

SUBSCRIPTION

Kuwait Times



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Kuwait offers treatment to Syria refugees in Turkey



Cabinet picks contradict Trump stands on issues



Top two collide in latest challenge for flying Real



WITH EYE ON TRUMP, PARIS TALKS TO PUSH FOR ME PEACE

SHEIKH KHALED AL-SABAH TO LEAD KUWAITI DELEGATION



150 Fils



Max 19°
Min 07°



NABLUS: A Palestinian protestor uses his jacket to cover his face from rising smoke during clashes with Israeli security forces following a demonstration in the village of Kfar Qaddum near Nablus in the occupied West Bank yesterday.—AFP

SPAIN, HUNGARY ARREST 4 WITH ALLEGED IS LINKS

MADRID: Four people with suspected links to Islamic State jihadists were arrested yesterday in separate incidents in Spain and Hungary, with several weapons also being seized, authorities said.

Spain's interior ministry said police detained two Spanish nationals, who were part of a group "that had reached a very high level of determination to carry out terrorist activities". The group was "fully aligned with the strategy of the terrorist organization Daesh," the ministry said, using an Arabic acronym for IS. Police seized a long gun and three knives during searches of six houses carried out as part of the operation in Ceuta, the tiny Spanish territory bordered by Morocco on one side and the Mediterranean Sea.

Meanwhile, Hungarian authorities said they arrested two young women from France and Belgium allegedly seeking to join IS in Syria. The Belgian, 18, and the French national, 19, were trying to cross into Serbia early yesterday, a police spokesperson told Hungarian news agency MTI.

The women, who were not named, were travelling on a bus from Vienna to Sofia from where they planned to reach Syria and join IS. They were subject to warrants issued for previous "acts in connection with terrorism," Gyorgy Bakondi, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's chief security advisor, told public television. No further details were released. — AFP

ACCIDENT MYSTERY SOLVED; BEDOON HELD FOR MURDER

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior's relations and security media department stated that its detectives managed to unravel the mystery surrounding a normal traffic accident that turned out to be a murder.

The sources explained that a 36-year-old bedoon was arrested for deliberately running over his own brother several times before he used a hammer to smash his skull and finish him.

The sources added that the murderer turned himself in and justified his action by saying that he committed the crime due to family problems. The suspect is facing first degree murder charges.

Meanwhile, a citizen in his thirties was found dead in his house with drug paraphernalia and empty plastic bags with traces of drug by his bed, said security sources. Initial reports suggest that the man would have died of drug overdose. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

PARIS: Around 70 countries and international organizations make a new push for a two-state solution in the Middle East at a conference tomorrow, just days before Donald Trump takes office vowing unstinting support for Israel. The Paris meeting aims to revive the moribund Israeli-Palestinian peace process, amid fears of fresh violence if Trump implements a pledge to recognize the contested city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. But neither Israel nor the Palestinians will be represented in Paris, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has dismissed it as a "rigged" conference, insisting that only bilateral talks can bring peace.

Meanwhile, First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah will leave for Paris today to lead Kuwait's delegation to the conference. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled will deliver a speech during the gathering, elaborating on Palestinian and Arab concerns over the regional peace process and reiterating Kuwait's stance on Palestinian state. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's accompanying delegation includes Assistant Foreign Minister for the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's Office Affairs Sheikh Dr Ambassador Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Paris Sami Al-Suleiman, Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani and several other senior officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

On his farewell tour, US Secretary of State John Kerry will join foreign ministers from around 40 countries and representatives from the UN, EU, Arab League and other organizations in calling for a two-state deal.

The meeting is also expected to back a UN resolution last month condemning Israeli settlement building in occupied Palestinian territory. The UN Security Council adopted the resolution after the Obama administration—in a parting shot at Netanyahu—took the rare step of abstaining from the vote. Netanyahu called the resolution "shameful" and has also lashed out at the Paris meeting.

On Thursday he called the gathering "a rigged conference, rigged by the Palestinians with French auspices to adopt additional anti-Israel stances".

The Palestinians, who are trying to rally opposition to a contentious promise by Trump to move the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, have lauded the multilateral initiative. "The bilaterals have not ended occupation even though we have been engaged in bilateral talks for the last 26 years," said senior Palestinian official Mohammad Shtayyeh.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas will meet French President Francois Hollande in the coming weeks to be briefed on the conference outcome, French diplomats said. Netanyahu declined a similar invitation, they added.

Writing in Le Monde newspaper on Thursday, Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said France was not trying to impose a solution on the Israelis and Palestinians but wanted to halt an "infernal cycle of radicalization and violence".

Palestinians were seeing "their future state melt away" as Israel continued expanding its settlements, "resulting in more occupation," he said. Israelis meanwhile were subjected to "nearly daily violence by those who "harness frustrations to promote an agenda of hatred," Ayrault added.

Peace efforts have been at a standstill since a US-led initiative collapsed in April 2014. Hardline Israeli lawmakers, including some from Netanyahu's Likud party, have said Trump's win represents an "historic opportunity" to end chances of Palestinian statehood. — Agencies

Photo

o f t h e d a y



A butterfly and a flower.-Photo by Ahmed Sorur—KUNA

KUWAIT DISTRIBUTES FOOD AID TO LIBERATED AREAS IN MOSUL

IRBIL: The State of Kuwait yesterday delivered about 150 tons of food and relief materials to the liberated districts of the city of Mosul. Representative of the Iraqi Unified Medical Association for Relief and Development Fahad Al-Obeidi told Kuwait News Agency that food baskets were distributed to the families in Mosul. He added that some 5,000 food baskets were distributed with each weighing 30 kilograms. Al-Obeidi pointed out that other families in the province would receive other batches later.

On his part, Chairman of the Strategic

Planning Commission Council of Nineveh province Khalaf Al-Hadidi said that Kuwait was among the first countries which assisted the province, expressing thanks and appreciation to the State of Kuwait for such generous aid. Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and other Kuwaiti charitable bodies have provided assistance in previous occasions to Iraqis escaping from Mosul, the last stronghold of the so-called Islamic State (IS) On October 16 of 2016, the Iraqi army - along with local and international allies - launched the "Battle of Mosul" operation which aims at ridding Iraq from IS.

Living in government-established camps, some 130,000 displaced Iraqis from Mosul try to survive on whatever the authorities and humanitarian organizations might offer in terms of relief aid and food. As a result of the ongoing operation to liberate Mosul from the so-called Islamic State (IS), a number of civil society volunteers began to distribute millions of loaves to help feed the displaced. Muhannad Al-Awamri, a media coordinator and a civil society volunteer, said that the bread distribution campaign had received strong support from different components of the Iraqi society.

The volunteer, who's a representative of the Nineveh Governorate network for civil society organizations, revealed that their efforts was not only supported by the Iraqi government, but also was backed up fellow Arab countries such as Kuwait and the UAE. He hoped that this effort will help ease the suffering of the displaced, affirming that the people of Iraq will stand together against the terror propagated by the IS terrorists in 2016, the Ministry of Displacement and Migration delivered thousands of food baskets and offered assistance to Iraqis escaping from Mosul.—KUNA



Families in Mosul receive Kuwait's relief materials.—KUNA Photos



One of the injured Syrian refugees in Reyhanli town receives medical assistance from the Kuwaiti team.



TURKEY: Kuwait's Patient helping Fund medical team in Turkey.—KUNA Photos

KUWAIT OFFERS TREATMENT TO SYRIAN REFUGEES IN TURKEY

ANKARA: Kuwait's Patient helping Fund medical team has begun delivering medical assistance to injured Syrian refugees in Reyhanli town in Hatay province south of Turkey. Member of the team and general surgeon Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Musalem said yesterday the team has visited 20 quadriplegic and paraplegic patients who have spine injuries due to fire shooting. The team will conduct

urgent surgeries to those who urgently need it and offer thorough diagnosis in order to prescribe the right medical help.

Al-Musalem said that Kuwait has always been pioneering to offer humanitarian assistance, hence, voluntary work has been encouraged at government and individual levels. On his part, director of Reyhanli medical center Dr. Osama Ghali said that the

center receives nearly 300 Syrian refugees on a daily basis. Reyhanli is a town and district of Hatay Province, on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey, near the country's border with Syria. Its Turkish population is only 90,000 while the Syrian refugees' population amounts to 130,000. The Turkish government allows 20 injured Syrians to enter its border crossing Bab Al-Hawa to receive medical treatment.—KUNA



Dr. Osama Ghali



Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Musalem



PAAET HONORS 29 EXPATRIATE STUDENTS

KUWAIT: Under the patronage and with the attendance of PAAET director, Dr. Ahmed Al-Athari, a ceremony was recently held to honor 29 expatriate students who had been studying at PAAET colleges on scholarships. The ceremony was also attended by dean of the diplomatic corps in Kuwait, the ambassador of Senegal, Abdul Ahad Umbaki and a number of PAAET officials.



KUWAIT OIL PRICE UP TO \$50.77 PB

KUWAIT: The price of Kuwaiti oil went up USD 1.37 to reach USD 50.77 per barrel (pb) on Thursday after being at USD 49.40 pb the day before, said Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) yesterday. The Brent crude price was up by 20 cents to USD 55.30 pb, the same case with the West Texas Intermediate, which went up by seven cents to USD 52.32 pb.—KUNA

ZAIN ANNOUNCES IBRAHIM AL HABEEB SIXTH WINNER IN PAY ONLINE AND WIN

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced the winner of the sixth week of its "Pay Online and Win" draw that will see a weekly postpaid winner of four valuable prizes when paying their bill using Zain's website or app as well as a grand prize at the final draw at the end of this January. Zain announced Ibrahim Ali JarAllah Al Habeeb winner of 4 valuable prizes in the sixth week of the draw, including iPhone 7, Touch Hotspot LTE-A with free 1.5 TB Prepaid Internet line valid for 3 months, and iPad mini 4.

The draw, held weekly until Jan 22 2017, will see one weekly winner of four valuable prizes, including iPhone 7, Touch Hotspot LTE-A with free 1.5 TB Prepaid Internet line valid for 3 months, and an entertainment device. The grand prize winner, announced at the end of the campaign, will receive iPhone 7, iPhone 7 Plus, Touch Hotspot LTE-A with free 1.5 TB Prepaid Internet line valid for 3 months, and a PlayStation 4 (1 TB).

Postpaid customers will get one chance to enter the weekly draws as well as the final draw for every KD1 paid through Zain's digital channels, including the company's website (pay.kw.zain.com) and Zain's app available for iOS and Android. Zain launched this exciting promotional campaign to reinforce its leadership position and its pledge in offering the best products and services to meet its customers' personal and professional telecommunications needs, who are considered Kuwait's biggest family of subscribers.



AL-SAGOBI WELCOMES MUNICIPALITY'S MAYOR OF N'DJAMENA

KUWAIT: The Security general of the Kuwait's municipality headquarter, Yousef Al-Sagobi welcomes the municipality's mayor of N'Djamena in Fifth circuit, Mohammad Ali Ahmad Aghbsh yesterday morning. Al-Sagobi discussed about several issues related to the municipality's working ways to support the relationship between the two countries with Mohammad. He also showed them several projects that has been approved

by the Kuwait's municipality Headquarter.

In addition to the work life and work mechanism of the headquarter, the variation of technical committees, and their especially. He also had approval to start preparation of the memorandum to be allies between the two countries to achieve cooperation between Kuwait and the republic of Chad for support in environment, hygiene, nutrition, construction

rules, markets, slaughterhouse and recycle wastes.

Mohammad Ali praised the warm welcome and conveys' N'Djamena and members of the municipality head-quarter's greetings and appreciation to Kuwait's citizens and hailed Kuwait's municipality experience in their work. As his final destination in Kuwait, he visits Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's hall and the technical committee's hall.



WATER FOUNTAINS AT SHEIKH JABER AL-AHMAD CULTURAL CENTER

KUWAIT: The water fountains at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural (JACC) are viewed as an additional attraction to this monumental Kuwaiti touristic site. With amaz-

ing color displays and lighting, the fountains welcomed visitors to the JACC, a facility which was opened on Oct 31, 2016. — KUNA

VIVA CONCLUDES ITS PARTICIPATION AT CES

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, concludes its participation in The International Consumer Electronics Show "CES 2017," held from 5 to 8 January in Las Vegas, NV. VIVA visited most of the companies' booths, whether eye-popping TVs, futuristic cars, shiny mobile devices, mind-boggling virtual reality, robots or amazing cameras, it covered their latest innovations and products through Snapchat and Instagram, with a comprehensive explanation about the mechanism and specifications.

The International Consumer Electronics Show (International CES) showcased more than 3,800 big international companies, including manufacturers, developers and suppliers of consumer technology hardware, content, technology delivery systems and more; a conference program with more than 300 conference sessions and more than 165K attendees from 150 countries.

