive oil (or use nonstick spray). Roast until tender, and the edges show a slight char, about 25 minutes, stirring halfway through. Sprinkle with parsley and serve.

Options: add red pepper flakes and a teaspoon of maple syrup for a sweet and spicy version, or a little sesame oil for a more Asian version, or top with cilantro, chopped green onions and lime juice. — AP



Cooking on Deadline

Taco night just got better

By Katie Workman

Barbecoa beef or lamb or goat, is by definition slowly cooked meat. The word is Mexican, and originally referred to a cooking method by which parts of an animal were wrapped in leaves, and steamed and smoked simultaneously over fire.

The dish came to America from Mexico by way of Texas, and is very much a part of Mexican immigrant and Tex Mex culture, as well as the cuisine of Mexico. So the notion of making it in a slow cooker is simultaneously radical and obvious. And the resulting meat is flavorful and tender, begging to be stuffed in a soft taco with toppings.

Leftovers might be used in chili, stews, enchiladas, burritos or quesadillas; a couple of cups of shredded, cooked beef in the fridge are a springboard for any number of dinners later in the week. This type of one-two-punch cooking is very rewarding. So throw that big chunk of beef into the slow cooker with a nice battalion of seasonings, shred up the soft meat, heat some tortillas in the microwave, oven or a skillet, and have yourself a delicious little winter taco feast.

SLOW COOKER BARBACOA BEEF TACOS

Serves 8

Start to finish: 10 hours, 20 minutes (10 hours of which are hands off)

Ingredients

12 -1/2 pound eye of round beef
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon chipotle in adobo puree
1 onion, chopped
1 tablespoon minced garlic
2 teaspoons chili powder
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1 tablespoon kosher salt
Juice of 2 limes
1/4 cup cider vinegar
3 cups beef or chicken broth
3 bay leaves
Warmed corn or flour tortillas to serve

Optional toppings

Salsa (tomato or tomatillo)
Sour cream
Shredded cheddar, or crumbled queso fresco, goat cheese, or feta
Diced avocado
Slivered red onion

Preparations

In a large, heavy skillet over high heat, heat the oil. Sear the beef on all sides until browned. Meanwhile, combine the chipotle puree, onion, garlic, chili powder, cloves, salt, lime juice and vinegar in a slow cooker. Add the broth and the bay leaves.

Cook on low for 10 hours, until the meat is falling-apart tender. Remove the meat from the slow cooker and let it sit for about 20 to 30 minutes, then pull it apart using two forks. Meanwhile, pour the cooking liquid into a tall container and put it in the fridge. When you have pulled apart the meat, take out the liquid and skim off any fat that has risen to the top. Rewarm the sauce if needed and drizzle the shredded meat with some of the cooking liquid until nicely moistened but not dripping.

Serve with warmed tortillas and whatever toppings you like. — AP


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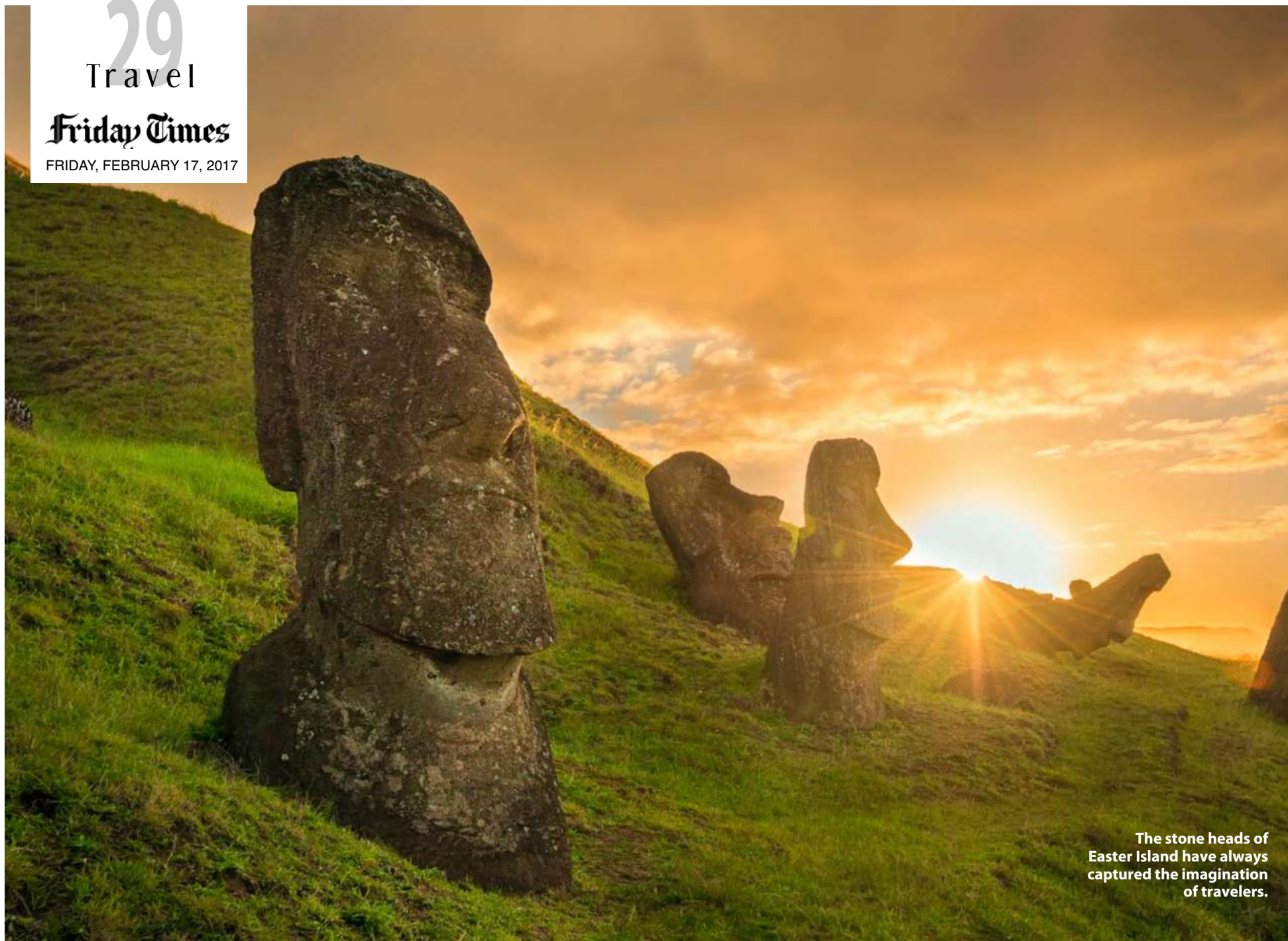


Travel

Where to find
‘the adventure’
in March



A Moken fishing boat cruises through the turquoise water in southern Myanmar.



The stone heads of Easter Island have always captured the imagination of travelers.

Travel is as much about the journey as it is about the destination itself. And we don't believe you should have to compromise on one or the other. With these four adventures we bring you epic journeys across dynamic destinations; from idyllic island-hopping in Myanmar to hiking among karst outcrops in Vietnam; exploring Easter Island's iconic stone heads; and tracking tasty treats on some of Australia's best cycling trails.

Cruise among hundreds of idyllic tropical specs in Myanmar

Far off the beaten track there's a dock, and from that dock a boat sails even further from the modern world - to the long isolated Myeik (or Mergui) Archipelago, off the southeast coast of Myanmar.

This sprinkling of 800 or so rocky islands flecking the Andaman Sea only recently began welcoming foreign visitors, and is at its most beautiful in the early months of the year; in March the weather is dry and warm, with underwater visibility perfect for snorkelers and divers to absorb the varied marine life.

Some islands, such as Lampi - a designated nature reserve - are blanketed with dense jungle in which tigers and elephants are reputed to roam. Others are studded with golden beaches and the stilted fishing villages of the Moken, the nomadic 'sea gypsies', who may have been the country's earliest inhabitants.

Trip plan: Several international tour operators organize sailing cruises, mostly departing from Kawthoung near the Thai border, or liveaboard dive trips from Phuket or other Thai islands.

Need to know: Burmese food is a blend of Indian and Thai; the traditional breakfast (and unofficial national dish) is mohinga, a spicy fish noodle soup.

Other months: Nov-Apr - driest months, best for sailing islands; May-Oct - monsoon.

Wander in ideal weather among Rapa Nui's enigmatic stone heads

Chile stretches some 2700 miles (4345 km) from its border with Peru and Bolivia in the north to Cape Horn, the very tip of the Americas, at 56° south - so finding the perfect time to explore can be tricky. Try March: a balmy time to be roaming the Lakes District and the wineries (for the joys of the grape

harvest), and it's the end of the Patagonian summer when crowds thin and prices simmer down. It's also good for a journey to that baffling ocean-lapped rock, Rapa Nui (Easter Island), adrift 2250 miles (3621 km) from the mainland. The enormous moai, huge stone heads for which the island is famed, are just the most visible of the mysteries surrounding the culture of its first inhabitants. Make a cir-

cuit of the island's ahu (platforms bearing moai) and ponder the birdman cult at Orongo ceremonial village.

Trip plan: Latam Airlines (latam.com) makes the 5 1/2-hour flight from Chile's capital Santiago to Rapa Nui several times a week.

Need to know: Occasional outbreaks of dengue fever on Rapa Nui mean covering up and using insect repellent is a wise strategy.



What better motivation to get in the saddle than the promise of delicious foodie fare at the end of your ride?

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Travel

Friday Times

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2017



A member of the Red Dao tribe plants rice in the mountains of the Sapa region, North Vietnam.

Roam among outcrops and drift through the delta of Vietnam

With three micro-climates, and rain hitting different regions in different months, it's always a great time to visit somewhere in Vietnam - but damp in other spots. March, though, is fine pretty much across the board: It's a rare season when you can capture photos of the junks and karst outcrops of Halong Bay and Bai Tu Long against an azure sky rather than haze; when trekking up the country's highest peak, Fansipan (3143m), and among the hilltribes around Sapa is comfortably cool and dry; when wandering Hanoi's charming Old Quarter is a delight; and when the central coast and southern beaches such as Mui Ne or Phu Quoc are pleasantly warm and rain-free.

Trip plan: How long have you got? A fortnight allows time for a tour of the north, looping from Hanoi to Sapa and Halong Bay, possibly even down to Hue and Hoi An. Add more time and you can stretch your route south to Nha Trang, Dalat, Saigon, the Mekong Delta and those beaches. And maybe get off the beaten track, too.

Need to know: Visa regulations change often - check the latest requirements with a Vietnamese consulate before heading off.

Other months: South - dry Dec-Apr, rains May-Nov; central coast around Hue - dry Mar-Aug, rains Sep-Feb; north - cold Dec-Mar, wet Apr-Sep, dry and cool Oct-Nov.

Enjoy fine cycling along some of Australia's tastiest trails

The heights around Bright in the northeastern corner of Victoria make a credible claim to being Australia's cycle epicentre, and March is an ideal time to saddle up - sunny, not too hot, just at the tipping point between summer and autumn. The region is laced with over 150 miles (241 km) of safe off-road routes including the 72-mile (116km) Murray to Mountains Rail Trail, plus adrenaline-piquing mountain-biking, testing road rides and plenty of family-friendly routes.

Pedal between historic gold-mining towns such as Yackandandah and Beechworth, stopping in at the bountiful cafes and cellar doors of notable wineries including Brown Brothers and John Gehrig. The region's riddled with foodie treats, too, from artisan food producers (try the wares of Milawa Cheese Company) to gourmet restaurants.

Trip planner: Bright, usually considered the gateway to the High Country, is a three-hour drive north of Melbourne. There are plenty of accommodation options, many of them charming historic B&Bs.

Need to know: If you don't bring your own bike, hire is available at most towns across the region; check details at victoriashighcountry.com.au.

Other months: Dec-Mar - summer; Apr-May - fine autumn foliage, harvest festivals; Jun-Sep - ski season; Oct-Nov - spring.

— (www.lonelyplanet.com)



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Leave your sensitive self at home when you start out for work today. The decision-making process will fare better by removing the emotional. There are some cost-saving ideas and opportunities that you will be able to put into action now. What you believe in and how you present yourself are important factors in today's outcome, whether you are at home, at work or in social circumstances. You could find yourself at odds with others if conversations become too sensitive; it would be wise to become aware of your conversations so that you can change a subject quickly. If others seem frustrated, listen carefully and then, perhaps, merge in a few helpful suggestions when asked; others are appreciative.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Breakthroughs in some problem-solving techniques are successful. Paying attention to updated business reports and projected changes helps you to feel in touch with the flow of the current business energy. Learning and communicating through networking may give you added information into how your own business interests are progressing and where the opportunities to expand or grow may be located. Your own requirements may appear to limit you from where the rest of the gang is headed. This is of short duration. You may feel like exercising or getting out to the gym later today. The folks that are near and dear to your heart, such as lovers or friends, will be your focal point this evening. You enjoy harmonious and enlightened relationships.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

If you are feeling edgy, it is just because you do not seem to be able to accept the fact that life is suddenly oodles better and the other shoe is not going to drop! Follow through with your ideas now. Your life can be quite enjoyable, especially if you can just relax. This is a lucky day for you! Because of your expertise or experience in the work field, a new co-worker may come to you with questions. There is probably a guide to the routine of business but if not, you might be able to suggest items or guidelines that he or she might want to see. Perhaps writing things down for him or her will help. A creative expression is due to receive some notoriety or recognition from your peers this afternoon. Whether you are single or not, the evening could bring romance.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

People who want to do things their way seem to pull the rug out from under you just now. It's important to take action, but only after you understand a situation and sometimes that can be most difficult. Essentially, there are changes to make and someone in your place of business may simply just be pushy by nature. Shopping at noon you may have to be very aware of the worth of some products; a good buy could be deceiving. If you are intent on purchasing an expensive item, make sure it is returnable. Keep your receipt. Stop and listen to your own inner voice today. You will find that, without much effort, you can understand the truth behind a confusing issue. A loved one does something today that makes you appreciate that special loved one more.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You should be enjoying some life style changes now. You have a unique way of dressing and others are supportive and fascinated by your ability to coordinate colors and patterns that would not otherwise have been considered. You enjoy your place in life today. With your ability to communicate and get your message understood, you will be able to handle most any situation that comes to your attention. Your mind is clear and you are able to find the needed solutions. There is a feeling that anything is possible if you apply yourself. An emotional person or event challenges your sense of privacy and inner growth this afternoon. Someone may get very personal with you. This would be a good time to simply excuse yourself from the conversation.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Evolutionary computing and some forms of computing with biological metaphors are fascinating and mind grabbers for you today. New science that is forecasted to be useful in our culture calls upon us to be inventive, creative and broadminded. You may be interested in the study of financial techniques as well as business probabilities that will find a place in your future and your children's future. A push of society to encourage new science and math and problem-solving solutions is a very important step toward succeeding in the scientific discoveries and invention trend. If you can continue your education, a teacher's degree would be a wise choice for future income survival. You are good at encouraging others and you would make an excellent teacher.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Being on the go and keeping a finger to the winds of change make you feel in touch. Learning and passing on information scratches an instinctive itch. Your creative side is showing most of this day. You have ideas and you find answers to most any problem that comes to your attention. You will be encouraging young people to move in positive directions this afternoon and that may mean you work with or own a place where kids love to come. A gym, a music store or perhaps a hobby store is where you like to teach and guide young people through life development. You are also good at hiring or working with others that enjoy teaching. This afternoon is a busy time and you will have the opportunity to be helpful. A loved one gives you encouragement.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

There are changes all this year that are positive and just what you have been wanting for a long time; some of those changes begin now. This could mean a raise, promotion, change of office or station, etc. Your ability to compromise is a big plus in the workplace. Your lighthearted way of seeing the world may help others get through the day. You appear perhaps more charming and refined than usual. Now could be the time to make that date; apply for a new job; or otherwise make yourself known. Writing may come into play at this time. Social plans can be enjoyed this evening and emotions in particular, or the feelings of those around you, may be very clear. Be attentive that you do not overspend or indulge too much just now. This is a positive time.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

The team you have gathered this morning will move beyond any expectations you have for accomplishing any work project. You enjoy having an opportunity to visit with work friends during a break or noon meal and having the opportunity to share information that is up-to-date, fun and unique. You might even be thinking about creating an events website that covers a plethora of subject matters in as small amount of space as possible. There could be a paragraph on earth news, animal news, medical breakthroughs, etc. There are also many possibilities to make a little money from this endeavor. There is a past wish that you have yet to fulfill for yourself and you may be learning of ways in which you can now make a special dream come true.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Scientists say that the universe will probably last for at least the next 24 billion years. Wherever you have heard otherwise, let it go. Now, this may be a strange approach but fearing the world will not have a long life seems to come from the ideas of movie plots and religious fanatics and other misinformation that can get out of hand. You will do your best to turn a negative into a positive now because you see endless opportunities to grow, learn, travel and improve living conditions on this earth. It is this time in your life when you will choose some past, present or future subject to learn more about and become part of the healing and renewal committee. Keep a keen awareness for any indication that will help you to learn and grow and set good examples.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Your good fortune will soon be discovered; for now, there must be patience. There are few opportunities in life where one has success with struggle and now is that time of change when you will find magic happening. At least for the next few weeks you will be able to set your goals and see success. Intellectually, you are ahead of most and can see what is necessary to make right choices. No person is clear in every choice but for a while, you will come close. The only mistake for now would be in thinking extravagance is acceptable; careful with expenditures, particularly when asked for funds from others. There is a little time this evening to be artistic; the rest of the night is for love. Take a few pictures; celebrate. Happy birthday!



