

SUBSCRIPTION

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ANNIVERSARY 55

THE FIRST DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2017

JAMADA ALAWWAL 21, 1438 AH

No: 17138

IS groomed child soldiers in Mosul orphanage



Dubai street art; open-air museum



Ibrahimovic and Dzeko run riot in Europa League



8

23

48



150 Fils

TWO EMIRATI SOLDIERS DIE IN WAR-RAVAGED YEMEN

AMIR SENDS A CABLE OF CONDOLENCE UAE LEADER



Min 05°

Max 15°



ABU DHABI: A handout picture shows Emirati soldiers carrying the coffins of their comrades Suleiman Mohammed Al-Thuhuri who was killed while on duty with a Saudi-led coalition battling Houthi rebels in Yemen and Nader Eissa who died of a heart attack following their arrival at the Al-Bateen Airport in Abu Dhabi yesterday. — AFP

DUBAI: An Emirati soldier was killed while on duty with a Saudi-led coalition battling Houthi rebels in Yemen, the United Arab Emirates' official WAM news agency reported yesterday. "The general command of the armed forces announced the martyrdom of Suleiman Mohammed Al Thuhuri, one of its soldiers involved in Operation Restoring Hope," WAM said. The announcement comes after a coalition raid on a rebel post in Khokha, south of the main Red Sea port of Hodeida, killed 15 rebels and wounded 20 on Wednesday, according to military sources allied with the coalition.

A second Emirati soldier died of a heart attack, WAM said. Some 80 Emirati soldiers have been killed since the coalition launched its intervention in support of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi in March 2015. More than 7,400 people have been killed since the intervention began, including around 1,400 children, according to World Health Organization figures. Despite the coalition's superior firepower, the rebels and their allies still control the capital Sanaa and much of the northern and central highlands as well as the port of Hodeida.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences yesterday to the President of United Arab of Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. In the cable, His Highness expressed his sincere condolences and sorrow over martyrdom of two Emirati soldiers while on duty with the Saudi-led Arab Coalition's Operation Restoring Hope in Yemen.

His Highness the Amir also prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow his mercy and forgiveness upon the deceased soldiers, and place them in his heavens. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Emirati President.

Also, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem sent a cable of condolence to the Chairperson of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Federal National Council Dr Amal Al Qubaisi, expressing his sincere sympathy and sorrow over martyrdom of the two military servicemen. The UAE General Command of the Armed Forces announced earlier martyrdom of two servicemen, Soliman Mohammed Soliman Al-Dhohouri and Sergeant Nader Mubarak Eisa Soliman, while on duty in Yemen, according to Emirates News Agency (WAM). — Agencies

SAUDI TRAIN DERAILS AS FLOOD WREAKS HAVOC

RIYADH: A Saudi train derailed near the eastern city of Dammam yesterday, injuring 18 people, after flooding from heavy rains caused the rail line to erode, the Saudi Railways Organization said in a statement. The 193 passengers and 6 crew members were transferred to another train and taken to Dammam after the incident occurred at about 1:00 am, it said, adding that all injuries were minor. Repair work has begun on the closed Riyadh-Dammam track, added the statement carried by the state news agency SPA.

Heavy rains have lashed Saudi Arabia for several days, causing severe flash floods throughout the kingdom and at least one death in southern Asir province. Flooding can be politically sensitive in the Islamic kingdom, where previous incidents - notably in the second city of Jeddah - have prompted anger over the government's perceived failure to build suitable prevention systems. — Reuters

PAKISTAN KILLS OVER 100 TERRORISTS

SEHWAN: Pakistani forces said yesterday they had killed more than 100 "terrorists" after 88 people died in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group on a Sufi shrine which stoked fears of a fresh surge in militancy. The devastating blast came after a series of bloody extremist assaults this week, including a powerful Taleban suicide bomb in the eastern city of Lahore which killed 13 people and wounded dozens. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and army chief of staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa yesterday visited the town of Sehwan in Sindh province where the latest attack took place.

Sharif vowed to eliminate militants "with the full force of the state". Pakistan's military later said operations were in progress across the country. "Over 100 terrorists have been killed since last night", it said, adding others had been detained. The emergence of Islamic State group (IS) and a Taleban resurgence would be a major blow to Pakistan, and the attacks have dented growing optimism over security after a decade-long war on militancy. Police yesterday cordoned off the shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar, a 13th century Muslim saint, in Sehwan, some 200 kilometers northeast of financial hub Karachi. — AFP (See Page 7)



KUWAIT: Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Sabah, Acting Minister of Information participates in the inauguration of the expo festival of the new avenue at Al-Mubarakiah. —KUNA

OFFICIAL AFFIRMS KEENNESS ON PROVIDING JOBS FOR YOUTH AMIR ENCOURAGES YOUNG KUWAITIS: MINISTER

MANAMA/KUWAIT: The Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) of Kuwait affirmed Thursday 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.

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. MGRP has submitted a sheet on its role in supporting small enterprises, encouraging job-seekers on pioneering an independent business which meets Kuwait's vision and

interest in qualifying the youth to attain work requirements at the private sector.

Furthermore, MGRP has held several training courses and workshops for around 310 male/female Gulf citizens who carried out their own initiatives regarding small enterprises, he noted. The Kuwaiti Program has also prepared a number of consultative studies necessary for establishing an incubator for small and medium enterprises and marketing their products through a joint cooperation with co-ops, said Majdaly.

Ambitious youth

Meanwhile, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs affirmed that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is keen on supporting initiatives aimed at encouraging ambitious Kuwaiti youth.

His Highness the Amir has always sought to back up the young citizens and encouraging their enterprises, said Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, also the Acting Minister of Information, in a statement during inauguration of the "expo festival of the new avenue at Al-Mubarakiah."

The festival is held as part of His Highness the Amir's initiative for incubating skilled and talented youngsters-held for the third year in a row. Successful economy is based on small and medium enterprises, he said, indicating that the Government is cooperating with the parliament to boost such businesses. The parliamentary commission tasked with improving the investment environment has recently recommended lifting value of the enterprise fund of the Industrial Bank from KD 10 million to KD 50 million, he said, also noting that that the ministry of commerce and industry has been facilitating business permits for the youth enterprises. Al-Mubarakiah is a large market place, located in the heart of Kuwait City, teeming with shoppers days and nights. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Farwaniya Governorate hosted a ceremony recently at the Avenues Mall under the patronage of Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Hamoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah, as part of Kuwait's national celebrations.

POLICE CHASE DIDN'T CAUSE INJURY: INTERIOR

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry said in a statement yesterday that social media reports claiming that a person was hospitalized following an accident caused by police are untrue. The ministry explained that two fugitives drove away from a police checkpoint in Taima yesterday morning, and stopped outside a house. One of them went inside the house, while the other climbed on top of the house next door and attempted to jump back to his friend's house. But he accidentally fell to the ground and was injured, the statement reads, noting that an ambulance was brought to send the man to the hospital.



KUWAIT: Vehicles on fire outside a mosque in Andalus Thursday night.

Roaming vendors

Kuwait Municipality inspectors carried out a campaign recently targeting roaming vendors in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Khaitan and Reggae. They issued 32 tickets, and confiscated electric appliances, furniture and vegetables that were sold illegally. The municipality used 26 half lorry trucks to move the material confiscated in the crackdown.

Fire

Four vehicles caught fire outside a mosque in Andalus Thursday night. Firefighters tackled the blaze and prevented flames from spreading to nearby vehicles. No injuries were reported in the incident. An investigation was opened to determine the cause of the fire.

LICENSES STILL ISSUED FOR EXPATS

KUWAIT: A security source denied social media rumors which claimed that a decision was made to stop issuing or renewing driver's licenses for expatriates in Kuwait. The source who spoke on the condition of anonymity explained that the Interior Ministry's General Traffic Department revokes licenses for mandoubs (company representatives) and drivers issued in or after 2014 once they transfer their residences from a sponsor to another, or if they change their jobs. Mandoubs and drivers are exempted from regulations to obtain a driver's license in Kuwait, which state that an expatriate working in the private sector must have a college degree and a minimum KD 600 monthly pay to be eligible for a license.

Thieves caught

Jahra police arrested three Bangladeshi men who were caught with possession of camping equipment they had stolen from a camp on Abdaly road. Officers had stopped a half lorry truck with three men inside after they noticed that it had carried some camping equipment. The men claimed that they were transporting the equipment at first, but later confessed that the equipment were stolen. They were taken to the proper authorities for further action.

Woman freed

Southern roads security freed a Kuwaiti woman who was kidnapped in Sabah Al-Ahmad after chasing the kidnapper and arresting him on King Fahd Road. A man had reported that his daughter was kidnapped in front of his house, adding that he chased the kidnapper and requested police's help because he was worried he may lose the suspect. Patrols arrived to the area shortly afterward and began their pursuit. They were eventually able to stop the suspect and free the kidnapped woman who was in a state of panic, and handed her over to her father. The kidnapper was arrested and taken to the relevant authorities to face charges. Separately, a citizen told Abu Hlaifa police that his domestic helper was kidnapped and kept in a Manqaf apartment. Detectives are investigating the case.

Police sent a citizen to the public prosecution to face forgery charges after she attempted to get a loan through official documents that carried her handicapped son's name. The woman submitted the forged documents to a bank and received a KD 9,000 loan, but the father of the handicapped man discovered the forgery committed by his ex-wife. He filed a complaint with police, accusing his ex-wife of taking advantage of their son's disability to obtain a loan given to citizens with special needs. —Translated from the Arabic press



BRUSSELS: Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. —KUNA

DEFENSE MINISTER MEETS WITH NATO CHIEF, QATARI, JORDANIAN OFFICIALS

BRUSSELS: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met yesterday with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. Stoltenberg, during the meeting, lauded Kuwait's constant efforts in a bid to maintain stability in the Middle East region.

Minister Mohammad Al-Khaled then received at his residence Qatar's Minister of State for Defense Affairs Khaled bin Mohammad Al-Attiyah. The two ministers discussed topics of mutual concern on the sidelines of a meeting of international coalition ministers to combat the so-called Islamic State (IS). Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled also received Jordan's chairman of the Joint Chiefs-of-Staff Major General Mahmoud Freihah and focused on some issues of mutual interest. The meetings were attended by Kuwait's ambassador to Belgium Jassim Al-Budaiwi.

NATO's meeting on the global coalition to counter IS had kicked off Thursday with participation of Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled. "Since September 2014, you have made tremendous strides toward the eventual defeat of IS, retaking the battlefield, countering propaganda, and breaking affiliate networks. Each contributing in your own ways,"

Stoltenberg said in his opening speech.

"Today, IS and terrorism remain among the most pressing challenges we face. While NATO itself is not a formal member of the Coalition against IS. Every NATO Ally is contributing to Coalition efforts," Stoltenberg said. He also noted that NATO is deploying AWACS aircraft in support of Coalition operations and training Iraqi security forces.

"Working closely with partners in the Middle East and North Africa to help them secure their borders and territory. Establishing a new regional center in Kuwait to coordinate our work in the Gulf. But we have the potential to do more. Training local forces is one of the best weapons we have in the fight against terrorism and building stability," Stoltenberg added. "The defeat of IS is a global challenge that requires a generational response. This Coalition has an unwavering commitment to see this fight to its conclusion," he stressed.

Meanwhile, US Defense Secretary James Mattis said "We are united in this fight to defeat IS," adding that the meeting aims to orchestrate an international pressure on the terrorist group, which will not be over quickly, but "we intend to accelerate the fight." —KUNA

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BEKAA: KRCS Chairman Hilal Al-Sayer is pictured inside a clinic that provides medical care to hundreds of Syrian premature babies in east Lebanon. — KUNA

KUWAIT, QATAR PROVIDE MEDICAL CARE TO SYRIAN PREMATURE BABIES IN LEBANON

BEKAA: Kuwaiti and Qatari red crescent societies have adopted a joint project for providing medical care to hundreds of Syrian premature babies in east Lebanon. Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Chairman Hilal Al-Sayer said in a statement that the initiative aims to secure necessary medical care to around 400 Syrian premature babies in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa. The initiative falls under the umbrella of the Secretariat-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The project is part of cooperation between the KRCS and Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) to provide medical help to Syrian refugee children in Lebanon, he added. Sayer noted that his agency

attaches much attention to the medical field as part of its diverse humanitarian projects, lauding fruitful cooperation between the KRCS and QRCS in helping Syrian refugee families in different Lebanese areas. Meanwhile, both Kuwaiti and Qatar red crescent societies signed another agreement to provide medical care to Syrian refugees who suffer from renal insufficiency. The agreement was signed by Sayer and QRCS Chairman Omar Katerji. It falls under the umbrella of the GCC Secretariat-General. The KRCS and QRCS signed an agreement in November 2015 under the GCC umbrella, aiming at unifying GCC efforts to help Syrian refugees in Lebanon. — KUNA

KUWAIT ESTABLISHES BREAST CANCER CLINIC IN LEBANON

MAJDAL ANJAR: Kuwait Red Crescent Society, in coordination with Qatar Red Crescent Society, inaugurated yesterday a clinic for treating breast cancer cases in eastern Lebanese town. KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said in a statement that the mobile clinic, with mammogram devices, will offer medical services for thousands of Syrian refugees. He thanked Kuwait Chamber of Industry and Commerce for covering costs of the clinic.

Meanwhile, Qatari Charge D'affaires Mubarak Al-Kbaisi said the Kuwaiti-Qatari cooperation would substantial boost medical services given to the Syrian refugees. Mohammad Al-Wugayyan, the deputy chief of the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission, said the ongoing Kuwaiti relief efforts for the refugees are being exerted in line with guidelines by His Highness the Amir. The KRCS, last year, granted a mammogram device to Majdal Anjar Medical center. — KUNA



MAJDAL ANJAR: Kuwait Red Crescent Society and Qatar Red Crescent Society officials pose outside a clinic for treating breast cancer cases in east Lebanon. — KUNA

KRCS DELIVERS AID TO SYRIAN REFUGEES

BEKAA VALLEY: Kuwait Red Crescent Society distributed food supplies to 500 Syrian refugee families in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley. Dr Musaed Al-Enezi, the KRCS envoy in Lebanon, affirmed in remarks to KUNA that the society would continue its relief efforts to help the Syrian refugees in Lebanon and other countries neighboring Syria.

Abdul Rahman Al-Saleh, member of the KRCS team, indicated to the Kuwaiti news agency that the Kuwaiti association is carrying out its humanitarian missions in the country in coordination with the Lebanese Red Cross.

The society has been delivering supplies including food and clothes to thousands of Syrian refugees in eastern Lebanon, where weather conditions during the winter turn very hard.

Lebanon hosts more than one million Syrian refugees. Some 70 percent of them live in very difficult conditions. — KUNA



KRCS DELIVERS 12,400 AID PACKAGES IN MOSUL

IRBIL: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) has distributed 12,400 food and health packages to the displaced Iraqis in camps south of Mosul. Head of 'Al-Haji' camp, Firas Ahmed said yesterday that his camp received 1,200 food baskets and 1,200 healthcare packages; an additional 10,000 relief parcels were distributed to other camps south of Mosul. Ahmed expressed his appreciation to Kuwait's 'incredible' humanitarian aid, which aimed at alleviating the suffering of the displaced and improving deteriorating living conditions at these camps.

KRCS has started a new humanitarian campaign at the beginning of this year and had delivered more than 10,000 food and health packages; in addition to 20,000 loaves and 150,000 liters of fuel. KRCS also signed two contracts with regional construction company in Iraq's Kurdistan to build five schools and three health centers. — KUNA





Hisham Al-Wugayyan

RELIEF BASIC IN KUWAIT'S FOREIGN POLICY: OFFICIAL

ROME: Kuwait Deputy Governor with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) Hisham Al-Wugayyan affirmed yesterday that Kuwait's global philanthropic activities constitute foundations of the State foreign policy. The State of Kuwait, since early last century, has built its relations with regional and foreign nations on bases of solidarity, humanitarian and development considerations, said Wugayyan, who also serves as IFAD'S deputy general director, in remarks to Kuwait news agency.

Kuwait believes in IFAD's unique and successful role and has played a key role in making its policies since its inception 40 years ago. Now Kuwait as chair of IFAD's executive board is looking forward to improve its performance to reach the 2030 goal of sustainable development - namely eradicating poverty and hunger worldwide. —KUNA

KUWAIT MISSION HOSTS FUNDRAISING EVENT

NEW YORK: The Kuwaiti Mission to the UN has hosted an annual fundraising bazaar to raise money to support health-care projects in developing countries. Islamic Heritage Society organized the event in the hope to raise more than \$40,000 this year.

President of the Heritage Society, Miriam Oueslati Khiari said that she thanked the Kuwaiti Mission for hosting the event and stressed that Kuwait has always been keen on engaging in humanitarian activities.

"This year the proceeds of our February event will go to the Syrian Refugees through UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Gift of Life Lebanon," the President and spouse of the Tunisian Ambassador to the UN said. Gift of Life Lebanon, she elaborated, is an offshoot of Gift of Life International, a US based non-profit organization that funds healthcare projects in developing countries with a specific focus on the development of sustainable pediatric cardiac surgery and prevention programs for children with heart disease.

"The contribution will help to fund pediatric cardiac surgeries and the after-care for children in need through a partnership with American University of



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi and his spouse are pictured at the bazaar. — KUNA

Beirut Medical Center AUBMC's Children Heart Center/Braveheart and Rotary clubs," she added.

Founder and Chair of Gift of Life Lina Shehayeb said that every year, 1 in 100 babies are born with congenital heart disease, the most common birth defect in the world. "In Lebanon alone, more than 700 babies are diagnosed with heart disease every year." The Islamic

Heritage Society, was founded in 1972. Some of its members represent Islamic and non-Islamic countries.

The Islamic Heritage Society's past fundraising events were dedicated to supporting UNHCR for Syrian refugees, Typhoon Haiyan's victims in the Philippines, and UNICEF in Lebanon for Children in the Middle East, as well as Ebola Virus Disease victims. — KUNA

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o f t h e d a y



KUWAIT: Al-Fatoran, a type of Misbah (traditional prayer beads) in Kuwait. —KUNA

EQUATE SPONSORS 2ND KIHSE 2017



KUWAIT: EQUATE Petrochemical Company, a global producer of petrochemicals, sponsored the 2nd Kuwait International Health, Safety and Environment Conference and Exhibition (KIHSE) 2017 to support the development of the industrial sector throughout the world. Held during the 15th and 16th of February 2017, the conference gathers various global figures and experts of the industrial sector to discuss several topics about environment, health and safety (EHS).

During the event, EQUATE's President and CEO Mohammad Husain participated in panel discussions regarding EHS and sustainability, as well as having a cleaner and safer industry, with a number of industrial leaders from Kuwait and around the world.

Husain highlighted the importance, responsibility and role of EHS management at any organization, adding that "Sometimes, optimizing EHS costs might

include arising risks, especially if adequate risk analysis is not performed."

Husain added, "Achieving EHS excellence is not about unlimited spending, rather it is about properly executing risk analysis, setting optimization objectives through training and cost of safety equipment, as well as simplifying safety standards. This requires innovation-based planning and execution to ensure optimum results."

Husain noted, "The safety of people and equipment must never be compromised to save cost. The partnership with our human capital to deliver outstanding performance includes utmost safety as a critical element."

EQUATE's participation in the conference also included EHS Leader Mohammad Al-Shamary, as well as two specialized presentations on industrial safety by Process Safety Expert Abdullah Al-Hazza and EHS Delivery Leader Rajasekar Jayanandhan.



International

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2017

In Mosul orphanage, IS grooms child soldiers

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500 migrants smash border fence into Spain

10

Trump, in unprecedented fashion, rips press

14



SEHWAN: A baby feeder lies on the blood-stained floor at the 13th century Muslim Sufi shrine of Lal Shahbaz Qalandar a day after a bomb attack in the town of Sehwan in Sindh province. —AFP

PAKISTAN REELS AFTER BOMBING AT SUFI SHRINE

IS ATTACK CLAIMS 88 LIVES, POLICE KILLS AND ARREST DOZENS IN RAIDS

SEHWAN: Pakistani forces killed and arrested dozens of suspects in sweeping raids as the death toll from a massive suicide bombing by the Islamic State group that targeted a famed Sufi shrine the day before rose to 88 yesterday.

The terror attack - Pakistan's deadliest in years - stunned the nation and raised questions about the authorities' ability to rein in militant groups despite several military offensives targeting militant hideouts. It also threatened to drive a deeper wedge between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Islamabad quickly lashed out at Kabul, saying the bombing was masterminded in militant sanctuaries across the border in Afghanistan.

Underscoring tensions, Pakistan fired a blistering round of artillery shells into Afghan territory yesterday and shut down the Torkham border crossing, a key commercial artery between the two neighbors. Afghan police chief Gul Agha Roohani in eastern Nangarhar province told The Associated Press the artillery assault began on yesterday morning, although there was no immediate confirmation from Pakistan. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani condemned the shrine attack. "Sufis always preach peace and brotherhood among people," he said in a statement, adding that "terrorists once again proved that they have no respect for Islamic values."

Militant holdouts

Meanwhile, raids overnight across Pakistan targeted militant hideouts and led to shootouts with insurgents that left at least 39 suspects dead, according to three Pakistani security officials who spoke on condition of anonymity under regulations. Most of the operations were carried out by the paramilitary Rangers. In one raid, troops killed 11 suspects at a militant hideout in the port city of Karachi. In another, the Rangers came under fire as they were returning from Sehwan, the town in southern Sindh province where the shrine bombing took place, and killed seven of the attackers. Other raids took place in northwestern Pakistan and also in the eastern province of Punjab. The officials said a total of 47 suspects were arrested.

In Thursday's attack, the suicide bomber walked into the main hall at the Lal Shahbaz Qalandar shrine in Sehwan, and detonated his explosives among a crowd of worshippers, initially killing 75. At least 20 women and nine children were among the dead. Yesterday, authorities raised the death toll to 88 after some of the critically wounded died. The Sindh provincial health department said a total of 343 people were wounded in the attack but that most were

discharged after treatment while 76 still remain in hospitals.

The Islamic State group, claiming responsibility for the attack in a statement circulated by its Amaq news agency, said it targeted a "Shiite gathering." The Sunni extremist group views Shiites as apostates and has targeted Pakistan's Shiite minority in the past. It also views Sufi shrines as a form of idolatry. The Sehwan shrine, which reveres a Muslim Sufi mystic, is frequented by the faithful of many sects of Islam but the majority of the worshippers are usually Shiite Muslims.

Raja Somro, who witnessed the attack, told a local TV network that hundreds of people were performing a spiritual dance known as the "dhamal" when the bomber struck. Local TV showed graphic footage of the aftermath of the blast, with wounded worshippers crying out for help and the floors covered with shoes, blood and body parts. Women cried and beat their chests in grief.

'Avenged immediately

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif vowed that security forces would track down the perpetrators, according to Pakistani state TV. "Each drop of the nation's blood shall be avenged, and avenged immediately," Pakistan's army

chief, Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, said in a statement. The US State Department condemned the attack and offered its support to Pakistan in bringing the perpetrators to justice.

The attack was the deadliest in Pakistan after the Dec 16, 2014 assault on an army-run school in Peshawar that killed 154 people, mostly schoolchildren. A Taliban-linked group, Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, claimed responsibility for that attack. Pakistan has been at war with the Taliban and other extremist groups for more than a decade. In recent years it has launched major offensives against militant strongholds in the tribal regions along the border with Afghanistan, but insurgents have continued to carry out attacks elsewhere in the country.

The Islamic State group has been expanding its presence in Pakistan in recent years and has claimed a number of deadly attacks, including a suicide bombing at another Sufi shrine in November 2016 that killed more than 50 people. The government has downplayed the IS affiliate, insisting that only a small number of militants have pledged allegiance to the group. Afghanistan and Pakistan have long accused each other of failing to crack down on militants who operate along the porous border. — AP

IN MOSUL ORPHANAGE, IS GROOMS CHILD SOLDIERS

'A' FOR APPLE, 'B' FOR BOMB

MOSUL: When the boys first arrived at the Islamic State training facility in eastern Mosul they would cry and ask about their parents, who went missing when the militants rampaged through northern Iraq in 2014. But as the weeks passed they appeared to absorb the group's ultra-hardline ideology, according to a worker at the former orphanage where they were housed.

The children, aged from three to 16 and mostly Shi'ite Muslims or minority Yazidis, began referring to their own families as apostates after they were schooled in Sunni Islam by the militant fighters, he said. The boys were separated from the girls and infants, undergoing indoctrination and training to become "cubs of the caliphate - a network of child informers and fighters used by the jihadists to support their military operations.

The complex in Mosul's Zuhur district, which had been home to local orphans until they were kicked out by Islamic State, was one of several sites the jihadists used across the city. It is now shuttered, its doors sealed with padlocks by Iraqi security forces. Islamic State withdrew before Iraqi forces launched a US-backed offensive in October to retake the city, but during a Reuters visit last month there were still reminders of the group's attempt to brainwash dozens of children. A saying attributed to the Prophet Mohammed is painted in black on one wall, urging children to learn to swim, shoot and ride horses. Inside the building is a swimming pool, now dry and full of rubbish.

Brutal ethos

In another room sits a stack of textbooks Islamic State had amended to fit its brutal ethos. Arithmetic problems in a fourth grade maths book use imagery of warfare, while the cover bears a rifle made up of equations. History books focus exclu-

sively on the early years of Islam and emphasise martial events.

Another textbook entitled "English for the Islamic State" includes ordinary words like apple and ant beside army, bomb and sniper. Martyr, spy and mortar also appear alongside zebra crossing, yawn, and X-box. The word "woman" is depicted by a formless black figure wearing the full niqab covering. All faces in the books - even those of animals - are blurred, in keeping with an Islamic proscription against such images.

The orphanage worker, who was cowed into staying on after the militants took over in 2014, said girls who were brought to the centre were often married off to the group's commanders. The man asked not to be named for fear of reprisals by Islamic State, which still controls the entire western half of Mosul. He was shot in the leg during recent clashes. He said the militants, mostly Iraqis, taught the Shi'ite children how to pray in the tradition of Sunni Islam and forced the Yazidis to convert. They memorised the Koran, were taught to treat outsiders as infidels and conducted physical exercise in the yard, which has since grown over.

A pair of colourful plastic slides and swing sets now sit untouched amid shattered glass, casings from a grenade launcher and a suicide bomber's charred remains - signs of the militants' fierce resistance as they retreated late last year. Reuters could not independently verify the orphanage worker's comments. But local residents gave similar accounts, and Islamic State has published numerous videos showing how it trains young fighters and even makes them execute prisoners.

New batches of children arrived at the Zuhur orphanage every few weeks from outside Mosul, including a few from neighboring Syria, while older boys were sent to the town of Tel Afar west of Mosul for intensive military training for duties including with Islamic State's courts or vice squad, residents said. — Reuters

THE ALTERNATIVES TO TWO-STATE SOLUTION

JERUSALEM: US President Donald Trump broke with decades of international consensus this week when he said a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may not be the only answer. But if two separate states may no longer the aim, what alternatives are being mulled?

Single unitary state

Creating a single, unitary state would likely involve Israel formally annexing Palestinian land in the West Bank and possibly the Gaza Strip. Parts of Israel's right support annexing the occupied West Bank, claiming a historic religious connection to the land, but what rights the Palestinians living there would be given is the key. "The real alternative is one democratic secular state where Jews, Muslims and Christians will be equals," senior Palestinian official Saeb Erakat told reporters on Wednesday. If it included Gaza and the West Bank, such a state would mix about 6.4 million Jews with a roughly similar number of Arabs. Israeli opponents fear such an entity would no longer be a Jewish state unless it abandons democracy and limits Arab political rights.

"Those who believe they can undermine the two-state solution and replace it with what I call one state, two systems... apartheid, I don't think in the 21st century they will get away with it, it is impossible,"

Erakat said. "Without a Jewish majority, it is doubtful whether a Jewish state can remain Jewish," late Israeli president Shimon Peres himself warned in 2012.

Arab Israeli member of parliament Ahmed Tibi gleefully pointed out that possibility in an interview with CNN this week, saying that if Palestinians got the vote alongside Israelis, he could oust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "I will get the vote from the Palestinians and some of the Jews and (Netanyahu) will be the loser," he said.

Israeli-Palestinian confederation

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin has floated the idea of two states, Israeli and Palestinian, in a confederation with defined borders, two parliaments and two constitutions but with only Israel having an army. Such a concept is likely to be a non-starter with the Palestinian moderate leadership, who have for years been demanding full sovereignty of their own independent state. Separately, the Islamist movement Hamas, which rules Gaza, wants a state governed by Islamic law on all of historic Palestine. The party's founding charter speaks of "the fight with the warmongering Jews".

Palestinian-Jordanian confederation

Israeli right-wingers have long promoted a union of a Palestinian state with

the kingdom of Jordan, which would conveniently take the issue off Israel's hands. But Jordan, which ruled the West Bank from 1948 until Israel captured it in the 1967 Six-Day war, revoked all claims to the territory in 1988, following the outbreak of the first Palestinian intifada. A 1972 Jordanian confederation proposal was rejected by both the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel. Nevertheless, an October 2016 opinion poll of 1,362 West Bank and Gazans by the West Bank's A-Najah University showed that "46.1 percent of respondents supported the creation of a confederation with Jordan on the basis of two independent states with strong institutional relations". It did not specify how many opposed the concept.

Doing nothing

The status quo, whereby Israel controls all movement in and out of the West Bank and Gaza Strip and maintains full on-the-ground military and civil control of 60 percent of the West Bank, is thought to be Netanyahu's most comfortable option. The international community, however, insists maintaining the status quo is not sustainable. This year's 50th anniversary of the occupation is likely to boost diplomatic pressure for its end and to boost calls for trade boycotts of Jewish settlement products. — AFP

ALLIES WIN US BACKING FOR POLITICAL SOLUTION IN SYRIA

BONN: US allies won assurances yesterday from new Secretary of State Rex Tillerson that Washington backed a UN-brokered political solution to the Syria conflict, the latest sign the Trump administration will keep to existing policy. Tillerson used a G20 gathering in Germany to hold a series of meetings with his global peers, reviewing crises from North Korea to Ukraine at a time of great uncertainty over President Donald Trump's "America First" strategy.

On the sidelines of the event, Washington's top diplomat joined a group of countries who support the Syrian opposition for talks on a way to end the nearly six-year war. "All the participants want a political solution because a military solution alone won't lead to peace in Syria," German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel told reporters in Bonn, adding that "Tillerson became very involved in the debates".

The meeting of the so-called "like-minded" nations-made up of around a dozen Western and Arab countries as well as Turkey-was the first since President Donald Trump took office. Diplomats had said before the talks they were hoping for clarity on whether there had been a change in US policy on Syria, particularly on the future of President Bashar Al-Assad. A new round of United Nations-led talks is set to take place in Geneva on February 23 involving Syrian regime and rebel representatives.

'No parallel negotiations'

Under Trump's predecessor Barack Obama, Washington insisted Assad had to go as part of a political solution to end the fighting. But Trump has called for closer cooperation with Moscow in the fight against the Islamic State jihadist group in Syria, downplaying what happens to Assad.

With Russia's sway in the conflict growing since it launched a military intervention in support of Assad's regime, it has seized the initiative by hosting separate peace talks in Kazakhstan along with US ally Turkey, brokering a fragile six-week-old truce on the ground. Gabriel said the "like-minded" countries had agreed to step up pressure on Russia and make clear there could be no alternative to the UN-led Geneva talks. "There should not be any parallel negotiations," he said.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault, speaking alongside Gabriel, said a key stumbling block was Russia's insistence to view all opposition groups as "terrorists". A Western diplomatic source said Tillerson had made clear in the meeting "there would be no military cooperation with Russia until they distance themselves from Damascus's stance on the opposition."