It is noteworthy that for 50 years, CES has been the launch pad for new innovation and technology that has changed the world. Held in Las Vegas every year, it is the world's gathering place for all who thrive on the business of consumer technologies and where next-generation innovations are introduced to the marketplace.



THREE AUK ENGINEERING TEAMS WIN AT THE SMART KUWAIT COMPETITION

KUWAIT: Three AUK teams from the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department were declared winners of the first, second, and third place in the Smart Kuwait Competition organized by the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET). The competition was held for the first time in Kuwait as part of the Heading Global Conference—whereby students from universities around the GCC presented projects in the categories of Smart Design, Smart City, Smart Learning, Smart Manufacture, and Smart Agriculture, to a panel of judges that comprised of faculty members from different institutions. The winning projects were announced at the Heading Global Conference in November and received prizes that totaled KD10,000 in value.

Listed below are the categories and projects of the three winning teams:

1st Place Winner of the Smart City Category

Project Name: Sun Chaser Robot

Description: This project aims to increase the efficiency and usability of solar energy. It is a tracker system that can detect the best position of the sun in order to extract the maximum amount of sunlight using four sensors. It rotates the solar panels toward the angle of the maximum sunlight using servomotors and generates power to charge batteries to be used for different applications.

Team: Manal Al-Enezi and Esraa Al-Qattan

Supervisor: Dr. Seyed E. Esmaeili

2nd Place Winner of the Smart Industry Category

Project Name: Giving Hands

Description: The idea behind this project is to solve two problems using one solution, the Smart Refrigerator. The project aims to reduce food waste by donating it to the needy, while at the same time provide a smart and accessible solution for those who need food supplies. People can donate certain types of food items and keep them in a smart refrigerator available to the public. The Smart Refrigerator will then send an SMS message for the users in the database informing them of the available items. The Smart Refrigerator is equipped with a temperature sensor to get rid of items in case of a malfunction and is also provided with a mechanism to discard expired items.

Team: Maha Al-Mari, Anwar Al-Khalaf, and Wed Al-Smiran

Supervisor: Dr. Seyed E. Esmaeili

3rd Place Winner of the Smart Home category

Project Name: NOAH

Description: NOAH (NOA's house) is a modernized smart house that will solve multiple problems and make life easier and more luxurious. NOAH -just like the human sympathetic

and parasympathetic nervous systems- can detect both dangerous and peaceful situations. NOAH approaches safety by detecting dangerous behaviors and symptoms. So, it can detect the elder's emergency behaviors such as falling or calling out for help, or observe the movements of a child if it comes near any of the house's hazardous locations such as electric plugs or windows. In addition, it can detect fire or smoke, call the fire department and notify other residents to evacuate the place. Moreover, NOAH can recognize faces for security issues to distinguish between residents and outsiders.

Team: Omar Abbas, Amr Lotfy, and Ahmed Abdel-Basset

Supervisor: Dr. Mohammed El-Abd.



Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah



Suleiman Al-Fahad

Hospital visit

Deputy PM and minister of interior, sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah and his undersecretary, Lt. general Suleiman Al-Fahad yesterday visited police captain, Ismail Bahbahani at Mubarak Al-Kabeer hospital where he is being treated from injuries he sustained while arresting an alcohol dealer in Salwa.

Crime

Report

Worker escapes death

Workers in an under construction courts complex in Hawalli recently escaped death when a five meter long steel beam fell from the seventh floor, said security sources noting that the beam only caused material damage.

Firemen injured

A fire recently broke out in an electric materials warehouse located over an area of 5000 square meters in Amghara, said security sources noting that fire teams were dispatched to the scene who managed to control the fire without reporting any casualties except for two firemen who were injured in the process.

Copper cables stolen

Lawyer of an oil company recently reported that unidentified robbers had stolen copper cables from two electricity transformers at the company's site. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Smuggle attempt

Customs inspectors at Shuwaikh port recently foiled an attempt to smuggle 422 cartoons of fake replicas of famous attire brands.

Egyptians arrested

Three Egyptians who were wanted in Egypt for murder and attempted murder were recently arrested in Kuwait after receiving Interpol reports about the suspects, said security sources.

Failed attempt

In an attempt to escape an arrest, a non-Kuwaiti alcohol pusher and his friend ran over a police detective in Salwa before his colleagues managed to control and apprehend them, said security sources.

Female held captive

A lawyer recently reported that his client; a female citizen who hired him to sue her family, was held captive by her family, said security sources noting that the lawyer urged security forces to investigate the matter and release her.

Security officers acquitted

State security recently acquitted two Egyptian security officers guarding a park in Jahra of charges of trading in weapons, said security sources. —Al-Rai/Al-Anbaa

By Hanan Al-Sa'doun

Fire at Bayan

Following up the fire at a Bayan high school, MOI's relations and security media department announced that security forces managed to arrest a 15-year-old citizen for setting the school director's and his secretaries offices ablaze. The sources added that the suspect was arrested with the possession of the tools he used. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.



GPA HOLDS GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN MANAMAH

BAHRAIN: Under the patronage of Bahrain's minister of information, Ali Bin Mohammed Al-Romaihi, The Gulf Press Association (GPA)'s will hold its 16th conference and general assembly tomorrow in Manamah, Bahrain. In this regard, GPA's secretary general, Mohammed Al-Othman said that the conference will witness electing the new chairman and secretary general and that many projects will be discussed. He also noted that the conference will be attended by representatives of member GCC and Yemen newspapers. Further, Al-Othman stressed that chairman, Turki Bin Abdullah Al-Sadeeri will not run for the elections so that new blood can take over.

MULLA INDUSTRIES JOIN HORECA 2017

KUWAIT: Preparations for the Horeca Kuwait 2017 exhibition are steadily progressing and attracting more companies to take part in it as an event providing a golden opportunity to scientifically exchange expertise that would match the local market needs and future expansion plans. Under the patronage and attendance of minister of information and minister of state for youth affairs, sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, the exhibition is due to be organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Co. at Mishref International Fairgrounds from 16 to 18 Jan 2017.

In this regard, the manufacturing manager at Al-Mulla Industries Company, Jawhar Othman Khan said that Horeca Kuwait had gained a great reputation in the Middle East over the past years and that this encouraged Al-Mulla Group to take part with its manufacturing sector, which is closely related to the food companies partaking in the exhibition. Jawhar also noted that Al-Mulla Group was one of the oldest companies in the region and that it was established in 1938 in various sectors including manufacturing, commercial



Nabilah Al-Anjari



Jawhar Othman Khan

and financial sectors. He added that Al-Mulla was the exclusive agent of Carrier products and the leading Belgian hydro-logic cranes, Dhollandia.

Meanwhile, and out of its social responsibility in supporting small Kuwaiti projects, Leaders groups announced launching the 'Kuwaiti Scan House' to create a link amongst young

entrepreneurs. Leaders Group will also allocate two booths on the exhibition for this project. Speaking on the occasion, Vision Plus sales and marketing manager, Dr. Ahmed Al-Sanfawi said that in collaboration with Horeca, his company will support the youth and highlight their activities, products and creations.

NATIONAL GUARDS ORGANIZES LECTURES UNDER SECURITY FIRST



KUWAIT: Within the National Guards' 2020 strategic plan to spread awareness under the title of 'Security First', the national

Guards Moral Guidance Department recently organized a number of lectures about e-crimes. The lectures were held in collabora-

tion with MOI's security media and criminal investigation departments where lit. colonel, Khaled Al-Sabah lecture on defining e-

crimes, their types and means of protection to avoid legal accountability while using websites and various social media networks.

NATIONAL GUARDS CONDUCTS DESERT HAWKS2 CONCLUSION DRILL



KUWAIT: Under the patronage and with the attendance of the National Guards undersecretary, Lt. general Hashim Abdul Razzaq Al-Refa'ee, cadets registered in the basic infantry training course, "Desert Hawks2", recently conducted their conclusion drill.

International

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US will be invited to Syria talks: Turkey

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Cyprus talks falter over fate of Turkish troops

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Cabinet picks contradict Trump stands on issues

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MOSUL: An elderly Iraqi man comforts a wounded boy as he receives treatment from military doctors in Mosul's Al-Sahiroun neighborhood yesterday, during a military operation by Iraqi security forces against IS militants. — AFP

IRAQI FORCES MAKE GAINS AGAINST IS IN MOSUL

HEAVY CLASHES INSIDE MOSUL UNIVERSITY COMPLEX

MOSUL, Iraq/BAGHDAD: Iraqi special forces stormed the Mosul University complex in the city's northeast yesterday and pushed Islamic State back to reach two further bridges across the Tigris river, the military said. The militants were fighting back at Mosul University, which they seized when they took over the city in 2014. A Reuters reporter witnessed heavy clashes inside the campus.

Iraqi forces have recaptured most districts in eastern Mosul in nearly three months of a US-backed offensive, which accelerated at the turn of the year with new tactics and better coordination. They aim to take full control of the eastern bank of the Tigris river, which bisects Mosul from north to south, before launching attacks on the west, still fully in Islamic State hands.

Driving the ultra-hardline Islamist group out of its Mosul stronghold will probably spell the end for the Iraqi side of the caliphate it has declared, stretching into Syria. By late yesterday, Iraqi elite forces had taken control of part of the university complex and reached

two more of the five bridges that link east and west Mosul, Sabah al-Numan, spokesman for the counter-terrorism service (CTS) said.

"God willing, in a very short while we will announce the clearing of the entire left bank ... there are not many areas left (under IS control) on this bank," he told state television. Iraqi forces have now reached Mosul's three southernmost bridges, having battled their way to the Fourth Bridge several days ago.

BULLDOZERS

Senior CTS commander Sami Al-Aridhi said the university was the most important Islamic State base in the eastern half of the city. "Forces are heading into the depths of the university," Aridhi said early in the day, after bulldozers smashed through a wall surrounding the campus and dozens of CTS troops sprinted through carrying rocket-propelled grenade launchers.

An Iraqi officer said army units backed by air strikes had also taken control of Hadba district, north of the university, and would aid

the assault on the complex.

Another CTS commander said the capture of the university would enable further advances as it overlooks areas closer to the river. Advances by Iraqi forces have gathered pace in the last two weeks after troops got bogged down in fierce street fighting in late

November and December and militants hid among the civilian population.

New tactics employed since the turn of the year, including a night raid and better defences against suicide car bombs, have given the campaign fresh momentum, US and Iraqi military officials say.—Reuters

GANDHI OUT, MODI IN ON KHADI CALENDAR

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has replaced independence hero Mahatma Gandhi as the 2017 face of the government's traditional handloom and cotton industry, triggering criticism yesterday. The image of the bespectacled Gandhi, wearing a loincloth and sitting cross-legged at a spinning wheel, is one of India's most iconic and has long been used to promote the khadi, or homespun cotton, industry. The government-run Khadi Village Industries Commission (KVIC) defended its decision to use a photo of Modi, sitting in

an almost identical pose while spinning cotton, on the cover of its 2017 calendar and diary. "He is khadi's biggest brand ambassador," Chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena told media. Saxena said figures other than Gandhi had been used as the faces of the calendar before, and that Modi deserved the honor because he had helped boost cotton sales.

Some KVIC workers staged a silent protest after seeing the new calendar, media reported. Opposition leaders were quick to ridicule the image.—Reuters

US EMBASSY JERUSALEM MOVE 'ASSAULT' ON MUSLIMS: MUFTI ABBAS SEEKS PUTIN'S INTERVENTION

JERUSALEM: Jerusalem's Grand Mufti yesterday branded plans by President-elect Donald Trump to move the US embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem an "assault" on Muslims across the globe. "The pledge to move the embassy is not just an assault against Palestinians but against Arabs and Muslims, who will not remain silent," Muhammad Hussein said in a sermon at Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem's Old City.

On Tuesday, Palestinian leaders called for Friday prayers at mosques across the Middle East this week to protest Trump's campaign pledge. There have been warnings that the move would constitute recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and could inflame tensions in the Middle East and possibly sink what remains of peace efforts.

"The transfer of the embassy violates international charters and norms which recognize Jerusalem as an occupied city," Hussein said in his sermon, avoiding mentioning Trump by name.

The Palestinians regard east

Jerusalem as the capital of their future state, while Israel proclaims the entire city as its capital. The city's status is one of the thorniest issues of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel occupied the West Bank and east Jerusalem in 1967. It later annexed east Jerusalem in a move never recognized by the international community.

Mohammad Shtayyeh, a senior Palestinian official and Fatah central committee member, said on Tuesday that the Palestinian leadership had been informed by diplomatic contacts that Trump could call for the move in his inauguration speech on Jan 20. The Palestinians have added the issue to the agenda of a meeting of foreign ministers from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Jan 19 in Malaysia, he added.

Putin help sought

Meanwhile, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas has asked Russian President Vladimir Putin to help stop the United States moving its embassy to

Jerusalem, a top Palestinian official said yesterday.