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

An important relationship, perhaps with an older person or someone in authority, may come into focus today. Work opportunities are available, especially if you are in business for yourself. There could be some tension or sense of opposition requiring a compromise or negotiation on your part. If you can remove the emotional and work things through just now, you can achieve many positive results. This is an opportunity for problem-solving expertise. Becoming too independent will cause you to miss some good times. You may be able to help a person or group to see difficult situations in a different light. You are asked to make good use of your natural abilities and common sense. Respect comes to you naturally. Horoscopes february 2017.

COUNTRY CODES

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



00:50 River Monsters
01:45 Bondi Vet
02:40 The Vet Life
03:35 Tanked
04:25 Call Of The Wildman
04:50 Call Of The Wildman
05:15 Gator Boys
06:02 River Monsters
06:49 The Vet Life
07:36 Going Ape
08:00 Going Ape
08:25 Groomer Has It
09:15 The Vet Life
10:10 Call Of The Wildman
10:35 Call Of The Wildman
11:05 Tanked
12:00 Groomer Has It
12:55 Bondi Vet
13:50 The Vet Life
14:45 Gator Boys
15:40 Call Of The Wildman
16:05 Call Of The Wildman
16:35 Tanked
17:30 River Monsters
18:25 Biggest And Baddest
19:20 Zoltan The Wolfman
20:15 Tanked
21:10 Call Of The Wildman
21:35 Call Of The Wildman
22:05 Biggest And Baddest
23:00 Zoltan The Wolfman

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 Rolling To The Ronks
08:15 Tsum Tsum Shorts
08:20 Elena Of Avalor
08:45 Bunk'd
09:10 Stuck In The Middle
09:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
10:00 Wizards Of Waverly Place
10:25 A.N.T. Farm
10:50 A.N.T. Farm
11:15 Good Luck Charlie
11:40 Good Luck Charlie
12:05 Shake It Up
12:30 Shake It Up
12:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
13:00 Welcome To The Ronks
13:15 Gravity Falls

13:40 Hank Zipzer
14:05 Star Darlings
14:10 Austin & Ally
14:35 Jessie
15:00 Bunk'd
15:25 Kirby Buckets
15:50 Rolling To The Ronks
16:15 Sunny Bunnies
16:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
16:45 Elena Of Avalor
17:10 Stuck In The Middle
17:35 The Swap
19:20 Disney Mickey Mouse
19:25 The Next Step
19:50 Austin & Ally
20:15 Star Darlings
20:20 Shake It Up
20:45 Backstage
21:10 Liv And Maddie
21:35 Cracked



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



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

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



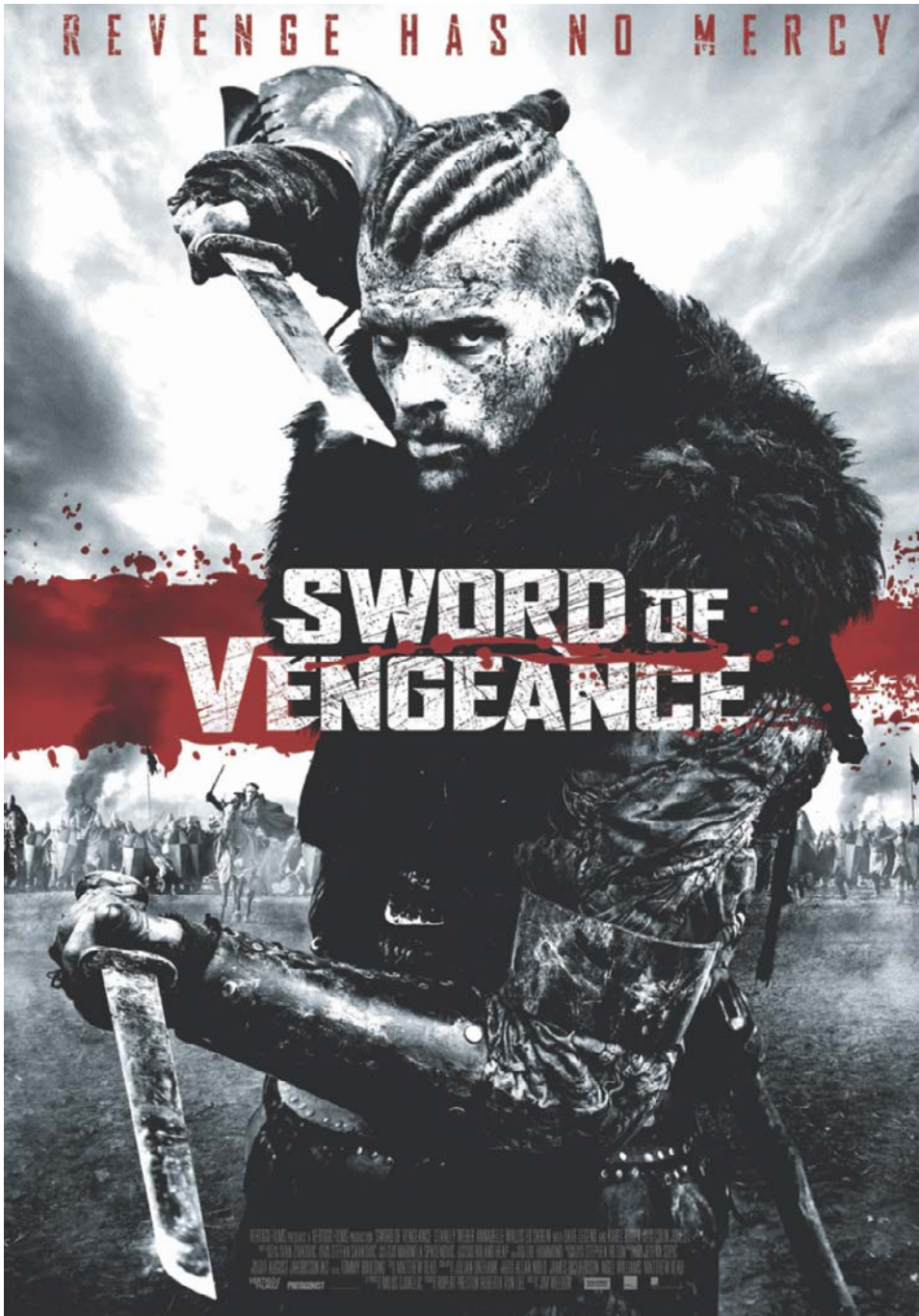
00:10 Chocolate Covered
00:35 Glamour Puds
01:00 Tom's Istanbul Delight
01:25 A Is For Apple
01:50 A Is For Apple
02:15 Patisserie With Michel Roux Jr
03:05 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
03:30 Sara's Australia Unveiled
04:20 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
04:45 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
05:10 The Wine Show
06:00 Patisserie With Michel Roux Jr
06:50 Tom's Istanbul Delight
07:15 A Is For Apple
07:40 A Is For Apple
08:05 Patisserie With Michel Roux Jr
08:55 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
09:20 Sara's Australia Unveiled
10:10 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
10:35 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
11:00 Carnival Eats
11:25 Carnival Eats
11:50 Patisserie With Michel Roux Jr
12:40 Tom's Istanbul Delight
13:05 A Is For Apple
13:35 A Is For Apple
14:00 Chocolate Perfection With Michel Roux Jr
14:55 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
15:25 Sara's Australia Unveiled
15:50 Sara's Australia Unveiled
16:20 Tom's Istanbul Delight
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20:50 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
21:15 The Wine Show
22:05 Chocolate Perfection With Michel Roux Jr
22:55 Tom's Istanbul Delight
23:20 A Is For Apple



00:00 The Killing Season
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
02:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
03:00 Homicide Hunter
04:00 The Killing Season
05:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
06:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
07:00 Evil Up Close
08:00 Evil Up Close
09:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
10:00 It Takes A Killer
10:30 It Takes A Killer
11:00 Crime Stories
15:00 Evil Up Close
16:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
17:00 It Takes A Killer
17:30 It Takes A Killer
18:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
19:00 The First 48
20:00 The First 48
21:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
22:00 Evil Up Close
23:00 The First 48



00:30 Science Of The Movies
01:20 NASA's Greatest Missions
02:10 NASA's Unexplained Files
03:00 Destroyed In Seconds
03:25 Destroyed In Seconds
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 How It's Made
05:05 How It's Made
05:30 Dirty Jobs
06:20 Mythbusters
07:00 Kids vs Film
07:25 Bear Grylls Survival School
07:50 Giant Pandas Go Wild
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Science Of The Movies
10:20 Mythbusters
11:10 Giant Pandas Go Wild
12:00 Ultimate Survival
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Dirty Jobs
14:30 Mythbusters
15:20 Science Of The Movies
16:10 Kids vs Film
16:35 Bear Grylls Survival School
17:00 Man v Expert
17:50 The Carbonaro Effect
18:15 The Carbonaro Effect
18:40 Destroyed In Seconds
19:05 Destroyed In Seconds
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Mythbusters
21:10 Man v Expert
22:00 The Carbonaro Effect
22:25 The Carbonaro Effect
22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
23:40 Ultimate Survival



SWORD OF VENGEANCE ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD



00:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:50 E! News
02:50 Just Jillian
05:30 Botched
06:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
06:55 E! News
07:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
08:10 E! News
09:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:00 E! News
12:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 E! News
15:15 Fashion Police
16:15 So Cosmo
17:10 Botched
18:05 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
21:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
22:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
23:00 E! News



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



00:20 Super Predators
01:10 Giant Panda: The Last Refuge
02:00 Fatal Attraction
02:50 Urban Jungle
03:45 Swamp Men
04:40 Natural Born Monsters
05:35 Fatal Attraction
06:30 Urban Jungle
07:25 Swamp Men
08:20 Natural Born Monsters
09:15 World's Deadliest
10:10 Wild Canada
11:05 Wild Indonesia
12:00 Pond Stars
12:55 Tiger On The Run
13:50 Secrets Of The Wild
14:45 Return Of The Lion
15:40 Dangerous Encounters
16:35 World's Deadliest
17:30 Wild Australia
18:25 Return Of The Lion
19:20 Pond Stars
20:10 Dangerous Encounters
21:00 World's Deadliest
21:50 Wild Australia
22:40 Return Of The Lion
23:30 Pond Stars

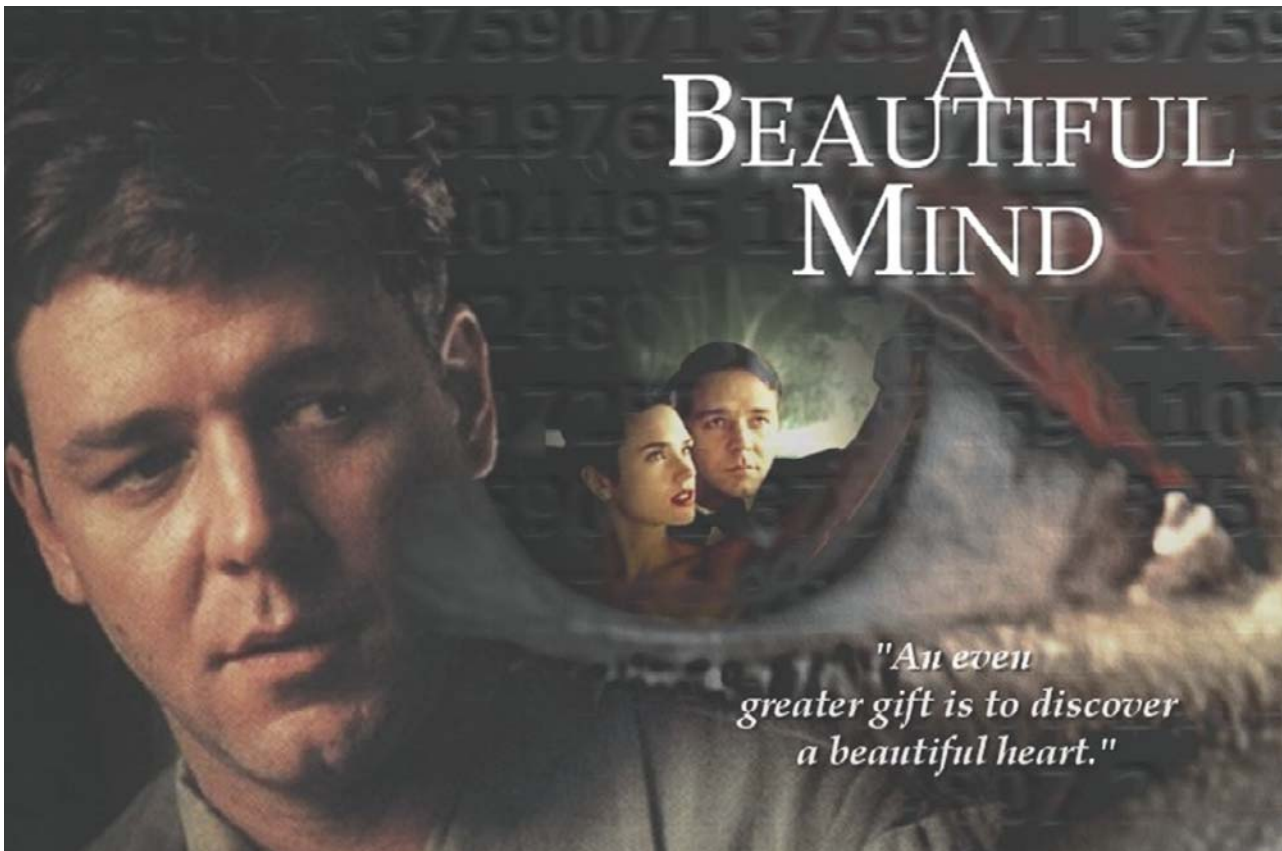


00:10 Apocalypse: The Battle Of Verdun
01:00 Apocalypse: The Battle Of Verdun
02:00 Locked Up Abroad
02:55 Ultimate Airport Dubai
03:50 Apocalypse: The Battle Of Verdun
04:45 The Numbers Game
05:10 The Numbers Game
05:40 Car SOS
06:35 Classified: Terror/Counter Terror
07:30 Dirty Rotten Survival
08:25 Battleground Brothers

- 09:20 The Numbers Game
- 10:15 Locked Up Abroad
- 11:10 The Border
- 12:05 Wingsuit Daredevil
- 13:00 Battleground Brothers
- 14:00 Dirty Rotten Survival
- 15:00 Classified: Terror/Counter Terror
- 16:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 17:00 The Border
- 18:00 Taboo USA
- 19:00 Miracle Hospital
- 20:00 Locked Up Abroad
- 20:50 The Border



- 00:15 Team Umizoomi
- 00:38 Louie
- 00:45 Louie
- 00:53 Olive The Ostrich
- 00:58 Olive The Ostrich
- 01:03 Max & Ruby
- 01:26 Wanda And The Alien
- 01:35 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 01:46 The Day Henry Met
- 01:51 The Day Henry Met
- 01:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 02:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 02:41 Zack & Quack
- 03:03 Team Umizoomi
- 03:25 Olive The Ostrich
- 03:30 Olive The Ostrich
- 03:35 Paw Patrol
- 03:58 Little Charmers
- 04:10 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 04:22 Dora The Explorer
- 04:44 Max & Ruby
- 05:07 Bubble Guppies
- 05:31 Shimmer And Shine
- 05:43 Shimmer And Shine
- 05:54 Dora And Friends
- 06:17 Zack & Quack
- 06:29 The Day Henry Met
- 06:34 The Day Henry Met
- 06:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 07:00 Paw Patrol
- 07:13 Paw Patrol
- 07:37 Dora The Explorer
- 08:00 Zack & Quack
- 08:22 Dora And Friends
- 08:46 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 09:10 Paw Patrol
- 09:35 Shimmer And Shine
- 09:45 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
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- 21:10 Paw Patrol
- 21:35 Shimmer And Shine
- 21:58 Dora The Explorer
- 22:21 Paw Patrol
- 22:45 Little Charmers
- 22:57 Bubble Guppies
- 23:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 23:40 Zack & Quack
- 23:52 Team Umizoomi



A BEAUTIFUL MIND ON OSN MOVIES HD

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 00:15 Troy
- 03:00 Jupiter Ascending
- 05:45 Robot Overlords
- 07:45 Harlock: Space Pirate
- 10:00 Sword Of Vengeance
- 11:45 Jupiter Ascending
- 14:00 Navy Seals: The Battle For New Orleans
- 15:45 Last Action Hero
- 18:00 Con Air
- 20:00 Lucy
- 22:00 Ant-Man

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

- 00:15 The Game Plan
- 02:15 The Incredible Adventures Of Professor Branestawm
- 03:30 Ice Princess
- 05:30 Gnomeo & Juliet
- 07:15 The Incredible Adventures Of Professor Branestawm
- 08:30 Scooby-Doo! And The Beach Beastie
- 09:00 Inside Out
- 11:00 Ice Princess
- 13:00 Up
- 15:00 The Wild
- 17:00 Herbie Fully Loaded
- 19:00 The Odd Life Of Timothy Green
- 21:00 Max Keeble's Big Move