'New friends'

The former ExxonMobil boss, who kept a low profile and left Bonn without giving the usual press conference, reassured US partners by sticking close to conventional foreign policy. In his first one-on-one with Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, Tillerson pressed Beijing to "use all available tools" to rein in North Korea after its series of nuclear and ballistic missile tests. A day earlier, he promised Japan and South Korea that Washington would use the full range of its arsenal, including nuclear weapons, to defend the allies against North Korea. With the White House embroiled in controversy over its ties to the Kremlin, Tillerson was cautious in his dealings with Moscow, despite Trump's pledges to take a softer line.

Following his first sitdown with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Thursday, Tillerson said the US sought cooperation with Moscow only when doing so "will benefit the American people". In his closing remarks, Germany's Gabriel welcomed the "active role" Tillerson had taken in the G20 debates. "I think he is someone we can work well with," he said. But other diplomats were less convinced, suggesting the Texan had been light on details.

Ayrault said the US position on the Israel-Palestinian conflict came across as "confused" while comments about the Iran nuclear deal raised questions. "There needs to be more precision on many issues; for the moment, it is all very general," the Frenchman added. Asked by reporters how his inaugural trip had gone, Tillerson kept it typically brief. "Met a lot of people, made a lot of new friends," he replied. Attention now shifts to the more high-profile Munich Security Conference where US Vice-President Mike Pence will make his international debut. — AFP



BARTELLA: A child from Mosul eats a sandwich while queuing with her family for permission to pass through a checkpoint. — AP

IN 'LIBERATED' MOSUL, ALARMED RESIDENTS SAY DANGER REMAINS 'BLOODSHED COULD BE JUST AROUND THE CORNER'

MOSUL: The Iraqi forces that retook east Mosul from jihadists last month have moved on to their next battle, leaving a security vacuum that has residents complaining of a job half-done. The traffic jams in the streets and the crowds swarming the shops of the eastern neighborhoods that the Islamic State group controlled only weeks ago are deceptive, residents say.

"Everything looks like it's back to normal but people know that bloodshed could be just around the corner and they live in constant fear," said Omar, from a civil society group that has been trying to breathe life back into Iraq's second city. "Everybody is talking about the liberation but Daesh (IS) is still here," the 25-year-old said. "Their drones are flying above our heads, target our homes, our hospitals and our mosques."

The Joint Operations Command that has been coordinating Iraq's fightback since IS seized a third of the country in 2014 announced that the east bank of Mosul had been "fully liberated" on January 24. The Iraqi tricolor has replaced IS's black flag above official buildings but the atmosphere is tense. "The suicide car bombs are back and that brings back memories of Daesh," said Umm Sameer, a resident of Al-Zuhoor neighborhood.

On February 9, a suicide bomber blew himself up at a popular restaurant in east Mosul, injuring several people, according to officials. Contrary to some expectations, roughly three-quarters of the population of east Mosul stayed home and weathered the fighting that engulfed their neighborhoods when elite forces from the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) punched into the city to take on the jihadists.

Fresh displacement

Yet some of them are leaving now, despite the fact that their areas have been officially liberated. Nuriya Bashir, in her sixties, left her home with her children and grandchildren this week. "My daughter's husband was killed when a drone dropped a grenade. Daesh knew where he was that evening. The sleeper cells are everywhere," she said, speaking from the Hasansham displacement camp east of Mosul where she and her family found shelter. "Just after the announcement that

east Mosul was liberated, many displaced people left the camp to return to their homes," said camp manager Rizqar Obeid. "But over the past few days, we have received around 40 families who couldn't bear the situation in the city any longer," he said.

There are security forces deployed in east Mosul but Umm Sameer accused them of "negligence" in their work. CTS fighters have now moved out to prepare for an assault on the city's west bank. "We have handed over this part of the city to the army," Abdulwahab Al-Saadi, a top CTS commander, told AFP. He admitted that insecurity remained in the east and blamed it on the fact that "jihadists on the west side continue to fire mortar rounds."

IS still here

But weaponised drones and mortar fire are not the only security concerns for east Mosul residents. "The security shortcomings in east Mosul are obvious," said Amer al-Bek, an activist with a local civil society group, criticizing "the lack of professionalism of some of the security forces." Residents of four villages that lie just north of the city limits on the east bank of the Tigris have said that armed IS fighters are still in their midst.

"There are around 100 of them in the area, walking around freely with their weapons and combat gear," said one resident who would not give his name for fear of retribution, adding that the jihadists had recently executed several villagers. "Why is the army not liberating our villages," another resident asked. In the city proper, the number of residents who stayed on during the fighting made effective screening almost impossible. The Institute for the Study of War said last week that the "inability to find a suitable hold force is also creating openings for IS to re-infiltrate, as shown by several attacks in eastern Mosul." Besides the immediate impact on the lives of civilians, the think tank warned that such "re-infiltrations" could also affect upcoming efforts to retake the west side, "forcing the ISF (Iraqi security forces) to fight on two fronts to recapture the city." — AFP

CAPTIVE IS MILITANT SAYS MASS RAPES ARE 'NORMAL'

SULAIYMANIYA: Islamic State militant Amar Hussein says he reads the Koran all day in his tiny jail cell to become a better person. He also says he raped more than 200 women from Iraqi minorities, and shows few regrets. Kurdish intelligence authorities gave Reuters rare access to Hussein and another Islamic State militant who were both captured during an assault on the city of Kirkuk in October that killed 99 civilians and members of the security forces. Sixty-three Islamic State militants died.

Hussein said his emirs, or local Islamic State commanders, gave him and others a green light to rape as many Yazidi and other women as they wanted. "Young men need this," Hussein told Reuters in an interview after a Kurdish counter-terrorism agent removed a black hood from his head. "This is normal." Hussein said he moved from house to house in several Iraqi cities raping women from the Yazidi sect and other minorities at a time when Islamic State was grabbing more and more territory from Iraqi security forces.

Kurdish security officials say they have evidence of Hussein raping and killing but they don't know what the scale is. Reuters could not independently verify Hussein's account. Witnesses and Iraqi officials say Islamic State fighters raped many Yazidi women after the group rampaged through northern Iraq in 2014. It also abducted many Yazidi women as sex slaves and killed some of their male relatives, they said.

Human rights groups have chronicled widespread abuses by Islamic State against the Yazidis. Hussein said he also killed about 500 people since joining Islamic State in 2013. "We shot whoever we needed to shoot and beheaded whoever we needed to beheaded," said Hussein. He recalled how emirs trained him to kill, which was difficult at first when one person was brought for a practice kill. It became easier day by day.

"Seven, eight, ten at a time. Thirty or 40 people. We would take them in desert and kill them," said Hussein, an imposing, well-built figure, who was wearing metal handcuffs. Eventually, he became highly efficient, never hesitating to kill. "I would sit them down, put a blindfold on them and fire a bullet into their heads," he said. "It was normal."

Drawn to jihad

Counter-terrorism agents said Hussein was trouble when he first arrived. "He was so strong he snapped the plastic handcuffs off his wrists," said one. Hussein sees himself as a victim of hardship, a product of a broken home and poverty in his hometown of Mosul, where Iraqi forces have launched an offensive against Islamic State to dislodge them from their last stronghold in Iraq.

"I had no money. No one to say 'This is wrong, this is right.' No jobs. I had friends but no one to give me advice," said Hussein, who has been held in the cell with a barred window since his capture in October. Religious slogans are scratched on its cement walls by previous jihadist prisoners. His only possessions are a thick blanket and a Koran. On the floor is a polystyrene plate with broth and some rice. Thick, metal handcuffs hang on a nearby wall.

Hussein, now 21, began his career as an Islamic militant began when he was just 14, he said. He was drawn to jihad by his local mosque preacher, then he joined Al Qaeda and now awaits legal proceedings as a member of Islamic State, the successor of Al Qaeda's Iraq branch. Counter-terrorism agents described a second prisoner, Ghaffar Abdel Rahman, as less forthcoming, and said he had revealed little during questioning about his experiences as a checkpoint and logistics man for Islamic State.

Abdel Rahman, 31, with long hair and beard and a blank stare, gave little away in a separate interview with Reuters. He admitted to opening fire on security forces in the raid on Kirkuk but says he never killed anyone. He said he and his brother joined Islamic State because otherwise, as state employees, they would have been killed by the group.

His Kurdish captors did not comment on his story, but Iraqi authorities are generally skeptical of fighters who say they had no choice. Abdel Rahman's only hint of anger came when he was asked his view of Shiite Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi and he suggested Iraq would always be plagued by instability because many sects live in the country. "He (Abadi) does not provide people with justice," said Abdel Rahman. —Reuters

ETHICAL QUALMS: UK POLICE CAMERAS A MIXED SUCCESS

LONDON: With accusations of police misconduct raging on both sides of the Atlantic, Britain has taken the lead in supplying officers with body cameras despite worries about ever-increasing surveillance by the authorities. London's Metropolitan Police Force is currently providing over 22,000 officers with Body Worn Video (BWV), saying it will "help officers to gather evidence and demonstrate their professionalism."

The force is one of around a dozen that have tested wearable technology, motivated by a fatal police shooting in 2011 that sparked widespread riots, as well as a major study that suggested they led to a 93 percent reduction in complaints against the police. A series of police shootings in the United States and the recent claims of rape against a French policeman have intensified an international debate about whether cameras should be used all the time.

British police say they have helped defuse tense encounters and speed up prosecutions, but the absence of a legal obligation to use them means their scope in uncovering any police misconduct could be limited. Privacy advocates also fear that the speed of technological advancement is outpacing ethical considerations about privacy.

"While we understand the perceived transparency benefits relating to body-worn cameras, we do have profound concerns about the potential rollout of the technology for purposes beyond law enforcement," Renate Samson, head of Big Brother Watch, told AFP. Officials such as traffic wardens and even local council litter enforcers see the "new capabilities as the solution to a broad range of problems", she said. "We could find ourselves being filmed all the time by officials wandering the streets."

'Speeding up justice'

Bernard Hogan-Howe, Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, began a trial of body-worn video cameras in 2014 after the death of Mark Duggan, who was shot by officers in north London in August 2011. The death led to riots in London and other major cities, and the police chief said the use of cameras would aid investigations into police shootings.

However, the fatal shooting of Yassar Yaqub by West Yorkshire Police marksmen during a car chase last month was not caught on camera despite a force-wide rollout of the devices. "We hope the Independent Police Complaints Commission will interrogate why body cameras were not used... particularly as the operation, by the force's own admission, was 'pre-planned,'" said Just Yorkshire, a rights group.

Home Office guidelines state that "the decision to record or not to record any incident remains with the user", adding only that "failing to record an incident is likely to require explanation in court". Hogan-Howe said the trial of the monitoring equipment in London revealed that "people are more likely to plead guilty when they know we have captured the incident on a camera... speeding up justice." The trial also "proved particularly successful in domestic abuse cases", the police force has said.

'People do have anxieties'

The Metropolitan Police also cited a year-long study of almost 2,000 officers across British and US forces from last year, which found that the introduction of wearable cameras led to a 93 percent drop in complaints made against the police by the public. The University of Cambridge study suggested the cameras result in behavioral changes that "cool down" potentially combustible encounters.

Deborah Coles from Inquest, which campaigns for police accountability, gave the cameras a "cautious welcome", but said they were "not a panacea". "It's up to the government to ensure police are using them properly... and not turning them off," she told AFP. In Britain, the cameras are attached to the officer's uniform, and those interacting with the police are informed before recording starts. They can ask for filming to be stopped, but the police need not comply with the request. — AFP



CEUTA: Migrants rest after storming a fence to enter the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. — AP

ALMOST 500 MIGRANTS SMASH BORDER FENCE INTO SPAIN

COMES AMID DISPUTE BETWEEN MOROCCO AND EU

MADRID: Hundreds of migrants stormed the border between Morocco and Spain at Ceuta yesterday; days after Morocco warned the EU of fresh migrant trouble following a row over a trade deal. The Spanish civil guard-or paramilitary police-told AFP that "several hundred" migrants had stormed the border fence into the Spanish North African territory and that some had been injured.

Three officers were hurt while trying to keep the migrants back, a civil guard spokesman said. Footage shot by the local Faro de Ceuta television showed dozens of euphoric migrants wandering the streets of the seaside enclave, ecstatic to have finally crossed into a European Union state. "I love you Mamma, long live Spain," shouted one young African draped in a blue EU flag. "Libertad, libertad" (freedom), shouted another.

Ceuta and Melilla, also a Spanish territory in North Africa, have the EU's only land borders with Africa, so are entry points for migrants who either climbing the border fence, swim along the coast or hide in vehicles. Emergency services said on Twitter that 400 people were receiving assistance from the Spanish Red Cross.

Row over trade deal

The massive entry, one of the biggest since the border barrier was reinforced in 2005, comes amid a dispute between Morocco and the EU over the interpretation of a free trade farm and fishing deal. In a late 2016 ruling, an EU court said the deal did not apply to the Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony controlled by Rabat where the Polisario Front is fighting for independence.

The court said this was because the

status of the disputed territory remained unclear according to the international community. The 28-nation bloc did not recognise it as part of Morocco. The ruling opened the way for the Polisario Front and its supporters to contest trade in products from the Western Sahara between Morocco and the 28 EU states. The decision angered Morocco, which in a warning on February 7 suggested it could lead to "a new flow of migration" towards Europe and place the continent "at risk".

The last such massive attempt took place on New Year's Day when more than 1,000 migrants tried to jump a high double fence between Morocco and Ceuta in a violent assault that saw one officer lose an eye. The enclave has been ringed by a double wire fence that is eight kilometers long. The six-meter high fence also has rolls of barbed wire. — AFP

FINLAND RE-ADOPTS GAY MARRIAGE LAW

HELSINKI: Finland's parliament voted yesterday for a second time in favor of same-sex marriage, just two weeks before a 2014 law enshrining it is due to take effect. The do-over was a last-minute attempt by opponents to prevent the legalization of gay marriage in the country, but the legislature upheld the law by 120 votes to 48. The law will now go into effect as planned on March 1. The previous parliament passed a law on "gender-neutral marriage" in late 2014, set for early March this year.

But conservative opponents-who want a law recognizing marriage as solely being between a man and a

woman-undertook a citizens' initiative, gathering more than the 50,000 signatures required for parliament to debate an issue. Parliament's legal affairs committee rejected the counter-motion on Tuesday, but conservative members from the Christian Democrats and the populist Finns Party-one of the three members of the government coalition-insisted on having the plenary vote.

"My conscience requires me to warn you against approving a law that will take away our nation's blessing," Finns Party MP Mika Niikko said during parliament's debate on Thursday, implying gay marriage was a sin. Others accused

the initiative's proponents of grandstanding for voters ahead of municipal elections in April and of wasting parliament's time on a futile vote.

"A worthless play is a good description of the parliament's behavior towards rainbow families. Once more they are being picked on... even when people have booked their wedding venues for the happiest day of their lives within less than two weeks," MP Emma Kari of the Green League replied. Finland has recognized same-sex partnerships since 2002, but has until now remained the only Nordic country where gay marriage is not legal. — AFP

MIGRANTS GET CRASH COURSE IN FRENCH UNIVERSITY LIFE

LILLE, France: A lawyer from Sudan, a footballer from Iran, an aeronautical engineer from Eritrea: They are among 80 migrants who have traded France's "Jungle" tent camp for a chance to earn a French degree and a new life. They were chosen last year for intensive language lessons in the northern city of Lille and a crash course in French university life and the chance to study for a career here. Over 200 hopefuls who used to live in the huge camp near Calais, which once housed up to 10,000 people and was demolished last October, applied for the coveted slots at the University of Lille.

"I spent two months in the Jungle, and

was only able to learn the alphabet," said Abdul-Raouf Hussein-Fadul, a 26-year-old Sudanese man in a baseball cap and white sneakers who now ranks first in his class. "I hope that one day I'll be able to become an engineer in France, like I was in Sudan... It's not easy, I'm going to have to work hard." The future students were recruited by university officials with the help of volunteer organizations at the camp. When the Jungle was broken up, its thousands of remaining residents were bussed off to shelters around France.

Initially there were fears of widespread resistance to the migrants elsewhere, but that has largely come to

nought. Applicants for the university program had to already have been students in their home countries have a course plan that was offered by the university and give up their dreams of reaching Britain. The lucky few were then split into four groups and put up in student housing, and are now taking 15 hours of language lessons each week.

French is pretty difficult

Mohsen Tajaddodi Paskiyabi, 28, left Iran in 2015, having played football for eight years before a knee injury forced him to quit. He ended up spending a year at the camp in Calais before being

picked for the new program. "I tried to learn French at the school in the Jungle, but there were lots of people so it wasn't really possible," he said. Once he has honed his language skills, Paskiyabi hopes to become a football coach.

"In January we had some tests, it was pretty difficult, since we've only been learning French for the past three months," he said. For the university, the goal "is to get their French as good as possible between now and June, so we can integrate them into the classic university curriculum in autumn 2017," said Hugues Perdriaud, one of their professors. — AFP

11 DEAD AS NIGERIAN TROOPS REPEL BOKO HARAM SUICIDE BOMBERS

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria: Battling multiple bombers strapped with suicide vests, Nigerian troops and civilian self-defense fighters repelled the fiercest Boko Haram extremist attack in months on the key northeastern city of Maiduguri yesterday. Nine bombers and two civilians were killed, according to witnesses, soldiers and police. The city is the birthplace of the Islamic insurgency and the headquarters of the military campaign to halt it. Residents awoke to mighty explosions around midnight.

Three female suicide bombers blew themselves up at a truck station, detonating vehicles at Muna Garage on the city's eastern outskirts, according to police Deputy Superintendent Victor Isukwu. Muna Garage has been attacked many times in recent months. Two civilians died in the blasts and seven self-defense fighters were wounded, witness Ayuba Ibrahim said. "Most of the trucks that were loaded with goods for export to Chad and the border communities were destroyed, along with commodities worth millions of naira," Ibrahim said.

One blast occurred as people were trying to board the trucks, said resident Isa Mamman. The attack also targeted a military checkpoint, according to Ahmed Satomi of the Borno State Emergency Management Agency. Soldiers later fired at gunmen on motorcycles escorting other suicide bombers, killing at least six of the bombers. The ambush shows "an increased boldness on the part of a rejuvenated Boko Haram," SBM Intelligence risk analysts said yesterday, adding that the extremists' ranks have been bolstered by an "influx of hardened fighters from the Sahel and Libya."

A multinational force last year drove Boko Haram out of towns and villages in northeast Nigeria, but isolated attacks and suicide bombings continue. On Wednesday, Boko Haram fighters fired at a military helicopter on a humanitarian mission in the northeast, wounding one airman, the Nigerian Air Force said. Last week, the extremists ambushed a convoy of new recruits, killing seven, the military and a self-defense commander said. Boko Haram's seven-year Islamic uprising has killed more than 20,000 people and driven 2.6 million from their homes, creating the worst humanitarian crisis on the continent with millions facing starvation.—AP



NIGERIA: People stand behind burnt out cars following an attack at a car park in Maiduguri, Nigeria, yesterday.—AP



MANILA: This picture taken yesterday shows coroners taking the dead body of a man killed by unidentified gunman in Manila.—AFP

MORE MURDERS IN PHILIPPINE DRUG WAR

SEVEN-MONTH CAMPAIGN LEFT 6,485 PEOPLE DEAD

MANILA: Shadowy assassins are still killing poor Filipinos, despite a police withdrawal from Rodrigo Duterte's deadly drug war, a rights group said yesterday, as Manila filed criminal charges against the president's top critic. Duterte ordered the police to step back at the end of January after a seven-month campaign that had left 6,485 people dead, many in unexplained circumstances. The latest tally given to AFP yesterday showed an extra 146 people had died since the Jan 31 stand-down was ordered, which rights groups said showed extrajudicial killings were continuing.

"The targets are still the same, as far as we are concerned: people linked to drugs and who live in poor neighborhoods," Wilnor Papa, campaign official for the Philippine branch of Amnesty International, said. Papa said unknown assailants were now killing between nine and 10 people daily. This compared with about 30 people a day being killed by police and unknown assailants when officers were still leading the crackdown. In one new shooting incident covered by an AFP photographer, police found four men dead inside a shanty in northern Manila before dawn on Thursday, in a scene very similar to those covered at the

height of the drug war. Witnesses said unknown suspects broke into the house and started shooting, while three other men were shot dead in separate incidents elsewhere in the same district that night, local police said. Duterte ordered all police to stop prosecuting his drug war after anti-drug officers kidnapped a South Korean businessman then murdered him inside the national police headquarters as part of an extortion racket, according to an official investigation. But Duterte promised that the war would continue and more addicts, as well as traffickers, would be killed as he sought to eradicate drugs in society.

Butchery of the regime

Although the anti-drugs campaign is popular among voters, campaigners say it has granted a license to kill to anyone with a grudge and a gun. But critics are finding it increasingly tough to get a hearing in the Philippines. Yesterday the government filed criminal charges against Senator Leila de Lima, a justice secretary in the previous government and former human rights commissioner who is one of Duterte's most vocal opponents. The charges allege she ran a drug trafficking ring using criminals in the country's largest prison when she

was justice secretary. De Lima said in a statement that the charges, which could land her a 30-year jail term, were solely aimed at silencing her opposition. "If the loss of my freedom is the price I have to pay for standing up against the butchery of the Duterte regime, then it is a price I am willing to pay," she said, describing the charges as "false". De Lima has not yet been arrested. In an earlier report, Amnesty said the police were guilty of systemic human rights abuses in the drug war, including shooting dead defenseless people, paying assassins to murder addicts and stealing from those they killed.

It also said police were being paid by their superiors to kill. Duterte has since ordered the much smaller Drug Enforcement Agency to lead the drug crackdown, with the support of the military. Derrick Carreon, spokesman for the 1,791-member drug agency, said there had been far fewer killings by authorities since it took charge, without giving figures. "(But) there is no point in comparing these figures because the police is a much larger organization, capable of conducting more operations," Carreon said, adding the military had mostly acted as observers so far. The national police force has 160,000 officers.—AFP



MACAU: This picture shows police standing outside the grounds of a residential building where Kim Jong-Nam, half-brother of a North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un, was believed to have lived, in the Taipa district of Macau. —AFP

NO RELEASE OF KIM BODY UNTIL FAMILY COME FORWARD

DETECTIVES TRY TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE MURDER

KUALA LUMPUR: The body of Kim Jong-Nam, the assassinated half-brother of North Korea's leader, will not be released until his family has provided DNA samples, Malaysia said yesterday, despite a request from Pyongyang. Detectives in Kuala Lumpur are trying to get to the bottom of the cloak-and-dagger murder that South Korea says was carried out by poison-wielding female agents working for their secretive northern neighbor.

Forensic specialists yesterday began testing samples from the dead man's body to try to determine the toxin that was apparently sprayed in his face as he readied to board a plane earlier this week. North Korean diplomats objected to the post-mortem examination, Malaysian officials say, but Kuala Lumpur has stood firm, and said yesterday it would not release the body until procedures were complete. "So far no family member or next of kin has come to identify or claim the body. We need a DNA sample of a family member to match the profile of the dead person," Selangor state police chief Abdul Samah Mat said.

"North Korea has submitted a request to claim the body, but before we release the body we have to identify who the body belongs to," he said. DNA from a child, sibling-or even half-sibling-would be enough to provide a "kinship match" and confirm the identity, a Malaysian forensic investigator said. Police were meanwhile questioning two women-one travelling on a Vietnamese passport and the other on an Indonesian document-as well as a Malaysian man.

Pyongyang silent

The drama erupted on Monday morning as Jong-Nam, the estranged elder brother of Kim Jong-Un, readied to board a plane to Macau. Malaysian police say the chubby 45-year-old was jumped by two women who squirted some kind of liquid in his face. Jong-Nam told staff he was suffering from a headache and was taken to the airport clinic grimacing in pain, according to Malaysian media citing CCTV footage from the airport.

One of the women walked to a taxi rank immediately after the attack, according to the same footage. He was rushed to hospital suffering from a seizure but was dead before he arrived. South Korea has pointed the finger of blame at the North, citing a "standing order" from Jong-Un to kill his sibling and a failed assassination bid in 2012 after he criticized the regime. A Japanese journalist who knew and wrote a book on Jong-Nam yesterday said he was a courageous man who sought to reform his country.

Woman in 'LOL' top

"Even if it put him in danger, he wanted to tell his opinions to Pyongyang through me or other media," Yoji Gomi said in Tokyo. Pyongyang has made no comment on the killing, and there has been no mention of it in North Korean media. AFP correspondents in Pyongyang say celebrations to mark the birthday of Kim Jong-Il, the late father of both men, have gone ahead without reference to the death.

Malaysian police on Wednesday arrested a 28-year-old woman carrying a

Vietnamese passport which identified her as Doan Thi Huong. Local media said she was the woman seen in CCTV images from the airport wearing a white top with the letters "LOL" emblazoned on the front. Officers later arrested Muhammad Farid Bin Jalaluddin, a 26-year-old Malaysian man. He led them to his girlfriend, a 25-year-old Indonesian national named Siti Aishah. Aishah's family in Jakarta expressed their shock over her arrest, with her former father-in-law saying there was "no way such a nice person would do that".

"I could not believe it because she was a good person," said Tija Liang Kiong, 56. Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla said Aishah appeared to be the "victim of a scam or a fraud" who thought she was taking part in a reality show involving hidden cameras. Indonesian embassy officials said they were providing Aishah with legal assistance. Selangor state police chief Abdul Samah earlier said he was looking for several more suspects, but declined to say how many were being sought.

First-born Jong-Nam was once thought to be the natural successor to his father, but on Kim Jong-Il's death in 2011 the succession went to Jong-Un, who was born to the former leader's third wife. Reports of purges and executions have emerged from the current regime as Jong-Un tries to strengthen his grip on power in the face of international pressure over nuclear and missile programs. The most notable of these was the 2013 execution for treason of the young leader's influential uncle, Jang Song-Thaek. —AFP

THAI COPS FIND TUNNEL IN MANHUNT FOR ELDERLY MONK

BANGKOK: Thai cops have uncovered secret tunnels running underneath a space-age temple of the controversial Dhammakaya Buddhist sect, as their manhunt for an elusive elderly monk accused of massive embezzlement entered a second day. Thousands of officers are involved in the search for the 72-year-old monk Phra Dhammachayo, who is believed to be holed up in the vast Wat Dhammakaya temple grounds on the outskirts of Bangkok.

The former abbot, who founded the breakaway Buddhist order in 1970 and has marshaled its prodigious rise, is accused of money laundering and accepting embezzled funds worth \$33 million from the jailed owner of a cooperative bank. But in an increasingly bizarre cat-and-mouse game, cops were frustrated for a second day running as they were led by orange-robed monks through endless rooms and hallways in the 1,000-acre site.

On Thursday police found a 1.5 kilometer tunnel-split into two routes-dug under the UFO-like temple that dominates the site, which may have been used by the ex-abbot as a place to hide. "It only has one entrance but it does not go outside of the temple," Police Colonel Worranan Srilum, deputy spokesman for the DSI-Thailand's equivalent of the FBI-told reporters. They also searched a sick bay used by the former abbot, but instead of finding their quarry, pulled back an orange robe covering several pillows arranged to look like a sleeping person.

"The Dhammakaya temple area is sprawling so it will have to take time to search... we can't find him yet, but our intelligence insists that he is still inside (the) temple," he added. The sweep of the powerful and ultra-rich Wat Dhammakaya temple comes after Thailand's junta chief invoked special powers to put its sprawling compound under military control. Temple officials say the ex-abbot is innocent and deny knowledge of his whereabouts.

Thailand's secular authorities are normally reluctant to intervene in the affairs of the clergy in the Buddhist-majority country. But the Dhammakaya sect has long been in the firing line. Critics accuse the temple of promoting a pay-your-way to nirvana philosophy, burnished with "cultish" mass shows of devotion and a sophisticated PR machine. The temple is also mired in the kingdom's treacherous politics, with rumored links to ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted in a 2006 coup and still hated by the Bangkok elite and their military allies.—AFP

PAKISTANI PAIR SET TO HANG IN SINGAPORE FOR MURDER

SINGAPORE: Two Pakistani men face the gallows in Singapore after a court yesterday found them guilty of murdering a compatriot over a gambling dispute and dismembering the body. Street-side tissue sellers Rasheed Muhammad, 45, and Ramzan Rizwan, 28, were convicted of smothering fellow Pakistani Muhammad Noor to death in their lodging house in 2014, before hacking up the body with saws. The 59-year-old victim's torso and lower limbs were found stuffed in two separate luggage bags in the city-state. Murder convictions in Singapore are punishable by death and carried out by hanging.

"As the photographs and evidence of the discarded limbs and torso show, both Rasheed and Ramzan acted in concert after the murder as they did before and during it," High Court Judge Choo Han Teck said in his judgement. Rasheed and Ramzan arrived in Singapore in May 2014, and sold packets of tissue paper for a living. The dispute started after the pair sought to retrieve Sg\$1,100 (\$776) Ramzan had lost to the victim in a card game.

After using a shirt to smother the victim, the two men purchased saws to dismember the body. A bag with the torso was found by an 81-year-old man and Rasheed subsequently led police to a second bag containing the legs, court documents showed. Defense lawyers for the pair had argued that they did not intend to commit murder, and both blamed each other for the death. Rasheed, a father of eight, and Ramzan, a father of three, will appeal the conviction, their lawyers said. —AFP

CAMBODIA COMMENTATOR CHARGED WITH DEFAMATION

PHNOM PENH: A Cambodian political analyst was charged yesterday with defamation and inciting unrest after allegedly accusing prime minister Hun Sen's ruling party of having a hand in the murder of prominent rights activist. Kem Ley, also a popular pro-democracy voice, was gunned down in July last year while drinking coffee outside a petrol station in the capital. The brazen daylight murder sent fear cascading across civil society groups in a country where the rich and powerful enjoy impunity. Still, tens of thousands turned out for his funeral.

A Phnom Penh court charged political commentator Kim Sok on Friday for comments he is alleged to have made in a radio interview speculating of links between the ruling Cambodia People's Party and the shooting. The complaint was brought by Hun Sen, Cambodia's strongman premier who has ruled the country for over three decades. "The judge detained Kim Sok on charges of public defamation and inciting unrest to social security," Ly Sophana, a Phnom Penh court spokesman, told reporters.

Defamation carries a fine while incitement is punishable by a jail term. Hun Sen is renowned for using Cambodia's pliant courts to tie-up his critics-including activists and the opposition party, which is hoping to oust him in elections next year. Shortly before his murder Kem Ley gave a lengthy radio interview welcoming a report on riches allegedly amassed by Hun Sen and his family. Hun Sen has ordered a thorough investigation into the murder and urged people not to turn the case into a "political act."—AFP

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TRUMP LOSES PICK FOR TOP SECURITY ADVISOR

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump's reported pick for national security advisor turned down the job just hours after the president defended the ousted Michael Flynn, saying he "wasn't wrong" for dealing with Russia. Retired Navy Admiral Robert Harward's rejection of the key post late Thursday leaves Trump without a replacement for Flynn, the first high profile casualty of the US leader's tenure, and it added to a perception of disarray in his administration.

Harward told CNN he bowed out because of family and financial commitments, but several US media outlets reported that he was unhappy because he had no guarantees that the National Security Council—and not Trump's political advisors—would be in charge of policy. Members of the council currently include Steve Bannon, Trump's controversial far-right former campaign manager. One Harward friend told CNN that he didn't want the job because of chaos at the White House.

Flynn, a close advisor on Trump's 2016 campaign, resigned after it was revealed that he held telephone conversations during the election race with Russia's ambassador in Washington about US sanctions. Flynn was no stranger to controversy. His past included a paid appearance at a 2015 dinner sitting next to President Vladimir Putin and suggestions that Russia's seizure of Crimea and its support for Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad were acceptable. Russia was the hot topic of a lengthy and often rambling press conference given by Trump on Thursday.