Saeb Erekat said he had passed on the message from Abbas to Putin during a visit to Moscow during which he met Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov. "The letter asks President Putin to do what he can about the information we have that President-elect Donald Trump will move the embassy to Jerusalem, which for us is a red line and dangerous," Erekat said.

According to Mohammad Shtayyeh, a senior Palestinian official and Fatah central committee member, the Palestinian leadership has been informed by diplomatic contacts that Trump could call for the move in his inauguration speech on Jan 20.

The Palestinians regard east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state, while Israel proclaims the entire city as its capital. The city's status is one of the thorniest issues of the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel occupied the West Bank and east Jerusalem in 1967. — AFP

US WILL BE INVITED TO SYRIA TALKS: TURKEY

BEIRUT: Washington will be invited to fresh Syria peace talks being organized by Moscow and Ankara this month, Turkey's foreign minister said, but Russia declined to confirm the invitation yesterday. On the ground meanwhile, Syria accused Israel of bombing a key airbase near the capital Damascus before dawn, condemning the incident as a "desperate attempt to support terrorist organizations."

Despite backing opposite sides in the Syrian conflict, Russia and Turkey have worked closely in recent weeks to broker a nationwide ceasefire that is meant to pave the way for Jan 23 peace talks in the Kazakh capital Astana. In the past, Washington has played a key role in attempts to bring Syria's warring parties to the negotiating table, but it has been notably absent from the cooperation between Ankara and Moscow.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, whose country, like Washington, backs Syria's rebels, nonetheless insisted Thursday that US officials would be invited.

"The United States should be definitely invited, and that is what we agreed with Russia," he said.

"Nobody can ignore the role of the United States. And this is a principled position of Turkey," he added. But the Kremlin, a key ally of President Bashar al-Assad's government, declined to comment on Cavusoglu's statements.

"I cannot say anything about this for now," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. He added however that Russia is "interested in the broadest possible representation of the parties who have a

bearing on the prospects of a political settlement in Syria."

US to take back seat

Last month, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed hope that the next American administration would "join the efforts so that we can work in the same direction harmoniously and collectively."

The Astana talks are scheduled to begin just three days after president-elect Donald Trump is inaugurated. In recent months, Washington has been largely absent from international discussions about Syria, and experts say Trump is unlikely to focus on the conflict.

"For the new American administration, it's not a priority to play a role in

resolving the Syrian crisis," said Imad Salamey, head of the political science department at the Lebanese American University.

"I think that with Trump in the White House, leadership will stay in the hands of Russia, but they will demand guarantees, particularly on Israel's security and the reduction of Iran's role," he told AFP.

Invitations to the talks have yet to be sent out, and the format of the discussions remains unclear.

A source close to the Syrian government said it expected the meeting to open with a session including all the invited parties but most of the discussions would take place directly between the government and rebels under Russian and Turkish supervision. —AFP



DAMASCUS: This file frame grab from a video provided by a Syrian opposition media outlet shows smoke rise from the government forces shelling on Wadi Barada, northwest of Damascus. —AP

COLD AND ANGRY, GAZANS PROTEST IN TEST FOR HAMAS

GAZA CITY: Crippling shortages of electricity in the Gaza Strip and reports of children dying of cold have stoked anger in the Palestinian enclave where there are daily protests against Hamas leaders.

The main Palestinian factions are blaming each other and Israel for the crisis, which has left the territory with just four hours a day of power at best. In one of the largest demonstrations yet, thousands of protesters in northern Gaza on Thursday walked to the local headquarters of the electricity company run by Hamas, the Islamist movement that has ruled the Strip since 2007.

Security forces dispersed the protesters violently, with shots fired in the air and a number of journalists beaten up. A prominent comedian was also detained on Wednesday after he posted on social media a call for Hamas to give up power. UN envoy for the Middle East peace process Nickolay Mladenov expressed concern about the "tense situation" in Gaza and urged calm. "We are witnessing a lot of anger and resentment at the power outages on the Gazan streets," said Amjad Al Shawwa, director of the Palestinian Non-Governmental Organizations Network.

Normally Gazans receive power in alternating eight-hour cycles, with those able to afford it having private fuel generators for the down times.

But for two weeks they have received a maximum of four hours a day from the state energy supply. Ahmad Al-Soarka believes the shortage is the reason he had to bury his 12-day-old son. "My son died from frost and the extreme cold, according to what they told us in the hospital," Soarka said. The family's home was destroyed in the 2014 war between Israel and Hamas and so they have lived in a caravan for two years.

"Right now it is like a freezer," the 24-year-old told AFP. "We have been here for two years."

The health ministry has not confirmed the cause of death as yet, but Soarka's father Salama, 49, said he had no doubt. "If we had electricity we could protect ourselves and the children from the cold," he said. "The young can't tolerate it." More than two thirds of Gazans depend on aid, according to the United Nations, which has also estimated the enclave could become unliveable by 2020 if current trends continue.

No solution in sight

The two million residents of Gaza require around 450-500 megawatts of power per day but are receiving less than half of that. With cold winters, demand has spiked leading to the shortages.

Maher al-Tabaa, an economic expert, said the crippling electricity shortages "affect all economic activities and have led to the suspension of a number of factories and economic construction." "The economy cannot manage only on electricity generators." Sadly for Gazans, there is no immediate solution to the crisis a decade in the making.

Israel has maintained a blockade of the enclave for 10 years, limiting goods and crippling the economy. Israel argues such restrictions are necessary to contain Hamas, with which it has fought three wars since 2008. But the more immediate cause of the crisis seems to be split between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority (PA), the internationally recognized Palestinian leadership which runs the West Bank.

Hamas seized control of Gaza from Fatah, which dominates the PA, in a near civil war in 2007.

The two factions have been unable to form a unity government and have been in dispute over tax bills on fuel imports. In 2015 Gaza's sole power plant, which itself was badly damaged in 2006 by Israel, shut down for several weeks over unpaid taxes.

Part of the reason energy authorities have so little funding is unpaid bills. Nearly 70 percent of households do not pay their electricity bills, either through poverty or lack of collection, the UN estimates. Fathi Sheikh Khalil, from Gaza's electricity company, told AFP "what is available is distributed," pointing to a shortage of funds.

Khalil Al-Hayya, a member of Hamas's political bureau, said the party was willing to "hand over the electricity file" if a solution could be found, while the PA government in Ramallah notes it pays millions of dollars annually for Gazan electricity. Celine Touboul, deputy director of the Economic Cooperation Foundation, an Israel-based think-tank, said it was a "recurrent" problem. — AFP

FOUR SUICIDE BOMBERS KILL 15 IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

YOLA, Nigeria: Four suicide bombers killed 15 people in a crowded market in the town of Madagali in Nigeria's north-eastern Adamawa state yesterday morning, a police spokesman said. The spokesman, speaking by telephone, did not identify any suspects. Suicide bombings are common in Nigeria's northeast, which is the centre of jihadist group Boko Haram's attempts to create an Islamic state.

The blasts killed two self-defense

fighters who wanted to search them. Their challenge likely saved many lives. In December, two women suicide bombers killed 57 people and wounded 177, including 120 children, at Madagali market. Last week, three girl suicide bombers were killed on the outskirts of the same town. Residents blamed Boko Haram Islamic extremists for the attacks. Madagali is about 150 kilometers (90 miles) southeast of Maiduguri, the largest city in the northeast and

birthplace of Boko Haram's insurgency. "They blew up themselves after they were intercepted by local vigilantes stationed at the checkpoint at the entry to town," resident David Abawu said by telephone. "Two vigilantes lost their lives in the process."

Nigeria's military and civilian self-defense fighters who work with them have intercepted many suicide bombers in recent months, preventing much higher death tolls. President

Muhammadu Buhari last month declared that Boko Haram had been crushed, but it is unlikely there will be a swift end to the suicide bombings and attacks on remote villages and army outposts.

Boko Haram's seven-year uprising has killed more than 20,000 people, driven 2.6 million from their homes and created a massive humanitarian crisis that the UN says has 5.1 million people in Nigeria facing starvation. —Agencies

LIBYA NOT ACCEPTING ITALY MIGRANT DEAL

VALLETTA: Libya's UN-backed government has not accepted proposals by Rome aimed at cutting migrant flows to Italy and the two sides are "far apart" on the issue, Malta's foreign minister said yesterday. George Vella, whose government holds the rotating chair of European Union ministerial councils, said he would brief his EU counterparts in Brussels on Monday on a long conversation he held on Thursday on behalf of the Union with the foreign minister of Libya's embattled, UN-backed premier, Fayez Seraj. Asked by reporters about unpublished proposals which Rome has put to Seraj in an effort to curb an expected surge in people taking to boats in Libya in the hope of being rescued and taken to Italy, Vella said the Libyans were considering the ideas. He declined to detail the Italian proposals beyond saying that their aim was to reduce the flow of migrants.

"They are far, far apart," Vella said. "Their positions are totally different ... It's not a question of money ... It's a wide-ranging discussion ... It's a question of what the Libyan government thinks would be acceptable to Libyans."

EU officials say the Union aims to agree a common position on Libya soon to back up Italy's initiatives. Rome has said these include helping secure Libya's southern desert frontier against people-smuggling and other trafficking.

Last week, after Italy's interior minister visited Tripoli, his ministry said he had agreed with Seraj that the two countries would cooperate against people-smugglers and that Rome would promote investment in the oil-rich country. Italy is reopening an embassy in its former colony and is keen to avert a new surge in migrant arrivals after taking in a record 180,000 people last year, mostly from Libya.

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi took funding from Rome in return for holding back African migrants heading north. Since he was overthrown in 2011, numbers have soared and anarchy in Libya has left Europeans struggling for ways to reduce the flow.

Vella noted that the EU is aiming to increase funding to and cooperation with African and Middle Eastern governments to stem migration pressure. He said he saw cooperation with Egypt, also on the transit routes, as an important element in the strategy. He said he would consider the idea of EU-backed centres to process asylum claims in Egypt or other countries to help reduce numbers making journeys on which thousands died last year alone. "I would be willing to discuss practically anything," he said.

Echoing comments by Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat on Thursday, Vella, whose tiny island country lies on the sea route from Africa to Italy, said he was concerned about increasing Russian involvement in Libya following its role in Syria's war.

Describing recent contacts by a rebel Libyan commander with Moscow as "cavorting with the Russians", he said: "I'm not comfortable. We all know the Russians' dreams have always been to have bases in the Mediterranean." —Reuters

CYPRUS TALKS FALTER OVER FATE OF TURKISH TROOPS

DEAL HINGES ON ASSURANCE OF CYPRUS'S FUTURE SECURITY

GENEVA: Hopes for a peace deal in Cyprus stalled yesterday over a decades-old dispute, with the rival sides at loggerheads over the future of Turkish troops on the divided island. A week of UN-brokered talks in Geneva between Greek Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades and Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci sparked optimism that an agreement to reunify the island could be at hand.

But any settlement will require an agreement on Cyprus's future security, with key players Greece, Turkey and former colonial power Britain needing to sign on. The eastern Mediterranean island has been divided since 1974, when Turkish troops invaded in response to an Athens-inspired coup seeking union with Greece. And a key sticking point remains the presence of some 30,000 Turkish troops in the north of the island.

Ankara and Akinci have insisted that some Turkish military presence is essential for Turkish Cypriots to feel safe in a prospective united country. Anastasiades yesterday restated his position that a timeline must be agreed for those troops to eventually withdraw.

And Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias said there can be no solution to the four-decade division of Cyprus while Turkish "occupation" troops remain. "A just solution (to division) means, first of all, eliminating what caused it, namely the occupation and presence of occupation forces," Kotzias said, according to a ministry statement as he left Geneva.

But Turkish President Recep Tayyip



GENEVA: Greek Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades (center) gives a press conference following UN-sponsored Cyprus peace talks yesterday in Geneva. — AFP

Erdogan declared that a full withdrawal of Turkish troops from northern Cyprus was "out of the question".

He said in televised remarks that Athens and Greek Cypriots still have "different expectations" from their Turkish and Turkish Cypriot counterparts on resolving the Cyprus problem. UN envoy Espen Barth Eide cautioned that discussions on security had just begun and that the subject was "emotional" for all sides. He insisted that efforts to end one of the

world's longest running political crises would not be derailed over a temporary war of words.

Despite the roadblocks ahead, Anastasiades said the two sides were "on a path that creates hope" and that compromise was key. "A solution cannot create winners and leave losers (in its wake). If we want it to be viable and durable, all must understand, Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike, that a fine balance must be struck," he told reporters in Geneva. — AFP

GREEK ISLAND REFUGEE CAMP A PLACE WITHOUT 'HUMAN DIGNITY: US DOCTOR

LONDON: A camp on the Greek island of Lesbos housing more than 2,500 migrants denies people the most basic human dignity in bitterly cold winter weather, a doctor working at the camp said.