OSN MOVIES HD

- 00:30 Poltergeist
- 02:15 A Beautiful Mind
- 04:30 Jurassic World
- 06:45 Barely Lethal
- 08:30 Twister
- 10:30 The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out Of Water
- 12:15 Jurassic World
- 14:30 Goosebumps
- 16:15 Ghostbusters
- 18:00 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part I
- 20:15 Skyfall
- 22:45 Public Enemies

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 The Starving Games
- 02:00 Lovesick
- 04:00 Hot Rod
- 06:00 Growing Up And Other Lies
- 08:00 Lovesick
- 10:00 Hot Rod
- 12:00 Night At The Museum: Battle Of The Smithsonian
- 14:00 The Grand Seduction

- 16:00 The Rewrite
- 18:00 All About Steve
- 20:00 Death At A Funeral
- 22:00 Trainwreck

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

- 00:00 Lost River
- 02:00 Creed
- 04:15 Foreverland
- 06:00 The Wave
- 08:00 Trash
- 10:00 Creed
- 12:15 Short Term 12
- 14:00 Still Alice
- 15:45 Spotlight
- 18:00 Bridge Of Spies
- 20:30 The Martian
- 23:00 The Revenant

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

- 00:45 K-9 Adventures: Legend Of The Lost Gold
- 02:45 Columbus In The Last Journey
- 04:15 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 06:00 Moomins And The Comet Chase
- 07:30 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
- 09:00 Harriet The Spy
- 10:45 K-9 Adventures: Legend Of The Lost Gold
- 12:30 Columbus In The Last Journey
- 14:00 Savva
- 16:00 Harriet The Spy
- 18:00 Evolution Man
- 20:00 Marco Macaco
- 21:30 Savva



- 00:40 Mythbusters
- 01:30 How Do They Do It?
- 01:55 Food Factory
- 02:20 You Can't Lick Your Elbow
- 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 You Can't Lick Your Elbow
- 06:49 You Can't Lick Your Elbow
- 07:12 Alien Encounters
- 08:00 How Do They Do It?
- 08:26 Da Vinci's Machines
- 09:14 Mythbusters
- 10:02 Alien Encounters
- 10:50 How Do They Do It?
- 11:14 Food Factory
- 11:38 You Can't Lick Your Elbow
- 12:03 You Can't Lick Your Elbow
- 12:26 Da Vinci's Machines
- 13:14 Mythbusters
- 14:02 How Do They Do It?
- 14:26 Food Factory
- 14:50 Alien Encounters
- 15:38 You Can't Lick Your Elbow
- 16:03 You Can't Lick Your Elbow
- 16:26 Da Vinci's Machines
- 17:14 Mythbusters
- 18:02 Alien Encounters
- 18:50 How We Invented The World
- 19:40 Mythbusters
- 20:30 Mythbusters
- 21:20 How Do They Do It?
- 21:45 Food Factory
- 22:10 Alien Encounters
- 23:00 Mythbusters
- 23:50 How We Invented The World



- 00:20 Oprah's Master Class
- 01:10 Single Dad Seeking...
- 02:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 02:25 Say Yes To The Dress
- 02:50 Love, Lust Or Run
- 03:15 Cake Boss
- 03:35 Oprah's Master Class
- 04:20 Little People, Big World
- 04:45 Little People, Big World
- 05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 06:00 Little People, Big World
- 06:25 Little People, Big World
- 06:50 Little People, Big World
- 07:15 Little People, Big World
- 07:40 Little People, Big World
- 08:05 Little People, Big World
- 08:30 Little People, Big World
- 09:20 Sister Wives
- 09:45 Sister Wives
- 10:10 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 11:00 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 11:50 Love, Lust Or Run
- 12:15 Love, Lust Or Run
- 12:40 Love, Lust Or Run
- 13:05 Love, Lust Or Run
- 13:30 Love, Lust Or Run
- 13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 14:45 Oprah's Master Class
- 15:35 Cake Boss
- 16:00 Cake Boss
- 16:25 Cake Boss
- 16:50 Cake Boss
- 17:15 Cake Boss
- 17:40 Outrageous Kid Parties
- 18:05 Outrageous Kid Parties
- 18:30 How The Rich Get Hitched
- 19:20 Little People, Big World
- 20:10 Sister Wives
- 20:35 Sister Wives
- 21:00 Little People, Big World
- 21:50 Sister Wives



- 00:00 The Universe
- 01:00 Warriors
- 02:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 03:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
- 03:50 Ancient Aliens
- 04:40 The Human Calculator
- 05:30 The Universe
- 06:20 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 07:10 The Universe
- 08:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 09:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
- 10:00 Ancient Aliens
- 11:00 The Human Calculator
- 12:00 The Universe
- 13:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 14:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 15:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
- 16:00 Ancient Aliens
- 17:00 The Human Calculator
- 18:00 The Universe

- 19:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
- 20:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 21:00 Missing In Alaska
- 22:00 Ancient Aliens



- 00:20 Time Team
- 01:10 America's 9/11 Flag: Rise From The Ashes
- 02:00 Inside Alcatraz: Legends Of The Rock
- 02:50 Storage Wars
- 03:15 American Pickers
- 04:05 Pawn Stars
- 05:00 Mountain Men - Closest Calls
- 06:00 Mankind The Story Of All Of Us
- 06:50 Gold Hunters: Legend Of The Superstition...
- 07:40 Billion Dollar Wreck
- 08:30 Shark Wranglers
- 09:20 Mountain Men
- 10:10 Pawn Stars South Africa
- 11:00 American Pickers
- 11:50 Counting Cars
- 12:15 Car Hunters
- 12:40 Pawn Stars
- 13:05 Storage Wars: Best Of
- 13:30 Leepu And Pitbull
- 18:30 Shipping Wars
- 19:20 Alaska Off-Road Warriors
- 20:10 Ice Road Truckers
- 21:00 American Pickers
- 21:50 Ronnie O'Sullivan's American Hustle
- 22:40 Forged In Fire
- 23:30 The Curse Of Oak Island



- 00:00 Patricia Heaton Parties
- 01:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 02:00 Man Fire Food
- 03:00 Chopped
- 04:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 05:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 06:00 The Kitchen
- 07:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 08:00 Siba's Table
- 09:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 10:00 The Kitchen
- 11:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 12:00 Siba's Table
- 13:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 14:00 Chopped
- 15:00 The Kitchen
- 16:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 17:00 Chopped
- 18:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 19:00 Man Finds Food
- 19:30 Man Finds Food
- 20:00 Follow Donal... To Vietnam
- 21:00 Girl Eat World
- 22:00 Iron Chef America
- 23:00 Man Finds Food



BRIDGE OF SPIES ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL HD

Word Search Puzzles

Movie Actors 1

Find and circle all of the Movie Actors that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a movie for which Jeremy Irons won an Oscar.

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

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| BACON, Kevin | DUNCAN, Michael Clarke | MCKELLEN, Ian |
| BARDEM, Javier | FORD, Harrison | NEESON, Liam |
| BLACK, Jack | FOXX, Jamie | PESCI, Joe |
| BRIDGES, Jeff | GIBSON, Mel | PHOENIX, Joaquin |
| CAINE, Michael | GOLDBLUM, Jeff | REEVES, Keanu |
| CARREY, Jim | GRANT, Hugh | RUSH, Geoffrey |
| CHAN, Jackie | GYLLENHAAL, Jake | RUSSELL, Kurt |
| CLOONEY, George | HACKMAN, Gene | SPACEY, Kevin |
| COSTNER, Kevin | HARTNETT, Josh | STATHAM, Jason |
| CUSACK, John | IRONS, Jeremy | TRAVOLTA, John |
| DAMON, Matt | JACKMAN, Hugh | VOIGHT, Jon |
| DANIELS, Jeff | JONES, James Earl | WAHLBERG, Mark |
| DEPP, Johnny | LAW, Jude | WEAVING, Hugo |
| DICAPRIO, Leonardo | MCCONAUGHEY, Matthew | WOOD, Elijah |
| DOUGLAS, Michael | | |

Yesterday's Solution

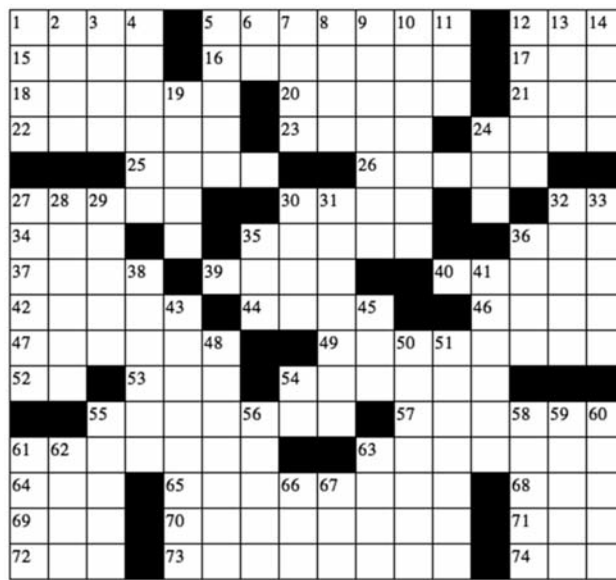
More 80's Songs

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

- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| AFRICA | GLORIA | NEVER | SUSSUDIO |
| ALWAYS | GUILTY | NOTORIOUS | THE FLAME |
| AMERICA | HEARTBREAKER | OUR HOUSE | THE LOOK |
| BEAT IT | HEAVEN | PASSION | THE ROSE |
| BROKEN WINGS | HOLD ME | PATIENCE | TIME |
| CALL ME | HUMAN | PINK HOUSES | TOO SHY |
| CONTROL | HUNGRY HEART | PURPLE RAIN | TRUE |
| CRUISIN' | INFATUATION | ROCK ON | TRULY |
| DOWN UNDER | KOKOMO | SAILING | TWO HEARTS |
| ENDLESS LOVE | LA BAMB A | SARA | VACATION |
| FAITHFULLY | LET'S DANCE | SATISFIED | VOICES CARRY |
| FAME | MAGIC | SHOUT | WE BELONG |
| FAST CAR | MANIC MONDAY | SONGBIRD | WHIP IT |
| FREEDOM | MONY MONY | SUKIYAKI | YOUR LOVE |

The hidden song is: I GUESS THAT'S WHY THEY CALL IT THE BLUES

CROSSWORD 1524



ACROSS

- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- An artist of consummate skill.
- A health resort near a spring or at the seaside.
- The sixth month of the civil year.
- Normal relaxed breathing.
- Imperial dynasty that ruled China (most of the time) from 206 BC to 221 and expanded its boundaries and developed its bureaucracy.
- United States writer of poems and plays about racial conflict (born in 1934).
- (with 'in') Guardianship over.
- Belonging to or on behalf of a specified person (especially yourself).
- Regarded with deep or rapturous love (especially as if for a god).
- A fee charged for exchanging currencies.
- In bed.
- A legendary creature resembling a tiny old man.
- An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- A pointed instrument used to prod into motion.
- A large quantity of written matter.
- A city in southern Finland.
- Back and sides of a hog salted and dried or smoked.
- Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829).
- Employed in accomplishing something.
- French writer who was the embodiment of 18th century Enlightenment (1694-1778).
- Of or relating to or characteristic of the African Republic of the Sudan or its people.
- A ductile silvery-white ductile ferromagnetic trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
- A column of light (as from a beacon).
- Sweet flags.
- A net that will enclose fish when it is pulled in.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- Marked by foolish or unreasoning fondness.
- One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
- The network in the reticular formation that serves an alerting or arousal function.

DOWN

- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- Edible starchy tuberous root of taro plants.
- The mountain peak that Noah's ark landed on as the waters of the great flood receded.
- English economist noted for his studies of international trade and finance (born in 1907).
- A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.
- An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to about a bushel.
- An unforeseen obstacle.
- The present or immediately coming night adv.
- An island in Antigua and Barbuda.
- An association of countries in the western hemisphere.
- Relative darkness caused by light rays being intercepted by an opaque body.
- Marked by the reception of pay.
- A former copper coin of Pakistan.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- The rate at which energy is drawn from a source that produces a flow of electricity in a circuit.
- On a ship, train, plane or other vehicle.
- Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
- According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
- Extensive landed property (especially in the country) retained by the owner for his own use.
- A purgative made from the leaves of aloe.
- A thermionic tube having two electrodes.
- A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
- A domed or vaulted recess or projection on a building especially the east end of a church.
- Sorghums of dry regions of Asia and North Africa.
- A bright spot on the parhelic circle.
- The spatial property resulting from a relatively small distance.
- (Irish) Ancient Irish god (probably a god of the sun).
- An analgesic for mild pain.
- The usage or vocabulary that is characteristic of a specific group of people.
- (classical mythology) A hero noted for his strength.
- Half the width of an em.
- Small shrubby African tree having compound leaves and racemes of small fragrant green flowers.
- A republic in southern Europe on the Italian Peninsula.
- United States parapsychologist (1895-1980).
- A member of a Turkic people of Chinese Turkestan and neighboring areas (formerly of Mongolia and eastern Turkestan).
- Large west African tree having large palmately lobed leaves and axillary cymose panicles of small white flowers and one-winged seeds.
- A republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
- Quality of being active or spirited or vigorous.
- A state-chartered savings bank owned by its depositors and managed by a board of trustees.
- A member of the Siouan people inhabiting the valleys of the Platte and Missouri rivers in Nebraska.

Daily SuDoku

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						6	4	
					7			9
	9			5		7	2	8

Yesterday's Solution

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

ADHD A 'BRAIN DISORDER', NOT BAD BEHAVIOR: STUDY

PARIS: People with ADHD have slightly smaller brains than those without the condition, according to a study released yesterday which insisted it is a physical disorder and not just bad behavior. The largest analysis to date of the brains of people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder found "structural differences" and evidence of delayed development compared with non-sufferers, researchers reported.

"The results from our study confirm that people with ADHD have differences in their brain structure and therefore suggest that ADHD is a disorder of the brain," said the study's lead author, Martine Hoogman of Radboud University Medical Centre in the Netherlands. "We hope that this will help to reduce stigma that ADHD is 'just a label' for difficult children or caused by poor parenting," she said in a statement.

The results of the study, which involved 1,713 people with ADHD and 1,529 people without the condition, were published in The Lancet Psychiatry. Most often diagnosed in children, ADHD is blamed for severe and repeated bouts of inattention, hyperactivity or impulsiveness that can cause problems at school or home. The symptoms can persist into adulthood. The causes remain in dispute, and some specialists say ADHD is nothing but an excuse for using drugs to subdue children with difficult personalities or bad parents. Drugs for treating ADHD, such as Ritalin, have been blamed for side effects including weight loss or gain, liver damage and suicidal thoughts. For the latest study, Hoogman and a team analysed the MRI scans of people aged four to 63, suffering from ADHD or not.

Emotional control

They measured overall brain volume as well as the size of seven regions thought to be linked to the disorder. The volume overall was smaller in people diagnosed with ADHD, as were five of the brain regions, the team said. "These differences are very small-in the range of a few percent-so the unprecedented size of our study was crucial to help identify these," Hoogman said. "Similar differences in brain volume are also seen in other psychiatric disorders, especially major depressive disorder." The regions affected included the amygdala, which is involved in the regulation of emotion. Previous studies which associated changes in brain volume with ADHD had been too small to be conclusive, the team said. The differences observed in their study were most prominent in children, but also present in adults with the condition. —AFP

BITE-MIMICKING MALARIA VACCINE SHOWS PROMISE

PARIS: A malaria vaccine that mimics a mosquito bite yielded encouraging results in human trials, its makers said yesterday, raising hopes for thwarting a parasite that kills a child every two minutes. The candidate drug, called PfSPZ, provided up to 100 percent protection for 10 weeks in a trial in Germany, although a trial in real life conditions in Mali gave a lower level of defence, they reported in two separate studies.

"We are extremely encouraged by these findings," said Stephen Hoffman of vaccine developer Sanaria, a company based in Maryland. But he stressed a lot of work lay ahead, and a registered vaccine may take another two years to reach the market. PfSPZ uses a live, immature form of the malaria parasite, called a sporozoite, to stimulate an immune reaction in humans.

In one trial, a version of PfSPZ required fewer shots and a lower dose of live malaria parasites than tested to date, researchers reported in the science journal Nature. For another form of the vaccine, sporozoites are exposed to radiation to weaken them before being injected into the human bloodstream. A previous trial with the irradiated version saw 44 trial volunteers given five shots, each with up to 135,000 sporozoites, or three doses with up to 1.8 million sporozoites in total.

The highest dose conferred up to 100 percent immunity, a 2013 report said. For the German trial, volunteers were given only three injections over eight weeks or 10 days, with sporozoite doses ranging from 3,200 to 51,200 per shot. All nine volunteers in the high-dose group enjoyed malaria protection 10 weeks after the last dose, compared to six out of nine in the medium- and three out of nine in the low-dose groups, said Hoffman.