The president insisted neither he nor his campaign team had contacts with Russian officials in the run-up to last year's US election, contradicting an explosive report which he dismissed as "fake news." Trump instead accused members of US intelligence agencies of breaking the law by leaking information about the calls. Asked whether he or anyone on his staff had engaged in contacts with Russia prior to the election, Trump proclaimed: "No, nobody that I know of." "I have nothing to do with Russia," Trump said. "The whole Russia thing is a ruse."

It's all fake news

It was a full-throated denunciation of a bombshell New York Times report which said intercepted calls and phone records show Trump aides were in repeated contact with Russian intelligence officials well before the US election. "It's all fake news," Trump insisted. He stressed that the Times story centered instead on inappropriate action by US intelligence agencies, and he stepped up earlier attacks vowing to catch "low-life leakers" of potentially classified information that led to Flynn's ouster.

"Those are criminal leaks" by people angry about Democrat Hillary Clinton's loss, Trump told reporters. "The people that gave out the information to the press should be ashamed of themselves." The Washington Post meanwhile reported that Flynn denied to FBI agents that he had discussed US sanctions on Russia with Moscow's ambassador. If Flynn did discuss the sanctions, as Trump appears to believe, then the retired general could be looking at prison time because lying to the FBI is a felony, though the president defended him. —AFP



WASHINGTON: This undated US Navy photo shows Ret. Navy Admiral Robert Harward. —AFP



WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump points to a member of the media as he takes questions during a news conference in the East Room of the White House in Washington. —AP

TRUMP, IN UNPRECEDENTED FASHION FOR A PRESIDENT, RIPS PRESS

TRUMP CALLS WHITE HOUSE A FINE-TUNED MACHINE

WASHINGTON: The leaks are real. But the news about them is fake. The White House is a fine-tuned machine. Russia is a ruse. For its stunning moments and memorable one-liners, Donald Trump's first solo news conference as president has no rivals in recent memory. For all the trappings of the White House and traditions of the forum, his performance was one of a swaggering, blustery campaigner, armed with grievances and primed to unload on his favorite targets.

In nearly an hour and a half at the podium, Trump bullied reporters, dismissed facts and then cracked a few caustic jokes - a combination that once made the candidate irresistible cable TV fodder. Now in office, he went even further, blaming the media for all but sinking his not-yet-launched attempt to "make a deal" with Moscow. That matters, Trump said in one of his many improvisational asides, because he'd been briefed and "I can tell you ... nuclear holocaust would be like no other." This was his and his aides' attempt to get the boss his groove back.

Trump used the event to try to claw his young administration back from the brink after a defeat in court and the forced resignation of his top national security adviser. He taunted reporters and waved away their attempts to fact-check him in real time. He (incorrectly) touted his Electoral College total and repeatedly blasted his November opponent - somehow mentioning Hillary Clinton more than anyone else in his defense of his administration's early days. He bragged that his White House is "a fine-tuned machine" and claimed "there has never been a presidency that has done so much in such a short period of time."

If only the news media would give

him credit. Over and over, he accused the political press of being dishonest and suggested that any negative coverage of his administration was "fake news." He unloaded a torrent of grievances while positioning himself as the stand-in for the everyman, who, he declared, hates and distrusts reporters as much as he does. "The press - the public doesn't believe you people anymore. Now, maybe I had something to do with that. I don't know. But they don't believe you," Trump charged.

"But you've got to be at least a little bit fair, and that's why the public sees it. They see it. They see it's not fair. You take a look at some of your shows and you see the bias and the hatred." The hastily called news conference was not on the White House's original schedule for Thursday, and some of Trump's own aides were surprised when the president let slip at a morning meeting that he would hold the event in the East Room just hours later.

Bizarre theater

The performance was vintage Trump, a throwback to the messy, zinger-filled news conferences he held during the early stages of his campaign. And, when combined with a rally slated for Saturday in Florida, it appeared to be the start of a one-two punch meant to re-energize a president whose White House in recent days has been buffeted by crisis and paralyzed by dysfunction.

Yet it was a far cry from the "buck stops here" mantra popularized by Harry Truman and other presidents who believed that the ultimate responsibility for any White House struggles lay with the president himself. Trump was eager to assign blame elsewhere, ignoring the nation's healthy economy and relative

peace when he took office to say "to be honest, I inherited a mess, a mess, at home and abroad, a mess."

He mostly blamed the media for his woes, rebuffing suggestions that he was undermining confidence in the press or threatening the First Amendment by trying to convince the nation that "the press honestly is out of control." "The press has become so dishonest that if we don't talk about it, we are doing a tremendous disservice to the American people," he said. "Tremendous disservice." Never before has a president stood in the White House and so publicly maligned the press or attacked reporters by name, according to presidential historians. Not even Richard Nixon in the days of Watergate.

"It was bizarre theater," said Douglas Brinkley, a professor of history at Rice University. "He turned a presidential press conference into a reality TV show in which he can be the star and browbeat anyone who objects to him with the power of his office." But for Trump, it continued a defining theme and amplified his chief strategist Stephen Bannon's decree that the media are "the opposition party."

Trump had put claims of press prejudice at the center of his campaign in an unprecedented way and earlier this month falsely accused the media of refusing to cover terrorist attacks across the world. Though Thursday's news conference was a messy, fact-challenged affair, it may well have been cheered by Trump supporters across the country who had packed arenas last year to jeer reporters and chant "tell the truth" at the press pen. An Associated Press-GfK poll taken on the eve of the election revealed that 87 percent of Trump's supporters saw the media as biased against him. —AP

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SEOUL: This picture taken on February 16, 2017 shows Samsung Group's heir-apparent Lee Jae-Yong (C) leaving after attending a court hearing on whether he will be issued with an arrest warrant at the Seoul Central District Court. — AFP

SAMSUNG HEIR ARRESTED IN CORRUPTION PROBE

FRESH BLOW TO THE ELECTRONICS GIANT'S CORPORATE IMAGE

SEOUL: Prosecutors yesterday arrested the de facto head of South Korea's largest conglomerate, Samsung, on bribery and other charges related to a political corruption scandal that triggered the impeachment of President Park Geun-Hye. In a fresh blow to the electronics giant's corporate image, a district court cited new evidence in approving the arrest warrant against vice-chairman Lee Jae-Yong, who oversees the family-run conglomerate in the absence of his ailing father.

Among other allegations, Lee is accused of paying nearly \$40 million in bribes to a confidante of President Park's to secure policy favors. "It is acknowledged that it is necessary to arrest (Lee Jae-Yong) in light of a newly added criminal charge and new evidence," a court spokesman said in a statement. Shares of many Samsung units took a hit on the Seoul stock market following the news, with the group's flagship Samsung Electronics sliding 0.4 percent.

Its de-facto holdings firm, Samsung C&T, dropped two percent and another key unit, Samsung Life Insurance, fell 1.4 percent. "We

will do our best to ensure that the truth is revealed in future court proceedings," the group said in a statement. Lee was already being held at a detention centre after appearing in court Thursday as judges deliberated whether to issue an arrest warrant. He will remain in custody as he awaits a trial likely to begin within a few months.

'Republic of Samsung'

Prosecutors said they planned to summon him today for further questioning, raising the prospect of Lee appearing in public handcuffed—a rare sight in the nation dubbed the "Republic of Samsung" due to the group's huge lobbying power. Lee, the son of Samsung group boss Lee Kun-Hee, has been quizzed several times over his alleged role in the scandal. The 48-year-old, described as a key suspect, narrowly avoided being formally arrested last month, after the court ruled there was insufficient evidence. But prosecutors on Tuesday made a second bid, saying they had collected more evidence in recent weeks. His arrest, the first for a Samsung chief,

will send shock waves through the group, which is a major part of the South Korean economy and includes the world's largest smartphone maker, Samsung Electronics.

"This is a blow to Samsung's image as a global player in the short term", HMC Investment Securities' analyst Greg Roh told AFP. IBK Investment Securities' Lee Seung-Woo said that given the cloud over Lee, at a time when the firm is attempting a complicated restructuring, Samsung could refrain from pursuing long-term investments such as overseas mergers and acquisitions. The company is already reeling from the debacle over the recall of its flagship Galaxy Note 7 device and reports have suggested it could face sanctions from overseas authorities if Lee is punished. Lee's father and grandfather repeatedly had close brushes with the law but were never jailed.

'Donation' scandal

The scandal centers on Choi Soon-Sil, who is accused of using her close ties with Park to force local firms to "donate" nearly \$70 million to non-profit foundations which

Choi allegedly used for personal gain. Samsung was the single biggest donor to the foundations. It is also accused of separately giving millions of euros to Choi to bankroll her daughter's equestrian training in Germany.

The court turned down prosecutors' demand for a separate arrest warrant for another Samsung executive, who is also the head of the Korea Equestrian Federation, citing his limited role in the scandal. Lee has effectively taken the helm of Samsung-South Korea's biggest business group since his father suffered a heart attack in 2014.

Prosecutors are probing whether Samsung had paid Choi to secure state approval for the controversial merger of two Samsung units seen as a key step towards ensuring a smooth power transfer to Lee. The merger in 2015 of Samsung C&T and Cheil Industries was opposed by many investors who said it will fully undervalued the former unit's shares. But the deal went through after Seoul's state pension fund—a major Samsung shareholder—approved it. — AFP

TONY BLAIR'S MISSION IS TO CHANGE MINDS ON BREXIT

LONDON: Former Prime Minister Tony Blair launched a new campaign yesterday to persuade Britons to change their minds about leaving the European Union. Blair urged voters to speak out against the government's drive to exit the EU at any cost, saying it could damage future generations. He argued last year's vote to leave was "based on imperfect knowledge," and that Britons voted without knowledge of the true terms of Brexit.

"As these terms become clear, it is their right to change their mind," he said. "Our mission is to persuade them to do so." Blair argued that leaving the 28-nation bloc was not

inevitable and that the people favoring Brexit took advantage of a mood of revolt stemming in part from changes in the global economy.

"The Brexiteers were the beneficiaries of this wave; now they want to freeze it to a day in June 2016," he said. "They will say the will of the people can't alter. It can." He plans to start an institute and build an alliance across party lines to create a movement with weight and reach to fight the notion of Brexit at any cost.

The former Labour leader said Prime Minister Theresa May's government has become obsessed by Brexit to the exclusion

of any other issue. Pressing issues on challenges in the modern economy, the National Health Service, communities left behind by globalization and immigration controls are being ignored, he said.

"This is not the time for retreat, indifference or despair," he said. "But the time to rise up in defense for what we believe." It is not immediately clear how much support Blair may have in creating a new wave of sentiment against May's plans. The once-popular Labor leader suffered a fall from grace in supporting the United States in its intervention in Iraq that led to the ouster of Saddam Hussein. — AP



NEW YORK: In this Jan 12, 2017 photo, traders work on the Mizuho Americas trading floor. — AP

GLOBAL STOCKS EXTEND RETREAT AS TRUMP FUELLED SURGE ENDS

'TRUMPS TWITTER DOES LITTLE TO IMPROVE STABILITY IN MARKETS'

LONDON: World stock markets fell further yesterday following a downbeat session in Asia, and after Wall Street's Trump-fuelled surge finally came to an end. European equities staggered lower with London sentiment also dented by news of a fresh drop in retail sales. Asian indices mostly dipped as investors cashed out after a healthy run since last week, and after Wall Street's Donald Trump-fuelled surge came to an end.

"European markets have struggled to gain traction this morning following on from last night's weaker performance from US equities," noted CMC Markets analyst Michael Hewson. New York had finished mixed Thursday as a five-day streak of record highs finally began to show signs of fatigue. Stocks around the world are sharply higher since the US president pledged last week a "phenomenal"

tax reform package soon, raising hopes he would press on with plans to fire up the US economy.

The remarks were the spark for all three main Wall Street indices to hit record highs for five successive days, with help also coming from Federal Reserve boss Janet Yellen's upbeat assessment of the outlook for the US and hints at a March interest rate hike.

"With no major data out of the US ahead of the long bank holiday President's Day weekend and no big earnings reports, the week will be finishing with investors weighing up the likelihood of another Trump Twitter rampage or press conference," added Hewson. "Whilst these create great headlines for the media it does little to improve stability in the markets, and many will be wondering whether the honeymoon period is over already."

There remained a lot of uncertainty,

particularly with Trump's first weeks in office engulfed in controversies, most recently over his relationship with Russia, dealers said. "The current political landscape is unlikely to change soon, nor will the debates surrounding tax, fiscal and Fed policies," said Oanda analyst Stephen Innes. "As such we should expect the markets to come under renewed pressure and to be severely tested in the weeks to come."

Hong Kong stocks—which this week hit highs not seen since summer 2015 — fell 0.3 percent while Shanghai shed 0.9 percent by the close. Sydney eased 0.2 percent and Seoul dropped 0.1 percent, while Tokyo lost 0.6 percent. The dollar was also struggling to break out against its major peers despite Yellen's comments this week to Congress that the economy continued to improve and left open the chance of a March rate hike. — AP

ALLIANZ WARNS OF UNCERTAIN YEAR

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German insurance giant Allianz said yesterday it aims to boost profits this year in the face of expected political and economic risks, after reporting strong results for 2016. The group had faced a "difficult environment" last year, chief executive Oliver Baete told a Munich press conference, with "market volatility, political volatility, Brexit, the elections in the US, the referendum in Italy." "All of that left its mark on us," he said, pointing as well to low interest rates that have burdened banks and insurers' traditional business.

Despite the headwinds, Allianz increased net profit by 4.0 percent to 6.9 billion euros (\$7.4 billion) in 2016, slightly overshooting analysts' forecasts. The firm notched up 122 billion euros in revenues last year, down 2.2 percent from 2015, but still beating its own forecast. Operating, or underlying profit edged up 0.9 percent to 10.8 billion euros.

In the fourth quarter alone, Allianz booked a 23-percent increase in net profit to 1.7 billion euros. The life and health insurance unit put in the best performance among the group's divisions, with operating profit there growing by 9.3 percent.

By contrast, operating profit at the property and casualty insurance arm fell back 4.2 percent and underlying earnings in its asset management division were down 4.0 percent. Nevertheless, there was good news for Pimco, the keystone of its asset management business, as investors entrusted more cash to the firm than they removed in the second half of the year—beginning a turnaround from the net withdrawals that had plagued it since the tumultuous departure of chief Bill Gross in late 2014.

Allianz plans to pay shareholders an increased dividend of 7.60 euros, up from 7.30 euros paid out for 2015. The insurer will also buy back up to three billion euros of its own shares.

"The combination of a dividend increase and a share buy-back probably both at the upper end of market expectations is a sign of strength," DZ Bank analyst Thorsten Wenzel commented. Shares in Allianz were up 2.49 percent to trade at 162.30 euros (\$172.76) just after 1100 GMT on Friday, making it the best performer in the Dax index of leading German shares.

2017 'difficult to predict'

The year ahead remains "difficult to predict", CEO Baete said in a statement released with the results, after a 2016 "filled with surprises, not all of them welcome, that challenged many assumptions". For 2017, the group forecasts operating profits around the same level as 2016, at 10.8 billion euros plus or minus 500 million euros—"barring unforeseen events, crisis or natural catastrophes," he went on.

At Friday's press conference, Baete said that Allianz was open to making acquisitions using its well-stocked war chest, but "only if they are worth it for the shareholders." The group would look particularly at property insurance firms rather than life insurers as takeover prospects, he went on. Baete also quashed press reports that Australian insurer QBE was on Allianz's acquisition radar, saying that they were "not true".

QBE has also denied the reports. The group made no comment on recent media reports that Allianz could look to buy Italy's Generali. — AFP

FORD NOT SCRAPPING PLANS TO BUILD MEXICO FACTORIES

MEXICO CITY: Ford is sticking with its plan to build two new factories in Mexico, despite an announcement last month that it had scrapped plans for a plant in the central state of San Luis Potosi.

The US carmaker said a planned factory in the central state of Guanajuato will build engines and transmissions, while another in the northern city of Chihuahua will make

car parts for use by Ford factories in the United States, South America and Asia.

The two facilities will cost about \$2.5 billion and employ some 3,800 people, said Gabriel Lopez, president and CEO of Ford Mexico. Ford without warning last month canceled plans to build a \$1.6 billion project in San Luis Potosi. It is one of several American companies com-

ing under pressure from US President Donald Trump, who has offered inducements to keep some US manufacturers in the United States, and threatened others with punishing tariffs if they go.

Ford, which has been operating in Mexico for about 90 years, currently employs around 9,000 workers in Mexico, according to Lopez. —AFP

TRUMP, FOND OF EXECUTIVE ORDERS, AWAITS FANCY PENS

PROVIDENCE: It didn't take long for US President Donald Trump to start running out of the custom-made Cross pens he uses to sign executive orders. "I think we're going to need some more pens, by the way," he said on Inauguration Day four weeks ago. Trump was handing them out as souvenirs for members of Congress who attended his first signing ceremony, joking to the lawmakers that "the government is getting stingy, right?"

The White House expected its latest batch of 350 of the gold-plated pens by yesterday. They were shipped Wednesday by the 170-year-old New England company that has supplied its fancy pens to at least seven US presidents. But Trump might be the first to make brandishing a pen and showing off each newly signed order such a definitive part of his governing style. "He absolutely, positively, had to have them by Friday," said Andy Boss, who manages business gift sales for AT Cross Co, based in Providence, Rhode Island. "My guess is he's running low."

Cross pens have been supplied to presidents at least since the Gerald Ford administration, said Boss, whose great-grandfather bought the writing instruments manufacturer a century ago. The company, sold to a private equity firm in 2013, was once a major Rhode Island employer but now makes most of its pens in China. It still tries to put an American imprint on the presidential pens, which are lacquered and engraved in China but go through their final assembly in Rhode Island using a mix of domestic and foreign parts.

'Trump loves gold'

President Barack Obama used the company's pricier Townsend model to sign the Affordable Care Act in 2010 but later switched to the slimmer Century II, the same felt-tipped model wielded by Trump when he signed an action last month expressing his intent to repeal Obama's health care law. Trump's transition team ordered its first 150 of the black-lacquered pens before the inauguration. The only features distinguishing Trump's Century II pens from Obama's are their engraved signatures and their metal plating: gold instead of chrome. "It's really just a personal preference," Boss said. "Obviously, Trump loves gold."

The White House didn't return emailed requests for comment this week about the cost of the pens and whether it matters to Trump where the pens are made. The manufacturer's suggested retail price is \$115 per pen, but Boss said it's sold to the White House through a third-party distributor that is likely to have offered a discount. — AP



PROVIDENCE: In this Tuesday, Feb 14, 2017, photo at Cross Co custom-made pens designed for President Donald Trump, top, former President Barack Obama, center, and former President George W Bush, below, featuring their signatures and presidential seals, rest side by side at the Cross Company Store. —AP



WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump arrives in the East Room of the White House on Thursday, Feb 16, 2017, to announce he will nominate R Alexander Acosta for Labor Secretary. (INSET) R Alexander Acosta talks to reporters during a news conference in Miami. — AP photo

US SENATE HEARING AHEAD, LABOR NOMINEE BEEN THERE BEFORE

WOULD BE FIRST HISPANIC MEMBER OF TRUMP'S CABINET

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump and a leading Republican are highlighting a key fact about labor secretary nominee Alexander Acosta: He has been confirmed three times by the Senate. Acosta, who would be the first Hispanic member of Trump's Cabinet, has won confirmation to the National Labor Relations Board, as the head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and as US attorney in Miami. That means he's already received some vetting - a practice for which the Trump administration is not known.

"Mr Acosta's nomination is off to a good start because he's already been confirmed by the Senate three times," said Sen. Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn, the chairman of the Senate panel that will hold Acosta's yet-unscheduled confirmation hearing. Trump also mentioned that fact during a brief statement on Acosta at the start of a press conference Thursday that swiftly became dominated by other issues. Acosta did not attend the event. "He did very, very well," during his past Senate votes, Trump said.

From violator to enforcer

Almost immediately, Acosta's Senate prospects for the labor post looked better than Andy Puzder's had after months of attacks on his personal life, statements and career as a fast-food CEO. He dropped out of consideration ahead of his hearing. Leading Democrats and their allies vowed to hold Acosta "accountable" as the head of an agency charged with enforcing worker protections. But their reactions were muted compared to the scathing response to Puzder's nomination in December.

"Unlike Andy Puzder, Alexander Acosta's nomination deserves serious consideration," AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka said in a statement. "In one day, we've gone from a fast-food CEO who routinely violates labor law to a public servant with experience enforcing it." Sen Patty Murray of Washington state, the leading Democrat on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, made a passing reference in her statement to having "some initial concerns about his record," but did not name

them. An assortment of Hispanic advocacy groups praised the nomination, including the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The Florida International University law school, where Acosta is dean, said he is 48. The Hispanic National Bar Association and others described Acosta as the son of Cuban immigrants. Other groups pointed out that Acosta was head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division when the agency came under fire for applying political considerations to some hiring decisions. The agency's inspector general report said Acosta "did not sufficiently supervise" an employee to whom he had delegated hiring duties.

"This egregious conduct played out under Mr. Acosta's watch and undermined the integrity of the Civil Rights Division," said Kristen Clarke, president of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under the Law. The Harvard-trained Miami native, now dean of the Florida International University law school, clerked for Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito on the 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals. — AP

GERMANY URGES FAIRNESS FOR ITS CARS IN CHINA

BONN: 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 on Thursday. 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 liberalization 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. China surpassed the United States last year to become the largest maker of pure electric cars thanks to a raft of government incentives to promote the switch from petrol to electricity as the country battles heavy pollution.

Sales of battery electric and plug-in hybrids increased 60 percent in January-November, to 402,000 vehicles. By 2020, China wants 5 million plug-in cars on its roads. In September, Volkswagen AG signed a deal with China's Anhui Jianghuai Automobile (JAC Motor) to explore making electric vehicles in a new joint venture. China has its own concerns about what it sees as European protectionism, particularly the EU's refusal to grant China "market economy status", which Beijing says is its right 15 years after it joined the World Trade Organization.

China's Foreign Ministry in a statement issued late Thursday cited Wang

as telling Gabriel that China hopes Germany can play a "proactive role" in pushing the EU to grant this. Despite disagreements with China over obstacles to foreign investment, its massive steel exports and other issues, the European Union increasingly sees Beijing as a crucial ally on global free trade in the face of protectionist pressures from US President Donald Trump's administration.

On Wednesday, Reuters exclusively reported that the EU, in which Germany is the largest economy, was preparing an early summit with China in April or May in Brussels to promote free trade and international cooperation. — Reuters



TOKYO: This picture taken on February 16, 2017 shows the Toshiba Corporation logo at the company's headquarters. — AFP

TOSHIBA DIVES ON NUCLEAR AS S&P WARNS OVER RATING

INVESTORS SLICE MORE THAN 20% OFF TOKYO-LISTED STOCK

TOKYO: Shares in troubled conglomerate Toshiba dived again yesterday as Standard & Poor's warned it may cut its credit rating while a possible savior of the Japanese firm's loss-hit nuclear unit reportedly ruled out any rescue deal. Investors have sliced more than 20 percent off its Tokyo-listed stock this week as Toshiba, one of Japan's best-known firms, warned of huge losses and possible accounting fraud at its US nuclear arm Westinghouse Electric.

Yesterday, shares plunged 9.2 percent to end the day 184 yen (\$1.62) with worries swirling that the firm will be booted off the Tokyo Stock Exchange's prestigious first section as its finances deteriorate. S&P said it may downgrade the conglomerate's credit rating again, while Shunichi Miyanaga, the head of Japanese industrial giant Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI), told the Financial Times that he had ruled out a rescue of Toshiba's ailing nuclear unit.

There has been speculation Toshiba may need to join forces with another firm involved in atomic power to keep the business from crashing. But Miyanaga told the newspaper in an interview published yesterday that MHI and Toshiba's nuclear businesses were too different to make a merger work. "When you see all this negative news... there is a temptation to keep on selling," Toshihiko Matsuno, chief strategist at SMBC Friend Securities, told AFP.

Possible wrongdoing

Toshiba shares are down about 60 percent since December, when it first warned of problems at Westinghouse. On Tuesday, Toshiba shocked markets when it failed to report its results for April-December as scheduled then said it needed more time to sort out the situation at the troubled atomic division. Instead it issued a grim preliminary forecast of a net loss of 390 billion yen (\$3.4

billion) in the fiscal year to March, dragged by a writedown topping \$6 billion at Westinghouse.

Toshiba also said it opened probe into possible wrongdoing by the unit's senior executives while chairman Shigenori Shiga, who once headed Westinghouse, quit. Citing unnamed sources, Japan's Kyodo news agency has said the unit's executives pressured underlings to understate losses linked to nuclear plant construction.

Less than two years ago, Toshiba, which makes everything from trains to memory chips, suffered an embarrassing profit-padding scandal that involved bosses pressuring subordinates to cover up weak earnings.

Since then it has launched a major restructuring, including selling its medical devices unit and most of its home appliance business. Toshiba is also moving to spin off its prized memory chip arm. —AFP

LACK OF CLARITY ON TRUMP A GROWTH RISK: SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE: Singapore's trade-driven economy rose faster than thought in 2016 but concerns over a "lack of clarity" on US President Donald Trump's policies could hit growth this year, the government said yesterday.

The economy expanded 2.0 percent in 2016, powered by a strong manufacturing sector performance in the fourth quarter, final data from the trade ministry showed. The figures are an improvement on the 1.8 percent expansion recorded in an advance estimate released last month, with growth next year forecast between 1.0-3.0 percent. But the ministry warned that rising protectionism in the West will hurt global growth while the results of upcoming elections in Europe could threaten the future of the eurozone at a time when Britain is on its way to exiting the European Union.

"If protectionist approaches become the norm, global trade will be adversely affected, with knock-on effects on economic growth worldwide," the ministry said. "Political risks and the lack of clarity on the policies of the new US administration have also heightened economic uncertainties globally and led to financial market volatility," it added.

"These uncertainties may in turn weigh on business and consumer confidence, thereby dampening investments and consumption, and causing a pullback in global growth." Asia's export-driven economies are increasingly concerned about growing anti-globalisation sentiment in the West, where globalisation and free-trade deals have been blamed for sending jobs abroad and opening the floodgates to immigrants.

New US president Trump last month pulled out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a major trade deal involving a dozen nations including Singapore that contains market-opening provisions that go well beyond cutting tariffs. The island state is one of Asia's wealthiest countries, but two thirds of its GDP is derived from external demand, making it vulnerable to developments outside the country.

Trump has vowed to pursue an "America first" policy, claiming that his country has been on the losing end of free-trade deals it had signed. Trump has also said he will renegotiate other free-trade arrangements involving the US. — AFP

HOW DO YOU SAY DEJA VU IN GREEK?

LONDON: It seems as if we have been here before: the euro zone fretting that a crisis with Greece will balloon out of all proportion while the government in Athens says it will not impose one euro more in cuts on its austerity-battered public. Cue a euro zone finance ministers meeting in Brussels. There are differences this time from two years ago when a battery of "last chance" meetings over a new bailout brought Greece to the brink of bankruptcy and default - and threatened the euro zone with its first dropout. When the ministers have their regular meeting on Monday there will be little brinkmanship or fear of failure. For one thing, a bailout is already in place - the argument this time is about compliance and future targets in order to get another tranche of money.

Indeed, some euro zone officials have been briefing privately that Greece has enough money to see it through for now, even if it fails to get the next tranche of bailout funds by the July deadline for paying back as much as 7.5 billion euros of debt falling due. But it would not be trite to say that another festering row with Greece is the last thing the euro zone needs when faced with a protectionist U.S. president, Britain leaving the European Union, and anti-euro politicians vying for power or presence in French, Dutch and German elections.

So EU officials have been urging speed in finding agreement and calmly warning of instability ahead if none is found. "There is a common understanding that time lost in reaching an agreement will have a cost for everyone," the European commissioner responsible for the euro, Valdis Dombrovskis, told Greek news portal Euro2day.

The issue, however, is multi-layered and thus particularly complex. Part of it is about what kind of primary surplus - what is left in a surplus budget before debt obligations - Greece must reach and run for some time. The bailout, signed by Greece and euro zone lenders, says 3.5 percent of gross domestic product (which would be by far the highest in the euro zone). The International Monetary Fund, the other major lender, says that is undoable without further Greek belt-tightening.

It says 1.5 percent of GDP and some form of debt relaxation for example, over what is paid when - would be more realistic and sustainable. The IMF, furthermore, says it won't participate in any bailout that it does not believe to be viable. Germany and others say that the IMF must be a part of the bailout or there is no deal.

Both lenders have told Greece they want about 3.6 billion euros in additional savings, including a reduction in the tax-free income threshold, now at about 8,600 euros per person per year, a number the IMF maintains lets some 56 percent of wage-earning Greeks escape paying income tax. Greece says no. Its economy contracted again in the fourth quarter of 2016, nearly one in four Greeks is unemployed and its pensioners have already seen 11 cuts to income. So plenty of scope for crisis - if not quite yet.

Growth mode

This old-but-new pressure comes as the euro zone's overall economy is beginning to pick up. How sustainable it is, however, may be seen on Tuesday when research firm Markit releases its flash - or preliminary - purchasing manager indexes for the euro zone, France, and Germany, as well as for the United States.

Reuters polls suggest that the composite indexes - which test the views of manufacturing and services businesses and correlate closely with economic growth - will be down for Germany and France, if still in growth mode. The euro zone index is expected to be flat, held up presumably by member countries where there is no flash report, such as Spain. The US manufacturing index, in the meantime, is expected to dip slightly. This all points to an easing off of growth - but not one that necessarily presages trouble ahead. EU-quitter Britain, meanwhile, is not so blessed. It is doing well, but has just had the first signs of Brexit economic trouble. Consumers in January were hit by rising inflation and factory input prices rose 20.5 percent to their highest since 2008.

A report by the Confederation of British Industry, due on Monday, may show whether any of it has spilled over into industrial orders - although the weaker pound should help exports and offset any UK slowdown. Slightly off the beaten path, meanwhile, is Israel, which has shown some surprising recovery. — Reuters



LERWICK: Birds circle above fishing boats and trawlers as they sit moored at Lerwick Harbour. — AFP

SHETLANDS FISHERMEN LOOK FORWARD TO BREXIT FUTURE

A SEA OF CHANGE AWAITS PRO-BREXIT FISHERIES

LERWICK: In the fishing ports of the remote Shetland Islands off northern Scotland, hopes are high that Brexit could boost a once-thriving industry. George Anderson, 59, skipper of the 70-metre trawler Adenia, told AFP that Brexit was a "no brainer" for Shetland fishermen. "We only had one choice, which was to get back control," he said, staring out on windy Lerwick harbor from his high-tech captain's chair.

The islands' two fishing ports, Lerwick to the east and Scalloway to the west, are often swept by strong winds that whip up majestic waves. "The weather? Well, the weather manages you more or less," Anderson chuckled in a broad Shetland accent. "It's a good job. Unless you're a fisherman you wouldn't know it's going out hunting fish, catching them, taking them back and providing for your family. The drawbacks are the limited quotas. The government has given away a lot of fish." In the Adenia's crew quarters, a "Fishing For Leave" poster used in the Brexit referendum campaign last year takes pride of place.

'Just a few boats left'

The Shetlands, along with Scotland's Western Isles, were the only part of the United Kingdom that voted against joining what was then the European Economic Community in a 1975 referendum. Soon after Britain joined the EEC in 1973, Shetland fishermen found themselves hit with a double whammy of European integration and oil. While the

burgeoning oil industry was a boon for the islands as a whole, it drained manpower from a fleet just as it was being compelled to share its waters with a growing number of European nations. Overfishing led to depleted stocks and decommissioning of vessels, and subsequent quotas often saw Shetlanders sidelined in their own waters.

"It was terrible to watch the decommissioning. Good boats gone, experienced guys giving up the fishing, that was it-gone," said Anderson, whose three sons work on the Adenia as mate, cook and engineer. "There's just a few boats left now," he said. "We had a good proud fleet once upon a time, and now we hope we'll maybe get some of that back."