Diane Sampson, an American paediatrician, said she had treated desperate patients at the Moria camp suffering from frostbite, shivering with cold and drenched by snow and rain that had washed through the flimsy tents they are staying in. "This camp is definitely one of the least prepared ones that I have seen. It's not really prepared for the weather conditions," Sampson, who has worked in the camp for nearly three weeks, said by telephone from Lesbos.

Tents are leaking and standing in cold water and migrants have no way of drying

their clothes and bedding after days of heavy snow and rain, said Sampson.

"In a situation like that our main responsibility is to look at these human beings and treat them like human beings. This place lacks basic human dignity," Sampson told the Thomson Reuters Foundation on Thursday. A volunteer for Dutch charity Boat Refugee Foundation, Sampson said she had worked in camps after earthquakes in Pakistan and Haiti as well as along the Pakistan-Afghan border in the past 20 years.

The difference between how these camps had been run and the conditions she has encountered at the Moria camp were like "night and day", she said.

Sampson said usually in a humanitarian emergency an organization takes the lead

in delegating tasks like shelter, food and clothing to ensure efficient management of resources. "What is frustrating is that many of the conditions we're seeing here are preventable," said Sampson.

RAIN FORECAST

More rain is forecast over the weekend and next week. Some of Sampson's patients had told her they had queued for up to an hour in the cold and rain for food, with most people lacking winter boots and rain-proof clothes. A video posted on YouTube earlier this week showed tents collapsing under the weight of heavy snow days after Greek Migration Minister Yiannis Mouzalas was quoted as saying there were no refugees or migrants living in the cold. —Reuters

HUNGARY'S ORBAN DEFIES EU WITH MIGRANT DETENTIONS

RESPONSE TO RECENT ATTACKS IN EUROPE

BUDAPEST: Hungary's right-wing Prime Minister Viktor Orban said yesterday he has defied Brussels by reintroducing the systematic detention of migrants arriving in the country in response to recent "terror" attacks in Europe. "We have reinstated alien police detention in the cases of those whose application to enter Europe has not yet been legally judged," Orban told public radio in a regular interview.

"As long as there is a verdict outstanding (in their asylum applications) they cannot move freely in Hungary," said the 53-year-old known for his anti-immigration views. He gave no further details.

Under pressure from Brussels, the UN refugee agency and the European Court of Human Rights, Hungary in 2013 suspended the practice of detaining asylum applicants. "But since then there have been terror acts in western Europe," Orban said yesterday. "Any legal regulation that facilitates terror acts must be changed in the interests of our own self-defense."

He said he was aware that this "openly goes against the EU", putting his government in "open conflict" with the rest of the 28-nation bloc. Orban has regularly crossed swords with the European Union over migrants, including by erecting fences on Hungary's border with Serbia and refusing to take part in a scheme to share refugees around the bloc.

Over the past two years many hundreds of thousands of migrants have sought asylum in Europe, many of them fleeing the civil war in Syria and other hotspots. Orban says that allowing migrants in without proper checks poses a security threat, with some of the Islamist extremists responsible for attacks such as in Paris in November 2015 having posed as refugees.

The most recent attack was in Berlin on December 19 when a Tunisian, Anis Amri, drove a truck into a crowded Christmas market, killing 12 people. He was killed in a shootout with police in Italy four days later. Amri arrived in Italy

from Tunisia in 2011 and went to Germany in 2015. He was known to German counter-terrorism officials and was supposed to have been deported back to Tunisia.

Orban, a big admirer of US President-elect Donald Trump, also says that allowing in so many Muslims risks undermining Europe's democratic values and its Christian traditions. Some of Orban's fiercest critics, not just over refugees but also in other areas, have been non-governmental organizations.

Earlier this week a senior member of his Fidesz party announced plans to tighten regulations on NGOs that receive foreign funding. "We live in a world where attempts to influence are endemic in all countries," Orban said yesterday.

"Hungarians have the right to know about actors in the public domain who gets what money from where, whether from abroad or from Hungary, and does the support come with expectations. We want transparency." —AFP



BOUAKE: Ivory Coast soldiers stand guard at the airport in Bouake yesterday prior to the arrival of Ivory Coast's minister of Defense for a visit in the city where soldiers staged a two-day mutiny over pay last weekend and held him hostage for two hours. —AFP

SOLDIERS CONFRONT PROTESTERS AS IVORY COAST TALKS START

BOUAKE, Ivory Coast: Soldiers fired guns into the air to disperse protesters in Ivory Coast's second city yesterday as the defence minister arrived for talks with leaders of a military mutiny that paralysed much of the country last week.

The chaotic scenes forced organisers to move the venue of the negotiations, delaying efforts to resolve a bitter dispute over soldiers' pay and conditions that has festered for years in the world's top cocoa producer. At least 100 soldiers who took part in last week's unrest poured out of their barracks in Bouake in pickups and trucks, confronting residents who had gathered to protest against the mutineers.

As locals ran to safety and shops shut, Defence Minister Alain-Richard Donwahi arrived by helicopter with other senior government and military officials at around 1 pm (1300 GMT).

"As promised, we are back to continue the discussions with our men," Donwahi said. "This is our country, our security. Our men are also ready to move in the right direction."

The mutiny, which first erupted in Bouake subsided last week when the government said it would accept many of the soldiers' demands. But negotiators for the mutineers, most of them ex-rebel fighters integrated into the army, say they have yet to receive bonuses agreed with government last week. They had expected payments to begin tomorrow. "We expect the minister to tell us when they will start to pay the 12 million CFA franc (\$19,278) bonus and when we'll have promotions and all our other demands," said one negotiator, who asked not to be named.

Ivory Coast has one of the world's fastest growing economies, but has struggled to resolve deeply entrenched problems left over from years of civil wars and political turmoil.

The army remains a patchwork of former rebel fighters and troops who stayed loyal to the government during the 2002-2011 crisis. Divisions and parallel chains of command persist.

Donwahi was briefly trapped in Bouake last Saturday during earlier negotiations with the mutineers, when shooting erupted outside the house where the talks were taking place.

Streets emptied again yesterday. "I'm going home. With this shooting starting up again, I prefer to be at home," teacher Sylvain Kouame said. —Reuters



THESSALONIKI: Migrants wash their faces using water from a bottle as the tap water is frozen, in a refugee camp of Diavata a west suburb of Thessaloniki yesterday. —AFP

BELGRADE WARNS FRANCE AGAINST 'IMPUNITY' FOR KOSOVO EX-PM

BELGRADE: Serbia warned France yesterday against "impunity" for Kosovo's ex-premier Ramush Haradinaj after he was released on bail by a French court following his arrest on suspicion of war crimes. Haradinaj was detained on Jan 4 at the Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg airport in eastern France under an international arrest warrant issued by Serbia more than a decade ago.

Belgrade has requested the extradition of the former leader of the insurgent Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to try him for alleged atrocities committed against civilians during the 1998-99 conflict against Serbian forces.

On Thursday Haradinaj was released on bail, a move that Kosovo hailed as "a first step" towards getting him fully freed. But he must stay in France

while the extradition request is examined, which could take months.

"Serbia does not accept a judicial system that infers impunity for those who have committed crimes against the civilian population," Marko Djuric, the Serbian minister who handles Kosovo affairs, told a press conference.

Serbian Justice Minister Nela Kuburovic said they would work on the "principle of reciprocity".

"If a person accused of war crimes is not extradited to Serbia, we will respond with the same measures to any requests from France," Kuburovic said, when asked hypothetically about extraditing suspected terrorists to France. After the 1990s conflict in Kosovo, which killed 13,000 people, the predominantly ethnic Albanian province became a United

Nations protectorate. It unilaterally declared independence a decade later—a move that has never been recognised by Serbia, which sees Kosovo as the cradle of its identity and religion.

Haradinaj has twice before been acquitted of war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague. He was elected Kosovo's premier in 2004 but resigned after 100 days in power to surrender to the United Nations judges. Since his acquittals he has become a political opponent of Kosovo's powerful President Hashim Thaci and is resolutely opposed to a historic 2013 agreement, brokered by the European Union, to normalise relations between Kosovo and Serbia. Ethnic Albanians have held protests across the region against Haradinaj's arrest. —AFP

BANGLADESHI LAW PROPOSES CHILD MARRIAGE IN 'SPECIAL CASES'

NEW DELHI: Bangladesh will be taking a step backwards in efforts to end child marriage if parliament approves changes to a law which would permit girls below 18 to be married in "special cases", a global alliance of charities said on Thursday. The poor South Asian nation has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world, despite a three-decade-old law which bans marriage for girls under 18 and men under 21.

Girls Not Brides, a coalition of more than 650 charities, said Bangladesh's parliament was expected to consider the proposed change to the Child Marriage Restraint Act. This is expected to take place in the next session beginning Jan 22. Girls Not Brides in Bangladesh said the proposed change was

"alarming" and a step backwards for the country which has reduced child marriage in recent years.

"We have worked with thousands of girls who have been pulled out of education, married off early, bear the scars of early pregnancy, and forced to marry their abusers. This is simply unacceptable," said a spokesperson from the alliance's Bangladesh chapter in a statement.

The proposed law was open to abuse since it gave no definition of the term "special cases", Girls Not Brides said. Statements made by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina suggest exceptions would apply in instances of accidental pregnancy, or where a marriage would help to protect a girl's "honor" and the family's rep-

utation in this largely conservative society.

Bangladeshi officials were not immediately available for comment. Along with Niger, Guinea, South Sudan, Chad and Burkina Faso, Bangladesh is among the 10 worst countries for child marriage despite moves to strengthen law enforcement and toughen penalties against the crime.

In 2011, 32.5 percent of girls aged between 15 and 19 were married compared with 37.5 percent a decade before, said Girls Not Brides, citing data from Bangladesh's Bureau of Statistics.

Campaigners say girls face a greater risk of rape, domestic violence and forced pregnancies - which may put their lives in danger - as a result of being married as children. Child

brides are often denied the chance to go to school, are isolated from society and forced into a lifetime of economic dependence as a wife and mother.

Yet the practice continues largely due to a combination of social acceptance and government inaction, activists say. "Marriage before 18 does not ensure a pregnant girl's safety," said Lakshmi Sundaram, executive director for Girls Not Brides, said in the statement. "In reality it exposes her to the risk of sexual, physical and psychological violence."

"The progress Bangladesh has made to address child marriage is impressive, and reflects a real commitment from the highest levels of the government. Now is not the time to regress." — Reuters



LAHORE: In this photo taken on Thursday, civil society activists demanding recovery of the missing persons, in Lahore. The United States has expressed concern over the disappearance of five Pakistani anti-Taliban activists and bloggers who mysteriously went missing last week.—AP

US CONCERNED OVER DISAPPEARANCE OF PAKISTANI ACTIVISTS

ISLAMABAD: The United States has expressed concern over the disappearance of five Pakistani anti-Taliban activists and bloggers who mysteriously went missing last week, incidents that have triggered an outcry from human right groups.

Dozens of activists rallied in the port city of Karachi for the second time late on Thursday, demanding the five men be accounted for. In Washington, State Department spokesman Mark Toner said the US is taking the disappearances "very seriously" and will "continue to monitor the situation in Pakistan."

Toner also welcomed a statement by Pakistan's interior ministry, which asked police to step up efforts to find the missing. Among the five are university professor Salman Haider, known for criticizing the Taliban and the government over its alleged inaction against militants, and Shiite activist Samar Abbas, who heads the Civil Progressive Alliance Pakistan.

No militant group has so far claimed abducting the activists and no government department or intelligence agency has said it detained or arrested any one of the five. Activist Syed Talib Abbas said yesterday that none of the missing men have been found so far. Haider's brother Zeeshan Haider said the family had not had any contact with him since he sent a text message to his wife's mobile phone last Friday, asking her to go to a roadside on Islamabad's outskirts and collect his car, which was found there. Pakistan's government has been under pressure since the activists disappeared, and the parliament has demanded an investigation. Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan promised the families of missing men that all efforts would be made to find them.

Benjamin Ismail, the Asia-Pacific head at Reporters Without Borders, on Friday said the disappearances were "shocking and extremely worrying" and urged authorities to determine the motives and bring those behind them to justice. — AP

PAKISTAN MULLS WAYS TO CURB MISUSE OF BLASPHEMY LAWS

CRITICS SAY HUNDREDS FALSELY ACCUSED, OFTEN FROM MINORITIES

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani Senate committee is set to debate how to prevent the country's blasphemy laws being applied unfairly, despite opposition from religious conservatives who support legislation that carries a mandatory death penalty for insulting Islam.

Senator Farhatullah Babar told Reuters that the Senate Committee on Human Rights, of which he is a member, will start discussions on blasphemy laws as early as next week, based on recommendations from a 24-year-old report. He said it would be the first time in decades that any parliamentary body had considered a formal proposal to stop the abuse of the blasphemy laws.