No radiation

"The ability to complete an immunization regime in 10 days will facilitate the use of PfSPZ-CVac in mass vaccination programs to eliminate the malaria parasite and to prevent malaria in travellers," he added. The reason that fewer sporozoites were required was that they were not irradiated before injection. Instead, the vaccine was administered in conjunction with an anti-malarial drug, chloroquine, to stop the parasite causing disease once inside the human body.

PfSPZ is being developed against the Plasmodium falciparum mosquito-borne parasite, by far the deadliest type. Further trials are to follow in Mali, Ghana, the United States and Gabon. A second report, published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases, said 44 people given five doses of PfSPZ

in Mali had a lower rate than non-inoculated peers after six months.

Of the control group given a placebo or dummy injection, 93 percent contracted malaria, said the team. In the vaccinated group, "only" 66 percent were infected. "That's the highest level of protection ever seen with a malaria vaccine... in a real setting," Hoffman told AFP. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there were 212 million malaria cases in the world in 2015 and 429,000 deaths.

More than 90 percent of deaths occur in Africa. Another vaccine called RTS,S, developed by GlaxoSmithKline, is being tested in children-the most affected population. It is considered the most advanced candidate, but results last year from a Kenyan trial showed it was only about four percent effective after seven years.

The developers of PfSPZ are aiming for efficiency of about 80-90 percent protection lasting for six months to a year, Hoffman said. "We hope we'll be there this year, maybe next year. We're closing in on it," he told AFP. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on the quest for a vaccine, but bite-prevention prophylactic-mosquito nets, insecticides, and wearing long sleeves in malaria-riddled areas. —AFP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE ORIGINAL INSPIRATION BASED IN THE ARABIAN WORLD

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
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 (16/02/2017 TO 22/02/2017)

SHARQIA-1
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 11:30 AM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 1:30 PM
 NO FRI+SAT
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE 1:30 PM
 FRI+SAT
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE 3:45 PM
 KAABIL- HINDI 6:00 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 9:00 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 11:00 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 1:00 AM

SHARQIA-2
 GOLD 12:45 PM
 ARSENAL 3:00 PM
 GOLD 5:00 PM
 GOLD 7:15 PM
 ARSENAL 9:30 PM
 ARSENAL 11:30 PM

SHARQIA-3
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 12:45 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 3:15 PM
 RINGS 5:45 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 7:45 PM
 RINGS 10:15 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 12:30 AM

MUHALAB-1
 PET 12:15 PM
 PET 2:15 PM
 PET 4:15 PM
 NO FRI+SAT
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE 4:15 PM
 FRI+SAT
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE 6:30 PM
 RINGS 8:45 PM
 RINGS 10:45 PM
 PET 12:45 AM

MUHALAB-2
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 12:00 PM
 KAABIL- HINDI 2:00 PM
 JOLLY LLB 2 -Hindi 5:00 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 8:00 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 10:00 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 12:05 AM

MUHALAB-3
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 12:45 PM
 ARSENAL 3:15 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 5:15 PM
 ARSENAL 7:45 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 9:45 PM
 ARSENAL 12:15 AM

FANAR-1
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 11:30 AM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 1:30 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 3:30 PM
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE 5:30 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 7:45 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 9:45 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 11:45 PM

FANAR-2
 PET 12:30 PM
 RINGS 2:30 PM
 PET 4:30 PM
 THE REMAINS 6:30 PM
 RINGS 8:30 PM
 THE REMAINS 10:30 PM
 PET 12:30 AM

FANAR-3
 KAABIL- HINDI 1:00 PM
 AL MOKHAYAM 1:45 PM
 DANGAL -Hindi 3:45 PM
 JOLLY LLB 2 -Hindi 7:00 PM
 KAABIL- HINDI 10:00 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 12:45 AM

FANAR-4
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 11:30 AM
 GOLD 2:00 PM
 GOLD 4:15 PM
 GOLD 6:45 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 9:30 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 12:05 AM

FANAR-5
 ARSENAL 11:45 AM
 ARSENAL 1:45 PM
 ARSENAL 3:45 PM
 RAEES- HINDI 5:45 PM
 ARSENAL 8:45 PM
 ARSENAL 10:45 PM

ARSENAL 12:45 AM

MARINA-1
 ARSENAL 1:00 PM
 KUNG-FU YOGA 3:15 PM
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE 5:30 PM
 GOLD 7:45 PM
 ARSENAL 10:00 PM
 ARSENAL 12:05 AM

MARINA-2
 DALIDA 12:45 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 1:30 PM
 FRI
 SPLIT 3:30 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 6:00 PM
 DALIDA 8:00 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 10:30 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 12:30 AM

MARINA-3
 RINGS 12:00 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 2:30 PM
 RINGS 5:00 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 7:15 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 9:45 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 12:15 AM

AVENUES-1
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE 11:30 AM
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE 1:45 PM
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE 4:00 PM
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE 6:15 PM
 AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film) 8:30 PM
 AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film) 10:30 PM
 AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film) 12:30 AM

AVENUES-2
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 -2D -4DX 12:15 PM
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE -3D -4DX 2:45 PM
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE -3D -4DX 5:00 PM
 THE LEGO BATMAN MOVIE -3D -4DX 7:15 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 -2D -4DX 9:30 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 -2D -4DX 12:05 AM

AVENUES-3
 RINGS 12:00 PM
 RINGS 2:15 PM
 RINGS 4:30 PM
 MUNTHIRIVALLIKAL THALIRKUMBOL -Malayalam 6:45 PM
 RINGS 9:45 PM
 SPLIT 12:15 AM

AVENUES-4
 KAABIL- HINDI 1:00 PM
 RINGS 1:30 PM
 FRI
 ARSENAL 4:00 PM
 RAEES- HINDI 6:15 PM
 DANGAL -Hindi 9:15 PM
 RINGS 12:30 AM

360°- 1
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 12:15 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 2:15 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 4:15 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 6:15 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 8:15 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 10:15 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 12:15 AM

360°- 2
 SPLIT 12:45 PM
 SPLIT 3:00 PM
 DANGAL -Hindi 5:15 PM
 KAABIL- HINDI 8:30 PM
 SPLIT 11:30 PM

360°- 3
 AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film) 12:15 PM
 AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film) 2:30 PM
 KUNG-FU YOGA 4:45 PM
 AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film) 7:00 PM
 AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film) 9:00 PM
 AL MOKHAYAM (Kuwaiti Film) 11:00 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 1:00 AM

AL-KOUT.1
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 1:00 PM
 ARSENAL 1:30 PM
 ARSENAL 3:30 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 5:30 PM
 ARSENAL 8:00 PM
 JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 2 10:00 PM
 ARSENAL 12:30 AM

AL-KOUT.2

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **GANIJI ZAINAB QURESH**, wife of Murtuza Mustufa Jawadwala, holder of Passport No. J0366967 & Civil ID No. 283021503013 has changed my name to **ZAINAB MURTUZA JAWADWALA** hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by my new name **ZAINAB MURTUZA JAWADWALA. (C 5274) 16-2-2017**

I, **Sonu** son of Halasha Ram, holder of Indian Passport No. M4637344 & Civil ID No. 280101012966 has changed my name **Som Nath Halasha Ram** hereinafter in all my dealings and documents I will be known by name of **Som Nath Halasha Ram. (C 5273) 15-2-2017**

I, **NR Rockie Rodgers S/o Noel Rodgers**, holder of Indian Passport No. K4263817 & Civil ID No. 274112305085 has changed my name to **Jahangir** hereinafter in all my dealings and documents I will be known by name of **Jahangir. (C 5271) 14-2-2017**

TRANSPORT

Transport required from Dhajeej to Hawally Qutaiba street, from 5 pm. Friday & Saturday off. Contact: **99878317. 15-2-2017**

ACCOMMODATION

2 big rooms with balcony + central AC, Jabriya B-10. St 9, near Indian School & Farah Jamiya, start from February. Mobile: 55706900, 55983570. **(C 5272) 14-2-2017**

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr: 05:06
Shorook 06:26
Duhr: 12:02
Asr: 15:14
Maghrib: 17:39
Isha: 18:56

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

Friday Times BUSINESS

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RUSSIA HOPES TO MEET OIL OUTPUT CUT DEAL BY APRIL

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Austria to sue Airbus over alleged Eurofighter fraud

CHINA'S OVERSEAS PROPERTY INVESTMENTS SLUMP PROPERTY AGENTS SAY CAPITAL CONTROLS HURTING ACTIVITY

BEIJING: Property investment by Chinese companies plunged in January as authorities tightened restrictions on capital outflows to support the ailing yuan currency and ease pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserves. Investment by Chinese firms in offshore properties—which has helped fuel sharp and often contentious home price rises from London to Vancouver—tumbled 84.3 percent in January from a year earlier, the commerce ministry said on Thursday, without giving the amount invested.

That helped drag China's outbound direct investment (ODI) down 35.7 percent in January to 53.27 billion yuan (\$7.77 billion), the weakest in 16 months. The data does not include investments by companies in the financial sector.

China tightened its grip on moving funds out of the country late last year as the yuan plumbed more than eight-year lows. While Beijing says it supports legitimate overseas investment, regulators have warned they would pay close attention to "irrational" investment in property, entertainment, sports and other sectors.

The move has disrupted Chinese plans to buy global assets ranging from Italian soccer club AC Milan to a Hollywood studio. Those involved in helping Chinese invest overseas say it is now much tougher to get money out of the country.

"All outbound property deals are heavily affected by the capital restrictions. We have changed our funding channels, to target investors who already have funds offshore," said an investment manager at China Orient Summit Capital, which operates property investment funds in Shanghai.

DTZ/Cushman & Wakefield expects the deal volume of China's outbound property investment to drop slightly in 2017 under the clampdown. It estimates Chinese investment in overseas commercial real estate alone reached a record \$38.3 billion last year.

There are also signs that overseas property purchases by individual Chinese, which aren't included in ODI data, have also been impacted by capital controls. "There has been a per-

ceptible reduction in activity from Chinese buyers on the ground in (London's) Mayfair, but they have by no means disappeared," Tim Macpherson, head of London Residential at Carter Jonas, said ahead of Thursday's data.

In Vancouver, Canada's most expensive real estate market and a region popular with Chinese buyers, property sales plunged 39.5 percent in January from a year earlier, data from the Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver showed. Measures recently announced by Beijing include vetting transfers abroad of \$5 million or more and increasing scrutiny on outbound corporate investments.

Chinese banks on Jan. 1 also began requiring customers purchasing foreign currency to specify how they will use the funds, while reminding them individuals are not allowed to invest in overseas property under the capital account. Efforts to prop up the yuan currency led China's foreign exchange reserves to fall below the \$3 trillion level in January for the first time in nearly six years. But the drop was less than expected, suggesting tighter controls are slowing capital flight.

"Risk warnings from regulators and short-term controls have achieved results," the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) said in a statement to Reuters last week. Investment in the culture, sports, and entertainment industries fell 93.3 percent in January. But, showing authorities were indeed being more selective, investment in overseas manufacturing and information technology sectors rose 79.4 percent and 33.1 percent, respectively.

"Although ODI dropped in January, the overall structure is improving," said ministry of commerce spokesman Sun Jiwen.

Too early to tell

Agents advising Chinese buyers on overseas property say it remains to be seen how capital controls will impact sales in the long term, as many buyers have already moved money abroad.

"The so-called 'mainlanders' who bought these high-value properties have had their

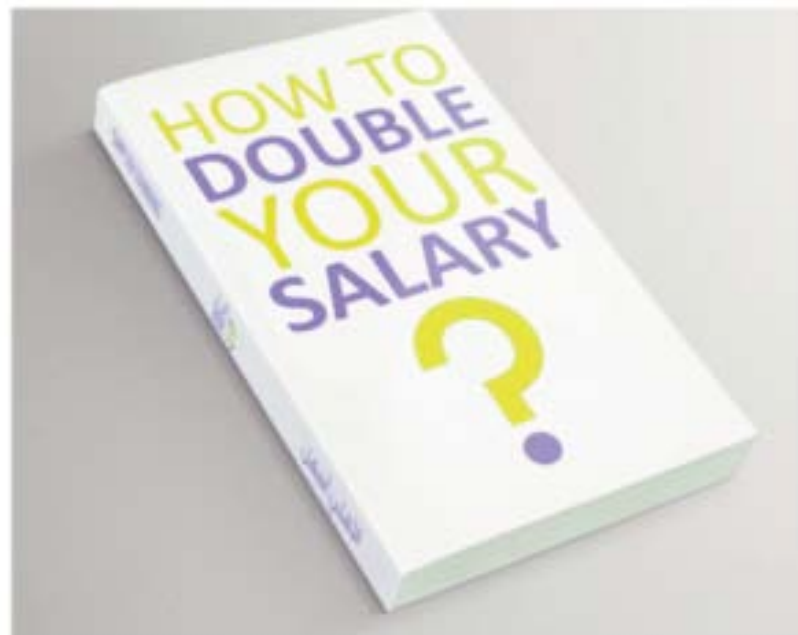
money transferred to Hong Kong one to two years ago," said Vincent Cheung, executive director, valuation and advisory, at Colliers International. Large companies such as Fosun, China's largest private conglomerate, say they already have sufficient funds overseas.

And Chinese interest in overseas property remains strong, according to Jan Kot, the head of China at property portal Juwai.com, which saw a more than 90 percent jump in inquiries on its website in January from a year earlier. The yuan is widely expected to fall further this year, according to a Reuters poll, while local Chinese governments are tighten-

ing restrictions to cool heated property prices at home. Economists expect more forceful policing of capital controls this year, though China's financial system is notoriously porous, with speculators quickly able to find new ways to get money out.

"It will probably stem outflows for a few months but over the long-term with the Chinese economic fundamentals still poor there is still a great desire for people to try to bring their money out," said Chua Han Teng, senior analyst at Fitch's BMI Research in Singapore. "In the long term, it seems like outflows are likely to persist." — Reuters

ABK Announces Winners of 42nd 'Double Your Salary' Weekly Draws



Get KD 100 upon transfer of salary to ABK and be one of the lucky winners to double up! Kuwait- 17 February, 2017: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held its 42nd 'Double Your Salary' weekly draw on 13th February, 2017 at the Bank's Head Office in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce, announcing the names of the winners for this week. The promotion includes weekly draws, with two winners per draw. The campaign will run until 27th June, 2017.

The winners this week were:

• Armit Kapil Deo, Fahahel Branch

• Bader Ahmad Akbar Albebbhani, Hawally Branch

New customers who transfer their salary to ABK receive KD 100 and will automatically be entered into the weekly draws to double their salaries. Existing customers who are already transferring their salary to ABK are entered into a separate draw.

The next 'Double Your Salary' draw will be held on 20th February 2017, where two new lucky winners will be announced. All winners will be contacted personally and a weekly announcement will be made through the media.



HANOI: A farmer uses a water buffalo to prepare his plot of land for the transplanting of rice in a paddy field on the outskirts of Hanoi yesterday. — AFP



ATHENS: Firefighters as reflected on a firefighter helmet during a protest outside parliament amid a contract dispute with the cash-strapped government, in Athens yesterday. —AP

EU OFFICIALS CALL FOR SWIFT BAILOUT DEAL ON GREECE

ATHENS/VIENNA: European Union officials urged Greece and its lenders yesterday to conclude a bailout review quickly to avert fresh uncertainty hovering over the crisis-hit nation and warned that a stalemate could harm its nascent economic recovery. Inconclusive talks between Greece and its international creditors on economic reforms and debt relief have cast doubt over the future of Greece's 86 billion euro bailout program.

European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs Pierre Moscovici said he was "hopeful" for a political agreement before a meeting of euro zone finance ministers next Monday.

"An agreement on the way forward for the Greek programme is absolutely necessary ... with (a) little effort from all stakeholders, (it) seems to me doable," Moscovici told reporters in Vienna.

Greece could be willing to compromise, he said, if it were given space to accommodate and protect those hit by the crisis. The Greek government has resisted the imposition of more austerity by the lenders, particularly on groups such as pensioners who have already seen 11 cuts to their income.

"It's clear that there is a need now to show the Greek people that there is a light at the end of the tunnel of austerity," Moscovici said.

In Brussels, the European Commission's vice president responsible for the euro Valdis Dombrovskis said there are costs in delaying agreement on Greece's bailout review, and a solution needs to be found swiftly. "There is a common understanding that time lost in reaching an agreement will have a

cost for everyone," Dombrovskis told Greek news portal Euro2day yesterday.

Dombrovskis, however, said the situation in Greece could not be compared with to the situation in early 2015 when the country narrowly avoided default and toppling out of the eurozone.

Delays in the bailout review mean delays in financial aid. Greece has about 7.5 billion euros of debt falling due by July, which it is unable to pay without more loans from lenders. So far it has received some 31.7 billion from the latest bailout accord, its third since 2010. Disagreements over labour and energy market reforms lenders want Greece to adopt have been complicated by broader misgivings from the International Monetary Fund, which will not participate in the most recent bailout because of concerns Athens will never be able to extricate itself from debt.

European policymakers have said that the bailout program cannot continue without IMF input, although a German politician close to Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday IMF participation is no longer crucial.