Anderson, whose grandfather was also a fisherman, remembers that of the five boys in his class at school, all went into fishing. Gary Leask, 38, skipper of the Kestrel, a 14-metre shellfish boat, comes from a younger generation who had a choice between fishing and oil. "When the oil came it was guaranteed money and good wages, while the fishing is dependent on weather and fish stocks," he said. When he left school, Leask said 30 boys went on to study fishing, but only three were still employed in the industry. "The others went into the oil or other industries, which is a shame," he said.

'Our big fear'

The small island grouping lies deep

in the North Atlantic, and is closer to Oslo than London. A fifth of the Shetlands' workforce is employed in aquaculture, which generates a third of the islands' economy. Despite their initial skepticism about the European project, 56 percent of Shetlanders voted to remain in the European Union in the June 23, 2016 referendum.

Scotland as a whole voted to stay in the EU, with 62 percent of votes cast there opposing Brexit, while Britain opted to leave by 52 percent to 48 percent. There is still burning resentment here over a memo written during Britain's negotiations to join the EEC-revealed 30 years later-which said that fisheries "must be regarded as expendable".

Fishermen worry they could be in for the same treatment as Prime Minister Theresa May prepares to begin negotiations to leave the EU. "That is our big fear," said Simon Collins, executive officer at the Shetland Fishermen's Association. "That wound is still open," he said. Fergus Ewing, Scotland's Rural Affairs Secretary, warned that the British government might try to trade away access to British fishing waters to other countries as part of Brexit negotiations. "We believe that we should have an independent Scottish government that stands up for fishermen and fishing interests," he said. But a UK government spokesperson responded by saying that leaving the EU was "a real opportunity" to ensure fair quotas and sustainable stocks. — AFP



HAMPTON CORNERS: In this Jan 27, 2017 photo, American Rock Salt Co. loaders work a road salt pile at the mine. — AP

SALT OF THE EARTH: ROAD SALT MINERS CHIP AWAY AT WINTER

‘WE LIVE AND DIE BY THE WEATHER’

HAMPTON CORNERS: Deep below upstate New York’s farm country, workers in ghostly tunnels are praying for snow. Fiercer winters mean better business, longer hours and fatter paychecks at what’s billed as the nation’s most productive salt mine, which ships trainloads of snow-melting road salt to municipalities across the Northeast. And when the snow keeps falling and supplies run low, miners have to step up production to meet demand in real time.

“We live and die by the weather,” said Joe Buccì Jr, environmental manager for American Rock Salt Co., which mines a sprawling seam of salt south of Rochester that was left from a sea that dried up 400 million years ago. That deposit is accessible today by a cage elevator that descends more than 1,200 feet, about as deep as the Empire State Building is high. Miners drive through a vast grid of tunnels to blast out and haul crystals that glimmer in their headlamps.

No matter the season, the temperature in the mine remains 60 degrees. Salt lingers in the air, and miners swear it does wonders for their sinuses. “I’ve always considered it coming down to a health spa every day,” miner John Goho said with a smile. But salt mining is a serious, sometimes dangerous business, practiced in this western New York countryside since the days of mules and pickaxes more than a century ago.

Room-and-pillar approach

America produces up to 4.3 million tons of salt a year, though it hoisted less last year because of the mild winter. Despite a big storm in the Northeast last week, this year has so far been a mixed bag for snow. But there is still time left and much at stake for the mine’s 350 workers, who can earn more than \$80,000 with overtime in a busy winter.

They remove the deposits with a room-and-pillar approach: using explosive blasts to loosen the salt, while leaving pillars of salt in place to support the overhead layers. Loaders scoop up the blasted salt, some in chunks as big as file cabinets, into a rock-crushing maw and then onto miles of conveyor belts. Machines then crush it further into crystals that are too impure for use as food, but perfect for spreading on icy and snowy roads.

“Our salt, you wouldn’t want to put it on your french fries,” Buccì joked as he steered a utility vehicle along a long corridor. Buccì has salt in his blood. His great-grandfather drove mules as an early salt miner in the area. Buccì’s father, Joe Buccì Sr., negotiated mineral rights for the old mine nearby and in 1997 co-founded the current mine company. It was a time when the local industry hit rock bottom. The old mine had been flooded by a cave-in a few years earlier, and the Dutch conglomerate that ran it abandoned plans to start a new mine nearby. Buccì stepped in to start the current mine with three other investors.

The elder Buccì says he wanted to keep mining alive in the area, a sentiment he held to even though his father was among four men killed in a 1975 mine explosion. Aside from milder winters, the biggest challenge for the industry now is cheap salt shipped from overseas, from countries such as Chile. But operators at American Rock Salt are confident enough in the mine to seek expansion. They want to add a third belt line that could be relied on at those times when one of the existing two goes down. It also could add another 10 years to the mine’s life. “This mine will be here 40 years from now, for sure,” said the elder Buccì. “Maybe 50 years, maybe longer.” — AP

TRADE SHOW LEAVING UTAH OVER PUBLIC LANDS STANCE

SALT LAKE CITY: A lucrative outdoor trade show that’s been staged in Salt Lake City for two decades announced Thursday it will be leaving Utah over the latest disagreement with state leaders about their stance on public lands. The Outdoor Retailer show made the announcement just hours after a conference call intended to smooth discord between industry leaders and Gov. Gary Herbert ended with both sides disappointed.

Herbert’s office called it offensive that the show won’t even let Utah bid for future shows after so many years of support. Utah’s Democratic chairman meanwhile blamed the state’s GOP’s “far-right agenda” for costing the state the \$45 million in direct spending the show brings annually. Industry leaders had previously threatened to leave Utah if Herbert didn’t stand down from his call for US President Donald Trump to rescind the new Bears Ears National Monument. He refused to grant them their request in the conference call, triggering the decision.

“We really can’t stand by this action,” said Rose Marcario, Patagonia CEO. “As an industry, we’re all about defending public lands.” Marcario was joined on the hourlong call by leaders from The North Face, REI and the Outdoor Industry Association.

The Bears Ears stance by Herbert and other Republican leaders was the culmination of years of actions that showed the state is more interested in seizing control of its public lands than preserving them for hiking, biking and skiing, said Amy Roberts, Outdoor Industry Association executive director. “Our members have made it very clear they won’t support the show in Utah,” Roberts said.

The Outdoor Retailer show thanked Salt Lake City for its hospitality over the past two decades in the statement but said, “we are in lockstep with the outdoor community.” They said Utah would not be considered in the bids from Utah for future shows. The organization said earlier this month it would solicit bids for new host cities after three more shows in Utah through 2018, but spokeswoman Kate Lowery said Thursday they are reconsidering locations of shows this year.

Political agenda

Gov Herbert’s spokesman, Paul Edwards, said not letting Salt Lake City even put in a bid for future shows is “offensive on many levels.” “It suggests that the political agenda instead of merit and reason has taken over the decision making at the outdoor industry association,” Edwards said. Gov Herbert said earlier in the day prior to the call that show organizers should remember that it’s been a “blessing” for them to have Salt Lake City as a host for the last two decades and it’s helped the expo grow significantly.

The event has grown from 5,000 people at the first show in 1996 to about 29,000 last summer. It attracts an estimated \$45 million in annual direct spending to Utah, filling hotels and restaurants during the two shows held each year.

Scott Beck, president and CEO of Visit Salt Lake, called it a disappointing end to a 20-year partnership between Utah and the show. He said he had hoped the conference call would lead to constructive dialogue.

“It’s hard. We feel we’ve been a really, really good partner,” Beck said. House Speaker Greg Hughes, a Republican who co-sponsored the resolution calling for the monument to be rescinded, said he has no regrets. “If we don’t see eye to eye politically and that has colored their decision, that’s their decision to make,” Hughes said. — AP



SALT LAKE CITY: In this Jan 11, 2017, file photo, people attend the Outdoor Retailer show at the Salt Palace Convention Center. — AP

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On the road with Bangladesh's female rickshaw wallah

A model presents a creation from Agatha Ruiz de la Prada's Autumn/Winter 2017-2018 collection during the Mercedes-Benz Madrid Fashion Week in Madrid yesterday. — AFP

SEE PAGE 25

Rocker **El Khatib** frees style and explores identity

Craving a new outlet despite his growing success, the indie rocker Hanni El Khatib took his cues from a perhaps unexpected source—the rap world. The garage rocker, who has worked with hip-hop stars including Freddie Gibbs, became transfixed by the phenomenon of mix tapes—song collections which some rappers release at a dizzying pace but don't consider albums. "Rappers do it every day, so why can't I do it? Why do rock bands have to be confined to this whole album and touring thing?" El Khatib asked. The result is the 19-track "Savage Times."

In commercial terms, it may mean little that El Khatib thinks of it as a mix tape, or that he has taken to calling it his fourth album. "Savage Times" heads in more adventurous musical directions, with El Khatib mostly staying true to his bluesy guitar rock but also dabbling in electronic effects, pop and, yes, hip-hop. "Savage Times" also brings out the most upfront statements on personal identity by El Khatib, a first-generation American born to a Palestinian father and Filipina mother. "This project was the most liberating thing musically I've ever made because I removed the album stigma," El Khatib said at a beerhouse in Los Angeles.

"Usually when I'm making a record, I'll think that there has to be a blend of songs and that they have to be cohesive sonically, or otherwise people won't think it's an album," he said. "That wasn't the point. The point was to make it an exercise in production what can I do as a producer and as a musician?" he said. "Savage Times" comes out Friday around the world except in France, where El Khatib has enjoyed a particularly strong fan base and it will be released March 3.

I was born brown

El Khatib's career has rarely touched on his ethnicity. He entered music from the fashion world, where he remains a designer at skateboarder label HUF in his native San Francisco. That changes on "Savage Times." The track "Born Brown" builds off psychedelic loops as El Khatib shouts with punk ferocity about his immigrant heritage, ending with the lines, "I was born brown-born brown!" On "Mangoes and Rice," with an indie swagger reminiscent of Sonic Youth or the Pixies, El Khatib affectionately remembers food his mother made for him.

El Khatib, who at an album release party in Los Angeles dedicated a song to immigrants, did not dispute that President Donald Trump's election may have awoken his consciousness. With an identifiably Arab name, he said he often encounters misperceptions with uninitiated listeners categorizing him as world music or thinking Hanni El Khatib is an invented band name. But El Khatib insisted he was not pushing a political agenda.



This file photo shows singer Hanni El Khatib performing at the Vieilles Charrues Festival in Carhaix-Plouguer, western France. — AFP

Freedom with own label

"By all means, I'm not trying to be an outspoken political artist, mostly because I don't feel that it's my place to do that," he said. "I can only speak from my experience—what I've been through and how I feel and how I get treated just because of my name," he said. El Khatib doubted that many people were looking to him for political cues but said, "I do have a platform over the guy working at the coffee shop."

"And that guy at the coffee shop isn't going to be asked six months later by a journalist about his Twitter." El Khatib toured almost all of 2015 to promote his last album, "Moonlight," but his shows came to an abrupt end when the Bataclan attack forced a cancellation in Paris. He said he had already felt that his touring was getting stale and wanted to head back into the studio. Before compiling "Savage Times," El Khatib started putting out the songs for free—an approach that he said initially unnerved his associates.

But El Khatib co-owns his own label, Innovative Leisure, handling detail down to designing art for album covers. "The beauty of the modern landscape of the music industry is that it is in a kind of disarray. People are playing by their own rules," he said. "I thought, I'm cutting out the middlemen anyway. So who do I have to answer to?"—AFP

Sara Bareilles to soon star in her Broadway show Waitress



In this file photo, musician Sara Bareilles poses for a portrait in New York. — AP

Sara Bareilles' songwriting skills are all over the new Broadway musical "Waitress" - and soon she will be, too. The singer-songwriter of "Brave" and "Love Song" will make her Broadway acting debut on March 31 in the lead role of Jenna Hunterson. She'll be in the show for 10 weeks until June 11. The musical tells the story of a waitress and pie maker trapped in a small-town diner and a loveless marriage. It's adapted from a 2007 film starring Keri Russell.

Bareilles will take over from Jessie Mueller, who won the best leading actress Tony Award for playing Carole King in the musical "Beautiful." Bareilles has already released her versions of the musical's songs in "What's Inside: Songs from Waitress," including the standout single "She Used to Be Mine." She joins other composers who have gone into their own Broadway shows, including Sting in "The Last Ship" and Green Day's frontman Billie Joe Armstrong, who made several onstage visits to his show "American Idiot."—AP

Arte Povera's Jannis Kounellis dies aged 80



Greek-Italian artist Jannis Kounellis, a major figure of the Arte Povera movement, has died in Rome aged 80, Italy's culture ministry said yesterday. Born in Piraeus in 1936, he moved to Rome at the age of 20 to study at the Academy of Fine Arts, and made his name with a 1969 exhibition where he put on show 12 live horses in the city's Attic Gallery. "It is a sad day, Kounellis has left us. A master, Italian by adoption, who left a mark on contemporary art," Italy's Culture Minister Dario Franceschini said in a tweet.

Kounellis worked often with "poor" materials—coal, jute bags, steel, piles of stones—and was admired for his challenge to Pop Art and the American hegemony of the 1960s. He was invited to hold solo exhibitions across the world, with works ranging from cuts of hung meat to cages of rats, and using materials such as propane torches, smoke, ground coffee, lead, and recycled wooden objects.

Arte Povera—a radical movement that challenged the status quo—was started in the 1960s during a period of social upheaval in Italy. Dubbed "poor art" to signify its anti-elitist protest against consumerism, it placed Italy in the vanguard of the international art scene. —AFP

Keith Urban leads country nominations after Pitbull rap

Keith Urban led nominations in the Academy of Country Music Awards on Thursday after releasing an experimental album that featured the rapper Pitbull. The country music veteran was nominated for seven awards, including in the top categories of Album of the Year and Entertainer of the Year. Winners will be announced April 2 at a gala in Las Vegas. "Ripcord," his latest album, veers outside country formulas with the song "Sun Don't Let Me Down," featuring Pitbull as well as guitar by Nile Rodgers of Chic fame.

Urban said he approached Pitbull about the song after hearing the Cuban-American rapper on the radio. "On that particular day, I heard his voice and I was like, 'Oh my gosh. That is the voice that needs to be on 'Sun Don't Let Me Down,'" Urban told the site Taste of Country. Urban—who was born in New Zealand, raised in Australia and now lives in the United States—is best known outside the country music world as the husband of Hollywood superstar Nicole Kidman. Another top name in country music, Miranda Lambert, was tied for six nominations with newcomer Maren Morris. Morris was also nominated as Best New Artist at the Grammy Awards amid the popularity of "My Church," a pop-tinged country song that likens cruising to the radio to a religious experience. The Academy of Country Music Awards is one of two top honors in the genre along with the Country Music Association Awards. —AFP



This file photo shows actress Nicole Kidman and musician Keith Urban arriving for the 23rd Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at the Shrine Exposition Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP



A general view shows graffiti by French artist Seth known as The Globepainter on 2nd of December street, which is part of the government-funded Dubai Street Museum project in Dubai. — AFP photos



A picture shows graffiti by Emirati artist Ashwaq Abdullah on the wall of a building on Dubai's 2nd of December street, which is part of the government-funded Dubai Street Museum project.

DUBAI STREET ART TURNS URBAN SPRAWL INTO OPEN-AIR MUSEUM

The streets of Dubai may be known for architectural superlatives like Burj Khalifa, the highest of the world's high-rises, and the Middle East's largest shopping centre Dubai Mall. But a group of street artists now also wants to turn the concrete walls of a fast-growing urban sprawl into an open-air museum that celebrates Emirati heritage and speaks to everyone in the multicultural city. From poetry painted in intricate Arabic calligraphy to a portrait of an old man rowing a wooden boat, the art of the government-funded Dubai Street Museum is bringing new life to the city.

The project features the work of 16 mural and graffiti artists of different genres and nationalities, including four Emiratis. They include Malaysian-based Lithuanian artist Ernest Zacharevic—who has been likened to British graffiti artist Banksy—and Tunisian street artist The Inkman. Each brings their own interpretation of a curated theme—"The Past"—to the 2nd December Street in the heart of Satwa, one of the older quarters of Dubai.

"Dubai has everything, from finance to tourism," says project director Shaima Al-Soueidi. "Tourists can see our history at the museums. But we want everyone to be able to see that history everywhere, even in the streets." Urban art is a growing trend in the Middle East, a region dotted with cities carrying complex—and frequently crisis-ridden—histories. But while graffiti in older cities like Tunis and Beirut often acts as a form of resistance against contemporary politics, the art form takes on a more conciliatory tone in Dubai.

Hope it spills over

Satwa, originally home to Emirati bedouins, is today a working-class neighborhood largely inhabited by laborers from the Philippines. Known locally as "mini Manila", Satwa is a bustling residential area dotted with late-night restaurants and shops selling everything from car parts to Chantilly lace. Satwa's unique social makeup caught the eye of those behind the Dubai Street Museum, who hope to see the project spread further across the city. "We were on the hunt for a way to turn Dubai into an open(-air) museum," Al-Soueidi explains.

"Because of its history and its position in



A picture shows graffiti by Malaysian-based Lithuanian artist Ernest Zacharevic on a wall of Dubai's 2nd of December street, which is part of the government-funded Dubai Street Museum project.

the city, we landed on the 2nd of December Street as the ideal site." The first mural in the neighborhood is that of a man in his abra, a narrow boat carved out of wood traditionally used for travel and trade across the Dubai Creek. Further down the street, an image of the national white-and-gold falcon stands three storeys high, while a building facade is covered in white, red and green patterns that echo the weave in traditional garments.

Emirati muralist Ashwaq Abdullah is among the artists to bring their vision to the walls and parking lots of Dubai. Her own mural pays homage to founders of the United Arab Emirates, sheikhs Rashed Al Maktoum and Zayed Al Nahyan. "Mural art speaks to everyone in all segments of society and it generally focuses on the past, the heritage, of the place," Abdullah explains. "For me this is a chance to express my love for my country," she adds. "The hope is that it spills over into streets all across Dubai." — AFP



A picture shows graffiti by Norwegian street artist Martin Whatson on Dubai's 2nd of December street, which is part of the government-funded Dubai Street Museum project.



A statue of late Colombian writer, journalist and Nobel Prize for Literature 1982 Gabriel Garcia Marquez is unveiled in Havana. — AFP photo

Gabriel Garcia Marquez statue unveiled in Cuba

A life-size bronze sculpture of the Colombian Nobel laureate Gabriel Garcia Marquez was unveiled Thursday in Havana, an homage to the writer and to Cuba for its support of the peace accord with leftist FARC rebels. The sculpture portrays the writer holding books and a rose, dressed in the traditional suit known as a liqui liqui that he wore to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1982.

"We want to pay homage to Gabo who is so intimately linked to Havana, the Caribbean and Cuba," Colombian ambassador to Cuba Gustavo Bell said, using a nickname for the late author. This "is a tribute, a show of gratitude from the Colombian people to the Cuban people for accompanying us

in the peace process," Bell said. Havana hosted four years of peace talks between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, known by the Spanish acronym FARC. Garcia Marquez, who died in 2014, was a personal friend of deceased Cuban leader Fidel Castro and lived in Havana for a period in the 1980s. The statue stands 1.80 meters tall and is a "living sculpture" that shows Garcia Marquez descending a staircase. The statue was created by Cuban sculptor Jose Villa Soberon, whose other works around the city include life-size renderings of the Beatle John Lennon and Mother Teresa. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the publication of the famous writer's "100 Years of Solitude."—AFP



In this photo, Wellesley College students Hannah Augst, of Richmond, Virginia, left, and Some Louis, of Charlottesville, Virginia, right, use a black shroud to cover a display case containing donated African art objects at the Davis Museum at Wellesley College, in Wellesley, Massachusetts. — AP

Museum removes artwork produced by immigrants as protest

A museum at a small liberal arts college in Massachusetts has removed or covered dozens of artwork produced by immigrant artists or donated by foreign-born collectors to illustrate their contribution to the cultural wealth of the United States. The Art-Less project has effectively removed or shrouded 120 works of art, or about 20 percent of artwork on display in the galleries at Wellesley College's Davis Museum.

Museum Director Lisa Fischman says the Art-Less project illustrates the kind of loss that we would feel without the gifts of immigrant artists and immigrant collectors. Museum visitor Audrey Stevens says the project is also a protest that sends a message that contribution from immigrants has made the US the desirable nation it is today.—AP

Comic-Con opens in Saudi: Chance to be free



A visitor poses for a picture with a man disguised as The Joker, during the Saudi Comic Con (SCC) which is the first event of its kind to be held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, yesterday.



Visitors enter Saudi Comic Con (SCC) which is the first event of its kind to be held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, yesterday.



Visitors watch the Turkish made robot Letrons, as it morphs from a car to a giant robot during the Saudi Comic Con (SCC) which is the first event of its kind to be held in Jeddah.

Nobody gave Ahmed al-Dainiy a second glance Thursday as he walked among the youthful crowd on the opening day of Saudi Arabia's first Comic-Con event, wearing a horse head mask. Dainiy, 18, was among thousands of people who filled a recreation centre in the Red Sea city of Jeddah for the international pop culture event which is helping to break stereotypes about the Islamic kingdom.

The three-day festival of anime, pop art, video gaming and film-related events is part of a government initiative to bring more entertainment to Saudi Arabia which bans alcohol, public cinemas and theatre. Unrelated men and women are normally segregated in Saudi Arabia, where restaurants have separate sections for "single" men and families. Comic-Con had different male and female

entrances but inside the darkened hall, where conversation was drowned out by rock music, there was barely room to move, and men and women were side-by-side.

The line to enter stretched for more than 100 meters when the event opened in mid-afternoon. Some young men were dressed in the costumes of their favorite Japanese anime characters but most wore Western clothes. A thobe, the traditional long white Saudi robe, was a rare sight. "You're free here," said Dainiy. "You are yourself." He said he wore the horse head because it is a character on the channel he operates on YouTube, one of the many popular Internet platforms where Saudis live much of their lives to escape from the strictures of a rigid society.

Reyad Ateyah, 22, arrived with the orange hair

of anime character Ichigo Kurosaki and said he welcomed the recognition of this sub-culture. "It's given us a chance, people like us who like cosplays and anime and comics, and movies," he said through a white mask with oversized teeth and red stripes. In contrast, most women at the event wore traditional black robes and head covers. But Mwadah Abdul Aziz, 23, and her colleagues manning a booth, added something new: a cute woolen cap in the shape of a bear. The teams were selling Japanese-style drawings on notebooks and other items that also incorporate Arabic writing.

Family appeal

"Many people in Saudi Arabia like Japanese culture so much, and Korean culture," Abdul Aziz said, calling it "amazing" that Comic-Con is taking place

in her country. "Saudi Arabia now is opening," the smiling young woman said. Comic-Con began in 1970 as a convention of a few dozen geeks who swapped superhero magazines in the United States. The event has grown in size and spread around the world, including to Saudi Arabia's Gulf neighbor Dubai.

Iron Man, Captain America and other members of the Avengers, from Hollywood's Marvel studio, took to the Comic-Con stage in Jeddah, which is considered a more liberal city than the capital Riyadh. "Raise your hand if you are bad," one of the Avengers asked the audience, provoking enthusiastic hoots. The government's General Entertainment Authority has said it supports the event, organized by Saudi firm Time Entertainment, because of Comic-Con's "strong family appeal."

On the road with Bangladesh's female rickshaw wallah



Bangladesh's lone female rickshaw puller Mosammat Jasmine poses on her battery-run rickshaw in Chittagong city. — AFP photo

As Bangladesh's only known woman rickshaw wallah, Mosammat Jasmine may be a feminist icon but to the passengers she cycles around the streets of Chittagong, she is known as "Crazy Auntie". "I do it to make sure my sons don't go hungry and they get a decent education at a good school," says the mother of three as she takes a break at Chittagong bus station. "Allah has given me a pair of hands and legs to work with. I don't beg—instead I earn a living by using his gifts," she adds.

Muslim-majority Bangladesh is one of Asia's most conservative societies where the concept of a woman doing such a job had been unheard of before Jasmine hit the road five years ago. Left to fend for three young children when her husband ran off with another woman, Jasmine initially tried her hand at being a maid and then working in one of Bangladesh's garment factories but found neither job suited her. "A maid's job is good if you only have to worry about yourself but not if you've got children. And the factory work is really back-breaking and the pay is really poor," the 45-year-old explains.

Struggling to make ends meet and determined to pay for her children's education, she decided on her radical career change when a neighbor who owned a rickshaw offered to lend it to her for a few days. Working out how to navigate the streets of Bangladesh's second city was the easy part although she did find it painful at times to peddle her brightly-colored tricycle up some of its hilly neighborhoods. But finding willing passengers proved a stiffer challenge. "Initially, many simply refused to get on board and some taunted me, saying I was doing a man's job," she recalls.

"Others told me that Islam does not permit a woman to roam around like this while there were some who refused to pay me the same fare as a male driver," Jasmine says, before adding: "I stuck to my guns as who else pays my bills, who is else is going to cover the cost of educating my sons?" On average she earns 600 taka (\$8) a day for an eight hour shift on the rickshaw, part of which she pays as rent to the rickshaw owner. She works seven days a week. Now a familiar sight on the streets of the bustling port city, she has won the respect of her colleagues. As she parked up by the bus station, she exchanged smiles and greetings with around a dozen male drivers.

Overwhelming courage

Since switching last year to a battery-run electric rickshaw, the work has become a little less arduous but she is still an inspiration to many. "Jasmine is unique. She is the only female rickshaw-puller among all of Bangladesh's 160-million populations. It is overwhelming to see her courage," local rights activist Suzana Salim said. The traffic police applaud her good road sense and for always wearing a helmet—unlike her male counterparts. And even some with religious authority have started praising her.

"She is a good example to society given that many girls who fall on hard times turn to prostitution or drugs," said Nurul Alam Azmiri, the imam at a local mosque. "She has a vision for her kids, which is commendable." Young people are particularly keen to flag her down, drawn in part by the loud music that blares from the speakers on "Pagli Khala's" (the Crazy Auntie's) vehicle. Despite the growing acceptance, Jasmine—who is a practicing Muslim—says she still faces taunts by people who question her faith. "I don't listen to them," she said. "My sons need their education and so I'll do my best to ensure that for as long as I live." — AFP



This picture shows a Pa Then ethnic dancer removing burning ashes during a fire dance at a local spring festival in Lam Binh district, northern province of Tuyen Quang.

Playing with fire: Exorcising demons in Vietnam

Deep in a trance and impervious to the heat of burning coals underfoot, lithe young men prance across piles of glowing embers at a ritual fire dance to exorcise spiritual demons and pray for a healthy harvest. Once dismissed as superstitious and banned by Vietnam's communist authorities, the fire dance is now performed publicly by the Pa Then ethnic minority after decades when they celebrated in the woods in secret. "Everyone here is so excited to see it," said first-time observer Hua Manh Linh, who joined hundreds to watch the hours-long nighttime ritual by the animist Pa Then people in northern Tuyen Quang province.

The evening starts with an offering to the gods: a whole boiled hog atop a platter of its own intestines. Logs are stacked in a two-metre tall tower ready to be lit nearby. The shaman leading the ceremony taps a traditional string instrument to invoke spirits. Soon the dancers are possessed: their eyes glaze over, their bodies jerk around, and they say the spirits shield them from the hot coals they are about to leap onto.

"It feels like jumping into a bath, and when the priest asks us to stop, we stop, otherwise we'll get burned," said Ho Van Truong, who has danced in the past, though not this year because he said

couldn't invoke any spirits. For him, the ceremony is a proud display of Pa Then culture, defined by a belief that everything in the universe possesses a soul.

The dance was driven underground in the 1960s and 1970s as communist authorities cracked down on so-called superstitious rituals, according to historian Nguyen Van Huy. But since the country started opening up in the late 1980s and gradually eased religious restrictions, the ritual crept back into public life. Today it is listed as intangible cultural heritage by the government, and performed at museums and ethnic minority festivals. But Huy warns that turning the dance into a public spectacle risks cheapening its sanctity.

"(It's) now getting more popular, and is performed more and more, so I worry about its sacred value, whether it will be preserved or lost in time," said Huy, author of "Cultural Mosaic of Ethnic Groups in Vietnam". Pa Then shaman Sin Van Phong says his concern is that younger generations, perhaps more rapt with mobile phone apps than centuries-old rituals, will let the fire dance fade. "The biggest challenge is passing the job on to younger generations, young people don't want to learn about the ceremony now," he said. —AFP



This picture shows relatives of Pa Then ethnic minority fire dancers waiting for the start of the dance during a local spring festival in Lam Binh district, northern province of Tuyen Quang. — AFP photos

Producers can't keep politics from edging into Oscar show

Meryl Streep ushered politics into Hollywood's awards season when she used her Golden Globes acceptance speech to condemn US President Donald Trump for what she called his "instinct to humiliate." Stars were even more outspoken at the Screen Actors Guild Awards, held just days after Trump's travel ban caused havoc at airports across the country. Even last week's performance-heavy Grammy Awards had a political edge when members of A Tribe Called Quest raised their fists and Q-Tip repeated a call to "Resist."

The Feb 26 Academy Awards are the final stop of the industry's annual two months of self-adulation, and while show producers aren't planning any political content, the night's winners might be.



This file image released by NBC shows Meryl Streep accepting the Cecil B. DeMille Award at the 74th Annual Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California. — AP

As much as first-time Oscar telecast producers Michael De Luca and Jennifer Todd may want their show to focus on the magic of the movies, they say they support any message spoken from the heart, even if it means turning the Oscar podium into a political pulpit.

"The show has to stand behind the free exchange of ideas," De Luca said in a recent interview. "I do believe a little bit in the famous Sam Goldwyn quote about movies: 'If you want to send a message, call Western Union.' And there's a school of thought that says people are tuning in to celebrate the storytelling that's moved them, and should we limit what we say to a celebration of that?"

But Oscar-caliber artists "are the kind of people that do get moved by the environment and the world they live in," De Luca said, and they may want to use their moment on stage "to share

those feelings the same way you shared the story that you're being nominated for, and we want to honor that, too." Given the tone set by celebrities at other awards shows this season - and on social media since the election - some anti-Trump rhetoric at the Oscars wouldn't be surprising.

Protest

The show already has a political element: The Iranian director and star of foreign language film nominee "The Salesman" have said they will not attend the ceremony in protest of Trump's travel ban. Film academy president Cheryl Boone Isaacs was clear at the annual nominees' luncheon last week that the organization supports artists and freedom of expression. "Each and every one of us knows that there are some empty chairs in this room, which has made academy artists activists," she said. "There is a struggle globally today over artistic freedom that feels more urgent than at any time since the 1950s."

Oscar host Jimmy Kimmel hasn't given much hint of his approach for the show. Winners are free to use their allotted 45 seconds of speaking time as they please. "I hope that the Oscar speeches, whatever they are, are just well said," co-producer Todd said. "I loved when Patricia Arquette talked about fair pay (when accepting the supporting actress Oscar in 2015). She did a beautiful job and she spoke from her heart. So I just think that as long as you're going to do it, do it well." Passionate expressions also make for compelling television, De Luca added.

"Those feelings can create moments for the telecast that are really memorable," he said. "And spontaneity is our friend. Anything that's not scripted, that's natural and from the heart, is a good thing for the telecast." And if viewers who disagree with the politics decide to tune out? "We're of a mind of: Let people be the people they are and not worry about the public reaction," De Luca said. Oscar nominees and guests say they expect politics to have a presence at the 89th Academy Awards.