According to Babar, the committee would consider a proposal making it binding to investigate complaints before registering a case, to ensure "genuine blasphemy" had been committed and the law was not being used to settle scores, as critics say it is.

He also said the committee would debate whether life imprisonment was an adequate punishment, instead of the mandatory death penalty. Many conservatives in Pakistan consider even criticizing the laws as blasphemy, and in 2011 a Pakistani governor, Salman Taseer, was assassinated by his bodyguard after calling for reform of the laws. His killer was hailed as a hero by religious hardliners, and tens of thousands of supporters attended his funeral after he was executed last year.

If the committee makes any recommendations, it would be only the first step in a long process to bring about change in how the laws are enforced.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's office declined to comment on the Senate committee's moves. His party's support would be needed for any measures to move forward, and while legislation protecting women's rights has been passed and Sharif has reached out to minorities, it is unclear if he would risk a backlash over blasphemy.

UNEARTHED REPORT

Hundreds of Pakistanis are on death row for blasphemy convictions, and at least 65 people, including lawyers, defendants and judges, have been murdered over blasphemy allegations since 1990, according to figures from the Center for Research and Security Studies

based in the capital Islamabad. Pakistan's religious and political elites almost universally steer clear of speaking against blasphemy laws, but a small group of lawmakers has been looking for ways to reduce abuses. Babar said the Human Rights Committee hit a "gold mine" when he discovered a 24-year-old Senate report that called for a more specific definition of blasphemy and said further debate was needed on whether expunging "imprisonment of life" from an earlier law had been correct.

"So we convinced other senators that here we have a chance, we have a starting point, we have this report in hand. Let's debate it and see how we can prevent abuse of this law," Babar said.

However, powerful religious conservatives who have millions of followers strongly support the laws. Tahir Ashrafi, head of the influential Pakistan Ulema Council of Muslim clerics, said it would oppose any change. "Make new laws to punish those who abuse blasphemy laws," Ashrafi told Reuters. "But no one can even think about changing this law."

"FIRMER STANCE"

Last week, Pakistani police arrested 150 headline activists rallying in support of the blasphemy laws on the anniversary of the assassination of Taseer, the Punjab governor shot dead by his bodyguard for calling for reform. Police have also resisted a demand by hardliners to register a blasphemy case against Shaan Taseer, the slain governor's son, over a Christmas message calling for prayers for those charged under the "inhumane" legislation. "This government has shown a firmer stance than the government when my father was martyred," Shaan Taseer said. But public opinion remains a major obstacle to reform. On the outskirts of Islamabad, thousands still visit the shrine of Mumtaz Qadri, executed last February for Taseer's murder.

The large shrine, with a glass roof and shiny marble floors, was built over his grave days after the burial. Taxi driver Waheed Gul says he has come to the shrine every day since it was built: "What better way to spend my days than to pray every day at the grave of someone who sent a blasphemer to hell?" — Reuters



GUWAHATI: An Indian villager displays his catch during a community fishing as part of Bhogali Bihu celebrations in Panbari village, some 50 kilometers (31 miles) east of Guwahati. "Bhogali Bihu" marks the end of the harvest season in the northeastern state of Assam. —AP

ABE ENJOYS DUTERTE'S FOLKSY DIPLOMACY

DAVAO, Philippines: With a visit to Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's bedroom, having one of the world's rarest birds named in his honor and guided by a sockless host, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had a morning to remember yesterday.

Duterte, a charismatic politician known at home for his folksy charm, dropped many of the formal protocols normally associated with visits by a head of government as he took Abe on a tour of his beloved southern home city of Davao. Abe's day began with a visit to Duterte's "simple home" for a breakfast of sticky rice cakes and mung bean soup, a presidential aide said, with the leaders dining at a wooden table before heading for a look around Duterte's house.

"We also showed him how the president enjoys the comfort of his own bed, including his old and favorite mosquito net," Duterte's aide, Christopher Go, wrote on Facebook alongside a photo of the leaders smiling while standing next to the bed.

The leaders later had a casual meeting at a hotel overlooking the sea, where Duterte was photographed in a checkered shirt and long pants but no

socks a familiar look for the 71-year-old who takes pride in his informal fashion style. Abe's next activity saw him standing in front of a stuffed Philippine eagle, the national bird and one of the world's most endangered. A ceremony saw a two-year-old eagle named Sakura after the famous Japanese cherry blossom.

Abe was given a photo of the eagle, which is kept at a nearby sanctuary, as well as a fluffy toy version draped in indigenous clothing. Abe, normally blue-suited and politically conservative who nevertheless showed off his fun side last year when he dressed up as video game icon Super Mario at the Rio Olympics' closing ceremony, appeared to enjoy the day.

He smiled and laughed throughout the eagle ceremony, and ended his Davao trip at a Japanese-language school where he was greeted by singing and flag-waving children.

Abe was the first foreign leader to visit the Philippines since Duterte took office just over six months ago. His two-day trip began on Thursday with a much more formal itinerary in the capital of Manila, where he held meetings with Duterte at the presidential palace.

Abe was also the first head of gov-



DAVAO: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (C) greets teachers at the Mindanao Kokusai Daigaku in Davao City yesterday. Abe is the first foreign leader to visit the Philippines since President Rodrigo Duterte took office just over six months ago. —AFP

ernment to visit Davao, the largest city in the southern Philippines that is 1,500 kilometres (900 miles) from Manila. Duterte, a longtime mayor of Davao before becoming president, has made developing the southern

Philippines a top priority, arguing the region has been neglected by "imperial Manila". Abe flew from Davao to Australia yesterday afternoon as part of a trip that will include Indonesia and Vietnam. — AFP

MYANMAR'S RAKHINE MPs REFUSE TO MEET UN ENVOY

LEE PROBING ROHINGYA ABUSES IN REGION

SITTWE, Myanmar: The ruling party in Myanmar's Rakhine state government said yesterday it refused to meet a UN envoy who is probing allegations of horrific abuse of Rohingya Muslims by security forces in the region.

Yanghee Lee, the UN special rapporteur on Myanmar, was expected to hold talks with members of the Arakan National Party in the state capital Sittwe, before travelling north to an area under military lockdown today. Lee has faced threats and been branded a "whore" by Buddhist hardliners on previous visits for her criticism of how Myanmar treats the Rohingya, a stateless group that has suffered years of poverty and repression. They have been targeted by security forces during a three-month crackdown in northern Rakhine that the UN said has seen at least 65,000 Rohingya flee across the border to Bangladesh.

"They offered to meet with us from their side but we have no plans to meet them," the vice president of ANP, Khine Pyi Soe, said of Lee's arrival. "I don't think that meeting with them is very important," he added. Lee's spokesman could not be immediately reached for comment.

Parts of northern Rakhine have been under military control since October as the army launches "clearance operations" to find Rohingya insurgents allegedly behind deadly raids on police border posts. The crisis has drawn a storm of international criticism from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, which took power in March. Lee has slammed the lockdown as "unacceptable" and called for an international investigation



This handout from the Joint Strategy Team, a consortium of nine local Kachin humanitarian organizations shows Chinese security forces (front) watching Myanmar residents, who fled from fighting between ethnic rebel groups and military troops, arrive at the river boundary of Myanmar and China at Lung Byen village near China's Yunnan province. — AFP

into claims troops have raped, murdered and tortured civilians from the Muslim minority. Ahead of her trip, she said violence in Rakhine had contributed to "disquiet regarding the direction that the new government is taking in its first year". Muslim-majority Malaysia has lashed out at Nobel laureate Suu Kyi for not stopping the violence, and next week will host foreign ministers from the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation for talks on the crisis.

Bangladesh has urged Myanmar's government to end the violence and

take back the thousands of refugees that have entered already overcrowded camps along the border.

"Bangladesh has demanded (the) quick restoration of (a) normal situation in Rakhine state so that Myanmar nationals... can quickly go back home," foreign minister A.H. Mahmood Ali said after meeting Myanmar's special envoy in Dhaka this week. Myanmar's foreign ministry said the two sides had "agreed to commence consultations for verification and repatriation" of those who had fled the lockdown. — AFP

INDONESIA NARCOTICS CHIEF FAULTS PILOTS ON DRUGS FOR CRASHES

JAKARTA: Most of Indonesia's airline accidents have involved pilots who tested positive for drugs, including a Lion Air jet that slammed into the sea four years ago while trying to land on the tourist island of Bali, the chief of the national narcotics agency said. Budi Waseso made the comments Thursday at a ceremony on Bali to inaugurate traditional village security guards as anti-drug volunteers.

The comments are another blow to the image of the country's airline industry after a video circulated online last month showing an apparently intoxicated pilot in the cockpit of a Citilink passenger plane. News reports this week said two pilots of another airline, Susi Air, owned by the country's fisheries minister had recently tested positive for drugs. "Almost all air accidents in Indonesia, whether it was just a skid or whatever, the pilots are indicated to be positive for drugs," Waseso told reporters.

Earlier in the day he told the event attended by Bali's governor that a Lion Air pilot in the spectacular 2013 crash had "hallucinated" that the sea was part of the runway.

His comments are at odds with other official accounts. After the crash, which miraculously caused no fatalities among the 108 people on board, the transport ministry said the pilots had not tested positive for drugs. The final report blamed the accident, which occurred in rain, on poor communication between the pilots and inadequate trading. Lion Air, the National Transport Safety Committee and the Ministry of Transport declined to comment.

Indonesian airlines were previously barred from flying to Europe and the United States but foreign air safety regulators have upgraded the country, allowing some airlines to resume flights. The US aviation regulator upgraded Indonesia's safety rating in August. However, the International Air Transport Association's former chief executive, Tony Tyler, who stepped down in June, said in 2015 he was very concerned about airline safety in Indonesia. His comments reflected worries about rapid growth in the number of planes in the skies and the need to upgrade air traffic management systems. —AP

BUSH DAUGHTERS ADVISE OBAMAS ON LIFE

WASHINGTON: A week before their dad leaves the White House, Malia and Sasha Obama received praise and advice from the daughters of former president George W Bush as they exit the public spotlight.

"Eight years ago on a cold November day, we greeted you on the steps of the White House. We saw both the light and wariness in your eyes as you gazed at your new home," 35-year-old twins Jenna and Barbara Bush said in a co-written article posted late Thursday on Time Magazine's website.

"In eight years, you have done so much. Seen so much," the Bush daughters wrote. "We have watched you grow from girls to impressive young women with grace and ease... Now you are

about to join another rarified club, one of former First Children."

Malia Obama, 18, is taking a gap year after graduating high school, before she enrolls next year at Harvard College.

Younger sister Sasha, 15, has another couple of years of high school ahead, which is the reason the first family have given for remaining in Washington after Obama hands over to President-elect Donald Trump.

The Bush twins offered words of encouragement and advice as the Obama girls prepare to leave White House. "Enjoy college. As most of the world knows, we did," the Bush twins wrote, in a joking reference to news accounts of the minor scandals that erupted over their alcohol use while in

college. "Explore your passions. Learn who you are. Make mistakes-you are allowed to. Continue to surround yourself with loyal friends who know you, adore you and will fiercely protect you," they wrote. "Those who judge you don't love you, and their voices shouldn't hold weight. Rather, it's your own hearts that matter."

Jenna and Barbara Bush grew up in Texas and graduated high school in 2000, the year their father was elected president. The Republican served two terms before being succeeded by Obama. Barbara Bush is now a health care advocate living in New York, while Jenna Bush Hager is a television correspondent and married mother of two young children. —AFP



WASHINGTON: This file photo taken on January 21, 2013 shows Sasha (L) and Malia Obama, daughters of US President Barack Obama, as they take a photo of themselves during the Presidential Inaugural Parade in Washington, DC. — AFP

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In this Dec 8, 2016 file photo, construction continues on the Inaugural platform in preparation for the Inauguration for President-elect Donald Trump on the Capitol steps in Washington, DC. Trump's Presidential Inaugural Committee has raised a record \$90 million-plus in private donations, far more than President Barack Obama's two inaugural committees. — AP

CABINET PICKS CONTRADICT TRUMP STANDS ON ISSUES

PRESIDENT-ELECT ACKNOWLEDGES DIFFERENCES

WASHINGTON: The lack of fireworks surrounding Senate consideration of President-elect Donald Trump's Cabinet picks may reflect a slew of statements his choices have made contradicting the billionaire businessman's position on key issues. Trump acknowledged the differences early yesterday, posting a message on his Twitter account saying: "All my Cabinet nominee are looking good and doing a great job. I want them to be themselves and express their own thoughts, not mine!"