The fundamentals of the Greek economy have been strengthened, Dombrovskis said, but that strong growth potential was contingent on reforms being implemented. "So policy makers are faced with this choice - work hard to reach an agreement that will build on progress made or slip back into uncertainty. I think the choice is obvious," he said.

Recent Greek economic data has shown how tenuous the recovery is, with inflation rising and economic growth contracting again. —Reuters

RUSSIA HOPES TO MEET OIL OUTPUT CUT DEAL BY APRIL

MOSCOW: Russia said yesterday it will fully comply with an oil output cut agreement with other oil producing countries by the end of April. Under the deal with OPEC and non-OPEC countries signed last year Russia pledged to reduce its crude output by 300,000 barrels per day as part of a concerted effort to combat a global oil glut.

"We can get to 300,000 barrels per day at great speed by the end of April," Energy Minister Alexander Novak told the Interfax news agency. "This will allow us in May to

produce exactly 300,000 less per day than in October."

In December, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries agreed with 11 non-members, including Russia, to cut output in the first half of this year to push prices higher.

Russia, which has suffered badly from oil price declines, was pumping oil at a record-breaking level of over 11 million barrels per day at the end of last year. Novak said Russian production was currently down by more than 100,000 barrels

per day and should be 150,000 barrels per day lower in March. Technical issues affecting Russia's production were stopping the country from going to the agreed level immediately, Novak said. The OPEC oil cartel, meanwhile, has implemented 92 percent of its agreed output cuts, Kuwait's oil minister said on Monday.

Non-OPEC producers had delivered on more than half of their pledged production reductions, said the minister, Essam Al-Marzouk, who chairs a committee tasked with monitoring the agreement. —AFP

WORLD STOCK MARKET RALLY RUNS OUT STEAM

LONDON: Europe's main stock markets and the dollar pulled lower yesterday as investors cashed in recent gains and eyed upcoming US data. Global equities had risen Wednesday as investors reacted to fresh indications that the US Federal Reserve could decide to lift interest rates as early as March.

"Blue-chips were down in early trading," noted Russ Mould, investment director at stockbroker AJ Bell. "This afternoon, US jobless, building, housing and manufacturing data will be closely watched as traders assess the likelihood of a US rate hike in March." London was hampered also by a number of companies going ex-dividend, meaning that the stock no longer carries the right to the most recently declared shareholder payout.

"The FTSE 100 is trading modestly lower but most of these losses can be explained away by a number of big names going ex-dividend," noted IG analyst Chris Beauchamp. "BP, Shell, AstraZeneca and Imperial Brands are all trading without the benefit of the dividend, and with these heavyweights in the red it is going to be tough for the market to push higher."

"Given the steady rally we have seen over the past week or more, however, some weakness is to be welcomed, taking a little heat out of the market." Drugs firm AstraZeneca shed 3.7 percent and cigarette maker Imperial Brands sank 0.6 percent. Oil giant BP lost 1.6 percent and rival Royal Dutch Shell saw its 'A' shares dip 1.5 percent in value. Investors meanwhile brushed off another record Wall Street close and other upbeat US data.

New York's three main indexes built on their recent surge, racking up a fifth successive day of record closes, after figures showed US inflation hit a four-year high in January, fuelling bets on an interest rate hike soon.

Added to the picture, US President Donald Trump said he would release specifics on his new tax plan in the "not-too-distant future", adding it will be "good and simpler". His remarks came less than a week after he promised "phenomenal" reforms to the tax system, spurring a surge in global markets and the dollar. "The strong numbers highlight that the US economy is in fairly healthy shape," analyst Greg McKenna at trading group AxiTrader.

"The key is the data and president Trump's recommitment to the release of the tax plan everyone is waiting for." Fed chief Janet Yellen also reiterated her view to Congress that the world's top economy was on a strong growth track, a day after indicating borrowing costs could increase any time soon-leading to speculation of a move as soon as March.

Britain's FTSE 100 was down 0.5 percent at 7,268 while France's CAC 40 fell 0.4 percent to 4,903. Germany's DAX slipped 0.2 percent to 11,765. Futures augured a tepid start on Wall Street. Dow and S&P futures were down 0.2 percent.

Corporate earning

On Wednesday, reports of stronger retail sales and inflation showed that the US economy was stronger than expected. Consumer prices rose 2.5 percent in January from a year earlier, the highest rate since March 2012. The data give the Federal Reserve more encouragement to raise interest rates, and economists said the possibility is increasing that it may happen at the central bank's next meeting in March. While higher rates can weigh on growth, the confidence pushed US stock indexes to new highs.

Shares in consumer goods companies were under pressure after food and drinks giant Nestle said its earnings were weighed down last year by weak prices. Nestle shares were down over 2 percent in Switzerland after it missed its growth target and said it would have to step up its cost cutting program. —Agencies



TOKYO: People in masks wait to cross a street in front of an electronic stock indicator of a securities firm in Tokyo yesterday. —AP

AIR FRANCE-KLM PROFITS UP IN 2016, CAUTIOUS FOR 2017



PARIS: Air France CEO Franck Turner (right) leaves as Air France-KLM group CEO Jean-Marc Janaillac (center) talks to group CFO Frederic Gagey (left) at the end of a press conference on the group's 2016 results in Paris yesterday. —AFP

PARIS: Air France-KLM said yesterday profits rose sharply in 2016, but issued a cautious outlook for the current year in face of global uncertainty and aggressive competition in the sector.

The French-Dutch airline said in a statement that its bottom-line net profit soared to 792 million euros (\$840 million) last year, up from 118 million euros in 2015. The headline figure was boosted by one-off gains from the sale of a 49.9-percent stake in the onboard catering arm Servair to Switzerland's Gategroup.

Underlying or operating profit grew by 34 percent to 1.05 billion euros as passenger numbers were up 4.0 percent at 93.4 million. However, revenues declined by 3.3 percent to 24.8 billion euros, the statement said. "While the fall in the oil price significantly reduced the group's costs, the geopolitical context, competition and industry overcapacity all resulted in low-

er unit revenues," chief executive Jean-Marc Janaillac explained. The airline said lower oil prices cut its fuel bill by nearly 26 percent in 2016. The French business, Air France, booked a decline in operating profit, while the Dutch arm, KLM, saw underlying earnings rise.

That was due to the impact on business of a series of jihadist attacks in France, as well as the costs of two flight crew strikes, the carrier explained. But Air France-KLM had rolled out measures to address the situation, it said. "We are resolutely committed to regaining the offensive ... and improving our competitiveness. In an economic and geopolitical context that remains very uncertain, and faced with aggressive competition, the status quo is not an option," said CEO Janaillac.

Looking ahead, Air France-KLM said it got off to a "resilient start" to the current year. —AFP

EUROPEAN CAR MARKET GETS OFF TO GOOD START IN 2017

PARIS: After a very good year in 2016, the European car market got off to a positive start in 2017, with new car sales jumping by more than 10 percent, industry data showed yesterday.

Apparently shrugging off the "dieselgate" scandal that first saw German giant Volkswagen and then other carmakers accused of cheating on their diesel emissions, overall new car registrations rose by 10.2 percent to 1.17 million in the European Union in January, the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association said in a statement.

"In January 2017, the EU passenger car market started the year positively, partially due to extra working days during the month," the statement said. "Among the major markets—Spain, France, Germany and Italy—recorded very strong performance in January, all posting double-digit percentage gains," ACEA said. The Spanish market grew by 10.7 percent, the French market by 10.6 percent, the German market by 10.5 percent and the Italian market by 10.1 percent. The British passenger car market "also grew during the first month of 2017, although at more modest rate" of 2.9 percent, the association added.

German carmaker Volkswagen—the biggest maker with a market share of 24.1 percent—saw combined sales of all of its 12 brands rise by 10.3 percent.

The German giant is still counting the cost of the massive scandal that was triggered 18 months ago when it admitted to installing emissions-cheating software into 11 million diesel engines worldwide. French groups PSA Peugeot Citroen and Renault — with market shares of 10.3 percent and 9.1 percent respectively—saw their sales rise by 6.8 percent and 10.4 percent. Paris prosecutors said last month they were probing Renault over possible cheating, accusations the French group strongly denies. The European car market had already shrugged off the dieselgate scandal to notch up strong growth in 2016, with passenger car registrations climbing by 6.8 percent to 14.64 million units.

That is close to the level seen in 2008 when the global economic crisis erupted and a long way above the low of 11.8 million vehicles recorded in 2013.

Fair play

Meanwhile, Germany wants China to create a fairer business environment for foreign companies, especially German carmakers seeking to tap into Beijing's drive for greener cars, Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel told his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi yesterday.

German companies have long complained of obstacles to investment and acquiring local firms in China, where the government plays a more interventionist role.

Their concerns have acquired greater urgency with the advent of a more protectionist administration in the United States and Britain's plans to exit the European Union, both issues that could harm German and wider EU commercial interests. "China has again promised that it wants to proceed on the path of market liberalisation and reforms," Gabriel said after talks with Wang in Bonn, where foreign ministers from the G20 top economies are meeting.

"I have as such urged minister Wang that China reinforce that, with clear signals of equal treatment for foreign companies in China, for example in the field of electric mobility," Gabriel said. — Reuters



MIAMI LAKES: In this July 19, 2016 file photo, a man fills out a job application at a job fair, in Miami Lakes, Fla. The Labor Department reported on the number of Americans seeking unemployment benefits. —AP

TRUMP'S CONTESTED PICK FOR LABOR SECRETARY WITHDRAWS

PUZDER GIVES UP AFTER INTENSE SCRUTINY

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's pick for labor secretary Andrew Puzder withdrew from consideration Wednesday, after facing intense scrutiny for his business record and controversies about his personal past.

The 66-year-old fast-food executive is the first of Trump's cabinet nominees to withdraw, dealing a new blow to the president on the heels of the resignation of his embattled national security chief. "I am withdrawing my nomination for Secretary of Labor. I'm honored to have been considered and am grateful to all who have supported me," Puzder tweeted.

In a statement to US media, Puzder said he reached his decision "after careful consideration and discussions with my family." "While I won't be serving in the administration, I fully support the president and his highly qualified team," he said.

The White House confirmed Puzder's departure, with press secretary Sean Spicer simply saying: "He withdrew." Concern swelled this year about Puzder's labor practices and positions, with critics blasting him for opposing a minimum wage for US workers.

He also admitted he had failed to pay taxes on an undocumented employee—although he paid back taxes long afterward. And he faced embarrassing questions related to a messy divorce that he went through several years ago.

To be confirmed in his post Puzder needed the support of at least 51 out of 100 Senators. But he was staunchly opposed by Democrats and had lost the support of several of the chamber's 52 Republican Senators.

"Andy Puzder made the right and honorable choice by withdrawing from consideration as labor secretary," Republican Senator Marco Rubio said in a tweet. The top Senate Democrat, Chuck Schumer, described the withdrawal as "a victory for the American worker."

"Puzder should never have even been nominated to lead the Labor Department, and Senate Republicans clearly recognized this too," he said. "If President Trump is remotely serious about standing up for workers, he will nominate someone for Labor Secretary that champions workers' rights rather than suppresses them."

Puzder's confirmation hearing, after a number of postponements, had been set for today, when Democratic and Republican senators alike would have had a chance to grill him over his record as head of the parent company of the Hardee's and Carl's Jr restaurant chains. His withdrawal comes just two days after the explosive resignation of Trump's top aide Michael Flynn, who is accused of lying to White House colleagues about his contacts with Russian officials. —AFP

US BANKS TO PUSH FOR EASING OF MONEY LAUNDERING RULES

WASHINGTON/NEW YORK: America's largest banks are to propose a complete overhaul of how financial institutions investigate and report potential criminal activity, arguing that rules imposed in the years after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks and strengthened during the Obama administration are onerous and ineffective, sources said. The Clearing House, a trade association representing the largest US banks including Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase & Co and Bank of America, has long raised concerns about the effectiveness of the current rules, but this will be the first time the group has publicly called for them to be revamped.

The proposal, which could be published as soon as Thursday, will set the stage for an intensive lobbying effort targeting bank regulators and members of the Senate and House of Representatives finance committees. President Donald Trump has said he wants to

cut costly regulations for Wall Street. To keep drug traffickers and terrorists from laundering money through the US financial system, federal law mandates that bank employees file a Suspicious Activity Report (SAR) with authorities if they suspect transactions could be part of a crime. Faced with record penalties in recent years over failures to alert authorities to criminal activities, banks say they now over-report, filing hundreds of thousands of SARs out of fear of later falling foul of regulators.

"Now we tell banks to file a (report) on everything that might be criminal," said Gary Shiffman, CEO of compliance software maker Giant Oak. "But when everything is a priority nothing ends up being a priority."

The number of suspicious activity reports rose from 669,000 in 2013 to almost a million in 2016, according to US Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FINCEN), which

enforces anti-money laundering rules and collects data on suspicious transactions from banks around the country.

Complying with anti-money laundering rules, including the manpower needed to file suspicious activity reports, costs US companies as much as \$8 billion a year, the Heritage Foundation estimated in a report last year. The Clearing House will propose a new system under which banks do not investigate and report every transaction that could possibly raise a red flag, according to people involved in the effort.

Instead, banks would focus on investigating and reporting transactions based on specific concerns relayed to them by law enforcement. Under this approach, banks could shift their focus, as law enforcement priorities change. Institutions in different parts of the country may also watch out for certain types

of criminal transactions, based on information from authorities. For example, law enforcement could warn banks in the southwest of the United States to look out for drug traffickers moving funds to Mexico, according to people involved in drafting the proposal.

The Clearing House will also call for the creation of an information-sharing platform that would allow banks to share data among themselves about possible criminal transactions. For international banks, the group will push for the US Treasury's FinCEN to be responsible for investigating compliance, rather than the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, a main bank regulator. Since FinCEN is already responsible for sharing threat data with law enforcement agencies, the agency will be better able to determine if banks are making a substantial contribution to law enforcement efforts, the bank group will argue. —Reuters



FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Carsten Kengeter (C), CEO of German Stock Exchange operator Deutsche Boerse, poses with board members Jeffrey Tessler (L), Hauke Stars (2nd L), Andreas Preuss (2nd R) and Gregor Pottmeyer (R) prior to a press conference to present their company's business report yesterday in Frankfurt am Main. —AFP

BOND-BUYING BOOSTS ECB NET PROFITS, BALANCE SHEET IN 2016

SPIKE IN INFLATION SEEN TRANSIENT

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: The European Central Bank said yesterday it had increased net profits in 2016 largely thanks to its massive bond purchases, which also pushed its balance sheet to 3.7 trillion euros.

The Frankfurt institution earned 1.19 billion euros (\$1.3 billion) profit last year, up from 1.08 billion euros in 2015, it said in a statement. The increase was "mainly owing to higher net interest income earned on the asset purchase program portfolio and the US dollar portfolio," the bank said.

The ECB's income comes from interest earned on its bond holdings, investing its foreign reserve assets and its own funds.

In 2016, the ECB responded to fears of deflation in the eurozone by expanding its bond-buying program. The move was just one of the interventions in the economy aimed at driving growth and pushing inflation towards the central bank's target of just below 2.0 percent.

A faster rate of monthly purchases from March saw the ECB more than dou-

ble the amount of bonds the Eurosystem-made up of the ECB and the 19 national central banks in the eurozone-holds under the scheme, hitting 1.65 trillion euros by the end of the year.

Interest earned by the ECB from the flood of bonds grew to 435 million euros, helping push the bank's overall interest income to 1.6 billion euros, an 11 percent increase. The mass bond-buying also helped swell the Eurosystem's balance sheet by 32 percent to 3.7 trillion euros.

ECB president Mario Draghi said at a regular press conference in December that the mass bond-buying would go on until December 2017, although the pace will drop to 60 billion euros per month from the present 80 billion starting in April. On the costs side, the ECB spent more on staff and administration, as it continues to expand its bank supervision arm after it was made the top eurozone financial regulator in November 2014.

The ECB distributes its profits to the 19 national central banks that are part of

the single currency. It shared out the first 966 million euros at the end of January, and plans to pay out the remaining 277 million on February 17.

Top European Central Bank officials viewed the current spike in inflation as "transient" as they decided last month to keep pumping newly printed money into the economy to support the strengthening economy.

A written summary of the Jan. 19 meeting shows members of the bank's governing council agreed they shouldn't overreact to inflation jumping to an annual 1.8 percent in January. On paper, that meets the bank's goal of just under 2 percent.

But the increase was mainly fed by higher oil prices, not by fundamental pressures such as wage increases for workers - which remain subdued. The officials decided they would "look through the volatility in short-term data if judged transient." The board decided to stress the bank would keep purchasing bond through the end of this year. — Agencies

BOEING UNION BID FAILS IN SOUTH AVERSE TO ORGANIZING

NORTH CHARLESTON, SC: Production workers at Boeing's South Carolina plant have rejected an effort to unionize, maintaining Southern reluctance toward unionization and setting up a picture-perfect stop for President Donald Trump, who visits the facilities this week.

Vote totals weren't immediately available Wednesday, but the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers' lead organizer said it's "the workers who dictate what happens next." National Labor Relations Board rules require workers wait a year before another union vote. Wednesday's balloting came just two days before Trump was slated to make the first visit by a sitting president to the sprawling North Charleston complex, where Boeing makes the 787 Dreamliner. On Friday, Trump is coming to town for the rollout of the first 787-10 model.