"I suppose each Oscar show represents its time on some level," said Viggo Mortensen, nominated for lead actor for "Captain Fantastic." "I think the Trump White House so far is not about being, let's say, completely honest and above board. It's not really about intellectual curiosity. It's not about listening to people who think differently. It's about, to some degree, shutting people up who you don't like or who don't agree with you, and I think the Oscars will probably be the opposite of that."—AP



This file photo shows reindeer standing in a holding pen at a farm in Lovozero. — AFP

Arctic cultures take climate fight to Berlin film fest

They are fighting to preserve their ancient lifestyles and the very ground under their feet as the Arctic ice cap shrinks and the tundra's permafrost slowly turns to mush. Polar circle film-makers at this year's Berlin Film Festival are taking a cold, hard look at the plight of the indigenous people on the frontlines of climate change. In a top-down view of the planet, the NATIVE showcase features films from the icy northern latitudes of Scandinavia, Siberia, Alaska, Canada, Iceland and Greenland.

The common theme is the twin threat faced by native peoples who have traditionally herded reindeer or caribou, or hunted seals and whales, before nation-states put them into permanent towns and their children into residential schools. In the historical documentary "Kaisa's Enchanted Forest," director Katja Gauriloff tells the story of her late great-grandmother Kaisa, a weathered matriarch of Finland's Skolt Sami minority. Using old black-and-white footage, it portrays the simple life of the semi-nomadic Sami in summer lakeside cabins and winter block huts, their children riding reindeer and skating on frozen lakes.

Kaisa shares her folk wisdom and magical tales—she uses white bird feathers to sweep her hut because, she says, evil spirits mistake them for an angel's wing. The tale darkens when World War II destroys the Sami's ancestral homes and forces them into camps where disease takes a heavy toll. They later move to a permanent settlement, their lives from now shaped by assimilation into Finland. Gauriloff said that today her community counts just a few hundred people, adding that "the reason I don't speak my mother tongue is there on the screen".

Tundra teddy bears

Another loving depiction of a vanishing way of life close to nature is "The Tundra Book. A Tale of Vukvukai-The Little Rock". It is an intimate portrait of the 78-year-old Vukvukai and his clan in Siberia's Chukchi community, which lives far north of the tree line. Viewers are invited into his clan's heavy-skinned yurts as icy winds howl outside, and watch as herders corral, lasso and wrestle down reindeer for slaughter, offering their thanks to the creator. The audience laughs as children in furry overalls tumble through the snow, resembling teddy bears.

Then, in the chapter "Steel Bird Takes the Kids Away", a helicopter carries the children off to a Russian state residential school where they spend 10 months of the

year. "Women give birth to people just to throw them away," says a distraught Vukvukai, knowing his language and way of life are disappearing. "How will we survive?" Director Aleksei Vakhrushev said that one of Vukvukai's sons went on to work as a gold miner, got drunk one day, lit a cigarette near a petrol canister and died in the explosion.

Mammoth bones

The other common threat for the polar circle communities is melting sea ice and the thawing of the permafrost that covers a quarter of the northern hemisphere. Scientists say this will release huge amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, in turn accelerating global warming. But for local indigenous people, warming is already an existential threat, said Vyacheslav Shadrin, chief of the Council of Yukaghir Elders in Siberia's Yakutia region. "A change of two or three degrees may not seem so big when it's minus 40," he said at a panel talk during the Berlinale festival.

"But a really big problem is weather instability. Hunting, fishing, reindeer herding all depend on our ability to predict the weather and animal behavior," he continued. "Now our elders say nature doesn't trust us anymore." He said that last winter, unseasonably early snowfalls blanketed lakes before the ice was thick enough to support vehicles-leaving remote villages cut off for months, short of food and fuel supplies. Riverside villages now face "catastrophic floods" and heavy erosion almost every year as a result of warmer, wetter weather and increased snow melt.

"Last year it didn't happen," Shadrin said. "That was like a gift from the gods." On the ocean front, once covered by sea ice, waves now crash into an already destabilized coastline, Torsten Sachs of the German Research Centre for Geosciences said at the same event. Sachs, who works in Siberia, Alaska and Canada, said the thaw was also causing the sudden draining of tundra lakes, or the appearance of new ones "where they aren't wanted".

Shadrin said the thaw had another effect-making the collecting of ancient mammoth bones "big business", even though this breaks an age-old taboo. Some tribal elders think this is what has caused the climate disaster, Shadrin said. "In our world view the mammoth is the god of the underworld," he said. "If you take the bones, you open the door to the evil spirits from the underworld."—AFP

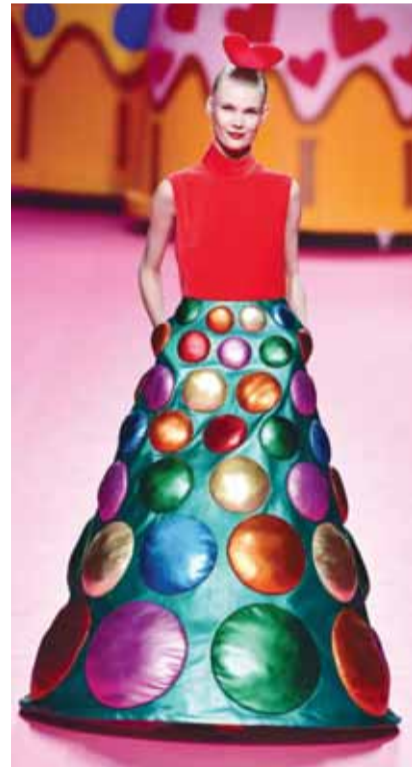


Mercedes-Benz

FASHIONWEEK MADRID



Models present creations from Agatha Ruiz de la Prada's Autumn/Winter 2017-2018 collection during the Mercedes-Benz Madrid Fashion Week in Madrid yesterday. — AFP photos



TOP 10 TRENDS on the NEW YORK CATWALK

New York fashion week wrapped Thursday with designers unable to agree on the season, the future of the runway in jeopardy and anti-Donald Trump political outrage palpable. As the global fashion circus now flits



to Europe with fashion week beginning in London yesterday, before moving onto Milan and Paris, here are the top 10 trends that New York offered this season:

Politics

There was no escaping the specter of Donald Trump, with America's cultural elite upset that Hillary Clinton, much admired in the fashion industry, lost the election and angry over the first chaotic weeks of his presidency. Public School parodied his "Make America Great Again" hats, Mara Hoffman opened with a manifesto from protest organizers and Nepal-raised Prabal Gurung sent models out in protest feminist T-shirts. White bandanas, intended to promote tolerance, were ubiquitous, included in invitations from Calvin Klein and worn by models at Tommy Hilfiger. Many designers distributed buttons in support of Planned Parenthood.

Bigger is beautiful

After years of complaints that stick-thin models do not reflect the average woman, plus-size models took to the catwalk. Ashley Graham-self-proclaimed body activist and the first plus-size model to appear on the cover of *Vogue* walked for Michael Kors, who com-



plained last season that larger models on the catwalk were not possible logistically. Gurung, who has designed a line of clothes for plus-size label Lane Bryant, led the way earlier in the week by sending out Candice Huffine and Marquita Pring. All three wore looks intrinsic to the rest of the collections.

Taboo busters

Breast cancer survivors modeled lingerie or dared to bear all for AnaOno, a label that designs for women who have had mastectomies, breast reconstruction or breast surgery, in a bid to raise awareness for the disease Down's syndrome model from Australia, Madeline Stuart, who has also sought to confound stereotypes in the beauty industry, debuted her own fashion label.

The hijab

Mere weeks after Trump temporarily banned travelers from seven Muslim majority countries, the hijab made a statement this season. Somali-American Halima Aden, 19, walked for Kanye West's Yeezy Season 5, while Indonesia's Anniesa Hasibuan returned for a second consecutive season with a hijab-only show styled with iridescent gowns fit for a princess.

Power dressing

Tory Burch offered a Katharine Hepburn-inspired collection for the powerful woman. Victoria Beckham came into her own with menswear given a sexy, feminine edge with statement boots and flat men's style shoes with a pointy toe.

Diversity

Quintessential American brand Ralph Lauren offered a nomadic-inspired col-

lection, with shimmering gold lame, snake-skin wedge sandals and silky sheaths with billowing trains. Belgian designer Raf Simons made his Calvin Klein debut inspired by the diversity of American culture, from traditional quilting to Art Deco and the wild west. Indian designer Bibhu Mohapatra said his muses were women throughout the world, while Chilean designer Maria Cornejo used models from 16 different countries from Uganda to the Dominican Republic.

Bella Hadid

The model younger sister of Gigi is having a moment. The daughter of Dutch-American model Yolanda Foster and Palestinian American Mohamed Hadid, she wowed on the catwalk from Ralph Lauren to Anna Sui to Oscar de la Renta. The girlfriend of singer The Weeknd also features in a string of lucrative campaign ads for the likes of Bulgari, DKNY and Moschino.

Velvet

Luxurious and warm for fall/winter 2017, velvet was everywhere-velvet boots, velvet track pants and velvet capes at Anna Sui; and gowns at Marchesa. Furs were also prominent, as were capped shoulders or strapless gowns.

New horizons

Marc Jacobs made his models walk the runway in silence and asked guests to refrain from whipping out mobile phones until the last minute. Zac Posen said changing times called for a new approach and threw a photo exhibition to create a conversation. Vera Wang is to release her collection by video and Sophie Theallet commissioned an online photo campaign.

New York losing its touch?

Fashion week was noticeable for its absentees: Tommy Hilfiger went to Los Angeles, as did Rebecca Minkoff. Vera Wang is to release a video at the beginning of Paris fashion week and Rodarte is going to Paris. Next season, Lacoste will stay in France and cutting edge New York label Proenza Schouler is also joining the exodus in moving to Paris. —AFP



London Fashion Week catwalk shows to begin in new location

London Fashion Week is set to kick off with a series of shows that will include Burberry, Versus and other luminaries. The British capital's fashion showcase starts Friday in a new location on the Strand in central London. The shows will include a mix of established designers and newcomers. There is also a broad array of international talent on display at presentations at Somerset House that includes designers from India, Guatemala, Slovakia and other parts of the world. There will be 51 catwalk shows and 31 presentations vying for the attention of an audience of buyers, bloggers, celebrities and fashion fans. The designers showing their creations will include Anya Hindmarch, Christopher Kane, ERDEM, Gareth Pugh, Roksanda and Julien Macdonald.—AP



Exhibition assistant Monique Ricketts puts finishing touches to a display by Egyptian fashion designers at Somerset House in London. — AP photos

Marc Jacobs rewrites runway rules with hip hop finale

Marc Jacobs offered a hip-hop grand finale to New York fashion week on Thursday, rewriting runway etiquette in a phone-centric, celebrity-obsessed world with the future of traditional catwalk shows under threat. One of America's most critically acclaimed living designers sent models down a bare wooden catwalk in silence, striding through the middle of a cavernous room devoid of decoration and empty but for a long line of seated spectators.



Fashion from the latest Marc Jacobs collection is modeled during Fashion Week, in New York.



Kendall Jenner models an outfit from the Marc Jacobs collection during Fashion Week, in New York.

In a break with the usual flash-mob frenzy straining to capture every move on cell phones, guests were kindly asked to refrain from taking pictures. The layout gave an audience of around 300 each in two back-to-back shows a front-row seat on utilitarian fold-out chairs. With no music, the only sound was the thud of models prowling the scuffed wooden floor. Only when they exited the building onto Park Avenue could press photographers record the action as models took their own seats, ready to turn phones onto the guests as they poured outside.

The music-so ubiquitous at fashion shows blared out of loudspeakers as guests and models found themselves in a mobile phone face-off on a bitterly cold February afternoon. Guest of honor Katy Perry, the most popular person on Twitter with 96 million followers, snapped away with other lesser mortals—the commentary on celebrity-obsession as deliberate as it was



Runway Models pose on the runway after the Marc Jacobs collection during New York Fashion Week in New York City.

unsubtle. Jacobs called his collection a "representation of the well-studied dressing up of casual sportswear" and hip hop the foundation of youth, street culture.

Time to rethink

Jacobs' virtuosic skill, which channeled hip hop into instantly recognizable upmarket attire, was mesmerizing, his palette camel, ginger, brown and gold—with hints of red and maroon. Belted coats fell mid-thigh and were paired with short skirts and dresses. There were baggy track-style pants that trailed even chunky platforms. Standouts included pumped up hats that evoked hip-hop style, heavy gold jewelry and a handbag worn round the neck on another chunky chain.



Fashion designer Marc Jacobs, right, walks the runway after showing his collection during Fashion Week in New York.

"This feels like a time to rethink not only what we say but how we say it," Jacobs told Women's Wear Daily, suggesting that people immerse themselves in the live experience of a fashion show much like going to the theater. "It does feel that, in this moment, people pay much more attention to who one's showing on than what one's showing. You know, whether it's the Kendalls or the Gigs," he said of celebrity models Kendall Jenner and Gigi Hadid.

That said, Jenner walked the runway, as did models Winnie Harlow, who has vitiligo, Casil McArthur, who transitioned from being a woman to a man, and Hanne Gaby Odiele who recently revealed she is intersex. New York saw an increasing number of designers question the relevancy of the runway—especially considering the cost of wildly expensive catwalk displays—as the industry moves towards a more see-now, buy-now model, and designers have more options to communicate. For the first time in his 15-year career, Zac Posen instead did an exhibition of photographs showing just five models wearing a capsule collection.

Dialogue

"I love the theatrics of the runway but I think right now it's a different time, for me at least," he told AFP. "I like that you can stand in front of an image and have a conversation about what we're seeing. At a runway show, there's no talk. Fashion and beauty is about dialogue," he added. Sophie Theallet, who made headlines for refusing to dress First Lady Melania Trump to protest against her husband's politics, posted her collection online in a series of photographs. She did private presentations for select press and retailers, but told AFP she wanted to concentrate on making clothes rather than the logistics of a show.

"I like to think there is shift right now," she said. "Independent brands can now communicate their vision directly to their customers," she added. Vera Wang also ditched the catwalk in

favor of a video that will coincide with the start of Paris fashion week. "Probably we will, but maybe in a very different format," she told Women's Wear Daily when asked whether she would return to the schedule in spring. "The calendar is so full now that it's insane to try to get models and hair and makeup. It's a battle royale for everybody."—AFP



Singer Katy Perry takes pictures of models on the runway for the Marc Jacobs collection during New York Fashion Week in New York City. — AFP/AP photos

57% MIDEAST BUSINESSES BELIEVE THEY'LL BE AFFECTED BY CYBERCRIMINALS: MIMICAST REPORT

DUBAI: Mimecast Limited, a leading email and data security company, announced the launch of the Mimecast Email Security Risk Assessment (ESRA), an analysis report measuring the effectiveness of email security systems. This effort highlights the need to push the entire industry to work toward a higher standard of email security. The report showed that millions of email attacks ranging from opportunistic spam to highly-targeted impersonation attacks are getting

through incumbent email security systems costing organizations a lot of time and money to clean up.

Many organizations think their current email security systems are up to the task of protecting them. However, if an organization hasn't reviewed its approach to email security within the last 18 months, it is likely vulnerable to attack. The Mimecast ESRA testing to date has covered 23,744 email users over a cumulative 153 days of inbound email received



Ed Jennings, chief operating officer at Mimecast.

into the organizations participating in the testing. This first report compiled the results of all assessments performed, in which more than 26 million emails were inspected by the Mimecast service. These emails had all passed through the incumbent email security vendor or cloud email service in use by each organization. However, Mimecast found millions of missed email threats had gotten through these incumbent security systems. Mimecast uncovered almost 3.5 million pieces of spam, 6,681 dangerous file types, 1,207 known and 421 unknown malware attachments and 1,697 impersonation attacks.

To complement this hands-on testing, Mimecast conducted research with Vanson Bourne on the state of organizations' cybersecurity, their expectations and needs and what attacks they've seen increase. Findings were based on responses received from 800 IT decision makers and C-level executives globally. The Mimecast conducted Vanson Bourne research revealed that in the Middle East, 57 percent of organization believe they will suffer a negative business impact from cybercriminal activity in 2017.

Malicious links

Further statistics for the Middle East reveal that around 45 percent believe that the volume of untargeted phishing with malicious links attacks has increased, while 49 percent believe that spear-phishing with malicious links targeted at the organization and an individual has gone up. The report revealed that email is the most likely method of ransomware infection in the Middle East and over 33 percent of organizations in the region have admitted to an increase in ransomware attacks.

Not surprisingly, and consistent with the results of the Mimecast ESRA report, advanced attacks were reported to be on the rise. For example, forty-five percent of respondents reported an increase in malicious macros within attachments. Not only that, but 64 percent of organizations believe they will suffer a negative business impact from cybercriminals in 2017, while 56 percent think malicious emails or URLs will be the likely attack vector. "It is easy to assume that your email security solution is protecting you from advanced attacks. If you don't have visibility into what's actually getting delivered to the inboxes of employees, why would you think otherwise? We launched Mimecast ESRA at the request of organizations who wanted an easy way to assess the risks and to see a greater level of detail to help understand the impact to their business," said Ed Jennings, chief operating officer at Mimecast.

XEROX: INKJET REALITY FOR ALL PRINT PROVIDERS 'RIGHT NOW'

DUBAI: Early adopters of Xerox's inkjet technology say they are seeing measurable business results such as increased page volumes, savings from printing on standard offset coated stocks, and faster turnaround on high-volume transactional print jobs. The Xerox entry inkjet portfolio featured at Hunkeler Innovationdays (HID) in Lucerne, Switzerland from Feb. 20-23, 2017 includes:

- Xerox Brenva HD Production Inkjet Press - cut sheet inkjet.
- Xerox Trivor 2400 Inkjet Press - continuous feed inkjet with Xerox High Fusion Ink.
- Xerox Rialto 900 Inkjet Press - narrow web roll-to-cut sheet inkjet.

Xerox's lower cost systems make inkjet more accessible and open new business opportunities for print providers. Throughout HID, Xerox will showcase how its inkjet solutions enable customers to move into today's biggest growth areas including catalogs, books, transactional and direct mail. "The inkjet opportunity is no longer on the horizon - It is here right now," said Andrew Copley, president, Graphic Communications Solutions, Xerox. "With our next generation production inkjet presses, customers get the right technology at less cost and space of traditional inkjet presses."

Direct mail

UK-based print, mail and digital communications provider McLays bought the Brenva HD to expand their direct mail and transactional applications. In the first month of production, page volume increased 15 percent, hitting up to 150,000 pages per day on peak days.

"We produced more than 1.5 million pages in January with Brenva HD and are confident that we can double that figure in the coming months as the machine moves into 24-hour print production," said Gary Wheeler, direct manufacturing manager, McLays.

"The press performs extremely well with low coverage, light tints and sharp black text, which are critical in our transactional business."



Andrew Copley

Coated stocks

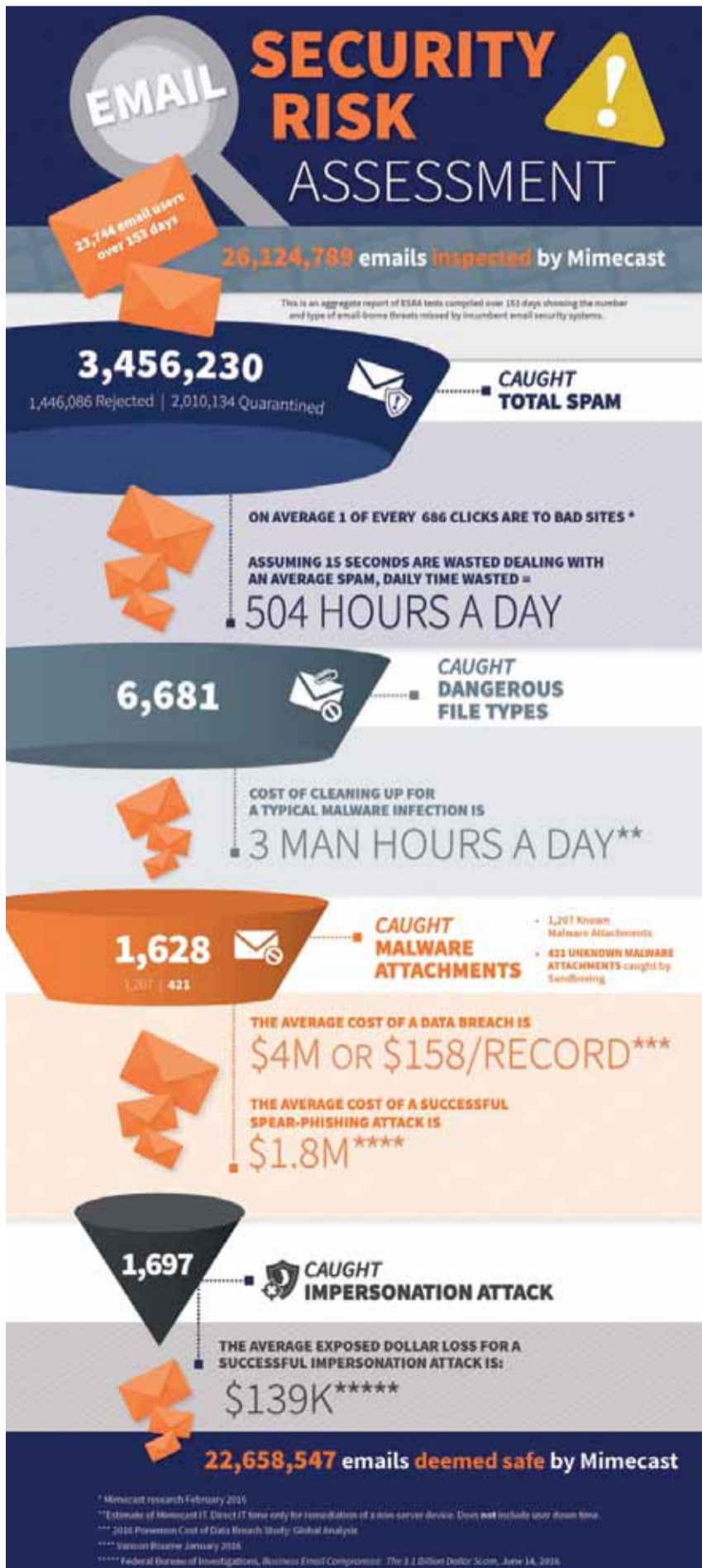
Belgium-based print provider, VPrint, wanted to add more personalization and quality to its large-volume direct mail business without the cost of using specialty stock made for inkjet printing. The company has been testing the Trivor 2400 paired with High Fusion Ink.

"We wanted to print on standard offset coated stock, with offset quality and volume but with all the benefits of production inkjet," said Thierry Ngoma, plant manager, VPrint. "So far High Fusion Ink and the Trivor 2400 are meeting our expectations - delivering brilliant color, high speed and the savings from using standard offset coated stocks without the need for any pre or post treatment."

Finishing options

During HID, Xerox will showcase the Rialto 900 with two new inline finishing options: a dynamic perforator and second dual high capacity stacker. The dynamic perforator enables the creation of horizontal, vertical or t-section tear offs - such as coupons, reply cards and payment stubs - opening up new opportunities in the transactional and direct mail markets. Additionally, a second dual high capacity stacker enables a continuous operation feature so print providers can keep presses running while unloading the other stacker.

These options build on the breakthrough in inkjet innovation of the Rialto 900 introduced at HID two years ago. Today, many print providers use the press to deliver everything from mono book pages to high-quality direct mail applications. UK-based commercial printer Datagraphic has two Rialto 900 presses that produce minute-critical, data-driven transactional print for enterprises across the public and private sectors.





MOUNTAIN VIEW: This Thursday, Jan 3, 2013, file photo shows Google's headquarters in Mountain View, California. — AP

CAN INTERNET-BEAMING BALLOONS OUTMANEUVER SHIFTING WINDS?

MOUNTAIN VIEW: For its next trick, an internet-beaming balloon factory spun out of Google believes it can outmaneuver the wind. In doing so, the 4-year-old 'Project Loon' says it will be able to bring remote parts of the world online more quickly with a smaller fleet of the balloons than it previously thought.

Engineers involved in the eccentric project, a part of the X Lab owned by Google's corporate parent Alphabet Inc, say they have come up with algorithms that enable the high-flying balloons to do a better job anticipating shifting wind conditions so they hover above masses of land for several months instead of orbiting the earth.

X Lab now expects to need fewer balloons to fulfill its goal of delivering internet service to billions of people living in unconnected regions in the world, ranging from small villages in Africa to the woods of California. The need for fewer balloons should lower Project Loon's costs and accelerate plans to start selling internet-services subscriptions to consumers and businesses.

The X lab, like other parts of Alphabet that are funded by Google's highly profitable digital advertising network, is under pressure to start making money on its own. The Alphabet subsidiaries operating outside Google, a hodgepodge of far-flung projects, have lost a combined \$7.1 billion during the past two years. In an acknowledgement of their lofty goals and risky nature, Alphabet CEO Larry Page calls them 'moonshots.' Astro Teller, who runs the X Lab, declined to provide a specific timetable for when Project Loon might start selling internet access plans.

Meeting with reporters Thursday at X's headquarters in a former shopping mall in Mountain View, California, Teller said the project hopes to team up with a telecommunications provider within the next few months to begin testing how well the balloons' new navigational system will work. He likened the newly developed algorithms' objectives to "a game of chess with the wind."

If the algorithms prevail in their metrological battle, Project Loop hopes to need only 10 to 30 beams floating about 60,000 feet above the earth to transmit high-speed internet signals to a target market, instead of up to 400 balloons orbiting around the globe. Keeping the balloons in smaller clusters will also make them easier to locate and retrieve once they descend back to land after several months in the stratosphere, Teller said.

Project Loon has been doing most of its testing recently in South America, although Teller said that isn't necessarily where it will team up with a telecommunications provider to determine the effectiveness of its wind-defying technology. Since launching in New Zealand in 2013, the balloons have traveled 19 million kilometers, or nearly 12 million miles, according to Project Loon.

Alphabet frames Project Loon as a noble endeavor striving to enable people currently without reliable internet service to tap into the vast reservoir of knowledge, entertainment and conveniences available online. But it could also enrich Google by expanding the potential audience that can query its search engine, watch video on YouTube, correspond through Gmail and click on digital ads. — AP

ZUCKERBERG'S GOAL: REMAKE A WORLD FACEBOOK HELPED CREATE

NEW YORK: Mark Zuckerberg helped create the modern world by connecting nearly a quarter of its citizens to Facebook and giving them a platform to share, well, everything - baby pictures and Pepe memes, social updates and abusive bullying, helpful how-to videos and live-streamed violence.

Now he wants to remake it, too, in a way that counters isolationism, promotes global connections and addresses social ills - while also cementing Facebook's central role as a builder of online "community" for its nearly 2 billion users.

The Facebook founder laid out his thoughts on Thursday in a sweeping 5,800-word manifesto that hews closer to utopian social guide than business plan. Are we, he asked in the document, "building the world we all want?"

In a phone interview with The Associated Press, Zuckerberg stressed that he wasn't motivated by the recent US election or any other particular event. Rather, he said, it's the growing sentiment in many parts of the world that "connecting the world" - the founding idea behind Facebook - is no longer a good thing.

"Across the world there are people left behind by globalization, and movements for withdrawing from global connection," Zuckerberg, who founded Facebook in a Harvard dorm room in 2004, wrote on Thursday. So it falls to his company to "develop the social infrastructure to give people the power to build a global community that works for all of us."

Connecting in Facebook's interest

Zuckerberg, 32, told the AP that he still strongly believes that more connectedness is the right direction for the world. But, he added, it's "not enough if it's good for some people but it doesn't work for other people. We really have to bring everyone along."

It's hardly a surprise that Zuckerberg wants to find ways to bring more people together, especially on Facebook. After all, getting more people to come together on the social network more frequently would give Facebook more opportunities to sell the ads that generate most of its revenue, which totaled \$27 billion last year. And bringing in more money probably would boost Facebook's stock price to make Zuckerberg - already worth an estimated \$56 billion - even richer.

And while the idea of unifying the world is laudable, some critics - backed by various studies - contend that Facebook makes some people feel lonelier and more isolated as they scroll through the mostly ebullient posts and photos shared on the social network. Facebook's famous "like" button also makes it easy to engage in a form of "one-click" communication that can displace meaningful dialogue.

Facebook also has been lambasted as a polarizing force by circulating posts espousing similar viewpoints and interests among like-minded people, creating an "echo chamber" that can harden opinions and widen political and cultural chasms.

Community support

Today, most of Facebook's 1.86 billion members - about 85 percent - live outside of the U.S. and Canada. The Menlo Park, California-based company has offices everywhere from Amsterdam to Jakarta, Indonesia, to Tel Aviv, Israel. (It is banned in China, the world's most populous country, though some people get around the ban.) Naturally, Zuckerberg takes a global view of Facebook and sees potential that goes beyond borders, cities and nations.

Equally naturally, he sees the social network stepping up as more traditional cultural ties fray. People already use Facebook to connect with strangers who have the same rare disease, to post political diatribes, to share news links (and sometimes fake

Last fall, Zuckerberg and his wife, the doctor Priscilla Chan, unveiled the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, a long-term effort aimed at eradicating all disease by the end of this century. Then, as now, Zuckerberg preferred to look far down the road to the potential of scientific and technological innovations that have not been perfected, or even invented yet.

That includes artificial intelligence, which in this case means software that's capable of "thinking" enough like humans to start making the sorts of judgments that Facebook sometimes bobbles. Last September, for instance, the service briefly barred the famous Vietnam War-era photograph dubbed "Napalm Girl" because it featured a nude child, and only reversed its decision after users - including the



LIMA: In this Nov 19, 2016 file photo, Mark Zuckerberg, chairman and CEO of Facebook, waves at the CEO summit during the annual Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in Lima, Peru. — AP

news links). Facebook has also pushed its users to register to vote, to donate to causes, to mark themselves safe after natural disasters, and to "go live." For many, it's become a utility. Some 1.23 billion people use it daily. "Our next focus will be developing the social infrastructure for community - for supporting us, for keeping us safe, for informing us, for civic engagement, and for inclusion of all," he wrote.

Long view

Zuckerberg has gotten Facebook to this position of global dominance - one that Myspace and Twitter, for instance, never even approached - partly thanks to his audacious, long-term view of the company and its place in the world.

prime minister of Norway - protested.

AI systems could also comb through the vast amount of material users post on Facebook to detect everything from bullying to the early signs of suicidal thinking to extremist recruiting. AI, Zuckerberg wrote, could "understand more quickly and accurately what is happening across our community."