This week's confirmation hearings produced an odd political chemistry where, for instance, one of the harshest examinations of a Trump Cabinet choice came from one of Trump's fellow Republicans, presidential campaign rival Sen. Marco Rubio. Despite Democrats' dismay over some of Trump's selections, the hearings were relatively tranquil, with Democrats generally restrained even in quizzing the more contentious picks. The reason, according to a few Democrats: The nominees are proving more palatable than Trump himself.

"As I meet members of the Cabinet I'm puzzled because many of them sound reasonable," said Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois, the No 2 Senate Democrat. "Far more reasonable than their president."

That could change in weeks to come, because some of the most potentially explosive hearings are still pending, including the scrutiny of former Goldman Sachs partner Steven Mnuchin for Treasury secretary. Several of Trump's Cabinet selections this week made statements this week contradicting policy stances espoused by their soon-to-be boss on issues ranging from Russia and NATO to climate change and Muslims.

Sen. Jeff Sessions, picked for attorney general, said he's against any outright ban on immigration by Muslims, in contrast to Trump's onetime call to suspend admittance of Muslims until US officials could learn more about nature of the threat of extremism.

His secretary of state candidate, Rex Tillerson, took a relatively hard line on Washington's dealings with Russia, even though Trump has been talking about improving relations between Washington and Moscow and held out for days before saying he accepted the intelligence community's conclusion that Moscow meddled in the US election process. Tillerson demurred, however, when one senator tried to lure him into calling President Vladimir Putin, whom he knows, a "war criminal," although he emphasized support for NATO commitments that Trump had questioned. The secretary-of-state designate also said the United States should not back away from its efforts against nuclear proliferation, notwithstanding Trump's suggestion earlier this year that some key US allies like Japan and South Korea provide their own defense.

Some of the toughest questioning of Tillerson came not from Democrats but from Rubio, who grilled the Exxon Mobil executive on human rights issues. As Mnuchin's confirmation hearing approaches, Democrats have set up a website to solicit stories from the thousands of people whose homes were foreclosed on by OneWest Bank while he headed a group of investors who owned the bank. They hope to use Mnuchin's nomination hearing to attack Trump's populist appeal with working-class voters and cast themselves as defenders of the middle class. Thus far, though,

Republicans are congratulating themselves for generally smooth sailing. And overall, the lack of drama may also be due to the decision by Democrats while in the Senate majority to lower the vote threshold for Cabinet nominees and others from 60 votes to 50, allowing Republicans to ensure approval as long as they can hold their 52-seat majority together.

"The purpose of confirmation hearings is to examine the record and views of potential nominees and I think that's what these hearings are doing," said Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas. "I think it's likely that all of the Cabinet nominees are going to be confirmed, I think the hearings have gone quite well this week."

A hearing Thursday for neurosurgeon Ben Carson to head the Department of Housing and Urban Development featured some pointed questioning from Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, but also warm exchanges between Carson and other committee Democrats. Afterward Carson thanked the panel and said that it "was actually kind of fun."

Sessions was denied confirmation once before by the Senate, but that was three decades ago for a federal judgeship. This time around the Alabaman is a sitting senator and was treated gently, for the most part, by his colleagues, even when Democrats brought up the racial issues that brought him down last time around. There was potential for drama as Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., broke with Senate tradition to testify against his colleague, but it came on the second day of the hearing after Sessions had finished testifying, so he was not even in the room. Tillerson had the rockiest outing thus far, with Rubio pressing him on Russia and Democratic Sen. — AP

US TO PAY BILLIONS TO MARINES AFFECTED BY TOXIC WATER

WASHINGTON: After years of waiting, veterans who were exposed to contaminated drinking water while assigned to Camp Lejeune in North Carolina may now be able to receive a portion of government disability benefits totaling more than \$2 billion. Beginning in March, the cash payouts from the Department of Veterans Affairs may supplement VA health care already being provided to eligible veterans stationed at the Marine base for at least 30 cumulative days between Aug 1, 1953, and Dec 31, 1987. Veterans will have to submit evidence of their diagnoses and service information.

Outgoing VA Secretary Bob McDonald determined that there was "sufficient scientific and medical evidence" to establish a connection between exposure to the contaminated water and eight medical conditions for purposes of awarding disability compensation.

The estimated taxpayer cost is \$2.2 billion over a five-year period. The VA estimates that as many as 900,000 service members were potentially exposed to the tainted water. "This is good news," said retired Marine Master Sgt. Jerry Ensminger, whose daughter Janey was born in 1976 while he was stationed at Lejeune. Janey died from leukemia at age 9. Ensminger now heads a veterans group, The Few, The Proud, The Forgotten, which advocates for those seeking disability compensation.

"This has been a hard, long slog," said Ensminger, who argues the government must go further in covering additional diseases. "This is not the end of the issue."

The new rule being announced today covers active duty, Reserve and National Guard members who developed one of eight diseases: adult leukemia, aplastic anemia, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, liver cancer, multiple myeloma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and Parkinson's disease. Documents uncovered by veterans groups over the years suggest Marine leaders were slow to respond when tests first found evidence of contaminated ground water at Camp Lejeune in the early 1980s. Some drinking water wells were closed in 1984 and 1985, after further testing confirmed contamination from leaking fuel tanks and an off-base dry cleaner. The Marine Corps has said the contamination was unintentional, occurring when federal law didn't limit toxins in drinking water.

The 246-square-mile military training complex was established in 1941. The new federal rule covers Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station New River, including satellite camps and housing areas. Spurred by Ensminger's case, Congress in 2012 passed a bill signed into law by President Barack Obama extending free VA medical care to affected veterans and their families. — AP

TRIAL DELAYED FOR OHIO MOTHER ACCUSED OF SUFFOCATING 3 SONS

BELLEFONTAINE, Ohio: An Ohio judge has delayed the trial of a woman accused of suffocating her three young sons out of jealousy at the attention her husband gave them.

The trial for 24-year-old Brittany Pilkington, of Bellefontaine, was scheduled to begin Mar 10. Pilkington's attorneys said they needed more time to prepare and asked a judge in Logan County court to push back the trial. The judge granted the extension on Wednesday and ordered all motions to be filed by Mar 17, ahead of the next hearing Mar 20. A new date hasn't been scheduled for the trial, which is expected to last weeks.

Pilkington has pleaded not guilty to aggravated murder charges. Authorities allege she killed her toddler son and two infants over a 13-month period in 2014 and 2015.

Prosecutors have said Pilkington confessed to all three murders in a recorded police interview in which she says she smothered each boy with a blanket because she didn't want to see them suffering.

Pilkington's attorneys have tried unsuccessfully to get the video thrown out and to have a judge to dismiss the parts of the charges against her that could lead to a potential death penalty if she is convicted. A visiting judge is expected to continue overseeing the case because the elected county judge, William Goslee, was previously involved in the matter as the county prosecutor when Pilkington was first charged. —AP

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export fall since 2009

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BRUSSELS: A man looks at a Mercedes GLA during the media day of the 95th European Motor Show in Brussels yesterday. —AP (See Also Page 16)

OPEC UNLIKELY TO DELIVER ALL PROMISED OIL CUTS

SAUDI ARABIA, KUWAIT CUT MORE OIL THAN COMMITTED

LONDON/DUBAI: OPEC is unlikely to deliver fully on its target to cut production despite Saudi Arabia saying it had trimmed more than it had committed to, OPEC delegates say, but compliance of 80 percent would be good and as low as 50 percent acceptable.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is planning to cut its output by 1.2 million barrels per day to 32.50 million bpd from Jan 1. Russia and other non-members are planning to cut about half as much. OPEC and the independent producers are cutting production to remove a global glut and prop up prices, which at \$56 a barrel are half their level of mid-2014, hurting the revenue of exporting nations.

"Compliance won't be 100 percent, it never is," said an OPEC source, who added that an overall rate of 50 to 60 percent would be good enough, based on past compliance levels. Top exporter Saudi Arabia and Kuwait said on Thursday they had cut production by more than they committed to. Kuwait, the head of a committee to monitor compliance which meets on Jan 22, said this was to "lead by

example". But OPEC as a whole has a patchy record of complying with its agreements, and previous non-OPEC pledges to curb output have proved largely token. Compliance is voluntary as OPEC has no mechanism to enforce its agreements. Based on statements by producing nations so far, there has been more than 60 percent compliance, Kuwaiti Oil Minister Essam Al-Marzouq said on Thursday.

Last time OPEC cut its output, in 2009, following agreements the year before, it initially made 60 percent of the reduction and compliance peaked at higher rates, according to estimates from the International Energy Agency and other analysts, some of whom see that as a reasonable target this time.

"We should see 60-70 percent compliance once again," Daniel Gerber of Petro-Logistics, a consultant which assesses OPEC supply by tanker tracking, told Reuters in December. The cuts in 2009 were more than OPEC achieved in previous price collapses, such as during the late 1990s when countries initially did not follow through on pledges. OPEC's historical average compliance rate is 60 per-

cent, according to the IEA. "Normally for OPEC, good compliance is near 80 percent," said another OPEC delegate. "It won't be 100 percent."

COMPLIANCE CONCERNS

Compliance with the 2009 OPEC cuts peaked at about 80 percent, according to the IEA. This was enough to help support a rise in oil prices, which began 2009 at \$46 and stood at \$69 by the end of June that year. Three months into that last OPEC cut, Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies showed the highest level of adherence. Saudi Arabia made a larger cut than it had to then, based on the IEA numbers, so history looks set to repeat itself in 2017 if Saudi Arabia's comments on Thursday are borne out. Next was Algeria, which implemented almost all of its commitment. Venezuelan compliance was 69 percent, more than that of Angola and Iran which both delivered less than half of their pledged reduction.

This time, while compliance in the Gulf OPEC members is expected by analysts to be high, industry and OPEC sources do not

expect a similar level across the board. "There is a concern about Venezuela and Iraq not being committed to the cuts," said an industry source involved in the global cut talks, who added Russia appeared to be complying with the deal. Iraq, which initially resisted joining the cut, said this week it was reducing production. Cash-strapped Venezuela, which pushed hard to bring the global deal together, has also said it intends to.

Russia reduced production by 100,000 barrels a day in the first few days of January, industry sources told Reuters. That reduction, or at least part of it, is down to unusually cold temperatures in Siberia that have forced work at oil rigs to grind to a shivering halt.

Potential production growth in countries exempted from making a cut, Libya and Nigeria, could undermine reductions elsewhere. They both boosted production in December, even though OPEC supply overall fell. "If things go well in those countries, it could be quite hard for OPEC to maintain a 32.50 million bpd production target," Gerber of Petro-Logistics said. — Reuters

TURKEY VOWS TO 'ROOT OUT' SPECULATORS AS LIRA PLUNGES

ISTANBUL: Turkey will root out those found to have manipulated foreign exchange markets, an adviser to President Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday, as the lira headed for its biggest weekly decline since the aftermath of a failed coup last July. The lira shed more than one percent against the dollar as the central bank's efforts to tighten liquidity and calls from President Tayyip Erdogan for Turks to sell dollars failed to reassure investors.

"The puppets, and the hands which manipulate them, must be found," presidential adviser Bulent Gedikli said on Twitter, adding that there was no risk in Turkey to justify the lira being at its current levels. Yesterday, Erdogan again called on Turks to convert their foreign currency into Turkish lira, repeating a call he has made several times since the recent lira slide began. "I am calling on my people not to save foreign exchange under their pillows, to convert to Turkish lira. Markets will be relieved if that happens," Erdogan said. "We agreed with some countries to trade in local currency - the pressure from forex on lira will be lighter when these agreements are implemented." The central bank tried to support the currency for a second day by not opening the one-week repo auction through which it usually funds the market with lira. "By not opening a one-week repo auction again today the central bank is continuing (veiled) monetary tightening," said Is Investment economist Muammer Komurcuoglu, but he said the market was focused on whether the central bank would raise interest rates at its next meeting on Jan. 24.

The lira has lost as much as 10 percent against the dollar since the start of 2017, making it the worst-performing major currency of the new year. Concern over political and economic stability is being compounded by doubts about whether the authorities will take decisive steps to stabilise it.

It was trading at 3.8045 by 1355 GMT after closing at 3.7615 on Thursday. The currency dropped to a record low of 3.9417 on Wednesday and has lost almost a quarter of its value in the six months since the failed coup attempt on July 15. Economists say the central bank needs to raise interest rates sharply to prevent further falls. But the bank is reluctant to make such a move, with Erdogan and the government preoccupied by slowing economic growth and eager for lower borrowing costs to spur investment.

SLOWING GROWTH

Growth in 2016 was around three percent, Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci told the state-run Anadolu news agency yesterday, a far cry from the high single-digit rates on which Erdogan built his reputation as prime minister from 2003-14. Erdogan and the government are keen to prevent the economy losing too much momentum as the country prepares for an expected referendum in the spring on constitutional changes that would create a full presidential system and hand him greater powers.