The presidential visit marks a photo finish for Boeing, which for weeks vigorously campaigned against the Machinists' effort. Billboards, radio and television ads blanketed the Charleston area, arguing to employees why they should not surrender their rights to the union.

In its campaign, Boeing didn't threaten to move its operations abroad if workers unionized - a tactic that often surfaces when collective bargaining efforts arise - perhaps abstaining from those threats because of its huge South Carolina plant investment and billions of dollars in federal defense contracts the company does not want to risk.

Trump himself engaged with the company during the presidential campaign, blasting Boeing for the cost of building a new Air Force One. "Costs are out of control," Trump tweeted in early December. "Cancel order!" Boeing CEO Dennis Muilenburg met with Trump two weeks later.

If successful, the balloting on whether employees should join the union would have sent a significant message to politicians in the region and Washington that workers here want the same protections and benefits as those in other areas. And, to leaders trying to recruit businesses by promoting their states' lack of union presence, it'd it would have made their jobs more difficult.

But this most recent test of Southern acceptance of collective bargaining movements was an uphill battle for the union and its backers. The global aviation giant, which came to South Carolina in part because of the state's minuscule union presence, did so with the aid of millions of dollars in state assistance made possible by officials who spoke out frequently and glowingly with anti-union messages.

"It is an economic development tool," Gov. Nikki Haley, now President Donald Trump's ambassador to the United Nations, said in a 2012 address of how she sold companies on coming to the state. "We'll make the unions understand full well that they are not needed, not wanted and not welcome in the state of South Carolina." At least that part of the tactic has worked. Only about 52,000 South Carolina workers have union representation, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2016 figures. Other major manufacturers in the state, including BMW and Michelin, aren't unionized or haven't experienced major campaigns to do so. — AFP

SOFTBANK ADDS FORTRESS INVESTMENT TO GROWING EMPIRE

TOKYO: The \$3.3 billion acquisition by SoftBank Group Corp., the Japanese telecommunications, internet and solar energy giant, of Fortress Investment Group marks tycoon Masayoshi Son's latest step in building an investment empire.

Son said the deal, announced by both sides Wednesday, will immediately contribute to his strategy for growth and complement his Softbank Vision Fund plan for investing in leading technologies including artificial intelligence and the "internet of Things," which links devices through the Internet.

"Fortress' excellent track record speaks for itself, and we look forward to benefiting from

its leadership, broad-based expertise and world-class investment platform," Son said in a statement.

Tokyo-based Softbank has been aggressive in global acquisitions and has been seeking partners for its private fund for technology investments that it says may grow to \$100 billion. Son appears determined to deliver on his promise to President Donald Trump to invest \$50 billion in US startups and create 50,000 jobs. In buying New York-based Fortress, he is betting more on Fortress's wide ranging expertise and heft in global investment than on gaining any edge in the technology sector: the US investment house has largely focused

on finance and real estate, leisure industries, transport and other infrastructure.

Private equity accounts for nearly two-thirds of the company's investments. Softbank's shares jumped 1.6 percent Wednesday in Tokyo trading. Shares in Fortress were up 6.5 percent late Tuesday.

Softbank also owns the US wireless company Sprint Corp and Britain's ARM Holdings, which is known as an innovator in the "internet of things," and in technology used in smartphones.

Fortress said its senior professionals will stay to keep up its fund performance. Fortress co-chairmen Pete Briger and Wes Edens

praised Son as "visionary." They said the companies have much in common, and the deal will benefit shareholders. "We join a company with tremendous scale and resources, and a culture completely aligned with our focus on performance, service and innovation," they said in a joint statement.

SoftBank, the first carrier to offer the iPhone in Japan, also sells the Pepper human-shaped companion robot. The company, founded in 1981, has within its investment empire financial technology and ride-booking services. Last week, the company reported its October-December profit soared to about 40 times what it was a year ago. —AP

ANC ATTACKS BANKS OVER FOREX RIGGING CHARGES

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's ruling ANC party called yesterday for the toughest possible sanctions against more than a dozen local and foreign banks accused of rigging the rand currency, piling political pressure on lenders that have become a target for public anger.

The Competition Commission said on Wednesday it had found the banks, including US, European, Japanese and Australian lenders, had colluded to coordinate their trading activities when dealing in the rand and US dollar.

South Africa's banking index fell 1 percent yesterday after the Commission, which has been conducting an investigation since April 2015, recommended heavy fines be imposed on the lenders.

The ANC attacked the banks, which many South Africans view as a symbol of the stark racial inequality that persists 23 years after the fall of apartheid. "The African National Congress takes an extremely dim view of the activities of the listed banks. These acts of corruption have crudely exposed the ethical crisis in the South African banking sector," the party said in a statement.

"It is further an indication of how the markets are and can be manipulated by dominant oligopolies to cripple its functioning to suit their nefarious agendas."

Financial regulators are clamping down worldwide, with dozens of traders fired and big banks fined around \$10 billion in total in separate cases for rigging the level of the Libor interest rates and other market benchmarks. The opposition Democratic Alliance accused the ANC of politicising the issue, saying ministers want "to do battle with the banks, regardless of the economic fallout".

Michael Cardo, who speaks on economic development for the right-leaning party, said President Jacob Zuma's State of the Nation Address last week had made clear "he intends using the competition authorities as a tool of his populist and destructive agenda of 'radical economic transformation'".

Last year the ANC suffered its worst ever local election performance as the left-wing Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) won over many poor black South Africans with promises of radical redistribution of wealth.

The EFF and sections of the ANC often criticise banks for keeping the wealth of the country in the hands of the white elite. This has turned up the heat on the banks, where a majority of executives are white despite black people making up 80 percent of the population.

The investigation found that from at least 2007, banks had an agreement to collude on prices for bids, offers and bid-offer spreads for spot trades involving the rand - whose international market code is ZAR - and the U.S. dollar, the Commission said.

Its inquiry centred on an instant messaging chat room called "ZAR Domination", which the Commission said was used to coordinate trading activities when giving quotes to customers who buy or sell currencies. Fines should amount to 10 percent of the banks' annual revenues, the Commission recommended, without saying whether this should relate to global revenues or just their South African business. The banks and brokerages named in the case were Citigroup, Nomura, Standard Bank, Investec, JP Morgan, BNP Paribas, Credit Suisse Group, Commerzbank AG, Standard New York Securities Inc, Macquarie Bank, Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BAML), ANZ Banking Group Ltd, Standard Chartered Plc and Barclays Africa (Absa), part of the Barclays Plc. — Reuters



VIENNA: This file photo taken on July 12, 2007 shows the first Eurofighter bought by Austria landing at Zeltweg air base, some 150 kilometers from Vienna. — AFP

AUSTRIA TO SUE AIRBUS OVER ALLEGED EUROFIGHTER FRAUD

GOVT SEES POTENTIAL DAMAGES OF UP TO 1.1 BN EUROS

VIENNA: Austria filed a lawsuit yesterday against Airbus and the Eurofighter consortium, alleging wilful deception and fraud linked to a 2 billion euro (\$2.1 billion) order for Eurofighter jets in 2003, the defence ministry said. The ministry said that following an investigation it believed Airbus and Eurofighter had misled Austria about the purchase price, deliverability and equipment of the jets.

Damages could amount to 1.1 billion euros, Defence Minister Hans Peter Doskozil said at a news conference in Vienna. Airbus said it was unable to comment as it had only just learnt about the action through the media. "We don't know any details," a spokesman said.

"We can however confirm that in recent years we have supported the activities by the legal authorities, for instance through (our) own investigations," he added. Austrian and German prosecutors have been investigating the case for years and Munich prosecutors have said they expect to complete separate preliminary proceedings by mid-

year. "As defence minister, I consider it my duty to report facts relevant for criminal prosecution and to claim compensation for the Austrian taxpayers' damage. This is what we did today," Doskozil said. Austria initially ordered 18 Eurofighter jets but reduced the order to 15 in 2007. It then ordered a review of the purchase four years ago following bribery allegations.

The deal was controversial from the outset and allegations surfaced almost immediately after its announcement in 2003 that money was pocketed by politicians, civil servants and others via brokers for side deals accompanying the purchase. A European defence executive, asking not to be identified, said Eurofighter had won the deal with the lowest price.

The Eurofighter is built by a consortium comprising Britain's BAE Systems and Italy's Leonardo as well as Airbus, which represents the other two nations in the European project: Germany and Spain. Airbus and the consortium illegally charged nearly 10 percent of the purchase price of 1.96 billion euros for

so-called offset deals, according to the defence ministry's findings. While offset deals - which involve work being given to local companies - were part of the agreement, their cost should have been reported separately, it said in a report.

Airbus and Eurofighter Jagdflugzeug GmbH, which coordinates the production of the aircraft and is headquartered in Munich, also deceived Austria about its ability and will to deliver the agreed equipment, the report said. The Eurofighter consortium was not immediately available to comment. The ministry said its damages estimate of up to 1.1 billion euros related to extra costs paid for the Eurofighter compared with a jet from another bidder and higher operating expenses.

Airbus, Europe's largest aerospace group, has said it is co-operating with a separate German probe into the fighter sale to Austria, as well as three probes into suspected irregularities in defense or security markets, including a UK investigation into a \$3.3 billion communications deal with Saudi Arabia. — Reuters

TENNIS

THIEM POUNCES AFTER ZVEREV TEEN TANTRUM

ROTTERDAM: Austria's Dominic Thiem battled into the second round of the Rotterdam World Tennis on Wednesday after Alexander Zverev's challenge fizzled out in a racquet-smashing tantrum. The German teenager lost 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 after dominating in the first set against second seed Thiem. He ended up smashing a racquet with five heavy blows in the final set after dropping serve.

The meltdown did not help in the end, with world number eight Thiem going through after one and three-quarter hours to next face France's Gilles Simon. Grigor Dimitrov advanced with a 6-7 (4/7), 6-2, 6-4 win over Alexander's elder brother Mischa Zverev as the red-hot Bulgarian racked up his 15th win of 2017. Dimitrov, who captured his second title of the season last weekend on home ground in

Sofia, had to dig deep, however, to see off Zverev who stunned world number one Andy Murray at the Australian Open last month.

The 25-year-old Dimitrov improved to 15-1 on the season and will next face Denis Istomin, who beat Novak Djokovic in the second round in Melbourne at the season's opening Grand Slam. Dimitrov, the fifth seed, took victory in just under two hours, firing his 11th ace for a match point and breaking on four of nine occasions.

"I'm pleased with the win. Mischa did not make it easy for me with his game. I had to fight to win," said Dimitrov, who was champion in Brisbane and a semi-finalist at the Australian Open in January. Belgian third seed David Goffin comfortably beat Andrey Kuznetsov 6-3, 6-2 "I am feeling good. I'm

playing really well and pleased with the victory, especially against Andrey—a good indoor player," Goffin said.

"He can play fast, so it was not an easy first round. I served well when I needed to and I am happy to win my first match in Rotterdam. I had a great week in Sofia (finalist against Dimitrov) and I've come here with a lot of confidence." Richard Gasquet put out Viktor Troicki 6-4, 6-2, ending with a pair of picture-perfect backhand passing shots. In the second round, defending champion Martin Klizan battled to a 6-7 (5/7), 6-4, 6-1 defeat of 2016 semi-finalist Philipp Kohlschreiber while French sixth seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga dismissed Gilles Muller 6-4, 6-2. Frenchman Pierre-Hughes Herbert advanced past qualifier Evgeny Donskoy of Russia 6-2, 7-6 (7/4). — AFP



SAN JOSE: Florida Panthers goalie Roberto Luongo (1) is tended to by a trainer during the third period of an NHL hockey game against the San Jose Sharks. — AP

NHL

JACKETS TRASHES MAPLE;
BLUES BEAT RED WINGS

COLUMBUS: Backup Joonas Korpisalo made 31 saves, and Nick Foligno and Boone Jenner had a goal each as the Columbus Blue Jackets beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 5-2 on Wednesday night. Josh Anderson, Oliver Bjorkstrand and Matt Calvert also scored, and Alexander Wennberg, Zach Werenski and Seth Jones had a pair of assists each for the Blue Jackets. Columbus moved into a tie with Pittsburgh for second place in the Metropolitan Division two days before the Penguins visit Nationwide Arena. Nazem Kadri scored both goals for Toronto, and Curtis McElhinney blocked 30 shots - McElhinney was waived by the Blue Jackets earlier this season after backing up Sergei Bobrovsky the past few seasons. Josh Leivo assisted on both goals for the Maple Leafs, who squandered a chance to move ahead of Ottawa and Boston for second place in the Atlantic Division.

PANTHERS 6, SHARKS 5, OT

Jonathan Huberdeau scored 1:38 into overtime after San Jose's Joe Pavelski scored twice late in the third period to tie it. Nick Bjugstad and Aleksander Barkov each scored twice for the Panthers, who have won five of six games. Jussi Jokinen also scored. Jaromir Jagr assisted on Barkov's second goal for his 1,900th NHL point. Sharks' fans gave him a nice ovation. Brent Burns, Joel Ward and Marc-Edouard Vlasic also scored for the Sharks, who have lost five of six. Roberto Luongo

stopped 29 of 34 shots for Florida and had to leave the game with a lower-body injury with 38 seconds left in the third period. He was replaced by James Reimer, who stopped two shots.

BLUES 2, RED WINGS 0

Carter Hutton made 25 saves for his second straight shutout, Ivan Barbashev scored 2:06 into the game and Jaden Schwartz had an empty-net goal in the final seconds, helping St. Louis beat Detroit. The Blues have won a season-high five straight games, and coach Mike Yeo has won six of seven since replacing the fired Ken Hitchcock. Detroit has dropped five straight games for the second time in less than a month, matching its season-long losing streak. Detroit also lost five straight following a 6-2 start to what's become a difficult season. The Red Wings played their first home game since team owner Mike Ilitch died Friday.

FLAMES 3, FLYERS 1

Matthew Tkachuk had a goal and an assist, Brian Elliott made 33 stops and Calgary beat Philadelphia. The 19-year-old Tkachuk pulled Calgary even at 1 with a goal 4:28 into the first period, then assisted on TJ Brodie's go-ahead goal 12:45 into the second. Mark Giordano added an empty-net goal with 39 seconds left for the Flames. Nick Cousins scored for the Flyers, and Michal Neuvirth stopped 20 of 22 shots. —AP

GOLF

RUMFORD, FOSTER
SHARE LEAD IN
WORLD SUPER 6

PERTH: Australia's Brett Rumford and Mark Foster of England shared the first-round lead at the European Tour's revolutionary new World Super 6 Perth event at Lake Karrinyup yesterday. The Perth native fired an opening round six-under 66 along with Foster.

There were 21 players within two shots of the lead as players vied to make it into Sunday's innovative new six-hole match play knockout format. The European Tour is trying to sex up golf for a 21st century audience and hopes the Perth event, and the recently announced GolfSixes over two days in England, in May will attract a new generation of fans.

A regular cut will take place after Friday's second round of strokeplay before the field is cut to 24 players for Sunday's finale in what is a first for the European Tour. Rumford, who finished fifth at the Australian PGA Championship on the Gold Coast last December, said he was looking to continue his good form in his homeland after losing playing privileges last season. "I actually feel as though the year has kind of been flipped on its head and I don't really feel any pressure whatsoever," Rumford said. "I don't feel pressure to win but my focus is on purely winning every golf tournament I'm trying to get into."

Rumford, 39, made birdies on the tenth, 11th, 14th and 15th - with a dropped shot on the 13th - to turn in 33 before picking up further shots on the first and fourth. Foster also turned in 33 and then added further gains on the first, fourth and fifth to join the lead. The Englishman also lost his tour card last year but quickly reclaimed it at the qualifying school and is embarking on a 16th consecutive season on Tour.

"I'm pleasantly surprised," he said. "You come all this way and you don't know what to expect and, obviously, as the round went on it got better so I was really pleased. "You just come down, you want to give yourself a chance, so I came down early because I've not been playing anything, so that was the best thing I probably could have done." There was a group of 10 players a shot off the lead containing American duo Casey O'Toole and Johannes Veerman, Englishman Robert Dinwiddie, German Sebastian Heisele and Japan's Hideto Tanihara. Thailand's Thitiphun Chuayprakong, Phacara Khongwatmai and Pavit Tangkamolprasert were among those on four under. The 2010 British Open champion Louis Oosthuizen of South Africa was three shots off the lead and Denmark's Thorbjorn Olesen was a stroke further back after a two-under 70. — AFP

CRICKET

WADE CONFIDENT BACK WILL ENDURE INDIA TEST



MUMBAI: Australia's wicketkeeper Matthew Wade (L) does shadow practice as captain Steve Smith bats in the nets during a training session at The Brabourne Cricket Stadium. — AFP

MUMBAI: Australia wicketkeeper Matthew Wade is confident his back problem will not flare up during the team's four-test series in India, the 29-year-old said yesterday. Wade abandoned the recent one-day tour of New Zealand to return home to manage a bulging disc before joining his team mates at a pre-series training camp in Dubai.