Speaking to the AP, Zuckerberg said he understands that we might not "solve all the issues that we want" in the short term. "One of my favorite quotes is this Bill Gates quote, that 'people overestimate what they can get done in two years and underestimate what they can get done in 10 years.' And that's an important mindset that I hope more people take today," he said. — AP



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
22:05 Biggest And Baddest
23:00 Zoltan The Wolfman
23:55 Gator Boys

00:40 Mythbusters
01:30 How Do They Do It?
01:55 Food Factory
02:20 You Can't Lick Your Elbow
02:45 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

00:10 Hank Zipzer
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Violetta
01:45 The Hive
01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:40 Hank Zipzer
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:30 Violetta
04:15 The Hive
04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:10 Hank Zipzer
05:35 Binny And The Ghost
06:00 Violetta
06:45 The Hive
06:50 The 7D
07:00 Jessie
07:25 Jessie
07:50 Rolling To The Ronks
08:15 Tsum Tsum Shorts
08:20 Elena Of Avalor
08:45 Bunk'd
09:10 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
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
21:40 The Next Step
22:05 Best Friends Whenever
22:10 Jessie
22:55 Tsum Tsum Shorts



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
21:00 Unbungalievable
21:05 Goldie & Bear

06:55 E! News
07:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
08:10 E! News
09:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
10:10 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



00:00 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
23:00 Engineering Disasters



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
12:00 Crime Stories
13:00 Crime Stories
14:00 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



BARELY LETHAL ON OSN MOVIES HD



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
09:50 Danger Mouse
10:20 Supa Strikas
11:10 Counterfeit Cat
11:35 Pair Of Kings
12:00 Pair Of Kings
12:30 Future-Worm!
12:55 Lab Rats
13:45 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



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
04:30 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
10:35 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 Loeppu And Pitbull
18:30 Shipping Wars
18:55 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



00:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:50 E! News
02:50 Just Jillian
05:30 Botched
06:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry



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
03:55 Sara's Australia Unveiled

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2017

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
 09:45 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
 16:45 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
 17:15 The Wine Show
 18:10 Chocolate Perfection With Michel Roux Jr
 19:05 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
 19:30 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 20:00 Sara's Australia Unveiled
 20:25 Valentine Warner's Wild Table
 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
 23:45 A Is For Apple



JUPITER ASCENDING ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

00:10 The Chase
 01:00 Emmerdale
 01:30 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
 13:45 Coronation Street
 14:15 The Chase
 15:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
 16:00 Don't Tell The Bride
 17:00 Tonight At The London Palladium
 17:50 The Trials Of Jimmy Rose
 18:45 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



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



00:30 Baby Daddy
 01:00 Baby Daddy
 01:30 Difficult People
 02:00 Difficult People
 02:30 The Big C
 03:00 Telenovela
 03:30 Telenovela
 04:00 According To Jim
 04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 05:30 Cougar Town
 06:00 George Lopez
 06:30 The Bernie Mac Show
 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
 08:00 According To Jim
 08:30 Cougar Town
 09:00 Telenovela
 09:30 Son Of Zorn
 10:00 The Mindy Project
 10:30 The Bernie Mac Show
 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 12:00 George Lopez
 12:30 According To Jim
 13:00 Cougar Town
 13:30 The Bernie Mac Show
 14:00 Telenovela
 14:30 Son Of Zorn
 15:00 The Mindy Project
 15:30 Baby Daddy
 16:00 Baby Daddy
 16:30 George Lopez
 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
 18:00 Black-ish
 18:30 Kevin Can Wait
 19:00 The Goldbergs
 19:30 Fresh Off The Boat
 20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
 21:00 Baby Daddy
 21:30 Baby Daddy
 22:00 High Maintenance
 22:30 High Maintenance



00:00 American Horror Story: Roanoke
 01:00 Lethal Weapon
 02:00 Star
 03:00 Mr. Robot
 04:00 Suits
 05:00 Good Morning America
 07:00 Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders
 08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 09:00 Drop Dead Diva
 10:00 Containment
 11:00 Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders
 12:00 Suits
 13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 14:00 Drop Dead Diva

15:00 Live Good Morning America
 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
 18:00 Blindspot
 19:00 Once Upon A Time
 20:00 Grey's Anatomy
 21:00 Frequency
 22:00 Timeless



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



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



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



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



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



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



00:00 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



00:15 Team Umizoomi
 00:38 Louie
 00:53 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
 01:57 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
 03:35 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
 05:54 Dora And Friends
 06:17 Zack & Quack
 06:29 The Day Henry Met
 06:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 07:00 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
 09:58 Dora The Explorer
 10:21 Paw Patrol
 10:45 Little Charmers
 10:57 Bubble Guppies
 11:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
 11:40 Zack & Quack
 11:52 Team Umizoomi
 12:38 Louie
 12:53 Olive The Ostrich
 13:03 Max & Ruby
 13:26 Wanda And The Alien
 13:35 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 13:46 The Day Henry Met
 13:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 14:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 14:41 Zack & Quack
 15:03 Team Umizoomi
 15:25 Olive The Ostrich
 15:35 Paw Patrol
 15:58 Little Charmers
 16:10 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
 16:22 Dora The Explorer
 16:44 Max & Ruby
 17:07 Bubble Guppies
 17:31 Shimmer And Shine
 17:54 Dora And Friends
 18:17 Zack & Quack
 18:29 The Day Henry Met
 18:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
 19:00 Paw Patrol



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
 05:40 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



THE GAME PLAN ON OSN MOVIES FAMILY HD



BHAVAN KUWAIT CELEBRATES ITS DECADAL ANNUAL DAY

The normally humble and insignificant day of February 9, 2017 was elated to the elite club of days with immeasurable importance as Bhavan Kuwait celebrated its decennial annual day on this Thursday in such a manner that every pulsating moment of the day will drum across the cerebrums of the blessed few who were taken back and forth in time and space to know the purpose of life by experiencing 'change', the providential law of the cosmos.

The 10th annual day, themed 'change' was honored by the gracious presence of Rishiraj Singh IPS, the Excise Commissioner (DGP) in the state of Kerala, India, a much feared name for the organized crime syndicate in India. Singh was given a proud and state of the art guard of honor by the Bhavans Service Scheme (BSS) cadets. The other dignitaries present were Ali Jediyan Al Rashidi, the sponsor and owner of Indian Educational School and Smart Indian School Kuwait, N K Ramachandran Menon, the Chairman, Bhavans Middle East, his better half, Sudha Ramachandran, Krishnadas Menon, Director IES, T Premkumar, the Principal, Indian Educational School Kuwait and Mahesh Iyer, the Principal, Smart Indian School (SIS), Kuwait.

The cosmic rays of change engulfed the school premises as the day of celebration started with soul-soothing verses from the Holy Quran followed by the Kuwait National Anthem. The day of magnificence unfurled with the prayer song rendered by the school choir. The ceremonial lamp was then conjointly lit by the Chief Guest Rishiraj Singh IPS (DGP), Ali Jediyan Al Rashidi, N K Ramachandran Menon, Sudha Ramachandran, Krishnadas Menon, T Premkumar and Mahesh Iyer.

An invocation dance of classical fusion performed by the talented Bhavanites was the harbinger of the cultural fiesta of the evening. The audience could feel the heavenly touch as they swayed and reeled in a devotional trance.

The blessed gathering of the chosen few was welcomed by Aditya Jaypal, the Head Boy, Indian Educational School, Kuwait. The floral bouquets of love, respect and appreciation were extended to the guests and special invitees by the school supreme council members.

The school annual report written in the blood and sweat of the members of the Bhavan Fraternity voicing the hard work, success, and jubilation, with all the feelings and emotions that one could find if they ever walked through the labyrinth of human mind was presented by T Premkumar, the principal, IES, Kuwait. The annual report of the Bhavan's Smart Indian School was presented in the form of a newscast by Andrew Joseph Rodrigues and Caren Ann Suresh, Jeffrey Induvara Withanachchi and Sambhav Nath Jain of SIS in a very novel and an innovative way.

It was then, it started, the visual incarnation of the cosmic

law, the change. The school premises transformed into the void of a black hole through which every single being was taken for a ride to a parallel universe to witness the horrid state of our own self, governed by the vices, plummets to extinction on our dear planet Earth. More than 300 versatile Bhavanites from the primary, middle, and the senior wings of IES as well as their counterparts from Smart Indian School, Kuwait drew a legendry story onstage which depicted the extinction of mankind due to their unquenchable greed which led them to sign a deed with devil who plotted and brought their doom. But, the ever-benevolent, the ever-forgiving 'Supreme Mighty' made them sign the deed of the divine, the 'change' and resurrected them; to live to love, to rule, to serve and to adapt to change. The audience gave a standing ovation when the curtains were drawn on the cultural extravaganza 'Change' so as to acknowledge their awe and admiration. The spectacular pageantry was conceptualized, directed and choreographed by Muneera, the HoD English (Primary Section), Jaemi, HoD English (Middle and Senior Sections) and EP Prasad (PGT English) and Rythmsacpes, the cultural wing of Bhavan, Kuwait respectively.

After the roller coaster ride in time and space, the chief guest, Rishiraj Singh IPS (DGP) addressed the audience. He appreciated the chosen theme of the annual day and congratulated the performers for their brilliance. In his speech, he emphasized the importance of the roles of teachers and parents in the lives of children, and highlighted the increase in the cases of drug abuse among the new generation, and discussed how we can save ourselves and the generations to come from the impending doom with mutual respect, care and love. He urged the parent community to make it a point to talk to their most prized possessions so that they won't go astray, and then seek refuge in the decadent dungeons of confusion. Singh was presented a memento and a painting by N K Ramachandran Menon, the Chairman, Bhavans Middle East as tokens of Bhavan's gratitude to the well-regarded IPS officer.

The speech culminated in opening many eyes. The prize distribution witnessed the proud display of Bhavan's whiz-kids and the child prodigies onstage to receive the prizes of excellence and accomplishment. Soon after, time brought another moment of glory as 'Tejas', the school magazine. The churning furnace of creativity was released by the chief guest in the presence of N K Ramachandran Menon, the Chairman, Bhavans Middle East, Sudha Ramachandran, T Premkumar, the Principal, IES, Mahesh Iyer, the Principal, SIS, and the members of the editorial board, Sriee Ashwathaman, Jayashankar and Aswin Kumar the Student Editor.

The day of infinite change ended with the vote of thanks proposed by Evelyn Biju George, the Head Girl, IES Kuwait. The

emcees for the day were Mokhinur Tinchlikova, Elizabeth Gigi, Rashmi Ajai Kumar and Snigdha Anil Kumar. Thus, a day with a humble origin was canonized by the holy grail of change and will be heading with a mission to change the world of vices to a world of love, peace and harmony.



NILAVU MEDICAL SEMINAR POSTER RELEASED

The cancer awareness medical seminar conducted by Nilavu, a socio charitable organization in the forefront of cancer awareness and life support, is scheduled to be on the 24th and 25th of February 2017 in Kuwait. Held as part of Hala February festival, the seminar is supported by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Housing Affairs, Ministry of Utilities, Kuwait Cancer Society, Indian Doctors Forum and Nurses Association, in addition to support from various socio-cultural associations in Kuwait.

The poster for the medical seminar was released by Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Hamoud Al-Malik Al-Sabah. It was received recently by the chairman of the medical seminar Dr Ameer Ahmed, who is also the former President of Indian Doctors Forum Kuwait. Well known oncologists from India Dr V P Gangadharan and Dr Chithra are leading the seminar which is to be conducted in Fahaheel and Abbasiya areas with a wide range of associated programs spanning from labor camps to school students. President of Nilav Kuwait Habeebulla Muttichoor, General Secretary Hameed Madhur, the program main sponsor Shifa Al-Jaseera Medical Group representative T T Saleem and Biju will preside over the function.



ASSE KUWAIT CHAPTER ORGANIZES FUN DAY OUT



ASSE Kuwait Chapter has objectively been organizing program for member's professional development and improved competencies over a decade now. This time around, for the first time in Kuwait Chapter's history, organized a Fun Day Out recently at Wafra chalet to bring in a fun filled ambiance and atmosphere to the members as well as their families. Around 150 members along with their family members enthusiastically participated and had great fun on the day.

The fun day out was kicked off with a speech by ASSE Kuwait Chapter President CH Rama Krushna Chary. The first half of the day was filled with sporting events like cricket, volley ball, fun games for kids, ladies, hula hoops etc. The post lunch session comprised with tug of war, games exclusively for females and couples and general quiz. The post lunch started with the briefing of the Fun Day Out program's objective and its necessity and relevance to the members as well as its family members by Sanjay Jaiswal, ASSE, KC Secretary followed by Quiz conducted by Muhammad Alamgir.

Apart from the bumper prize, HP Laptop, numerous gifts were given away to over 60 participants of the quiz contest. The members and families were well entertained by melodious songs with music throughout the day. Give away gift bag apart from the quiz winner's gift was also given to each member. During the concluding ceremony Sanjay Jaiswal, Secretary thanked the Chapter Staff, EC Members, EQUATE the Gold sponsor, Reliance World Wide the silver sponsor who provided the catering service for the entire day with BBQ stations and the event Copartner Raja Company.

He extended a special thanks to Eng. Fadhel Al Ali, Chairman ASSE Kuwait Chapter for his inspiration, encouragement and consistent support for executing outdoor programs for the benefit of chapter members and consequent success of the Kuwait chapter. The event was possible due to the annual plan of the outreach committee and its member's total commitment. The day was concluded with vote of thanks delivered by Sunil Sadanandan, Treasurer, ASSE Kuwait Chapter.



TWIN TRAGEDIES GIVE SURVIVOR A NEW FACE

ROCHESTER: He'd been waiting for this day, and when his doctor handed him the mirror, Andy Sandness stared at his image and absorbed the enormity of the moment: He had a new face, one that had belonged to another man. His father and his brother, joined by several doctors and nurses at Mayo Clinic, watched as he studied his swollen features. He was just starting to heal from one of the rarest surgeries in the world a face transplant, the first at the medical center. He had the nose, cheeks, mouth, lips, jaw, chin, even the teeth of his donor. Resting in his hospital bed, he still couldn't speak clearly, but he had something to say.

He scrawled four words in a spiral notebook: "Far exceeded my expectations," he wrote, handing it to Dr Samir Mardini, who read the message to the group. "You don't know how happy that makes us feel," Mardini said, his voice husky with emotion as he looked at the patient-turned-friend he had first met nearly a decade earlier. The exchange came near the end of an extraordinary medical journey that revolved around two young men. Both were rugged outdoorsmen and both just 21 when, overcome by demons, they decided to kill themselves: One, Sandness, survived but with a face almost destroyed by a gunshot; the other man died. Their paths wouldn't converge for years, but when they did - in side-by-side operating rooms one man's tragedy offered hope that the other would have a second chance at a normal life.

'Super, super depressed'

It was two days before Christmas in 2006 when Andy Sandness reached a breaking point. He'd been sad and drinking too much lately. That night after work while "super, super depressed," he grabbed a rifle from a closet. He stared at it for a while, then put a round in the chamber. He positioned the barrel beneath his chin, took a deep breath and pulled the trigger. Instantly, he knew he'd made a terrible mistake. When the police arrived, an officer who was a friend cradled him in his arms as Sandness begged, "Please, please don't let me die! I don't want to die!"

He was rushed from his home in eastern Wyoming, treated at two hospitals, then transferred to Mayo Clinic. When he woke, his mother was holding his hand. She'd always been a strong woman but that day, her face was a portrait of unfathomable pain. The bullet had obliterated his mouth, so he motioned for a pen and paper. "I'm sorry," he wrote. "I love you," she replied. "It's OK." But all Sandness could think about was how he'd hurt his family - and just wonder what was next.

The answer came quickly when he met Mardini, a plastic surgeon whose specialty is facial reconstruction. As a newcomer at Mayo, the doctor was on call Christmas Eve. Over the next few days, he reassured Sandness that he'd fix his face as best he could. "I just need you to be strong and patient," he said. It would take time and much surgery. And despite their skills, the doctors couldn't miraculously turn him back into that guy with the orthodontist-perfected smile Sandness couldn't bear to see himself, so he covered his hospital room mirror with a towel. He had no nose and no jaw. He'd shot out all but two teeth. His mouth was shattered, his lips almost non-existent. He'd lost some vision in his left eye. He needed breathing and feeding tubes at first.

Mardini and his team removed dead tissue and shattered bones, then connected facial bones with titanium plates and screws. They reconstructed his upper jaw with bone and muscle from the hip; they transferred bone



ROCHESTER: Andy Sandness (right) talks with his father, Reed Sandness and Dr Samir Mardini (left), before Andy's face transplant procedure at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. — AP



Dr Samir Mardini shaves the face of his patient, Andy Sandness, days after leading a team that performed the first face transplant surgery at the hospital. — AP

and skin from a leg to fashion the lower jaw. They used wires and sutures to bring together his eyelids, which had been spread apart because of the powerful blast. They made progress, even if it didn't always look that way. After about eight surgeries over 41/2 months, Sandness returned home to Newcastle, Wyoming, a hamlet of 3,200, where friends and family embraced him. He worked at a lodge, in the oil fields and as an electrician's apprentice.

He was insecure

But his world had shrunk. When he ventured to the grocery store, he avoided eye contact with children so he wouldn't scare them. Occasionally, he heard them ask their mothers why he looked that way. He sometimes lied when folks asked what had happened. "I would tell them it was a hunting accident," he says. "I felt like they didn't need to know." He had almost no social life; on a rare night out to shoot pool, a guy taunted him about his appearance. He retreated to the hills, where he could hunt elk and fish wall-eye, unseen. "Those were real tough times for him," says his father, Reed. "He was insecure. Who wouldn't be?"

Sandness learned to adapt. His mouth was

about an inch wide - too small for a spoon - so he tore food into bits, then sucked on them until he could swallow the pieces. He wore a prosthetic nose but it constantly fell off outdoors; he carried glue to reattach it. It discolored often, so he had to paint it to match his skin. "You never fully accept it," he says. "You eventually say, 'OK, is there something else we can do?'" There was, but the prospect of 15 more surgeries Mardini had mapped out scared him. He didn't want more skin grafts, more scars or dental implants. Even then, he'd still look deformed. Over the next five years, Sandness made yearly visits to Mayo. Then in spring of 2012, he received a life-changing call.

Regimen of anti-rejection

Mardini told him it looked like Mayo was going to launch a face transplant program and Sandness might be an ideal patient. The doctor had already begun traveling to France, Boston and Cleveland to meet doctors who'd done face transplants. Mardini tried to temper his patient's enthusiasm. "Think very hard about this," he said. Only about two dozen transplants have been done around the world, and he wanted Sandness to understand the risks and the aftermath: a lifelong regimen of anti-rejection drugs. But Sandness

could hardly contain himself. "How long until I can do this?" he asked. He followed Mardini's advice to research the surgery. It was far more complicated than he'd imagined, but he was undeterred.

"When you look like I looked and you function like I functioned, every little bit of hope that you have, you just jump on it," he says, "and this was the surgery that was going to take me back to normal." Three more years passed as Sandness waited. By then, Mayo Clinic had completed a long internal review to get the face transplant program approved. Sandness had to undergo a rigorous psychiatric and social work evaluation to address, among other things, a key question: Should this surgery be performed on someone who'd attempted suicide?

Incremental steps

Several factors were in his favor: His resilience and motivation, a strong support network of family and friends, a long-standing rapport with Mardini and a gap of several years since the shooting. Doctors also noted others with self-inflicted injuries, such as excessive drinkers, have received liver transplants. "I don't think there's anybody who doesn't deserve a second chance," Mardini says. Asked by the doctors what he expected from the transplant, to make sure he had realistic goals, Sandness said he wanted a working nose, the ability to bite, swallow, chew, and to "get good stares as opposed to bad stares."

These incremental steps benefited everyone, says Dr Hatem Amer, Mayo's medical director of reconstructive transplantation. "He wasn't rushing us, and we weren't rushing him," he says. "He really understood what he was embarking upon." Sandness says he was concerned both about the possibility of rejection and potential side effects of anti-rejection drugs, including skin cancer, infection, diabetes and weakening of the bones. Mardini and his team devoted more than 50 Saturdays over 31/2 years to rehearsing the surgery, using sets of cadaver heads to transplant the face of one to another.

They used 3-D imaging and virtual surgery to plot out the bony cuts so the donor's face would fit perfectly on Sandness. In January 2016, Sandness' name was added to the waiting list of the United Network for Organ Sharing. Mardini figured it would take up to five years to find the right donor: a man with matching blood and tissue types, roughly the same size as Sandness, within a 10-year age range and a close skin tone. But just five months later, Mardini got a call: There might be a donor. He phoned Sandness, cautioning it was just a possibility.

The next day, Mardini got the final word: The donor's family had said OK. The decision came from a 19-year-old newlywed mourning the sudden loss of her husband. In early June, Calen "Rudy" Ross fatally shot himself in the head. His devastated widow, Lilly, was eight months pregnant. Despite her grief, she was committed to carrying out her husband's wishes: On his driver's license, Ross, who lived in Fulda, Minnesota, had designated he wanted to be an organ donor. Lilly met with a coordinator from LifeSource, a nonprofit group that works with families in the upper Midwest to facilitate organ and tissue donation.

Since Ross had been healthy and just 21, his heart, lungs, liver and kidneys could be donated. But additional screening determined he could do even more: He was a good match for a man awaiting a face transplant at Mayo Clinic. In a second conversation, LifeSource broached the idea to Lilly. "I was skeptical at first," she says. —AP

NICARAGUA FOCUSES ON CLIMATE-CHANGE RESISTANT COFFEE

MANAGUA: With climate change threatening crops in many parts of the world, Nicaragua is turning to a robust variety of coffee bean to protect one of its key exports. The appropriately named robusta coffee comes from the *Coffea canephora* plant, which is being increasingly planted in the Central American country under government authorization. The sturdy variety is easier to care for, higher in caffeine, faster to produce fruit and more disease-resistant than the more popular Arabica sort Nicaragua traditionally grows—although it is of lower quality, fetching a lower price. However, its advantages make it better suited to ride out climate change and bring benefits to smaller producers, industry groups say. “Robusta coffee production has proven its profitability through its high productivity, low production costs and high potential,” says Luis Chamorro, an executive with the Mercon group, which plans to plant the variety on 7,000 hectares it owns on the eastern side of the country.

Lower ‘prestige’?

But not everyone is convinced. Some producers worry that the new focus on robusta could affect Arabica production and prestige. “If we change to a variety that damages our coffee-growing sector and the prestige of quality, that would be an error we shouldn’t make and it could cost us dearly,” warns Leonel Lopez, a coffee farmer in the northern Nueva Segovia region. The stakes are high for Nicaragua, a poor country that depends on its coffee sector, which brings in \$400 million in export revenues and employs hundreds of thousands of people. However, a lengthy drought over the past two years and a blight that has affected most of the coffee plantations—ruining hundreds of smaller outfits has prompted the diversification to robusta.

Keeping varieties separate

More bitter and acidic, the robusta bean is



MEDELLIN: A woman works at the new Chapecoense Coffee Bar in Medellin, Colombia. — AFP

often mixed with other varieties, especially for instant coffee.

The government authorized its planting in the eastern lowlands five years ago. Last December, the agriculture ministry decided to expand the order to some fields in

the west. To stop robusta coffee plants from invading Arabica-producing fields, they are planted at least 30 kilometers (20 miles) apart.

“We believe both varieties can exist alongside each other, as already happens in Brazil

and in Vietnam,” says Michael Healy, president of the UPANIC farmers’ association. The 2016-2017 robusta harvest should yield more than 1,800 tons, Chamorro said.

That’s around two percent of the total coffee volume produced in the country.— AFP

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PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

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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
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 1:15 PM
 EL QERD BEYETKALIM-Arabic 3:15 PM

MATRIMONIAL

Jacobite parents invite proposals for their son, Post Graduate Engineer, 29/173, working in Kuwait. M4marrry profile ID - 4178223. Email: scariahreji@gmail.com (C 5275) 18-2-2017

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

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: 05:05
Shorook 06:25
Duhr: 12:02
Asr: 15:14
Maghrib: 17:39
Isha: 18:57

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

WORDSEARCH PUZZLE

Movie Actors 2

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 William Hurt won an Oscar.

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

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|-------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| ASTIN, Sean | FIENNES, Ralph | MARTIN, Steve |
| BLOOM, Orlando | FREEMAN, Morgan | MORTENSEN, Viggo |
| BROSNAN, Pierce | GERE, Richard | MYERS, Mike |
| BUSCEMI, Steve | GOSLING, Ryan | PATTINSON, Robert |
| CAGE, Nicolas | HANKS, Tom | PENN, Sean |
| CONNERY, Sean | HARRELSON, Woody | REYNOLDS, Ryan |
| CROWE, Russell | HOFFMAN, Philip Seymour | ROGEN, Seth |
| CRUISE, Tom | HOWARD, Terrence | RUDD, Paul |
| DAFOE, Willem | HURT, William | SMITH, Will |
| DE NIRO, Robert | JACKSON, Samuel L. | STALLONE, Sylvester |
| DIESEL, Vin | JONES, Tommy Lee | STEWART, Patrick |
| DOWNEY JR, Robert | KEATON, Michael | VAUGHN, Vince |
| DREYFUSS, Richard | KILMER, Val | WILKINSON, Tom |
| DUVALL, Robert | LABEOUF, Shia | WILLIAMS, Robin |
| EVERETT, Rupert | MAGUIRE, Tobey | WILSON, Owen |
| FERRELL, Will | | |

CROSSWORD 1525

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| 22 | | | | 23 | | 24 | | | 25 | 26 | | | | |
| | | | 27 | | 28 | | | 29 | | | | | | |
| 30 | 31 | 32 | | | 33 | | 34 | | | | 35 | 36 | | |
| 37 | | | 38 | 39 | | | | 40 | | | 41 | | | |
| 42 | | | 43 | | 44 | | 45 | | | | 46 | | | |
| 47 | | 48 | | | | | 49 | 50 | | 51 | | | | |
| 52 | | | | | 53 | 54 | | | | 55 | | | | |
| 56 | | | | 57 | 58 | | | | 59 | | | | | |
| | | | | 60 | 61 | | 62 | | | 63 | | 64 | 65 | 66 |
| 67 | 68 | 69 | | 70 | | | 71 | | 72 | 73 | | | | |
| 74 | | | | | | 75 | 76 | 77 | | 78 | | 79 | | |
| 80 | | | | 81 | 82 | | | | | | | 83 | | |
| 84 | | | | 85 | | | | | | | | | | 86 |

ACROSS

- South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
- Tranquilizer (trade name Dalmane) used to treat insomnia.
- An internationally recognized distress signal in radio code.
- A city in western Nevada at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.
- New World lizards.
- A rapid bustling commotion.
- The cardinal number that is the sum of one and one and one.
- A switch made from the stems of the rattan palms.
- Marked by excessive enthusiasm for and intense devotion to a cause or idea.
- A white or colorless vitreous insoluble solid (SiO2).
- (Greek mythology) God of love.
- Type genus of the Ranidae.
- An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
- The sound made by a horse.
- Fabric dyed with splotches of green and brown and black and tan.
- Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
- Of or pertaining to the Avesta (sacred text of Zoroastrianism).
- A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
- A serve that strikes the net before falling into the receiver's court.
- In operation or operational.
- A number of sheets of paper fastened together along one edge.
- Antacid (trade name Prilosec) that suppresses acid secretion in the stomach.
- An ambitious and aspiring young person.
- An association of nations dedicated to economic and political cooperation in south-eastern Asia.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
- Made of grain or relating to grain or the plants that produce it.
- A Japanese cheer of enthusiasm or triumph.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- 1/10 gram.
- The Mongol people living in the central and eastern parts of Outer Mongolia.
- A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (trade name Clinoril).
- A branch of the Tai languages.
- Adorned by inlays.
- Viscera and trimmings of a butchered animal often considered inedible by humans.
- A master's degree in business.
- A negative.
- Genus of shrubs or small trees having indehiscent pods with black seeds.
- Tag the base runner to get him out.
- A group of Niger-Congo languages spoken primarily in southeastern Mali and northern Ghana.
- Someone who operates an aircraft.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- Studies intended to provide general knowledge and intellectual skills (rather than occupational or professional skills).
- A beautiful and graceful girl.
- A blue dye obtained from plants or made synthetically.

- South African shrub having flat acuminate leaves and yellow flowers.
- English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- Of or relating to the corpus luteum.
- A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
- Type genus of the Annonaceae.
- A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.
- The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
- A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
- (Norse mythology) Ruler of the Aesir.
- A sodium salt of carbonic acid.
- Formerly a large constellation in the southern hemisphere between Canis Major and the Southern Cross.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- A small hard fruit.
- Airtight sealed metal container for food or drink or paint etc.
- (usually followed by 'to') Strongly opposed.
- An asset of special worth or utility.
- Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
- Any of numerous low-growing cushion-forming plants of the genus Draba having rosette-forming leaves and terminal racemes of small flowers with scapose or leafy stems.
- A unit of dry measure used in Egypt.
- Formerly included in genus Cedrela.
- The part of the nervous system of vertebrates that controls involuntary actions of the smooth muscles and heart and glands.
- Large elliptical brightly colored deep-sea fish of Atlantic and Pacific and Mediterranean.
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- A sharp vibrating sound (as of a plucked string).
- Any of various spectacular plants of the genus Laelia having showy flowers in many colors.
- An edge tool used to cut and shape wood.
- Sole genus of the family Naiadaceae.
- An informal term for a father.
- A male child (a familiar term of address to a boy).
- A state in northwestern North America.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- A genus of Lamnidae.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Jordan's port.
- Relatively small fast-moving sloth.
- (Welsh) Corresponds to Iris Ler.
- Monotypic genus of palms of Australasia.
- Tall palm tree bearing coconuts as fruits.
- Radioactive iodine test that measures the amount of radioactive iodine taken up by the thyroid gland.
- The cardinal number that is the sum of four and one.
- A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
- A broad flat muscle on either side of the back.
- A soft silver-white or yellowish metallic element of the alkali metal group.

Yesterday's Solution

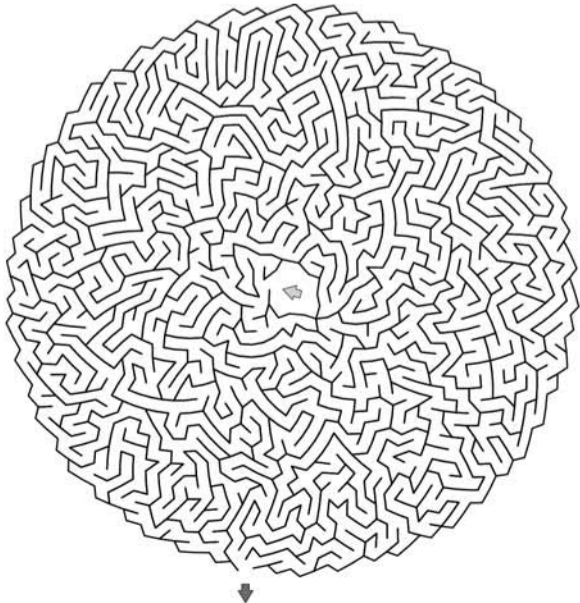
Movie Actors 1

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

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| BACON, Kevin | DUNCAN, Michael Clarke | MCKELLEN, Ian |
| BARDEM, Javier | FORD, Harrison | NEESON, Liam |
| BLACK, Jack | FOX, 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 | | |

The hidden movie title is: REVERSAL OF FORTUNE

CHALLENGING MAZE



Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

RUGBYL PREVIEW

SHARKS READY TO SWIM WITH BIG SUPER LEAGUE FISH

LEEDS: The honor of representing Australia in the World Club Challenge is unfamiliar ground for Cronulla-Sutherland Sharks, but second row Chris Heighington insists they are well aware of their responsibilities. With almost half a century of hurt wiped out on that unforgettable October day in Sydney, Sharks' defense of their maiden NRL crown begins later this month. But first they must play their part to retain series bragging rights over English opposition and put Super League champions Wigan Warriors to the sword in their own backyard on Sunday.

Warriors began their season last weekend with a 26-16 defeat of Salford Red Devils, but NRL clubs have enjoyed an unblemished record on British shores since 2012 and Heighington wants to keep that run going. "We didn't travel half-way across the world to lose," said the 35-year-old, who played four times for England—his father having been born in England. "It's awesome to be back over here. The conditions are good and we've had use of some great training facilities in London and got to have a bit of a look around the City too. "The Grand Final was a few months ago now, so we don't

spend too much time looking back on that."

However, Heighington, formerly with Wests until they released him after nine years of service in 2012, said there was no rustiness about the team. "We are back to normal and been training hard, looking to improve in a few areas—there is always room for improvement. There's good vibes around the place," said Heighington. "We are confident going to Wigan, but we have not played much lately and they are very successful and have some really good players. "We've spent time watching videos of them and we know they like to attack, so we will need to be on our game. "We want to win every game we play. This is important because once we fly home we'll only have six or seven days before the competition starts against the Broncos."

'Undercooked?'

In contrast to Sharks, Wigan are seasoned campaigners in this Series having competed in the last three years. Warriors skipper Sean O'Loughlin is desperate to taste victory at the fourth time of asking. "We hope the English clubs have a

decent chance this year. It'd be great to get our hands on that one," said the 34-year-old. "They're coming over here as champions, so for us to have a crack at them is great for us. "It's been a long time for the club since we've had success on that side of things, so it'll be great achievement for us as a club and as a sport if we could get that one." The tournament kicks off 24 hours earlier, when Brisbane Broncos go head-to-head with last year's Super League runners-up Warrington Wolves. Brisbane prop Josh McGuire is hoping to be involved in a winning effort for a third successive season, with Broncos having beaten the Warriors in 2016 and 2015.