Zeybekci said the central bank has many instruments to counter speculative moves in the lira and said its hands were not tied, although he said that it would be wrong for it to intervene by directly selling forex. "In the period ahead we will see the lira returning to a normal trend as hope in the speculative moves is lost," he said.

Erdogan accused Turkey's enemies on Thursday of using currency speculation to try to topple the state and urged the central bank to "thwart these games", saying it had all the tools it needed. He repeated his call to Turks to sell foreign currency, urging a "sense of national mobilization", and evoked the July coup attempt, when people took to the streets to block tanks.— Reuters



BRUSSELS: A Peugeot Fractal prototype is on display during the media day of the 95th European Motor Show in Brussels yesterday.—AP

OIL SET FOR WEEKLY FALL ON DOUBTS OVER OPEC CUTS

SAUDI SAYS OUTPUT HAS FALLEN BELOW 10M BPD

LONDON: Oil prices are on track to end the week lower on lingering doubts over the extent of OPEC cuts, with sentiment worsened by concerns over the health of the Chinese economy after it reported the steepest falls in exports since 2009.

Brent crude futures, the international benchmark for oil prices, were trading 20 cents down at \$55.81 a barrel at 1004 GMT yesterday. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures fell by 23 cents to \$52.78. Record Chinese crude imports of 8.56 million barrels per day (bpd) in December helped to buoy prices somewhat, traders said, but they could not hide underlying fears over the overall health of the world's second-biggest economy.

Despite China's oil thirst, overall exports-the country's economic backbone-declined by 7.7 percent last year in what was the second annual decline in a

row and the worst since the depths of the global crisis in 2009. Exports of Chinese refined oil products last month rose nearly 25 percent year on year to a record 5.35 million tons, well above November's previous record of 4.85 million tons.

On the supply side, there was some market support from top crude exporter Saudi Arabia, which said that its output had fallen below 10 million bpd to levels last seen in February 2015 and that it expects to make even deeper cuts next month. However, hard evidence of export reductions has yet to emerge, two weeks into the month in which the cuts by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other producers, such as Russia, were supposed to start. Many analysts expect compliance of 50 percent to 80 percent at best.

"As the Saudis hint at even deeper reductions in February, assumptions are rife that its enthusiastic approach to output cuts is an admission that cheating is expected on the part of other producers," said Stephen Brennock of oil brokerage PVM.

The US Energy Information Administration said in its January outlook that it expects Brent and WTI to average \$53 and \$52 a barrel respectively in 2017.

Even if OPEC cuts its output as agreed, traders said that rising US shale output and increasing supply from OPEC members Nigeria and Libya, which were exempt from the pact, might offset any reductions. An informal Reuters survey of more than 1,000 energy market professionals showed that Brent prices in 2017 are expected to average about \$55-\$60 a barrel.— Reuters

STOCKS CLIMB ON US BANK HOPES, DOLLAR, YIELDS SLIP

LONDON: European and US stocks looked to end a sluggish week on a high note yesterday, while the dollar was on track for its biggest weekly fall in two months and US bond yields eyed their longest run of weekly declines since July.

Investors largely shrugged off figures that showed Chinese exports fell the most last year since 2009, and will look to earnings reports from US banks JP Morgan Chase, Bank of America Merrill Lynch and Wells Fargo later in the day for direction. "The banking sector will be the major focus," said Naem Aslam, chief market analyst at

Think Markets UK. "With rising interest rates and hopes of more friendly regulation, the shares of these banks have a lot of upside in the coming days."

Bank stocks led the charge in European trading, rising 1 percent to lift the FTSEuroFirst 300 0.5 percent. The broader index was still down slightly on the week though, its first weekly fall in six.

Shares in Fiat Chrysler Automobiles rose 6 percent, recouping some of the previous session's 16 percent slump triggered by the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) accusations that the car

maker illegally masked excess diesel emissions.

Germany's DAX was up 0.5 percent and Britain's FTSE 100 rose 0.4 percent, on course for its 12th record high close and 14th consecutive daily gain.

US futures pointed to a slightly higher open on Wall Street. Thursday's slip into the red marked yet another failed attempt to lift the Dow Jones through the magical 20,000 points barrier. Wall Street was chilled by president-elect Donald Trump's failure to address economic policy plans at his first news conference since winning the Nov

8 election, and growing fears that his proposed protectionist trade policies will choke global trade. Chinese trade data yesterday poured oil onto those flames. December exports fell by 6.1 percent from a year earlier, meaning the overall fall in exports last year was the biggest since the depths of the crisis in 2009. As the world's largest trading nation, China could come under pressure from protectionist measures this year if Trump follows through on his campaign pledges to brand it a currency manipulator and impose heavy tariffs on the country's imports.— Reuters

TAKATA SHARES SURGE ON REPORT OF US SETTLEMENT

TOKYO: Shares in struggling auto parts maker Takata surged yesterday following a report the company and US authorities could announce a settlement later in the day over deadly exploding airbags.

The final agreement with the Japanese airbag maker may include criminal charges and a fine of up to \$1 billion, Bloomberg News reported, citing people familiar with the matter. Takata shares closed up 16.46 percent, or 150 yen, at 1,061 yen after having reached their maximum daily increase early in the session.

The performance took gains since late last month to about 75 percent as investors bet on the two sides striking a deal. Some 100 million Takata airbags have been recalled worldwide over a defect that can send metal and plastic shrapnel from the inflator canister hurtling toward drivers and passengers when an airbag is deployed. The problem has been linked to more than a dozen deaths worldwide and scores of injuries. US regulators have said the defect is more dangerous in southern parts of the United States with warmer and more humid climates.—AFP

ZIMBABWE REVERSES TELECOMS PRICE HIKE AFTER PUBLIC PROTESTS

HARARE: Zimbabwe has reversed a decision to impose a drastic increase in mobile phone data charges, which provoked an angry response from customers and critics who accused President Robert Mugabe's government of trying to curtail the use of social media.

Last year activists used the Internet to mobilize the biggest anti-government protests in a decade, bypassing traditional opposition parties as anger grew over Mugabe's handling of the economy.

Econet Wireless, the southern African nation's largest mobile telephone company, raised data charges by a multiple of 25, in line with new regulations from the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe. But Information Communication Technology Minister Supa Mandiwanzira said in a statement on Friday that the tariff increases were "shockingly high" and blamed mobile phone companies for "gluttonous corporate greed".—Reuters

CORPORATES LOOK PAST INDIA'S CASH CRISIS

BIENNIAL INVESTMENT CONFERENCE IN GUJARAT WINDS DOWN

GANDHINAGAR: Business leaders from around the world attending an investment summit in the western Indian state of Gujarat this week cheered Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reforms, and said the disruption caused by his radical demonetization move should be temporary. Executives at the week-long, biennial Vibrant Gujarat Summit held in Modi's home state said the tide was turning on investments into India, although some complained the approval process remained prohibitively slow. Modi has promoted a business-friendly agenda since coming to power in 2014, and his reforms have helped turn India into the world's fastest growing major economy, albeit with the help of hefty government spending to fund projects.

"We are making a real bet on the country. What we are seeing with Prime Minister Modi is really some substantive change, it's more than lip service," said Peter Huntsman, Chief Executive of US chemical maker Huntsman Corp.

Huntsman said his company, which sells products ranging from adhesives to industrial inputs, is doing "preliminary analysis on what may end up being several hundred million dollars worth of investments in India."

As someone who first came to India in the late 1980s and has seen the promises made over decades, he described the pace of change under Modi as "near light-speed", and said that an overhaul of India's unwieldy tax code would be a game changer. After lengthy delays and political horse trading among lawmakers,

Modi finally won parliamentary approval last year to implement the Goods and Services Tax (GST), although it is likely to go only some way to unifying rates. The prime minister also stunned Indians on Nov 8 when he abolished old 500 and 1,000 rupee notes in a bid to root out corruption and drag the nation into the age of digital payments.

The World Bank said in its report this week that the move would slow India's economic growth to 7 percent this fiscal year, down from an earlier estimate of 7.6 percent. Other economists have also pared growth forecasts, as money shortages over the last two months have caused frustration for millions of people in an economy largely driven by cash.

Industrialists like B K Goenka, chairman of Indian conglomerate Welspun Group, believe the economic hit from so-called demonetization is in the past.

"Demonetization is over. It was a bold decision and in the long run it will benefit. It will also help the implementation of GST," said Goenka, adding moves to cleanse the system prior to implementing GST later this year made sense.

Welspun outlined proposed investments of 40 billion rupees (\$588 million) in Gujarat during the summit, which ended yesterday.

RISKS AND REWARDS

Canadian billionaire investor Prem Watsa said his India-focused investment vehicle Fairfax India is raising a further \$500 million, as its initial \$1 billion raise from 2015 has already been largely earmarked for deployment. "I'm saying

India is the single best country to invest in worldwide for the long-term," said Watsa, adding that all the companies Fairfax India has invested in so far are registering double digit growth rates. "I see huge opportunities."

"You're going to see a transformation take place before your eyes in India," said Watsa, comparing Modi's reform agenda in India to the transformation Lee Kuan Yew brought to Singapore.

Even for optimists, though, challenges remain. Fairfax India warned last week that a \$323 million deal it had struck in March 2016 to acquire a 33 percent stake in the Bengaluru airport was still in limbo, awaiting some government and regulatory approvals.

That deal had initially been expected to close in mid-2016. The head of Dubai's DP World, which operates several ports along India's coastline, said he was "very bullish" on India but that more work was needed to speed up approvals. Others pointed to the unpredictability of Indian politics as a wild card factor.

That challenge was illustrated this week when Amazon.com was forced to remove doormats resembling the Indian flag from its Canadian website, after an Indian government threat to rescind visas of the company's employees if they did not stop selling them.

"Investors will just have to accept a higher level of risk to get the returns they want from big markets like India," said Amitabh Dubey, a political analyst at emerging markets advisory firm Trusted Sources.—Reuters

INDIA'S SPICEJET BUYS UP TO 205 BOEING JETS

NEW DELHI: Indian low-cost airline SpiceJet said yesterday it would buy up to 205 Boeing planes worth \$22 billion as it seeks to strengthen its grip on the world's fastest-growing passenger aviation market.

SpiceJet said the order, the largest an Indian airline has ever placed with the US aerospace giant, would enable it to expand its domestic and international operations. "This is the largest deal for SpiceJet, it's one of the largest in Indian aviation and is the largest for Boeing in India," SpiceJet Chairman Ajay Singh told journalists as he announced the deal. "We are now in a very good position to expand our network and operations, which includes both domestic and international routes and destinations." Singh said the deal included 100 737 jets from Boeing's new Max family of aircraft, which he said would help reduce fuel costs by up to a fifth.

The deal marks a major turnaround for SpiceJet, whose planes were briefly grounded in 2014 after suppliers refused to refuel them due to unpaid bills. It now has a 13-percent share of the Indian market, behind rivals Indigo, Jet Airways and Air India.

India's airline market is growing at double the pace of nearest rival China, as an emerging middle-class takes to the skies. Train travel remains slow and demand for low-cost flights has boomed in the past

decade. The market is seen as having vast untapped potential with fewer than 100 million of India's 1.2 billion citizens flying on domestic routes last year.

But most of the country's airlines are still loss-making and laden with debt, while state carrier Air India has long relied on government support. Analysts say lower fuel prices and a rise in economic growth have boosted the sector, with domestic traffic up 21 percent last year. "The airline has done really well from being almost on the brink of closure to nearly seven quarters of profit," said industry analyst Kapil Kaul. "The new aircraft order is on expected lines and gives them long-term direction. A positive and long-term story is likely to emerge with this order."

SpiceJet currently has just 49 aircraft, putting it well behind the market leader Indigo with 400. It is the only Indian low-cost carrier with a Boeing fleet. The company's shares have more than tripled since December 2014. Singh said the deal included an option to purchase wide-body, long-haul aircraft in the future. It put the value of the planes at \$22 billion at list prices, although it will likely pay less as discounts for large orders are customary. "We are honoured to be the partner of SpiceJet and to be in India in a big way and this is a demonstration of our commitment to our partners and to India," said Raymond Conner, vice chairman of Boeing.—AFP



NEW DELHI: Spicejet Chairman Ajay Singh (left) and Raymond L Conner (right), Vice-Chairman of Boeing, attend a press conference in New Delhi yesterday.—AFP

MEXICO PRESIDENT TRIES TO CALM ANGER OVER GAS HIKE

MEXICO CITY: Mexico's president tried again on Thursday to calm anger over the big jump in gasoline prices this month amid a historically weak currency and continued threats by Donald Trump to steer manufacturers back to the United States. In his latest speech, the deeply unpopular President Enrique Pena Nieto outlined measures that he said would help families mitigate the impact of the price hike. Yet steps like notifying more than 3 million Mexicans older than 65 that they have money in government retirement accounts seemed unlikely to dissipate

the outrage that led to widespread looting in parts of the country and marches calling for his resignation.