"It's just something that I'll have to manage," Wade told reporters at Mumbai's Brabourne Stadium. "The disc just bulged a little bit but it just hit one of the nerves, so it took a little while to come right. "I've done it before, touch wood it doesn't happen again but if it does I'm confident that I can turn it around pretty quick."

Australia will take on world number one India in the first of the four tests at Pune next Thursday and Wade is aware that his keeping techniques will be thoroughly tested in India's spin-friendly conditions. "It's trying to get all that out of your mind and stick to the basics," the Victoria captain said. "The ball that turns and bounces, you'll react if your technique's good. "It's about trying to hone my technique in the next week or two, then when you do get one that spits out of the rough it's just trusting your technique. "But I quite enjoy keeping over here, the ball beats the bat a lot more up to the stumps so that's probably the challenge. "In Australia the ball doesn't beat the bat consistently so it's hard to get a consistent rhythm up to the stumps," he said. — Reuters



LAHORE: The Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Shaharyar Khan talks to journalists outside the Gaddafi Cricket Stadium. —AFP

PCB TO INDICT
CRICKETERS AFTER
LEGAL FORMALITIES

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Shaharyar Khan said yesterday suspended cricketers Sharjeel Khan and Khalid Latif will be formally indicted for spot-fixing. Sharjeel and Latif had informal meetings with officials of the PCB's anti-corruption unit in Lahore over the last two days, during which the players asked for time to consult their families before giving their statements.

"We will formally record their statements on video and then indict them in a day or two," Shaharyar told reporters in Lahore yesterday. "We have to be very careful and make sure the legal process is complete. Legally our stance should be watertight because these players might go to the court." Last Friday, the PCB provisionally suspended both players, who represented Islamabad United in the Pakistan Super League. On Monday Britain's National Crime Authority arrested two men, one of them believed to be former Pakistan opening batsman Nasir Jamshed, before releasing them on bail in connection with spot-fixing in the PSL.

The PCB suspended Jamshed from playing any form of cricket. The officials of the PSL and PCB claimed to have concrete evidence against both Sharjeel and Latif of involvement in spot-fixing during the PSL. Three more players - Islamabad United's Mohammad Irfan, Quetta Gladiators' Zulfiqar Babar and Karachi Kings' Shazaib Hassan were questioned by the PCB's anti-corruption unit, but none of them were suspended. — AP

KOHLI AND SMITH INSPIRE
NEW ENG CAPTAIN ROOT

LEEDS: Joe Root hopes becoming a Test captain will take his batting to the "next level", just as it's done for India's Virat Kohli and Australia's Steve Smith. Root was confirmed as England's new Test skipper, following Alastair Cook's resignation, despite the likes of former Test spinner Graeme Swann saying it could adversely affect his batting. The 26-year-old Yorkshireman already boasts an impressive batting average of nearly 53 in his 53 Tests to date.

Yet Kohli averages over 67 as captain of the India side now top of the world Test rankings compared to a shade above 41 when a player in the ranks. The corresponding figures for Smith are equally stark, at 71 and 53 respectively. "That excites me," said Root at his Headingley home ground on Wednesday. "It's a great motivator to make sure I do everything I can to get my batting in the best place possible and set the example for the rest of the guys in the team."

Root added: "You look at other guys who've taken similar roles like Virat and Steve Smith and they've gone on to bigger and better things and taken their game to the next level. I don't see why I can't look at it in the same light. "It's a great opportunity to take that added responsibility and really motivate me to get better. "Every kid dreams of being England captain one day... I'm just really looking forward to getting my teeth into it and putting my mark on things."

'Biggest honor'

Root insisted he had no hesitation in accepting the captaincy when it was offered to him by England and Wales Cricket Board director Andrew Strauss. "I think it's the biggest honor in the game, simple as that," he said. Meanwhile Strauss, Cook's predecessor as England captain, forecast an initial upsurge in the form of Root, a regular in all three international formats.



Joe Root

"When you get to the end of a captaincy career, you look at Alastair Cook and talk about him feeling a bit drained," said Strauss. "The opposite is also true. Early on in your captaincy career, it's incredibly energizing. "You walk a bit taller, you are passionate about taking the team forward, and you want to contribute to winning games of cricket. "We've seen with a lot of captains that it's had a really positive effect on their game generally. There's no reason why that wouldn't happen to Joe for the next 18 months. And it's 18 very important months for both him and the England team."

Root has plenty of time to ease himself into his new role as England's next Test is not until they face South Africa at Lord's in July, with their focus for the time being on limited overs cricket, including June's Champions Trophy on home soil. For a team that prides itself on its Test results, 2016 was a tough

year for England. They lost eight Tests in all, culminating in a 4-0 series loss in India-Cook's final campaign as captain.

After this year's home series against South Africa and the West Indies, England's packed schedule continues with the defense of the Ashes in Australia in November. But an undaunted Root said of his promotion to captain: "It's a good opportunity to give something back to the game that has given me so much. "I'm very lucky to have inherited an exciting team with a great blend of experience, raw talent and a core group of players who have played 20-30 games and are ready to take some more responsibility." He added: "I'd like to be a captain that wins, tough to play against, and I like to hope we'll play cricket that is enjoyable to watch. "It should be entertaining Test cricket and that's something I want to get across to the team and the people watching." — AFP

WESTBROOK NOTCHES 27TH TRIPLE-DOUBLE OF SEASON

OKLAHOMA CITY: Russell Westbrook scored 38 points and had his 27th triple-double of the season to help the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the New York Knicks 116-105 on Wednesday night. Westbrook moved into sole possession of third place for the most triple-doubles in a season, behind Oscar Robertson's 41 in 1961-62 and Wilt Chamberlain's 31 in 1967-68. The star guard had 14 rebounds and 12 assists in the 64th triple-double of his career. Victor Oladipo added 21 points for the Thunder. Carmelo Anthony had 30 points for the Knicks, and Derrick Rose added 25.

CELTICS 116, 76ERS 108

Isaiah Thomas scored 13 of his 33 points in the fourth quarter and the surging Boston Celtics held on to beat the Philadelphia 76ers 116-108 on Wednesday night. It was the 40th straight 20-point game for Thomas, tying the team record set by John Havlicek during the 1971-72 season. Marcus Smart added 21 points and eight steals for the Celtics. Boston has won four in a row and 11 of 12. Philadelphia had won three straight. Dario Saric led the 76ers with 20 points and 11 rebounds. Robert Covington added 18 points.

CAVALIERS 113, PACERS 104

LeBron James scored 31 points, Kyrie Irving added 26, Kyle Korver made six 3-pointers and Cleveland beat Indiana to roll into the All-Star break with its seventh win in eight games. Irving and Korver combined to make four 3s in the first 2:50 of the fourth quarter - Korver finished with 22 points and became the seventh player with 2,000 career 3s - as the NBA champions improved to 7-1 in February following a drama-and-distraction filled January. Glenn Robinson III scored 17 points for Indiana. The Pacers have lost five straight.

WARRIORS 109, KINGS 86

Klay Thompson scored 10 of his 35 points during a big third-quarter run and the Golden State Warriors beat the Sacramento Kings. Stephen Curry added 13 points and nine assists, and Kevin Durant had 21 points, seven rebounds and seven assists as the Warriors bounced back from a loss in Denver two nights earlier to head into the All-Star break an NBA-best 47-9. DeMarcus Cousins had 13 points and six assists for Sacramento. Matt Barnes added 15 points and Darren Collison scored 14.

HEAT 117, ROCKETS 109

Hassan Whiteside had 23 points, 14 rebounds and five blocks to help Miami beat Houston. Dion Waiters added 23 points, nine rebounds and seven assists, and Goran Dragic had 21 points for the Heat. They had lost two straight after winning 12 in a row. James Harden had 38 points 12 rebounds and 12 assists for Houston his 15th triple-double of the season.

BUCKS 129, NETS 125

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 33 points in his final game before making his All-Star debut, Greg Monroe added 25 and Milwaukee sent Brooklyn Nets to the break on a 14-game skid. Khris Middleton finished with 20 points in his strongest game since returning from a ruptured left hamstring that forced him to miss the first 50 games. Monroe was 12 for 16 from the field after going 12 for 15 on Monday in a victory over Detroit. Brook Lopez scored a season-high 36 points for the Nets.

TIMBERWOLVES 112, NUGGETS 99

Andrew Wiggins scored 40 points and Karl-Anthony Towns added 24 points and 18 rebounds in Minnesota's victory over Denver. Wiggins' second 40-plus game in 24 hours helped the Timberwolves split the season series. The Nuggets went cold 48 hours after blowing out Golden State behind an NBA record-tying 24 3-pointers on 40 tries. They made just 11 of 34 from long range this time, and Nicola Jokic shot just 6 of 19 from the floor for 15 hard-earned points.

SUNS 137, LAKERS 101

Eric Bledsoe had his third career triple-double, the first for a Phoenix player since November 2015, and the Suns routed Los Angeles. Bledsoe got his 10th rebound with 6:06 to go and exited shortly after, finishing with 25 points and a season-high 13 assists. Devin Booker scored 23 points. Lou Williams and D'Angelo Russell led Los Angeles with 21 points apiece.



OKLAHOMA CITY: Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook (0) shoots over New York Knicks forward Kristaps Porzingis (6) during the first quarter of an NBA basketball game. —AP

RAPTORS 90, HORNETS 85

Kyle Lowry scored 21 points and Toronto overcame a 17-point fourth-quarter deficit to beat Charlotte. Norman Powell had 17 points and Jonas Valanciunas added 10 points and 11 rebounds for Raptors. Frank Kaminsky had 27 points, and Kemba Walker added 24 points and nine assists for Charlotte.

SPURS 107, MAGIC 79

LaMarcus Aldridge scored 23 points and Kawhi Leonard added 22, leading San Antonio past short-handed Orlando. Orlando was down a key player after newly acquired swingman Terrence Ross was unable to suit up because Serge Ibaka didn't complete his physical in time in Toronto. The Magic sent Ibaka to Toronto for Ross and a first-round draft pick Tuesday. Nikola Vucevic led Orlando with 16 points and 10 rebounds.

PELICANS 95, GRIZZLIES 91

Solomon Hill scored a season-high 23 points and Anthony Davis added 18, including a key basket with 38.8 seconds left that helped New Orleans hold off Memphis. Jrue Holiday had 19 points and seven assists for New Orleans. Alexis Ajinca added 12 points and a season-high 10 rebounds. Mike Conley led the Grizzlies with 17 points.

PISTONS 98, MAVERICKS 91

Reggie Jackson scored 22 points, Jon Leuer added 20 and Detroit beat Dallas. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope had 16 points, and Tobias Harris 13. Dirk Nowitzki had 13 of his 24 points in the third quarter to help the Mavericks rally.

JAZZ 111, TRAIL BLAZERS 88

Gordon Hayward scored 22 points and George Hill added 19 for Utah. Joe Ingles had 18 points for the Jazz, and Rudy Gobert had 13 points and 12 rebounds. CJ McCollum had 18 points for Portland.

CLIPPERS 99, HAWKS 84

Blake Griffin scored 17 points and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Atlanta Hawks to head into the All-Star break on a four-game winning streak. JJ Redick added 15 points, Austin Rivers had 13 and All-Star DeAndre Jordan had 16 rebounds to help the Clippers beat the Hawks at home for the first time since March 8, 2014. Dennis Schroder led Atlanta with 15 points, and Dwight Howard had 11 points and 15 rebounds. —AP

NBA results/standings

LA Clippers 99, Atlanta 84; Golden State 109, Sacramento 86; Oklahoma City 116, NY Knicks 105; Phoenix 137, LA Lakers 101; Minnesota 112, Denver 99; Utah 111, Portland 88; Miami 117, Houston 109; New Orleans 95, Memphis 91; Boston 116, Philadelphia 108; Toronto 90, Charlotte 85; Milwaukee 129, Brooklyn 125; Detroit 98, Dallas 91; San Antonio 107, Orlando 79; Cleveland 113, Indiana 104.

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Boston	37	19	.661	-
Toronto	33	24	.579	4.5
NY Knicks	23	34	.404	14.5
Philadelphia	21	35	.375	16
Brooklyn	9	47	.161	28

Central Division

Cleveland	39	16	.709	-
Indiana	29	27	.518	10.5
Chicago	27	29	.482	12.5
Detroit	27	30	.474	13
Milwaukee	25	30	.455	14

Southeast Division

Washington	33	21	.611	-
Atlanta	32	24	.571	2
Miami	25	32	.439	9.5
Charlotte	24	32	.429	10
Orlando	21	37	.362	14

Western Conference

Northwest Division

Utah	35	22	.614	-
Oklahoma City	32	25	.561	3
Denver	25	31	.446	9.5
Portland	23	33	.411	11.5
Minnesota	22	35	.386	13

Pacific Division

Golden State	47	9	.839	-
LA Clippers	35	21	.625	12.5
Sacramento	24	33	.421	23
LA Lakers	19	39	.328	29
Phoenix	18	39	.316	29.5

Southwest Division

San Antonio	43	13	.768	-
Houston	40	18	.690	4
Memphis	34	24	.586	10
New Orleans	23	34	.404	20.5
Dallas	22	34	.393	21

22 FROM LAOS, CAMBODIA GET LIFE BANS FOR FIXING

KUALA LUMPUR: Twenty-two players and officials from Laos and Cambodia have been handed life bans in one of Asian football's biggest mass punishments for match-fixing. The Asian Football Confederation said the action follows an investigation that started in 2014, and that it will seek to have the bans extended worldwide.

"The (AFC) Disciplinary Committee has issued a life ban from football-related activities to twenty-two individuals from Laos and Cambodia for involvement in the manipulation of matches involving the representative teams of Laos and the club side Lao Toyota FC," a statement said late on Wednesday. "The AFC investigation into the manipulation of matches involving the representative teams of the Lao Football Federation commenced in 2014 and remains ongoing," it added.

Fifteen of those banned are current or former players of the Laos national side or Vientiane-based Lao Toyota FC, the AFC said. Details of the games involved were not released, but four of the players had been provisionally suspended during the AFC Solidarity Cup involving Laos in November. "(The players') ongoing participation provided a direct threat to the integrity of the competition," the AFC said at the time, adding that the suspensions also related to "suspected manipulation of multiple matches committed by the representative teams of Laos since 2010".

Laos played three matches at the Solidarity Cup, beating Sri Lanka 2-1 and Mongolia 3-0, and losing 4-1 to Macau. Poorly paid Asian footballers and officials have long been vulnerable to advances from match-fixers seeking to manipulate games for betting purposes, giving rise to a long list of scandals. Among the largest was China banning 33 players and officials for life in 2013, following a three-year investigation into notorious corruption in its domestic leagues.

In 2007, two Vietnamese footballers were jailed and six others given suspended sentences for rigging an under-23 match against Myanmar at the 2005 Southeast Asian Games. Last year's AFC Champions League winners, Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors, have been banned from this year's competition over a match-fixing scandal relating to South Korea's K-League. —AFP

ZEMAN SET FOR SHOCK RETURN WITH PESCARA

MILAN: Former Roma coach Zdenek Zeman is set for a surprise return to Serie A as boss of rock-bottom Pescara, reports said yesterday. Zeman, a legendary figure in the Italian game who has also coached Lazio, Napoli and Cagliari, was sacked by Roma in February 2013 after a string of poor results left the capital side in eighth place. According to reports in the Gazzetta dello Sport, the 69-year-old Czech, who spent a season with Swiss side FC Lugano last year, will sign a deal to take over the Adriatic coast club until June 2018.

Pescara sacked coach Massimo Oddo on Tuesday, three days after a 5-3 defeat to Torino. A week earlier, two cars belonging to Pescara president Daniele Sebastiani were set alight in an arson attack blamed on hardline "ultra" fans upset at the club's poor form. Pescara have shipped a league-leading 55 goals in 24 games and are 13 points from safety. Zeman initially became famous in Italy during a five-year spell at Foggia, whom he led from the third division to Serie A and the cusp of qualification for the UEFA Cup for three consecutive seasons. —AFP

MYANMAR, FROM ASIA'S PRIDE TO STEADY SLIDE

YANGON: Shouts reverberate under the concrete overpass as barefoot players jostle for the ball, a sad echo of Myanmar's long-lost footballing glory days which authorities are now hoping to revive. Once an Asian powerhouse, Myanmar's football fortunes suffered a precipitous decline under the former military junta whose 50-year reign ravaged the economy and sporting infrastructure.

Myanmar, formerly Burma, won the 1966 and 1970 Asian Games and were crowned Southeast Asian champions five times in a row. But they are now wallowing at 159th in the FIFA rankings, much to the dismay of their long-suffering fans. Ye Aung Oo, who plays under the Yangon overpass every night, says he hopes attempts to stimulate football at the grassroots level will help turn Myanmar's passion into prowess on the pitch.

"I have loved playing football since I was young and I wanted to play professionally," said the 20-year-old computer technician. He admits that the national team "needs a lot" of work, but adds: "I hope that with time we will be successful, now that more support is being developed." Hopes of a rebirth are now growing with FIFA president Gianni Infantino set to open a new academy in Yangon on Friday, part of a push to reinvigorate grassroots football.