"We love coming over to England, it's always one to tick off on the calendar," he said. "The weather's not nice, but it's part of the experience playing in England and we'll embrace that. "We're expecting a tough game and I'm sure Warrington will push us all the way. "We haven't played for a while, but I'm ready to go and excited to play footie this year. "There's no danger of being undercooked. We're professional, we want to win the game, and also to perform. We want to show we're ready to compete." — AFP

THE BIG 12 WITH 5
TEAMS ON NCAA
TOURNAMENT BUBBLE

KANSAS: The Atlantic Coast Conference had more teams in the NCAA Tournament selection committee's top 16 with four. The Big 12 had more teams near the top and could be right behind the ACC when the actual selections are made. Through Thursday's games, the Big 12 had three teams that should be locks: No 3 Kansas, No 4 Baylor and No 9 West Virginia. The Jayhawks were picked as the No 1 seed in the Midwest Regional, the Bears were No 1 in the South and the Mountaineers fourth the West. Even with losses by Baylor and West Virginia this week, those teams should be in.

How many more teams make the field of 68 will depend on what happens over the next three weeks. Oklahoma State (17-9, 6-7 Big 12) should be in good shape despite a losing conference record. The Cowboys knocked off fellow bubble team TCU, though lost to another Big 12 bubbler, Kansas State. Oklahoma State's only nonconference losses were to North Carolina and Maryland, with victories over Connecticut and Georgetown on its resume. Iowa State (16-9, 8-5) picked up a huge win by knocking off Kansas in Lawrence on Feb. 4 and put a dent in Kansas State's NCAA hopes with an 87-79 victory in Manhattan on Wednesday. The Cyclones have plenty of chances to boost their resume, starting with today's game against fellow bubble team TCU.

Needing a win Wednesday night, the Frogs (17-9, 6-7) stumbled with a 71-68 loss to Oklahoma State. TCU still has chances to boost its resume with games against Iowa State, Kansas and West Virginia coming up, but can't afford any slip-ups against the lower-end Big 12 teams. Kansas State (16-10, 5-8) missed a big chance with its loss to Iowa State, though it does have a road win over Baylor on its resume. The Wildcats don't have any more games against the Big 12's top three, so they have a chance to make a late-season run. Texas Tech (17-9, 5-8) appeared to be headed toward the NIT at best just a week ago, but Monday night's win over Baylor provides bubble life. Road games against West Virginia, Oklahoma State and Kansas State could make the difference in the Red Raiders' season.

On the rise

Michigan. The Wolverines (17-9, 7-6 Big Ten) had a good week last week by beating rival Michigan State at home and Indiana on the road. Michigan took a bigger step toward the NCAA Tournament on Thursday night by beating No 11 Wisconsin. Minnesota, another Big Ten team on the bubble, is up next tomorrow. Arkansas. In need of a resume-boosting win, the Razorbacks (19-7, 8-5 SEC) came through Wednesday night by knocking off No 21 South Carolina in Columbia. A road win over a Top-25 team helps offset some of the slip-ups earlier in the season. Seton Hall. The Pirates (16-9, 6-7 Big East) were on the wrong side of the ledger last week after losing to St John's. A win over No 23 Creighton puts them right back in the mix, with opportunities against No 2 Villanova and No 24 Butler coming up. Illinois State. — AP

JOHNSON EYES WORLD
NUMBER ONE RANKING

LOS ANGELES: Dustin Johnson hits his tee shot on the 12th hole during the first round of the Genesis Open golf tournament at Riviera Country Club on Thursday, Feb 16, 2017. — AP

LOS ANGELES: Big-hitting Dustin Johnson made a strong start in his bid to claim the world number one ranking this week by firing a five-under 66 that left him two shots off leader Sam Saunders on the opening day of the weather-interrupted Genesis Open. Thursday's 75-minute fog delay led to play being halted due to failing light with 48 players still on the course. Heavy rain and high winds are expected to threaten play today.

Reigning US Open champion Johnson, who can claim the top ranking with a win should incumbent Jason Day tie for third or worse, made six birdies and one bogey to tie for second behind Saunders on the classic Riviera layout in Los Angeles. "Obviously, it would be great to get there but I'm focused on this week and this golf tournament, each shot that I'm hitting," said Johnson, who is in a five-way tie for second. Saunders, grandson of the late Arnold Palmer, made seven birdies in a bogey-free 64 as he seeks his maiden PGA Tour win in his 79th start.

"I just want to try and give myself the position to win any tournament out on tour," said Saunders, whose famed grandfather won the Los Angeles Open three times. "I'm still looking for my first win. If it could come at a place like this it would be incredibly special," the 29-year-old added. Joining Johnson at five-under were JT Poston, a qualifier who holed out from the fairway to eagle the par-five first hole, Daniel Summerhays, Brett Stegmaier and Cameron Percy. Among a pack of eight posting 67s are Ireland's Pdraig Harrington and crowd favorite Phil Mickelson, who displayed his short game magic to the delight of fans.

Mickelson began the round at the 10th and surged up the leaderboard with an eagle at the par-five 17th after banging his 317-yard approach off the greenside grandstand into deep rough. But the big lefty turned trouble into triumph when he hoisted up a high, soft pitch that found the bottom of the cup. World No 5 Hideki Matsuyama of Japan, who also has a chance at grabbing the number one spot with a win, was one-under through 16 holes when play ended. Australia's Day was tied for 74th on even par after 16 holes, two strokes better than defending champion Bubba Watson, who had played 17. — Reuters

BASILASHVILI STUNS TOP SEED KARLOVIC

RAFTER QUILTS AMID TOMIC, KYRGIOS STAND-OFF

WASHINGTON: Georgia's Nikoloz Basilashvili upset Croatian top seed Ivo Karlovic 7-6 (7/2), 6-3, Thursday to reach the quarter-finals of the ATP Memphis Open. A week shy of his 25th birthday, the world number 67 won all 37 of his first-serve points and took only 69 minutes to dispatch hard-serving 37-year-old Karlovic, ranked 20th. Basilashvili, seeking his first ATP crown, advanced to the last eight at the indoor hard-court event, where he will meet Australian qualifier Matthew Ebden, who downed US teen Taylor Fritz. 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 after one hour and 42 minutes.

Kazakhstan's Mikhail Kukushkin dispatched Barbados qualifier Darian King 6-3, 6-0 in 70 minutes to book a quarter-final spot against US fourth seed Steve Johnson, who rallied to oust compatriot Tim Smyczek 3-6, 6-4, 6-2. Kukushkin connected on 65 percent of his first serves and won 82 percent of his first-serve points while King managed to take only 36 percent of his first-serve points. Yesterday's other quarter-finals send US second seed John Isner against compatriot Donald Young and American Ryan Harrison against Bosnian Damir Dzumhur.

Tomic, Kyrgios stand-off

In another development, Pat Rafter stepped down as Tennis Australia's head of performance yesterday, ending his rocky relationship with the country's two polarising stars Nick Kyrgios and Bernard Tomic. After two years in the role, Rafter has been replaced by his deputy and former Davis Cup captain and coach Wally Masur. Masur will have the task of bringing the Tomic family back into the fold after relations soured under Rafter. Tomic made himself unavailable for a Davis Cup tie this month against the Czech Republic, citing scheduling issues.

Reports said Tomic's father John had a bitter ongoing feud over his son and daughter Sara involving funding from Tennis Australia. Last month at the Australian Open Rafter, a former world number one and two-time US Open champion,

admitted he had little input into the direction of the country's top two players. Rafter stepped down as Davis Cup captain in early 2015 following a turbulent time dealing with Tomic, while Kyrgios once tweeted: "Another negative comment out of Rafter's mouth. Does this guy ever stop #everyoneisaworkingprogress."

Rafter said recently that he preferred to leave Tomic and Kyrgios alone. "I haven't really been speaking to them very much and I don't really know where they're at," Rafter said. "I just sit back and watch from a distance. I don't really have a lot to offer them. "If they ever want to talk to me, I'm happy to talk."

Kyrgios and Tomic have frequently fallen foul of tennis authorities and have a love-hate relationship with the public. Kyrgios, 21, was fined for swearing and throwing his racquet in a spectacular meltdown at last month's Australian Open, when he threw away a two-set lead to bow out in the second round against Andreas Seppi. Tomic, 24, has also been plagued by controversy, making headlines last year when he turned his racquet the wrong way to face a match point against Fabio Fognini in Madrid. Masur said he was already in regular contact with John Tomic and confirmed that Sara Tomic had been offered funding under a restructuring by TA late last year.

"They've got to hit certain benchmarks to get X amount of funding but I feel like that's a positive because we're not saying, it's our way or the highway," Masur said. Rafter said his time as the Davis Cup captain and TA performance director had been an "eye-opener". "The time is right for me, I came in to Davis Cup and then in this role because I wanted to make a difference and I feel we have taken some major strides," he said. "This journey for me-through the Davis Cup years and now as performance director-has been an eye-opener to say the least. "The restructuring process that we went through in September last year was intense for everyone." — Agencies

JETS' CORNERBACK REVIS FACES CRIMINAL CHARGES

NEW YORK: New York Jets cornerback Darrelle Revis is expected to be charged with criminal violations related to a Sunday street altercation in Pittsburgh that left him injured, the city's Department of Public Safety announced Thursday. Police said charges pending include terroristic threats, robbery, conspiracy and aggravated assault. ESPN reported that Blaine Jones, Revis' attorney, has been told by Pittsburgh police that the NFL standout will be charged, with an arrest warrant to be issued and Revis placing himself in police custody. The incident began when two men approached Revis just before 3:00 am local time, one of them recording on his cellphone as they followed Revis.

Police said in a statement that Revis allegedly grabbed the phone in an attempt to delete the video, before tossing it on the road. The men then engaged in a verbal argument, police said, before another man came to Revis' assistance. The two men who had approached Revis, ages 22 and 21, told police they were then punched, and last remember waking up and speaking with officers. Witnesses said the two were unconscious for about 10 minutes. Police viewed the video and confirmed Revis was the subject.

Jones said Revis needed medical attention, but did not detail the injury. "The bottom line is, Darrelle Revis was the victim in all of this," Jones said. "He never went out to start a fight. He has stellar credibility. ... He feared for his safety." Revis, 31, is a four-time all-pro and a former Super Bowl champion with the New England Patriots. But next month he could lose his spot on the Jets, who could look to save \$15.3 million against the NFL salary cap by releasing Revis. In 10 NFL seasons, eight with the Jets, Revis has 29 interceptions, four forced fumbles and two sacks in 140 games, all of them as a starter. The Pittsburgh native played 15 games last season, finishing with five deflections and one interception. — AFP

WIZARDS ROUT PACERS AS BULLS EDGE CELTICS

WASHINGTON: With a host of scoring threats, the Washington Wizards have become one of the NBA's hottest teams, showing their scoring depth Thursday in a 111-98 rout of struggling Indiana. Otto Porter Jr had 25 points and eight rebounds, Markieff Morris added 21 points and seven rebounds, all-star John Wall contributed 20 points and 12 assists while Bradley Beal had 19 points as the Wizards led all the way. "We have a lot of threats and it's hard to key on any one guy," Beal said. "We are enjoying this. Winning like this is fun. "We are playing with a lot of energy and we don't care who is scoring or anything like that. We enjoy playing for each other."

The Wizards improved to 34-21, shooting 51.8 percent from the floor in inflicting the Pacers' sixth loss in a row. "We have been looking real good for the last few months," Wizards coach

Scott Brooks said. "I think we are in a good spot, but I think the thing I love about this group is that they are not satisfied. "We know we have a lot of work ahead of us. A tough part of our schedule is coming up. We are going to go into it with the right focus and challenge. "We're not going to win all of them, but we have to stick together when we don't," he said. "Our guys have done that."

The Wizards—who currently force the most opponent turnovers per game, averaging 15.6 - rank third in the Eastern Conference after their ninth victory in 10 games. "We are looking at the big picture," Morris said. "We still have a lot of season to go." "We have to make sure guys are working out over the All-Star break. We just have to stay ready." Myles Turner and Paul George each had 17 points to lead the Pacers—now 29-28 and sixth in the East—one game ahead of the Chicago Bulls, who edged visiting Boston 104-103 in Thursday's only other game.

The Bulls made all 22 of their free throw attempts, with Jimmy Butler sinking a pair with .9 of a second remaining to lift Chicago (28-29) to victory. Bulls scoring leader Butler, 9-for-9 from the free throw line on the night, drew a foul on Marcus Smart off a jump shot on the Bulls' final possession. Boston's Al Horford missed a fadeaway jumper as time expired. Butler scored 29 points and had seven assists for the Bulls. The Celtics, 37-20 and second overall in the East, were led by Isaiah Thomas with 29 points, including the Celtics' final 11 points. Thomas scored 20 or more points for the 41st consecutive game, breaking a franchise record previously held by Hall of Famer John Havlicek. — AFP



INDIANAPOLIS: Washington Wizards guard John Wall (top left) goes over the top of Indiana Pacers center Myles Turner (bottom) for the ball during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Indianapolis on Thursday, Feb 16, 2017. — AP

PETITION LEAVES BUDAPEST'S 2024 GAMES BID IN BALANCE

BUDAPEST: Budapest edged closer yesterday to a possible withdrawal of its bid to host the 2024 Olympic Games, dealing a potential further blow to global organizers' attempts to find a city to host the event following a number of pullouts. Hungarian political movement Momentum has collected more than 200,000 signatures on a petition against the bid, raising the prospect of a referendum, daily newspaper Magyar Nemzet reported yesterday.

Budapest's Mayor Istvan Tarlos told a news conference that, if a referendum against the bid was triggered, he would "seriously consider" a proposal to withdraw it. Budapest is competing against Paris and Los Angeles to host the Games, and an event whose costs have risen sharply over the past 20 years. If it did pull out, it would join Hamburg, Rome and Boston among candidate cities that later abandoned bids.

A Momentum spokesman declined comment on the newspaper report ahead of a news conference scheduled for 1230 GMT on Friday. Spokespeople for the government and bid organizers also declined to comment. Momentum, launched by a group of students born around 1989 when the country's Communist regime collapsed, will finish collecting signatures at the conclusion of a month-long campaign later on Friday and submit them to the Budapest election office. The authority will then rule whether a sufficient number of valid signatures - in broad terms amounting to 10 percent of Budapest's around 1.4 million voters - has been collected to call a referendum.

'The wishes of the people'

The International Olympic Committee is due to announce the 2024 host city in September. If Budapest won, Hungary would become the first Eastern European country to welcome the Summer Games in the post-Communist era. The government and the city's authorities have both supported the bid vocally but plebiscites are usually risky for Olympic hopefuls. Hamburg pulled out after a negative referendum result in 2015, while Rome mayor Virginia Raggi ended her city's bid last year to honour an election promise. A Zavecz Research institute poll published last week on news website Index.hu showed 51.95 percent of Budapest citizens would vote against the Olympics, up from 31.7 percent in September.

In a separate survey commissioned by the bid organizers in early December, 55 percent of Budapest residents backed the hosting of the Games. Prime Minister Viktor Orban's chief of staff, Janos Lazar, said on Thursday that the government was waiting on the outcome of the referendum initiative and would act accordingly. "The wishes of the people will be respected," he told a news conference. Momentum, assisted in the campaign by leftist and opposition parties, advocates spending the huge budget for the Games on sectors including healthcare and education, and postponing any further bids until Hungary is more prosperous.

"If a referendum is called, then we will boost our campaign hard," Janos Mecs, 25, a leading member of the movement said at a campaign stand in a Budapest square earlier this week. The stand was erected against the backdrop of a huge pro-Olympics billboard hanging from one of the buildings, where 57-year-old entrepreneur Janos Pasztor braved the chilly weather to add his signature to the campaign. "First this money should be spent on healthcare so that if I break my leg, I could get to a hospital instead of being taken care of on the street," he said. — Reuters

JAPANESE WOMEN 'ALL SMILES' AHEAD OF THE WINTER GAMES

SAPPORO: The women's ice hockey team from Japan is giving its fans plenty to smile about. Fresh off qualifying for next year's Olympics, the women's national team, nicknamed "Smile Japan," is aiming to keep the good times rolling at the Asian Winter Games, which begin this weekend in Sapporo. Japan, the highest-ranked team in the tournament, gets its campaign underway on Saturday against Kazakhstan. Japan beat Austria 6-1, France 4-1 and Germany 3-1 in the final round of Olympic qualification last week to reach their third Winter Games following Nagano and Sochi. While they lost all five games in Sochi, the team has shown much improvement and is hoping to contend for a medal in Pyeongchang. Eight teams will play in the women's Olympic tournament in Pyeongchang. — AP



PITTSBURGH: Sidney Crosby #87 of the Pittsburgh Penguins handles the puck as Dustin Byfuglien #33 of the Winnipeg Jets defends in the third period during the game at PPG PAINTS Arena on February 16, 2017. — AFP

CROSBY HITS 1,000 AS PENGUINS DOWN JETS

PITTSBURGH: Sidney Crosby completed his march to 1,000 career points in typically unselfish fashion. The Pittsburgh star wasted little time before starting his quest for the next thousand. The Penguins captain fed Chris Kunitz for a first-period goal against Winnipeg on Thursday to become the 86th player in NHL history to reach the 1,000-point plateau, added an assist on Phil Kessel's game-tying goal in the third, then put the winner past Connor Hellebuyck with 21 seconds left in overtime as his side escaped with a 4-3 victory. Crosby finished with three points to push his total 1,002. Evgeni Malkin also scored for Pittsburgh, while Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 44 shots for the Penguins, who improved to 6-0-2 since the All-Star break. Patrik Laine scored his 27th for Winnipeg. Paul Postma collected his first and Dustin Byfuglien his eighth for the Jets. Hellebuyck made 35 saves, but couldn't get a handle on Crosby's 31st of the season and 369th goal of his career.

ISLANDERS 4, RANGERS 2

Andrew Ladd scored twice to lead the New York Islanders over their crosstown rivals. Anders Lee and Nikolay Kulemin also scored, and Thomas Greiss stopped 25 shots to help the Islanders improve to 8-0-2 in their last 10 at home. John Tavares had two assists for his 12th multipoint game of the season. The Islanders, who swept the four games between the teams a year ago, beat the Rangers for the second time in three meetings this season. Nick Holden and Jimmy Vesey scored for the Rangers, whose season-high six-game winning streak was snapped. Henrik Lundqvist finished with 19 saves.

BLUES 4, CANUCKS 3

Vladimir Tarasenko and Alexander Steen scored third-period power-play goals to lift streaking St Louis over Vancouver. Magnus Paajarvi and Jori Lehtera also scored, and Kevin Shattenkirk had three assists for the Blues, who won their sixth straight game. Jake Allen made 18 saves. St Louis improved to 7-1 since Mike Yeo took over as coach, which is the best start for a coach in Blues history. Bo Horvat, Henrik Sedin and Brandon Sutter scored for the Canucks, who dropped their third game out of their last four. Jacob Markstrom made 17 saves.

SENATORS 3, DEVILS 0

Mike Condon made 21 saves in recording his fifth shutout of the season and Dion Phaneuf scored on a power play as Ottawa beat New Jersey. Erik Karlsson scored on a point shot that crawled into the net and Kyle Turris shot into an empty net in the final four minutes to give the Senators their third win in four games. Cory Schneider stopped 32 shots, but the Devils lost for the second time in regulation (4-2-1) in their last seven games.

SABRES 2, AVALANCHE 0

Sam Reinhart and Evander Kane scored and Robin Lehner made 23 saves as Buffalo beat Colorado. The Sabres moved within three points of Toronto for the final Eastern Conference wild-card spot. They have won consecutive games for the first time since a three-game winning streak from Jan 20-24. Lehner got his fifth career shutout and second of the season. The Avalanche lacked energy in the fourth of a season-long five-game road trip. Colorado has lost five in a row and 11 straight on the road. This was the Avalanche's ninth shutout loss. Calvin Pickard made 30 saves. — AP

NHL results/standings

Arizona 5, Los Angeles 3; Edmonton 6, Philadelphia 3; St. Louis 4, Vancouver 3; Minnesota 3, Dallas 1; Buffalo 2, Colorado 0; Ottawa 3, New Jersey 0; NY Islanders 4, NY Rangers 2; Pittsburgh 4, Winnipeg 3 (OT).

| | Western Conference | | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------|----|-----|------------------|-----|-----|
| | Central Division | | | Pacific Division | | |
| | W | L | OTL | GF | GA | PTS |
| Minnesota | 38 | 13 | 6 | 190 | 131 | 82 |
| Chicago | 35 | 17 | 5 | 166 | 147 | 75 |
| St. Louis | 31 | 22 | 5 | 167 | 168 | 67 |
| Nashville | 27 | 21 | 8 | 158 | 151 | 62 |
| Winnipeg | 26 | 29 | 5 | 174 | 191 | 57 |
| Dallas | 22 | 27 | 10 | 161 | 190 | 54 |
| Colorado | 15 | 38 | 2 | 109 | 186 | 32 |
| San Jose | 34 | 18 | 6 | 161 | 141 | 74 |
| Anaheim | 30 | 18 | 10 | 152 | 147 | 70 |
| Edmonton | 31 | 19 | 8 | 168 | 151 | 70 |
| Calgary | 29 | 26 | 3 | 152 | 165 | 61 |
| Los Angeles | 28 | 24 | 4 | 141 | 141 | 60 |
| Vancouver | 25 | 27 | 6 | 138 | 168 | 56 |
| Arizona | 20 | 29 | 7 | 136 | 177 | 47 |
| Eastern Conference | | | | | | |
| Atlantic Division | | | | | | |
| Montreal | 31 | 19 | 8 | 165 | 150 | 70 |
| Ottawa | 30 | 19 | 6 | 148 | 146 | 66 |
| Boston | 29 | 23 | 6 | 157 | 155 | 64 |
| Toronto | 26 | 19 | 11 | 174 | 167 | 63 |
| Florida | 25 | 20 | 10 | 140 | 158 | 60 |
| Buffalo | 25 | 23 | 10 | 143 | 161 | 60 |
| Tampa Bay | 25 | 24 | 7 | 154 | 160 | 57 |
| Detroit | 22 | 25 | 10 | 141 | 171 | 54 |
| Metropolitan Division | | | | | | |
| Washington | 39 | 11 | 6 | 192 | 121 | 84 |
| Pittsburgh | 36 | 13 | 7 | 201 | 158 | 79 |
| Columbus | 36 | 15 | 5 | 182 | 138 | 77 |
| NY Rangers | 37 | 19 | 1 | 194 | 151 | 75 |
| NY Islanders | 26 | 20 | 10 | 166 | 167 | 62 |
| Philadelphia | 27 | 24 | 7 | 151 | 177 | 61 |
| New Jersey | 24 | 23 | 10 | 131 | 162 | 58 |
| Carolina | 24 | 22 | 7 | 140 | 156 | 55 |

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

SRI LANKA OVERPOWER AUSTRALIA TO WIN FIRST T20

MELBOURNE: Chamara Kapugedera smashed a four off the last ball to give Sri Lanka a thrilling five-wicket victory over Australia in their first Twenty20 international at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday. The win kept Sri Lanka unbeaten in four T20 internationals in Australia and followed their 2-1 series win over South Africa last month. The pulsating win was made possible by a dashing 52 off 37 balls by Asela Gunaratne, who was named man-of-the-match for his match-turning innings.

Gunaratne slammed seven fours to share in a decisive 60-run stand with Milinda Siriwardana to put the Sri Lankans just 18 runs short of victory with 17 balls remaining. "We have beaten South Africa and Australia - one of the best teams in the world - and it is a good feeling," skipper Upul Tharanga said. "All the batters enjoyed the game. Fielding is the area where we have to improve. The bowlers, though, did well to keep them to 168."

It was a tense finish with skipper Aaron Finch making fielding changes before every ball to prevent Sri Lanka from getting home. But it was Kapugedera who stood up to the pressure and slammed fast bowler Andrew Tye's final delivery through the covers to the boundary rope for the winning hit. The win put Sri Lanka one up in the series with two matches to play in Geelong tomorrow and Adelaide on Wednesday. "Credit to the Sri Lankans. They came out swinging and attacked the run chase," Finch said.

"When you have the power to hit down the ground and also scoop over the keeper, it is tough to bowl to. "I thought we were a bit short. We lacked maybe a 15-plus over. There were a lot of positives too and I am looking forward to Geelong." For a time it looked as though the Australians, playing without their leading stars, Steve Smith, David Warner, Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood all on tour in India, would hold off the fast-finishing Sri Lankans. The home side posted a competitive total of 168 for six off their 20 overs with skipper Finch smashing two sixes and two fours in his topscoring 43 off 34 balls.

Finch shared in an opening stand of 76 with T20I debutant Michael Klinger. Klinger, making his debut at the age of 36 after starring with the Perth Scorchers in the domestic Big Bash League, hammered 38 off 32 balls with four boundaries. Lasith Malinga, who has played virtually no cricket for



MELBOURNE: Australia's Tim Paine (left) stumps Asela Gunaratne of Sri Lanka during the first Twenty20 cricket match between Australia and Sri Lanka at the MCG yesterday. —AFP

nearly a year due to injuries, was an influential figure taking two wickets in two balls and taking two catches. Malinga claimed the wickets of Travis Head for 31 off 24 balls and debutant Ashton Turner for 18 off 13 balls, both caught by Seekkuge Prasanna at deep mid-wicket.

Malinga finished with two wickets for 29 off his four overs. Pacesman Pat Cummins struck with the last ball of his opening over to have Tharanga edging to wicketkeeper Tim Paine for a duck in the first over of the Sri Lanka innings. Leg-spinner Adam Zampa claimed the big wicket of free-scoring opener Niroshan Dickwella for 30 off 25 balls. Dickwella, who slammed four fours and a six, looked to flick Zampa over mid-wicket only to lob a leading edge to Klinger at short third man in the ninth over. Dilshan Munaweera smashed a breezy 44 off 29 balls with six fours before he hit a short ball from Zampa to mid-wicket where Finch took a head-high catch. But Gunaratne took charge and his half-century turned the tide to set up the thrilling victory for the Sri Lankans. —AFP

SCOREBOARD

MELBOURNE: Scores in the first Twenty20 international between Australia and Sri Lanka at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday:

| Australia | | Sri Lanka | |
|---|-----|--|-----|
| A. Finch c Malinga b Gunaratne | 43 | N. Dickwella c Klinger b Zampa | 30 |
| M. Klinger c Malinga b Sandakan | 38 | U. Tharanga c Paine b Cummins | 0 |
| T. Head c Prasanna b Malinga | 31 | D. Munaweera c Finch b Zampa | 44 |
| M. Henriques c Kapugedera b Bandara | 17 | A. Gunaratne st Paine b Turner | 52 |
| A. Turner c Prasanna b Malinga | 18 | M. Siriwardana lbw b Turner | 15 |
| J. Faulkner not out | 14 | C. Kapugedera not out | 10 |
| T. Paine run out (Kulasekara) | 0 | S. Prasanna not out | 8 |
| P. Cummins not out | 0 | Extras (b1, lb3, w9) | 13 |
| Extras (b1, lb1, w4, nb1) | 7 | Total (5 wickets, 20 overs) | 172 |
| Total (6 wks, 20 overs) | 168 | Did not bat: S. Bandara, L. Malinga, N. Kulasekara, L. Sandakan | |
| Did not bat: A. Zampa, A. Tye, B. Stanlake | | Fall of wickets: 1-5 (Tharanga), 2-79 (Dickwella), 3-91 (Munaweera), 4-151 (Gunaratne), 5-152 (Siriwardana) | |
| Fall of wickets: 1-76 (Klinger), 2-86 (Finch), 3-116 (Henriques), 4-153 (Head), 5-153 (Turner), 6-162 (Paine) | | Bowling: Cummins 4-0-29-1, Stanlake 3-0-42-0 (4w), Faulkner 4-0-27-0 (1w), Tye 3-0-32-0, Zampa 4-0-26-2, Turner 2-0-12-2 | |
| Bowling: Malinga 4-0-29-2 (1w), Kulasekara 4-0-38-0 (1nb, 1w), Bandara 3-0-35-1 (1w), Prasanna 4-0-23-0 (1w), Sandakan 4-0-30-1, Gunaratne 1-0-11-1 | | Result: Sri Lanka won by 5 wickets. | |

SCOREBOARD

AUCKLAND, New Zealand: Scoreboard yesterday in the Twenty20 cricket international between New Zealand and South Africa at Eden Park:

| South Africa | | New Zealand | |
|--|-----|--|-----|
| Hashim Amla c Bruce b Wheeler | 62 | Glenn Phillips c de Kock b Morris | 5 |
| Quinton de Kock c Santner b Boult | 0 | Kane Williamson c Parnell b Phehlukwayo | 13 |
| Faf du Plessis lbw b de Grandhomme | 36 | Colin Munro b Morris | 0 |
| de Villiers c Wheeler b de Grandhomme | 26 | Tom Bruce b Tahir | 33 |
| J.P. Duminy run out | 29 | Corey Anderson c de Kock b Phehlukwayo | 6 |
| Farhaan Berhardien c Anderson b Boult | 8 | Colin de Grandhomme c Duminy b Tahir | 15 |
| Chris Morris not out | 13 | Luke Ronchi c de Kock b Tahir | 0 |
| Wayne Parnell not out | 0 | Mitchell Santner c Amla b Phehlukwayo | 5 |
| Extras (4b,4lb,3w) | 11 | Ben Wheeler b Tahir | 6 |
| TOTAL (for six wickets) | 185 | Tim Southee b Tahir | 20 |
| Overs: 20. Batting time: 86 minutes. | | Trent Boult not out | 1 |
| Fall of wickets: 1-15, 2-102, 3-123, 4-145, 5-171, 6-181. | | Extras (1lb,2w) | 3 |
| Did not bat: Andile Phehlukwayo, Dane Paterson, Imran Tahir. | | TOTAL (all out) | 107 |
| Bowling: Trent Boult 4-0-8-2, Ben Wheeler 4-0-49-1, Tim Southee 4-0-47-0 (2w), Mitchell Santner 4-0-40-0, Colin de Grandhomme 3-0-22-2 (1w), Colin Munro 1-0-11-0. | | Overs: 14.5. Batting time: 72 minutes. | |
| | | Fall of wickets: 1-10, 2-10, 3-38, 4-55, 5-60, 6-60, 7-68, 8-80, 9-106, 10-107. | |
| | | Bowling: Chris Morris 3-1-10-2, Dane Paterson 2-0-13-0, Wayne Parnell 3-0-40-0 (1w), Andile Phehlukwayo 3-0-19-3 (1w), Imran Tahir 3.5-0-24-5. | |
| | | Result: South Africa won by 78 runs. | |

BRILLIANT TAHIR SPINS SOUTH AFRICA TO VICTORY

AUCKLAND: Leg-spinner Imran Tahir justified his position as the top-ranked bowler in white-ball cricket with an inspired display in South Africa's 78-run victory over New Zealand in their one-off Twenty20 international at Eden Park yesterday. Tahir, who took two wickets in two balls in his second over, had his figures marginally sullied by successive sixes from Colin de Grandhomme but still finished with a career-best 5-24 in 3.5 overs, with the home batsmen unable to pick his googly.

The 37-year-old was able to build on a superb performance by opening bowler Chris Morris, who was also denied a hat-trick on his way to figures of 2-10 in his initial three-over spell. Andile Phehlukwayo claimed three victims, including the vital wicket of New Zealand captain Kane Williamson, as the hosts were dismissed for 107 in 14.5 overs in pursuit of South Africa's 185 for six. "They played well in all departments. Frustrating from our perspective, we didn't fire a shot," Williamson told reporters.