The British Council has also brought in experts from English Premier League clubs including Arsenal, Newcastle United and Everton to teach dozens of coaches. The Myanmar Football Federation is training 50 young players to take part in the ASEAN under-18 competition to be held September, and another pan-Asian competition the following month. And the body is extending its scouting network to 52 towns and cities to find more young talent for its football academies. "Most international football federation can access very talented players easily" from domestic clubs, explained chief executive Phone Naing Zaw. But in Myanmar, "the MFF has to dig to the grassroots, open football training classes and run academies. This is very different."

Fallen Angels

Myanmar's "golden age" of the 1960s and 70s, which also included a berth at the 1972 Munich Olympics, still evokes nostalgia among fans and players. "We were very good at football at that time and went to (South) Korea," said 71-year-old former defender Myo Win Nyunt, describing the 1972 President's Cup. "We beat them at home and became the champions. That was my greatest memory as we did it for our country," he told AFP at his home, surrounded by trophies from a bygone era.

But the glory of Myanmar's national team, the White Angels, faded as the junta's stranglehold on the economy tightened. Amidst the decline, former military leader Than Shwe considered buying Manchester United for \$1 billion before shelving the idea, according to leaked US diplomatic cables from 2009. Today Myanmar's National League still inspires fierce rivalries and even hooliganism among its avid fans, but matches rarely draw big crowds.

Football fans are more likely to be



YANGON: This photo is taken on February 9, 2017 shows youth playing football on the street in downtown Yangon.



YANGON: This photo is taken on January 26, 2017 shows Myo Win Nyunt, (71), a former national football player, talking during an interview. —AFP

found watching Arsenal or Chelsea in a street corner beer station than attending domestic matches, or playing themselves. Many blame the dearth of green spaces in cities like Yangon, which have been eaten up by the housing developments that have mushroomed as the economy fires back to life as Myanmar reopens to the outside world.

Others bemoan a lack of sport in

schools, academic pressure on students, and a shortage of well-qualified scouts to seek out new talent. "There were many playgrounds to play football in Yangon (when I was young) and now there are none," said prominent sports journalist Sein Myo Myint. "Students have to have extra tuition before school and again after school, so they have no time to go to the football pitch." —AFP

KARIM MAKES REAL CLICK SAYS ZIDANE

MADRID: Real Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane hailed the impact of Karim Benzema after his compatriot lifted the European champions from the early blow of conceding to beat Napoli 3-1 on Wednesday. Madrid are now on the brink of a seventh successive Champions League quarter-final as they aim to become the first team to retain the trophy in the Champions League era.

Lorenzo Insigne's wonder strike from 40 yards after just eight minutes had given Napoli a shock lead at the Bernabeu. However, Zidane was rewarded for keeping faith in Benzema despite fierce criticism of late from the Spanish press as he headed home his 51st Champions League goal to equalise before second-half strikes from Toni Kroos and Casemiro gave Madrid a commanding lead.

"I am always happy with him, said Zidane. "He needed that goal which lately he didn't get, but I am happy not only for the goal but also for how he played generally. He made the rest of the team play better and his movement is very good. "The performances of Karim, Cristiano (Ronaldo), James (Rodriguez) they all made the rest of the team better."

Benzema's goal also moved him ahead of compatriot Thierry Henry as top French scorer of all-time in the Champions League proper. "It was a great night. We all played well, not just me," Benzema told Spanish TV station MEGA. "I am very happy and proud of my work. There are a lot of sacrifices, but now I feel good. "I scored a goal and saw that the fans were with me which is very good for my confidence."

NAPOLI RUE MISSED CHANCES

Napoli had chances to set up a mouthwatering second leg on March 7 as Dries Mertens blazed over with the goal at his mercy and former Madrid winger Jose Maria Callejon had a goal ruled out for offside late on. However, Napoli boss Maurizio Sarri believes his side still have a chance of reaching the quarter-finals for the first time in their history.

"Clearly Madrid played their best game of the past three months and we didn't play our best," said Sarri. "If we manage to play at our best we are not that far away. We may lose (in the second leg) but we can go for it." "It is the first game we have lost in four

months. We didn't manage to express ourselves 100 percent, but we can't lose our confidence because we have the return game and league games to come.

"We don't have a great chance of turning it around but we have a chance." Even a pre-match pep talk from former Napoli great Diego Maradona couldn't inspire the Italians to victory. However, Sarri believes their fast start more than justified his decision to invite the Argentine into the dressing room before kick-off. "Diego spoke with us for 30 seconds, but he is a legend so clearly it had an impact. Our first 10-15 minutes were our best."

Despite that early blow, though, Madrid responded like European champions to take control and Sarri lamented his side's distribution from the back under Real's intense pressing. "It was difficult to mount counter-attacks because we gave the ball away so much," he added. "We were playing a very good team, the best team in the world. The only thing is I feel we committed more errors than normal. "It is normal to suffer in this stadium, it is normal to commit errors, but thanks to these type of games you improve." — AFP

SOCCER

FIFA UNWORRIED ABOUT RUSSIA 2018 HOOLIGANS

DOHA: FIFA president Gianni Infantino said yesterday he was not worried about hooliganism at next year's Russia World Cup, amid growing fears the tournament could be blighted by fan violence. Speaking in Qatar following a FIFA executive summit meeting, Infantino also said that football's governing body has not asked Russian Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Mutko to resign as the tournament's chief organiser.

"I am not concerned about trouble and violence in 2018," Infantino told AFP and a small group of reporters on the sidelines of the meeting. "I have full confidence in the Russian authorities, they are taking this matter very, very seriously." He added that Russian organizers had been in touch with FIFA, UEFA and the organisers of Euro 2016 in France, where Russian and English fans clashed in bloody street battles, especially in Marseille, leading to the expulsion of several Russians. He added that Russia was a "welcoming country, which wants to celebrate football". Infantino's comments came ahead of the broadcast of a television documentary in Britain on Thursday in which Russian hardline fans are said to threaten trouble against English fans who go to the World Cup.

Hardline hooligans warned that the 2018 World Cup would be a "festival of violence". There are also concerns about Mutko, who has faced questions about his role as head of the Russia's 2018 organizing committee after being linked to doping by Russian athletes. Mutko has denied any link to the scandal, which a report by a World Anti-Doping Agency investigator said was "state sponsored". Mutko is also seeking a new place on the FIFA council in a vote in April and must pass an integrity check. Asked whether he has asked Mutko to resign as head of the Russian World Cup committee, Infantino said: "No."



DOHA: FIFA President Gianni Infantino speaks to reporters at a press conference during the FIFA Executive Football Summit in the Qatari capital. — AFP

FOUR WC HOST COUNTRIES?

Infantino was however more open about the prospect of countries sharing the hosting of the World Cup finals from 2026 on, when the tournament will expand to 48 teams. "For 2026, now we are starting the bidding process, we took already some important decisions," he said. "We will encourage co-hosting of the World Cup.

"We need FIFA to show we are reasonable and we have to think about sustainability long-term. "If you think about the World Cup and the requirements we are putting on countries there are really only a few countries in the world that can comply. "It is perfectly in line with our sustainability and legacy to maybe bring together two, three, four countries who can jointly present a project with three, four, five stadiums each."

He added that hosting countries should "preferably" be located close to one other, which may increase speculation about a joint North American bid for 2026. One of the few countries which can afford a World Cup on its own is Qatar. Last week, the country's finance minister, Ali Shareef Al-Emadi, said the energy-rich 2022 hosts were spending almost \$500 million every week on major infrastructure projects for football's biggest tournament. However one outstanding concern is the need for Qatar to test its multi-billion dollar facilities ahead of 2022. Asked if Doha could host the 2021 FIFA World Club World Cup tournament, Infantino said "all options were open". "We have to make sure there will be some test events, test matches organized here and all the options are open at this moment in time." — AFP

FIFA: NO EVIDENCE OF BRAIN INJURY RISK

ZURICH: FIFA insisted yesterday there is no conclusive proof that heading a ball causes an increased risk of brain disease, after the release of a study on footballers who died from dementia. "To our very best knowledge, there is currently no true evidence of the negative effect of heading or other sub-concussive blows," football's world body said in response to calls by British neurological experts for greater research.

"Results from studies on active and former professional football players in relation to brain function are inconclusive," a spokesman said in a statement. The spokesman acknowledged that professional players are "more exposed to all football activities including heading from early childhood than recreational players." But FIFA said: "Fortunately, football (soccer) does not belong to the high-risk sports for brain and head injuries."

A British study said professional footballers are at heightened risk of developing a brain disease that can cause dementia and is usually found in boxers and American football players. The study, published in the *Acta Neuropathologica* journal, looked at 14 retired footballers with dementia who started playing football and heading the ball in childhood or early teens.

Post-mortem exams on six of the players found that four showed signs of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), far in excess of the average rate of 12 percent found in the general population. It is the first time CTE has been confirmed in a study involving ex-football players. "The findings of our study show a potential link between playing football and CTE," lead researcher Helen Ling, from University College London's Institute of Neurology, told AFP.

"Large-scale study is needed and cooperation from professional bodies such as the FA (Football Association) and FIFA will be required," she said. All of the ex-players involved had been referred to a psychiatry service in Swansea, Wales between 1980 and 2010. Twelve of the 14 died with advanced dementia. FIFA said that it has been "actively following the issue of head and brain injuries" for more than 15 years including publishing scientific studies with international sports federations and research groups.

It said rule changes toughening sanctions for elbow to the head blows and introducing a head injury protocol in 2014 had cut head injury numbers. FIFA quoted one international study on children aged seven to 12 years which indicated there was "one concussion with ball contact every 200,000 playing hours." "FIFA will continue to monitor the situation of head injuries, maintaining constant contact with current and on-going studies regarding long-term neurocognitive changes, both in male and female football players," the spokesman said declaring the health of players to be "a top priority in developing the game." — AFP

GERMANY HAILS ANCELOTTI

MUNICH: The German media poured praise on Carlo Ancelotti's Bayern Munich yesterday after their 5-1 drubbing of Arsenal allowed the Italian to step out of Pep Guardiola's shadow. "Big Bayern", "The Red Rush" and "Respect, Bayern" were the headlines here after the Bundesliga leaders dominated Tuesday's Champions League's last 16, first-leg, clash. Bayern extended their Champions League record run to 16 home wins by putting Arsene Wenger's Arsenal to the sword with three goals in 10 magical second-half minutes. Arjen Robben's early goal was cancelled out by an Alexis Sanchez penalty, converted at the second-attempt, as it finished 1-1 at the break.

Bayern hit top gear in the second-half with attacking midfielder Thiago Alcantara, who's performance Ancelotti dubbed 'perfect', leading the charge with two goals. Robert Lewandowski restored Bayern's lead by out-leaping the Arsenal defense on 53 minutes and 178 seconds later, his flick put Thiago behind the defense to make it 3-1. The Spanish midfielder then banged home, via a deflection, from outside the area to effectively slam the door shut on Arsenal's quarter-finals hopes.

Thomas Mueller simply completed the rout two minutes from time with a fifth goal off the bench. As Bayern captain Philipp Lahm put it, "before the penalty, we were very good, up until half-time we weren't really good, but after that we were sensational." Bild awarded Robben, Lewandowski and Thiago top marks, but arguably the biggest winner was Ancelotti.

Bayern's performance allowed him at least a step out of the shadow of predecessor Guardiola. Bayern raised their game when it mattered, shaking off below-par German league performances to hit top gear. "A horse jumps only as high as it needs to," wrote Munich-based TZ. "Against the Gunners, the Red steed had to leap. And it leapt, like Ancelotti said it would."

Bild pointed out, "Ancelotti has found his first-choice team" with the same line-up which floored nearest challengers RB Leipzig in the Bundesliga last December. Despite scoring, Mueller was a casualty on Bayern's big night. As ex-Germany captain Lothar Matthaeus pointed out, there is no room for misfiring Mueller in Ancelotti's vision for Bayern.



MUNICH: Arsenal's French midfielder Francis Coquelin (L) and Arsenal's French headcoach Arsene Wenger (R) speak together during the UEFA Champions League round of sixteen football match between FC Bayern Munich and Arsenal. — AFP

SOCCER

PRESSURE PILING ON WENGER AS NEVER BEFORE AFTER LOSS

LONDON: "Every good story has an ending. Au revoir Arsene," read the words on a sticker on display in Borehamwood, a commuter town where north London side Arsenal enjoy strong support. That sticker has been on display for several months and the words were positively polite compared to the torrent of criticism Arsene Wenger, Arsenal's manager for over 20 years, faced following the Gunners' humiliating 5-1 loss away to Bayern Munich in the last 16 of the Champions League on Wednesday.

Of course there is still a home leg to come but having seen their side lose in the last 16 in each of the past six seasons, even loyal Arsenal fans will have few hopes of a spectacular reversal of fortune when German giants Bayern arrive at the Emirates on March 7.

This defeat was compounded by a recent shock league loss to Watford and an ensuing, rather more predictable defeat by Chelsea that between them appeared to have scuppered Arsenal's hopes of a first Premier League title since 2004. Veteran manager Wenger, whose contract expires at the end of the season, has always previously appeared defiant in the face of criticism, so much so that some have suggested the best thing for those who want the 67-year-old Frenchman to leave Arsenal is to stay silent.

Yet what might hurt a proud man most was the evident pity behind the comments of those who reckoned his time was up after a Munich mauling where Arsenal, level at the break after Alexis Sanchez cancelled out Arjen Robben's opener, were swept away by goals from Robert Lewandowski and Thomas Muller either side of Thiago's double. "The fact that he hasn't been able to get a response from the players in the last few weeks might be the final straw," former Arsenal defender Lee Dixon told ITV.

'Too soft, too naive'

That Wenger was unable to get that "response" was, in the view of many observers, because he had signed too many of the wrong sort of players. "They (Arsenal) have only

two players of stellar quality in Alexis Sanchez, who scored and never stopped trying, and Laurent Koscielny, whose injury early in the second half gave Bayern even more space to plunder goals," wrote Henry Winter, The Times's chief football writer.

Winter added: "Ultimately the real blame lies with Wenger, who has built a squad with too few leaders, too soft, too naive." Wenger, whose ability to speak near flawless English from the moment he arrived at Arsenal in 1996 charmed the media and fans alike, won praise early on for his tactical sophistication, his success paving the way for an influx of foreign managers into the Premier League including bitter rival Jose Mourinho.

But as with many pioneers, there is a sense he has now been overtaken. His repeated insistence that Arsenal could no longer compete with the likes of big-spenders Chelsea and Manchester City because of the cost of their move from Highbury to the Emirates was already looking a thin argument even before 5,000/1 outsiders Leicester won the Premier League title last season.

Wenger's early successes, including domestic league and FA Cup 'Doubles' in 1997/98 and 2001/02, meant he could do no wrong in the eyes of the Arsenal board. Yet even since the takeover by Stan Kroenke in 2011 there has never been a hint of pressure from the Gunners' hierarchy regarding the manager's position.

Indeed Kroenke angered Arsenal fans when he made it clear last year he had no interest in matching the big-spending of City and Chelsea, who've won six Premier League titles between them since 2004, with the US businessman saying: "If you want to win championships then you would never get involved." For the time being, Wenger's future appears to be in his own hands. But when his most loyal supporters such as former goalkeeping coach Bob Wilson and the man between the posts during Arsenal's 1970/1 'Double' season, say even Wenger "can only take so much", perhaps the writing is on more than just a sticker. — AFP

FA POST 360M TURNOVER DESPITE ENGLAND FLOP

LONDON: England's Euro 2016 campaign may have ended in a humiliating defeat by Iceland but that did not stop the national governing Football Association making a record £370 million (\$462 million, 435 million euros) turnover during the 2015/16 season. Figures released by the FA on Thursday in its accounts for the year to July 31, 2016 showed it made a profit of £7 million after tax, having lost £9 million in 2015.

Turnover was up £52 million to £370 million, allowing the FA to invest £125 million in the domestic game. Tournament years for the men's national side generally produce greater sponsorship and marketing revenue, with the figures published yesterday also a reflection of job cuts made by the FA and the refinancing of Wembley, the national stadium in London, and the St George's Park training centre. "We are delighted to be in such strong financial health," said FA chief executive Martin Glenn in a statement. "The FA is for all and this allows us to invest even more money than ever before back into every level of our national game." He added: "At the end of 2016 we announced key commercial deals, including the international broadcast rights for the Emirates FA Cup and the new 12-year deal with Nike, which means the FA is extremely well positioned to support English football for the foreseeable future."

The combined worth of the Nike kit deal and the overseas TV rights for the FA Cup will be nearly £170 million, but those agreements do not start until 2018. But all the encouraging financial figures will not ease the pressure on the FA, under fire for both the performance of the men's side and its own governance. Roy Hodgson quit as manager after England's Euro 2016 exit, with his successor Sam Allardyce overseeing just one game before stepping down in September as a result of incautious comments to undercover Daily Telegraph reporters. Meanwhile Britain's sports minister, Tracey Crouch, has threatened to withdraw millions of pounds in public funding for grassroots football from the FA if it does not reform its unwieldy governance structure. —AFP

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Sports

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2017

OKLAHOMA CITY: Oklahoma City Thunder guard Russell Westbrook (0) goes up for a dunk in front of New York Knicks forward Kristaps Porzingis (6) during the fourth quarter of an NBA basketball game in Oklahoma City. — AP

Westbrook notches 27th triple-double of season