"On this ground, you don't know what a good score is. We pulled it back (when bowling) and probably gave ourselves a par target. But rotating strike is hard on drop-in sur-

faces and we lacked partnerships." The loss was New Zealand's first at home this summer. The South African top order also underlined how dangerous they would be in the five match one-day series that starts at Seddon Park in Hamilton tomorrow with nearly all of them making telling contributions. While Quinton de Kock fell for a duck in the third over, Hashim Amla (62), captain Faf du Plessis (36), AB de Villiers (26) and JP Duminy (29) all scored quickly.

Amla hit nine boundaries and a six in his 43-ball innings and combined with du Plessis in an 87-run partnership from 8.3 overs as the visitors looked well set to score in excess of 200. De Grandhomme, however, dismissed both du Plessis and de Villiers to leave their side on 145-4 in the 16th over, ensuring the all-rounders needed to push the innings on. Opening New Zealand bowler Trent Boult finished with an impressive 2-8 from four overs. "We played some good cricket," du Plessis said. "We were consistent with the bat on a wicket that bounced and we played really well. "We have had six or seven months that have been amazing. We are confident but we know that we have to rock up every day and perform." —Reuters

SPL Preview

RANGERS PRESS RESET BUTTON AFTER WEEK OF CHAOS

GLASGOW: Breaking up is never easy, but Rangers supporters are still seeking clarity on the club's split with former manager Mark Warburton following what has been another chaotic week in the life of the Glasgow giants. The club's board announced last Friday that Warburton, his assistant, David Weir, and the club's head of recruitment, Frank McParland, had resigned their positions at Ibrox—a version of events the trio strenuously deny.

The abrupt departure of the management team came almost five years to the day since the club's financial meltdown which saw Rangers enter administration in February 2012 over an unpaid tax bill during the short, but chaotic, reign of Craig Whyte. Liquidation followed in June 2012 to cap an amazing fall from grace. The club's rebirth in the lowest tier of Scottish football was seen as an opportunity to start afresh but following a further period of financial upheaval and boardroom infighting, a consortium headed by South African businessman Dave King took control in March 2015.

The new board's subsequent appointment of Warburton and Weir in the sum-

mer of 2015 was widely heralded after the Englishman's success with unfashionable Brentford. And the new management team initially hit the ground running as his patient passing philosophy paid off as he led the Gers to the Championship title, Challenge Cup and a defeat of rivals Celtic en-route to the Scottish Cup final. However, his team came up short on their return to the top flight and have won just 12 of their 24 league matches.

For the Rangers support second is nothing, but Warburton has left the Gers sitting in third-three points behind Aberdeen who also have a vastly superior goal difference. Worse, they trail Celtic by 27 points as the unbeaten Hoops chase a domestic cleansweep, and it now seems that second has become everything to Rangers as they chase a European spot. Whether Warburton resigned or was sacked, the Rangers board have pressed the reset button as they search for a way to be competitive with a Celtic side who are within touching distance of a sixth successive title and whose financial clout is growing.

In the interim, under-20s coach Graeme Murty has been put in charge of a

team low on confidence and with just one win in their past five league outings. But after clear the air talks with the first team stars this week, Murty is hopeful of building on last weekend's 2-1 Scottish Cup win over Morton when the Gers travel to take on Dundee tomorrow. "I just chatted to them about what they want to do and what they want to achieve and they were really open and honest," the former Scotland international said.

"They gave each other clear markers on what they expect from one another in terms of behaviour and performance. "Getting that out in the open and getting them to actually be as open as they were was really beneficial I think." As Rangers struggle, Celtic continue to go from strength to strength under former Liverpool boss Brendan Rodgers. With the League Cup already claimed, the record-breaking team remain unbeaten in 30 games since the start of the season and have won the past 19 league matches. That run looks set to be extended on Saturday when the Parkhead side host a Motherwell side that shipped seven to Aberdeen in midweek. —AFP

Scottish Premiership table

GLASGOW: Scottish Premiership table ahead of the weekend matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Celtic | 24 | 23 | 1 | 0 | 65 | 16 | 70 |
| Aberdeen | 24 | 14 | 4 | 6 | 47 | 22 | 46 |
| Rangers | 24 | 12 | 7 | 5 | 32 | 26 | 43 |
| Hearts | 24 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 45 | 31 | 37 |
| St Johnstone | 24 | 9 | 7 | 8 | 31 | 30 | 34 |
| Kilmarnock | 24 | 5 | 10 | 9 | 21 | 39 | 25 |
| Dundee | 24 | 6 | 6 | 12 | 24 | 34 | 24 |
| Ross County | 24 | 5 | 9 | 10 | 27 | 42 | 24 |
| Motherwell | 24 | 6 | 6 | 12 | 29 | 46 | 24 |
| Partick | 24 | 5 | 8 | 11 | 24 | 32 | 23 |
| Hamilton | 24 | 3 | 12 | 9 | 25 | 35 | 21 |
| Inverness CT | 24 | 3 | 9 | 12 | 28 | 45 | 18 |

French League Preview

TOULOUSE FACE SURGING PSG

PARIS: Toulouse coach Pascal Dupraz knows his team have reasons to be fearful this weekend as they travel to face a Paris Saint-Germain side fresh from a crushing win over Barcelona. PSG stunned Lionel Messi and co and sent a clear signal of intent to the rest of Europe by winning their Champions League last 16, first leg 4-0 at the Parc des Princes on Tuesday. The result has been celebrated in France as one of the greatest ever European performances by a French club and Toulouse could be forgiven for thinking now is not the time to face Unai Emery's side.

"I think Barcelona have a budget of 700 million euros (\$746m, £598m) while ours is 35 million," observed Dupraz. "That is 20 times greater so four times 20 is 80. So if we lose 79-0 logically speaking we are doing better than Barca. But if we lose 79-0 we are going to look like idiots." Mid-table Toulouse have been in good form in recent weeks and beat PSG 2-0 at home in September, but the capital club's performance against Barcelona was far from a one-off.

They may come into the weekend in second place, three points behind leaders Monaco, but they have won 11 and drawn one of their last 12 matches and scored 38 goals in that time. "I am not going to go to Paris, get there and say 'oh la la'. We will definitely get off the bus. But even before their exceptional performance we knew it was going to be complicated," added Dupraz. PSG are waiting on the fitness of skipper Thiago Silva, who did not play against Barcelona due to an apparent calf problem. Emery may also choose to rotate his squad but cannot afford to take the game lightly as Monaco have themselves been in superb form and show no signs of letting up.

Monaco warm up for City

Leonardo Jardim's side traveled to Corsica to face struggling Bastia yesterday as they look to continue their own unbeaten start to 2017. The principality club know they need to negotiate this fixture against a Bastia side in the relegation zone before they turn their thoughts to next week's Champions League trip to Manchester City. "The best preparation for the Champions League is to win so the most important thing just now is to concentrate on the league," said Jardim. "We are not thinking about City. Bastia are a team who play with a lot of intensity and need points. They are not in a good position in the table but we need to be wary." The title race risks becoming a two-horse affair with Nice stumbling recently and slipping five points behind the leaders. Lucien Favre's men travel to Lorient, the scene of their elimination

from the French Cup last month, where Mario Balotelli will hope to earn a recall.

The Italian did not feature in last week's draw at Rennes having started on the bench in the preceding win over Saint-Etienne. "He wasn't satisfied but I don't know any player who is happy being on the bench," said Nice goalkeeper Yoan Cardinale. "It was a blow to the back of the head for him but he has been very good in training this week." Saint-Etienne go to Montpellier in between the two legs of their Europa League tie with Manchester United, while Marseille host Rennes without leading scorer Bafetimbi Gomis, who has a knee injury. Former OM coach Franck Passi takes charge of struggling Lille for the first time as they go to Caen. - AFP

French League 1 table

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

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|
| Monaco | 25 | 18 | 4 | 3 | 75 | 23 | 58 |
| Paris SG | 25 | 17 | 4 | 4 | 50 | 18 | 55 |
| Nice | 25 | 15 | 8 | 2 | 41 | 20 | 53 |
| Lyon | 24 | 13 | 1 | 10 | 45 | 29 | 40 |
| Saint-Etienne | 24 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 26 | 19 | 36 |
| Marseille | 25 | 10 | 6 | 9 | 33 | 31 | 36 |
| Bordeaux | 25 | 9 | 9 | 7 | 29 | 31 | 36 |
| Guingamp | 25 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 30 | 30 | 34 |
| Toulouse | 25 | 9 | 6 | 10 | 31 | 28 | 33 |
| Rennes | 25 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 25 | 29 | 33 |
| Montpellier | 25 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 36 | 42 | 29 |
| Nantes | 24 | 8 | 5 | 11 | 18 | 33 | 29 |
| Dijon | 25 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 34 | 37 | 27 |
| Angers | 25 | 7 | 6 | 12 | 21 | 33 | 27 |
| Nancy | 24 | 7 | 6 | 11 | 18 | 32 | 27 |
| Metz | 24 | 8 | 5 | 11 | 24 | 44 | 27 |
| Lille | 25 | 7 | 5 | 13 | 23 | 32 | 26 |
| Caen | 24 | 7 | 4 | 13 | 25 | 42 | 25 |
| Bastia | 24 | 5 | 7 | 12 | 21 | 32 | 22 |
| Lorient | 24 | 6 | 4 | 14 | 27 | 47 | 22 |

Note: Metz deducted two points.



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

SPANISH LEAGUE

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Sporting Gijon v Atletico | 15:00 |
| beIN SPORTS 3 HD | |
| Real Madrid V RCD Espanyol | 18:15 |
| beIN SPORTS 3 HD | |
| Deportivo La Coruna v Alaves | 20:30 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Sevilla FC v SD Eibar | 22:45 |
| beIN SPORTS | |

ITALIAN LEAGUE

| | |
|---------------------------|--------------|
| Atalanta v Crotone | 20:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Empoli v SS Lazio | 22:45 |
| beIN SPORTS | |

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Hertha v Bayern Munich | 17:30 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Borussia v Wolfsburg | 17:30 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Eintracht v Ingolstadt 04 | 17:30 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| FSV Mainz v Werder Bremen | 17:30 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Hoffenheim v Darmstadt 98 | 17:30 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Hamburger SV v Freiburg | 20:30 |
| beIN SPORTS | |

FRENCH LEAGUE

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Olympique V Stade Rennes | 19:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| FC Metz V Nantes | 22:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Lorient V OGC Nice | 22:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Caen V Lille OSC | 22:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Angers V Nancy Lorraine | 22:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |

German Bundesliga table

BERLIN: German Bundesliga table ahead of this weekend's matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Bayern Munich | 20 | 15 | 4 | 1 | 45 | 12 | 49 |
| RB Leipzig | 20 | 13 | 3 | 4 | 36 | 20 | 42 |
| Eintracht Frankfurt | 20 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 25 | 18 | 35 |
| Borussia Dortmund | 20 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 40 | 23 | 34 |
| Hoffenheim | 20 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 36 | 21 | 34 |
| Hertha Berlin | 20 | 10 | 3 | 7 | 27 | 23 | 33 |
| Cologne | 20 | 8 | 8 | 4 | 29 | 18 | 32 |
| Freiburg | 20 | 9 | 2 | 9 | 26 | 34 | 29 |
| Bayer Leverkusen | 20 | 8 | 3 | 9 | 31 | 29 | 27 |
| Moenchengladbach | 20 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 22 | 27 | 26 |
| Schalke 04 | 20 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 24 | 21 | 25 |
| Mainz 05 | 20 | 7 | 4 | 9 | 29 | 35 | 25 |
| Augsburg | 20 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 18 | 24 | 24 |
| VfL Wolfsburg | 20 | 6 | 4 | 10 | 19 | 28 | 22 |
| Hamburg | 20 | 5 | 4 | 11 | 19 | 35 | 19 |
| Werder Bremen | 20 | 4 | 4 | 12 | 24 | 42 | 16 |
| Ingolstadt 04 | 20 | 4 | 3 | 13 | 17 | 32 | 15 |
| Darmstadt | 20 | 3 | 3 | 14 | 14 | 39 | 12 |

German League Preview

LAHM BACKS BAYERN'S STRUGGLING MUELLER

BERLIN: After thrashing Arsenal in mid-week, leaders Bayern Munich return to Bundesliga business at Hertha Berlin today with captain Philipp Lahm backing Thomas Mueller to return to form. Bayern head to the capital with a seven-point lead in Germany's top flight and one foot in the Champions League's quarter-finals after hammering Arsenal 5-1 in Wednesday's last 16, first-leg. Carlo Ancelotti opted for Thiago Alcantara instead of Mueller to run Bayern's attack against the Gunners.

The attacking midfielder scored two goals in a display his coach hailed as 'perfect'. Germany star Mueller was left on the bench but still managed to come on and score Bayern's fifth goal in his four minutes on the pitch after Thiago presented him with a simple tap-in. It had been 999 minutes since he had previously netted for Bayern. Ancelotti is set to rotate his squad with Mueller poised to make the starting line-up at Berlin's Olympic Stadium.

Lahm says home-grown Germany star Mueller is working tirelessly to rekindle his form. "He has a place in every team," Lahm told Kicker. "It's unbelievable the way he trains every day, he always looks forward and pushes, regardless of whether he plays from the start or not. "It's just a question of time until he finds his form." All of their six closest rivals lost last weekend and Berlin is a happy hunting ground for the Bavarians.

They won the Bundesliga title there with a record seven games to spare in March 2014, and have been victorious in their last 11 games against Hertha. Goalkeeper Manuel Neuer could record his 100th clean sheet in the league playing a team that has not scored against Bayern in their last five meetings. Having been as high as third this year, Hertha are down to sixth after winning just two of their last seven league games. Hertha striker Vedad Ibisevic is set to play despite an ankle knock. Second-placed RB Leipzig are at Borussia Moenchengladbach tomorrow looking to bounce back from defeats in their last two games.

Gladbach are on a roll and up to tenth after last week's 3-2 comeback win against Bayer Leverkusen, when they fought back from two goals down. There is a seven point gap behind Leipzig in the table, but the Saxons are wobbling. Their defense was badly caught out in their 3-0 home loss to Hamburg, their first home defeat this season, which came on the back of a 1-0 defeat at Dortmund. Centre-back Willi Orban is suspended while striker Yussuf Poulsen is out for the coming weeks with a leg injury. Fourth-placed Borussia Dortmund will host Wolfsburg on Saturday with their iconic south stand empty.

The club will lock fans out as part of a German FA (DFB) punishment after hooligans attacked RB Leipzig fans, including families, two weeks ago. Dortmund striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang is struggling for form after his howler in Tuesday's 1-0 Champions League defeat at Benfica. The striker missed four clear chances, including a second-half penalty and was hauled off with an hour gone in Portugal.

Spanish League Preview

LOWLY LEGANES HAND BARCA CHANCE TO LICK PSG WOUNDS

MADRID: Still reeling from their humiliation at the hands of Paris Saint-Germain, Barcelona can't afford a Champions League hangover as they return to La Liga action at home to Leganes tomorrow. Barca trail league leaders Real Madrid by a point, but have also played two games more than their title rivals, leaving Luis Enrique's men little room for error in their quest for a third straight La Liga title. Enrique has been the fall guy for Barca's disastrous showing in a 4-0 thrashing in Paris on Tuesday with fans, media and even the club's players criticizing his tactical set up.

Key midfielders Sergio Busquets and Andres Iniesta, who were overrun by PSG's pace and power, insisted Barca's problem was not one of attitude one but being outplayed thanks to PSG boss Unai Emery's master plan. Even Lionel Messi was off color as his mistake led to PSG's second goal, but Javier Mascherano claimed the five-time World Player of the Year is the only Barca player who can't be questioned. "Leo is indispensable and, yes, the rest of us are expendable," Mascherano told Barca magazine. "He is unique. We are talking about the best player in the history of this sport without any doubt."

Fortunately for the Catalans, they couldn't have picked better guests for a time of crisis as Leganes travel to the Camp Nou having been dragged into a battle against relegation by a 12-game winless run. Ironically, Enrique had rotated heavily throughout the first two months of the year to ensure Barca were not physically worn down before their trip to the French capital. Despite a first free midweek of the year to come after Sunday, though, Enrique is expected to ring the changes again with Lucas Digne, Rafinha, Ivan Rakitic, Denis Suarez and Arda Turan all in contention to come into the side.

Bale back

Madrid can open up a four-point gap at the top on Saturday when Espanyol visit the Santiago Bernabeu. The European champions enjoyed contrasting Champions League fortunes in midweek as they came from behind to beat Napoli 3-1 and could have even more firepower available with Gareth Bale in line for his return after three months out with ankle ligament damage. Real boss Zinedine Zidane resisted the temptation to rush the Welshman back into action after he returned to training last weekend, but is expected to at least appear off the bench. Espanyol's hopes of European football next season were punctured by a first home defeat since September to Real Sociedad last week-

Spanish La Liga table

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

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|
| Real Madrid | 20 | 15 | 4 | 1 | 54 | 18 | 49 |
| Barcelona | 22 | 14 | 6 | 2 | 61 | 18 | 48 |
| Sevilla | 22 | 14 | 4 | 4 | 44 | 28 | 46 |
| Atletico Madrid | 22 | 12 | 6 | 4 | 39 | 18 | 42 |
| Real Sociedad | 22 | 13 | 2 | 7 | 36 | 31 | 41 |
| Villarreal | 22 | 9 | 9 | 4 | 29 | 15 | 36 |
| Eibar | 22 | 10 | 5 | 7 | 36 | 29 | 35 |
| Athletic Bilbao | 22 | 10 | 5 | 7 | 28 | 26 | 35 |
| Espanyol | 22 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 30 | 29 | 32 |
| Celta Vigo | 21 | 9 | 3 | 9 | 33 | 36 | 30 |
| Las Palmas | 22 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 31 | 33 | 28 |
| Alaves | 22 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 21 | 28 | 27 |
| Real Betis | 21 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 21 | 31 | 24 |
| Malaga | 22 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 29 | 36 | 23 |
| Valencia | 21 | 5 | 5 | 11 | 29 | 40 | 20 |
| Deportivo La Coruna | 21 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 26 | 34 | 19 |
| Leganes | 22 | 4 | 6 | 12 | 15 | 37 | 18 |
| Sporting Gijon | 22 | 4 | 4 | 14 | 24 | 43 | 16 |
| Granada | 22 | 2 | 7 | 13 | 17 | 48 | 13 |
| Osasuna | 22 | 1 | 7 | 14 | 24 | 49 | 10 |

end to leave them four points off the top six.

And there is little in Espanyol's recent record against Madrid to give former Watford boss Quique Sanchez Flores's men hope as they have lost their last nine against Real and haven't won in their last 20 meetings. Sevilla can leapfrog Barca into second for at least 24 hours as they warm up for their Champions League clash with Leicester City on Wednesday by hosting the on-form Eibar, who harbor European ambitions of their own. Atletico Madrid could also have a return to Champions League action in mind when they travel to a Sporting Gijon side suddenly eyeing survival after their first win since December at Leganes last weekend. Any slip up by Atletico could be pounced on by Sociedad, who trail Diego Simeone's men by just a point in the battle for fourth, and host sixth-placed Villarreal in a huge clash for the final Champions League place on Sunday lunchtime. —AFP

RUSSIA HOOLIGANS WARN OF 'FESTIVAL OF VIOLENCE'

LONDON: Russian hooligans have warned of a "festival of violence" at next year's World Cup, in a BBC documentary aired on Thursday in which the fans celebrate street fights at Euro 2016. Hours after FIFA president Gianni Infantino said he was not concerned about violence at the tournament, the BBC's "Russia's Hooligan Army" showed fans predicting clashes between supporters. "For some it will be a festival of football, for others it will be a festival of violence," one such hooligan told the BBC, interviewed close to the Rostov stadium which will host World Cup matches. "Everyone from the fans' movement is looking forward to the World Cup taking place in Russia. There is no need to travel to have fun. Our opponents are naturally the English because they are the forefathers of hooliganism," he said.

The British broadcaster also spoke to members of the "Orel Butchers", a group of hardcore supporters of Lokomotiv Moscow who were accused of violence dur-

ing Euro 2016 in France. A leader of the group predicted a crackdown by Russian authorities, telling the BBC "they will just take down all leaders, all people who are capable of organizing anything and just lock them down." Despite the prospect of tighter rules against hooliganism, the Orel Butchers member said it was "100 percent guaranteed" that some fans in Russia will try to organize against England supporters.

Several Russians were expelled from France last year after street battles broke out with England fans in Marseille. The violence was celebrated by Russian hooligans in the documentary, with one boasting: "Our guys are more dangerous than special forces." Speaking in Qatar on Thursday, Infantino said he had faith in Russia's abilities to host the World Cup. "I am not concerned about trouble and violence in 2018," Infantino told journalists on the sidelines of a FIFA executive summit meeting in Qatar. He added that Russia was a "welcoming country, which wants to celebrate football". —AFP

JESUS ABSENCE OFFERS AGUERO CHANCE OF RENAISSANCE

Huddersfield: Pep Guardiola faces a double selection quandary as he prepares for an FA Cup fifth round visit to in-form Championship club Huddersfield Town today. The Manchester City manager, still active on three fronts as he seeks silverware in his first season in the English game, will be without injured Brazilian striker Gabriel Jesus who broke a metatarsal in this week's league victory at Bournemouth.

The talented teenager, who had scored three goals in as many league games since his January arrival, may not play again this season, with estimates putting his rehabilitation period at two to three months. Jesus has been flown to Barcelona to undergo treatment with Ramon Cugat, the City manager's physician of choice who has overseen the rehabilitation of a number of the club's players this season.

But Guardiola's decision as to Jesus's replacement is complicated by the looming Champions League last 16 first leg tie with French club Monaco, which takes place at the Etihad on Tuesday. Thereafter, and assuming they do not have to schedule an FA Cup replay with Huddersfield, City have a 12-day break until they are in action in a league visit to struggling Sunderland on March 5, with Guardiola using that

opportunity to take his players to Abu Dhabi for a period of warm weather training.

'Sergio important'

But, before then, Guardiola must decide whether to recall talismanic veteran Sergio Aguero as Jesus's replacement and run the potential risk of an injury ruling him out of the Monaco game-or recall Nigerian understudy Kelechi Iheanacho who, despite a prolific scoring record, appears to have fallen out of favor with Guardiola in recent weeks. Aguero appears likely to win the battle for selection and be granted his first start since Jesus broke into the first team picture with an exhilarating appearance when he came on as a substitute against Tottenham on January 21.

After the victory over Bournemouth, Guardiola acknowledged the important role he expects Aguero to fill over the remainder of the season. "I know how important Sergio is," he said. "I did yesterday, the day before, the last week, the last month." Meanwhile, Jesus's team mate and countryman Fernandinho has revealed he is hopeful the striker may be able to return before the end of the season.

"He was treading badly with his right foot, but we

will see what the doctors will say," said Fernandinho. "We are all hoping it was nothing serious and hopefully he can come back as soon as possible." Guardiola has fielded strong line-ups in the FA Cup until this fifth round stage and the game also appears a perfect opportunity for captain Vincent Kompany, who started the fourth round win at Crystal Palace to continue his comeback from injury. Huddersfield, meanwhile, will be without their influential Australian midfielder Aaron Mooy who is on loan from City and forbidden by FA rules from playing against his parent club in the competition.

Huddersfield manager David Wagner, who has led his club to within four points of automatic promotion to a top flight they last occupied in 1972, admits he will rotate his squad with a place in the Premier League far more important than a possible place in the sixth round of the cup. "We didn't do it only in the Cup, also since the beginning of December when we started our rotation," he said. "We don't have the biggest squad or budget, so to keep everybody healthy, we have rotated for 10-12 weeks. "It doesn't matter if we win or lose, it is if it makes sense for the next game and we will probably make changes against City." —AFP

FA Cup Preview

CHELSEA LOOKING TO AVOID CUP SAVAGING BY WOLVES

Wolverhampton: Chelsea will look to avoid an FA Cup upset at Wolverhampton Wanderers today with the mood still upbeat despite being held to a disappointing 1-1 draw at Burnley last Sunday. The Londoners hold an eight-point lead over Manchester City in the Premier League but the Cup could give them a chance to rest some of their more established players even against a side that knocked out Liverpool last time. Certainly manager Antonio Conte was able to make nine changes from his regular side for the fourth round tie at home to Brentford yet still emerge comfortable 4-0 winners.

Pedro was one of those that played against Brentford and could feature against Wolves too after claiming he is now "very happy" at Stamford Bridge. The Spanish winger came close to a return to Barcelona in the summer but no longer has any plans to leave following a successful campaign where he has scored nine times in 27 appearances. "This is the best moment for me at this club and also the best moment for the whole team since I've been here," he said.

"I'm very happy here. It's a good situation when you are top of the League and progressing in the FA Cup. We are on the right path. "Last year was a difficult one for me, for the club, for the team, but this year is different. "With this coach, all the team is focused on the fight for the title, with more confidence for every game and this is good. It's a completely different season. "Every day I'm more comfortable with the team, with my team-mates, with the club and I have a good relationship with the supporters. All is good for me here and I'm very happy with the situation."

'Analyse it, let it go'

Pedro, who won five league titles and three Champions League trophies whilst at Barcelona, admits he found the going tough in his first season in England last term but has now got used to the pace of the game. "It's very different compared to Spain, but now I'm in my second year here I understand the football. It's quicker, more intense and more competitive," said the 29-year-old, who was also a member of the Spain team that won the 2010 World Cup.

"For me it's different now I have adapted. I have to run a lot, play harder and I'm very quick, which helps me in the games here in England. "Here it's quicker when you attack and everything is different. You have to change mentally and it's difficult to adapt at first, but I have changed, I have done that now." Wolves enter the game on the back of their eighth home defeat of the Championship season after Wigan Athletic won 1-0 with a late goal on Tuesday.

Manager Paul Lambert claims a meeting with the Premier League leaders is the perfect game for his side and he is drawing on some advice from Ottmar Hitzfeld-his boss at Borussia Dortmund. "They won't need picking up or motivating," said Lambert. "I'm looking forward to it myself, the game and the atmosphere it's going to generate. "One of the greatest bits of advice I ever had was from Ottmar Hitzfeld. He actually sent me a nice text when we beat Liverpool so we keep in touch. "He and Martin O'Neill were the best managers I worked under. —AFP



LONDON: Arsenal's manager Arsene Wenger watches over a training session at London Colney, Hertfordshire, England. —AP

ARSENAL DECISION LOOMS FOR UNDER-FIRE WENGER

LONDON COLNEY: Arsene Wenger said yesterday that he will make a decision on his Arsenal future "in March or April" as he vowed to remain in football management come what may next season. The Frenchman is out of contract with the north London side at the end of the current campaign and questions over whether he will stay at Arsenal intensified after the Gunners' humiliating 5-1 defeat by Bayern Munich in the Champions League on Wednesday. "No matter what happens I will manage for another season," Wenger, who has been Arsenal's manager for more than 20 years, told reporters at the club's training ground, north of London yesterday.

"Whether it's here or somewhere else, that is for sure," the 67-year-old added. "If I said March or April it is because I didn't know. I do not want to come back on that. We have other priorities at the moment. "I hate defeat and it's hard to take,

but I have the strength and experience to come back from that," he added ahead of Arsenal's fifth-round FA Cup tie away to non-league Sutton United on Monday. What made the Bayern defeat all the more bitter for Arsenal's supporters was that it meant, barring an extraordinary second leg, the Gunners will be knocked out in the last 16 of the Champions League for the seventh year in a row.

Meanwhile, Arsenal have not won the Premier League since 2004 and could not mount a sustained challenge even when 5,000/1 outsiders Leicester took the title last season. That domestic title drought looks set to continue, with Arsenal currently 10 points adrift of Premier League leaders Chelsea. But Wenger warned Arsenal fans, many of whom have been heavily critical of him in recent times, that the club's form will not improve spectacularly just as a result of him leaving the Emirates Stadium. —AFP

Sports



Sri Lanka overpower Australia to win T20

44



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Swedish striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic (center) heads the ball to score but is ruled offside during the UEFA Europa League Round of 32 first-leg football match between Manchester United and Saint-Etienne at Old Trafford stadium on February 16, 2017. —AFP

IBRAHIMOVIC, DZEKO RUN RIOT IN EUROPA

SPURS BEATEN 1-0; LYON ROUT AZ; FIORENTINA EDGE GLADBACH

LONDON: The goals continued to flow for Manchester United's Zlatan Ibrahimovic and AS Roma's Edin Dzeko as they bagged hat-tricks to help their teams take commanding leads in the first legs of their Europa League last 32 ties on Thursday. United swept aside St Etienne 3-0 at Old Trafford and Roma made light work of last season's semi-finalists Villarreal with a 4-0 win in Spain, leaving their sides with little work to do in next week's return encounters.

Tottenham Hotspur's Europa League campaign, however, got off to a frustrating start as they were beaten 1-0 at mid-table Belgian outfit Gent, while Olympique Lyonnais beat AZ Alkmaar 4-1 away and Fiorentina edged Borussia Muenchengladbach 1-0. St Etienne will be totally sick of the sight of Ibrahimovic as the Swede took his tally against the Ligue 1 side to 17 goals in 14 games, having terrorised Les Verts during his four years at Paris St Germain. "Every time I've played against St Etienne, with hard work there has been a couple of goals. I've scored a couple of goals tonight and hopefully I can do the same next week," Ibrahimovic told BT Sport.

He opened the scoring with a deflected free kick in the first half and added two more - a tap-in and a late penalty - after the break as United quelled the visitors' early enthusi-

asm. The match was billed as a battle of the Pogba brothers with younger sibling Paul facing St Etienne's Florentin for the first time in a competitive encounter. It was the 35-year-old Ibrahimovic who stole the show, however, grabbing his first United hat-trick and taking his tally in a remarkable maiden season at Old Trafford to 23.

Rich Vein

Dzeko is in a similarly rich vein of form at Roma, who swatted aside a Villarreal team who are in freefall having now won just one of their last 10 games in all competitions. Emerson Palmieri gave Roma the lead after 32 minutes and then Dzeko took over after the break, netting for the seventh straight game to double the lead in the 65th minute before adding two more goals to take his tally for the campaign to 28.

Spurs, who have dropped into the competition from the Champions League, were off color throughout in Belgium and were undone in the second half when journeyman French striker Jeremy Perbet stroked home at the second attempt on the hour. Spurs had arrived looking to restore pride in north London football after Arsenal were thrashed 5-1 by Bayern Munich in the Champions League on Wednesday but were stifled in a poor performance and were lucky to

escape with a one-goal deficit. After Perbet scored, Gent, eighth in the Belgian league, had a golden chance to double their lead but Danijel Milicevic's effort was tipped onto the post by keeper Hugo Lloris.

Gladbach came into their encounter with Fiorentina on a hot streak having won their last four games and they dominated possession and made several chances against the Italians. The Serie A side were resilient at the back, however, and grabbed the only goal when Federico Bernardeschi fired home a fine free kick in the dying seconds of the first half. Lyon will take a commanding lead into their second leg against AZ Alkmaar after teenager Lucas Tousart scored his first senior goal and Jordan Ferri rounded off the scoring in stoppage time either side of Alexandre Lacazette's double.

Alireza Jahanbakhsh had reduced the deficit for AZ with a 68th-minute penalty. Schalke 04's Klaas-Jan Huntelaar netted his 50th European goal to round off a 3-0 win at PAOK Salonika while Anderlecht overcame a sluggish Zenit St Petersburg, playing their first competitive game in 10 weeks, to win 2-0 in Belgium. Elsewhere, Shakhtar Donetsk won 1-0 at Celta Vigo with a 27th-minute goal from Gustavo Blanco Leschuk, while Sparta Prague were thrashed 4-0 at Rostov and FC Krasnodar beat visitors Fenerbahce 1-0. —Reuters