Earlier this week, Pena Nieto promised to police price increases for staple goods and invest in modernizing public transportation. But it was difficult to see how any of that could make up for the overnight 20 percent increase in the price of gasoline when the government ended price controls.

After days of seeking ways to strike a calming chord, Pena Nieto tried taking a more relaxed posture Thursday, leaning casually on the podium, cracking jokes -

and telling Mexicans to suck it up.

"It is a difficult step that we have to adapt to," he said. He spoke a day after the peso fell below 22 to the dollar as the US president-elect again promised to make Mexico pay for a new border wall. The interbank rate strengthened some Thursday to close at 21.70 to the dollar, but retail customers were still paying 22 pesos per dollar at exchange houses. Jose Antonio Gonzalez Anaya, head of the state-owned oil company Pemex, said Thursday that the previous system of having the government set the price for gasoline across Mexico

made it unattractive to bring more gas to various parts of the country and to invest in infrastructure such as fuel pipelines to move fuel. He noted that most of Mexico's gasoline is still transported by tanker trucks, a far more costly alternative.

Pena Nieto said that he had heard many times that eliminating the gasoline subsidies would happen only when the government had no other alternative or when there was no more oil. He pointed out that Mexico is producing far less oil than it used to. "In a way both things coincided," he said. — AP



SEOUL: Women pass by sale signs at a shopping district in Seoul yesterday. South Korea's central bank lowered its forecast for the country's growth in 2017 due partly to the fallout from a massive influence-peddling scandal. —AP

BANK OF KOREA CUTS GROWTH OUTLOOK

SEOUL: South Korea's central bank lowered its forecast for the country's growth in 2017 due partly to the fallout from a massive influence-peddling scandal.

Bank of Korea said yesterday that the economy will likely expand 2.5 percent this year, slower than its October prediction of 2.8 percent growth. It said Asia's fourth-largest economy will grow 2.8 percent in 2018. The bank cited weak private consumption because of meager income growth, heavy household debts and the political fallout from the scandal.

Parliament impeached President Park Geun-hye in December and the Constitutional Court is considering whether she should be removed from power permanently for allegedly letting a long-time friend secretly meddle in state affairs.

Uncertainties over the next presidential election have left companies reluctant to increase investment and hiring. Bank of Korea Gov. Lee Ju-yeol told reporters that economic policy should focus on encouraging consumer spending.

South Korea's shipping and shipbuilding companies have shed tens of thousands of jobs to stem heavy losses. Youth unemployment has risen, pushing the number of jobless among 15 to 29-year-olds to 1 million people for the first time last year. Lee said the grim job market was hurting consumer sentiment.

Despite slowing growth, inflation is expected to rise to 1.8 percent this year from 1.0 percent in 2016, partly due to higher oil prices. Bank of Korea kept its policy rate at 1.25 percent this month, keeping the benchmark rate at a record low for a seventh straight month. —AP

WORLD'S JOBLESS TO RISE AMID SLOWER GROWTH

UN AGENCY SEES GROWING UNCERTAINTY

GENEVA: The ranks of the world's jobless are expected to grow this year due to slow growth, political and economic uncertainty and a lack of investment, the International Labour Organization (ILO) said on Thursday. Unemployment is rising in major emerging economies, especially those reliant on commodity exports such as Russia, South Africa and Brazil, the United Nations agency said.

Due to the failure to create jobs, global unemployment is forecast to increase by 3.4 million people in 2017, bringing the total to 201 million, it said in its annual report World Employment Social Outlook.

"That corresponds to an increase in the rate of unemployment in the world from 5.7 percent in the year that has just closed to 5.8 percent in 2017, and this is a tendency driven by deteriorating labor market conditions, particularly in emerging countries," ILO director-general Guy Ryder told a news briefing. "We

have a situation in which, despite relatively high cash holdings, companies seem uncertain about investment. Investment levels are not where they need to be," he added.

MIGRATION

Globalization and trade liberalization are increasingly questioned, Ryder said, noting that the intentions of the incoming US administration of Donald Trump were a "major cause of uncertainty".

Long-term unemployment remains stubbornly high in Europe, Canada and the United States, the report said. At the same time, social unrest and a lack of decent wages are prompting job-seekers to migrate from developing regions. "Migration is an essential part of the world of work, it's an essential part of stimulating future growth, sharing prosperity, making our global economy more inclusive," said Ryder, a former head of the international trade union ICFTU.

"The irony, dilemma, paradox of our time is that at a moment when the economic case for migration, taken globally, has probably never been stronger, it seems that the social and political obstacles to migration are becoming even higher." Major commodity-exporting economies are hardest-hit by insufficient jobs.

"For instance, we note an increase in the unemployment rate in the Russian Federation, South Africa, Brazil ... and some levelling off at least in Saudi Arabia and again also in Indonesia," said ILO senior economist Steven Tobin.

Latin America and the Caribbean remain scarred by recent recessions, while sub-Saharan Africa is in the midst of its lowest level of growth in more than two decades, the report said. Latin America's unemployment rate is set to rise by 0.3 percent in 2017 to 8.4 percent, largely due to the slowdown in Brazil, the continent's largest economy, it said. — Reuters

SOUTH AFRICA EXAMINES BARCLAYS AFRICA OVER APARTHEID-ERA BAILOUT

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's anti-graft watchdog has reopened an investigation into whether Barclays Africa Group benefited from an apartheid-era bailout, the bank said yesterday. A preliminary report by the country's Public Protector has found that the apartheid government breached the constitution by supplying Bankorp, which was acquired by Barclays Africa unit, Absa, in 1992, with a series of bailouts from 1985 to 1995, the Mail & Guardian newspaper reported.

Barclays Africa could have to repay 2.25 billion rand (\$166 million) if the finding by Public Protector Busisiwe Mkhwebane is upheld, the paper added. A previous investigation in 2000 by a central bank-appointed panel found that the loans were made to stabilize the banking system and Absa shareholders did not derive any undue benefit, recommending no further action be taken.

Former Public Protector Thuli Madonsela instituted the follow-up investigation after a 2010 complaint by Paul Hoffman of non-governmental organization Accountability Now, the Mail & Guardian newspaper said. Barclays Africa said it would continue to cooperate with the Public Protector, but it believes Mkhwebane's preliminary report has "several factual and legal inaccuracies".

"In its current form it creates the incorrect view that

Absa Bank Limited (Absa), a subsidiary of the Group, received undue benefits by virtue of the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) assistance to Bankorp," Barclays Africa said in a statement.

Shares in Barclays Africa were down 1.46 percent to 168.50 rand. Barclays PLC is in the process of trying to reduce its stake in Barclays Africa to 20 percent from 50.01 percent as it focuses its business on other markets. A spokesman for Barclays in London declined to comment on whether the case had any implications for the bank's plans to sell its stake in Barclays Africa.

South African Reserve Bank (SARB) Governor Lesetja Kganyago said yesterday the central bank will also cooperate in the Public Protector's investigation. Mkhwebane, whose office did not immediately respond to requests for comment, has given Absa, the SARB, the national treasury and the presidency until Feb. 28 to make further submissions before finalizing her investigation, the Mail & Guardian said, citing a copy of a preliminary report.

In her suggested remedial action, Mkhwebane proposed that South African President Jacob Zuma should consider a commission of inquiry to see whether other apartheid-era loans should be repaid by other institutions, the paper said. — Reuters

GERMANY CALLS ON ECB TO END ECONOMIC STIMULUS

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: The European Central Bank should begin winding down its expansive monetary policy in 2017 as inflation returns in the eurozone, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble said in an interview yesterday.

"It would probably be right if the ECB starts daring to head for the exit this year," Schaeuble told the Sueddeutsche Zeitung newspaper—although he acknowledged it would be a "difficult task".

The ECB has fixed interest rates at record lows in the 19-nation single currency area, as well as offering cheap

loans to banks and buying up tens of billions of euros per month of government and corporate debt. The moves are designed to make more cash from the financial system available to the real economy, powering growth and investment and driving inflation towards its target of just below 2.0 percent.

German economists and political leaders have long grumbled about the policy, objecting that low interest rates hurt savers. With interest rates on many savings accounts lower than inflation, Germans' cash piles will shrink in real terms if prices continue to grow and rates remain unchanged.

"I share the concerns" of savers, Schaeuble told the SZ yesterday, noting that inflation is expected to rise further in 2017. In Germany, prices increased faster in December than in the rest of the eurozone, at 1.7 percent compared to an average of 1.1.

There is "ongoing evidence of German inflation picking up markedly," IHS Markit economist Howard Archer tweeted yesterday, warning that the rise would "fuel tensions with the ECB".

Schaeuble acknowledged that any exit from expansive monetary policy would be "a difficult task to solve" for the ECB, as moves that look like remov-

ing the support could spook financial markets.

The German minister also cast barbs at fellow eurozone members he sees as laggards on economic reform. "The problem at the moment is not the ECB," he told the SZ.

"A range of member countries are not delivering what they committed themselves to, namely improving their competitiveness." German inflation breaking away from the eurozone average showed that "the problem is the weakness of other states, not Germany's strength," Schaeuble said. — AFP



TURIN: The logos of automobile companies (L to R) Abarth, Lancia, Fiat, Alfa Romeo and Jeep are pictured at the entrance to the Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) at the Fiat Mirafiori car plant yesterday in Turin. —AFP

FIAT CHRYSLER SHARES UP AS INVESTORS SHUN EPA IMPACT

MILAN: Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) shares rose yesterday as investors played down the potential impact of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) accusing the company of concealing diesel emissions. Fiat's Milan-listed rose more than 7 percent in early trade and stood 3.53 percent higher at 9.09 euros at 1101 GMT.

The shares tumbled 16 percent on Thursday after the EPA accused the world's seventh-largest carmaker of illegally using hidden software to allow excess diesel emissions to go undetected, suggesting a maximum fine of about \$4.6 billion.

Larger rival Volkswagen has admitted to cheating diesel emissions tests and agreed to spend up to \$22 billion in the United States to address claims from owners, environmental regulators, US states and dealers. FCA lacks Volkswagen's cash pile but analysts said its case looked much less severe than that of its German counterpart.

The EPA said FCA failed to disclose engine management software in 104,000 U.S. vehicles leading to an increase in emissions of nitrogen oxides (NOx). However, the authority has not yet labeled them "defeat devices" as in Volkswagen's case. FCA Chief Executive Sergio Marchionne categorically rejected the allegations on Thursday saying there was no wrongdoing and the company never attempted to create software to cheat emissions rules. He also stressed FCA's situation cannot be compared with VW's.

Analysts drew best and worst case scenarios, estimating potential fines ranging from several hundred million dollars to \$4 billion. But they said the likelihood of hefty fines were very low. "Our base case is that the current violation notice is settled as a reporting violation of \$140 million, a very manageable figure for FCA," said Stuart Pearson, an analyst at Exane BNP Paribas. "However, until the issue is settled, emissions uncertainty is likely to remain a significant overhang to the shares and break the stock's impressive recovery since Trump's election." Analysts also noted that FCA's vehicles are equipped with selective catalytic reduction (SCR) systems, so could likely be fixed at a relatively immaterial cost. Before this week's tumble FCA's shares had risen by around 70 percent since Donald Trump's election on expectations of less stringent emissions policies under the next US administration. —Agencies

AS TALKS LOOM, 'HARD BREXIT' OPTION RAISES FEAR OF TARIFFS

EU MAY IMPOSE TARIFFS ON ESTIMATED 15,000 GOODS

LONDON: Is it cod or haddock? That's the sort of question that will matter to Britain if it leaves the European Union's tariff-free single market and ends up operating under rules overseen by the World Trade Organization. A complete divorce, often referred to as "hard Brexit," would see the EU impose tariffs on an estimated 15,000 goods, in no uniform way: some British exports, like pharmaceuticals, would face no extra charge but the large majority would.

How big the tariffs are will depend on a complex series of factors. So cod and haddock may sit side by side in your average British "fish and chip" restaurant but they are classified differently by the EU - cod would be slapped with a 12 percent tariff and haddock 7.5 percent.

And the list goes on and on

According to a recent analysis from Civitas, a London-based economic think tank, the average tariff on British exports to the EU under WTO rules would be around 4.5 percent. It's a scenario that many experts, including from the ranks of those who backed Britain's departure in June's referendum, say would be a worst case scenario for British businesses. That's why the pound has fallen any time Prime Minister Theresa May's comments point to such an outcome. The response to her Brexit speech on Tuesday will be interesting.

The issue is heating up as May plans to start by the end of March the formal talks to leave the EU. German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other EU leaders have repeatedly warned Britain cannot retain access to the single market if it wants to control the immigration of EU citizens. May's repeated focus on the need to control borders suggests Britain won't be able to remain a member of the single market.

WHAT WOULD THAT MEAN?

Britain would trade on the rules devised and policed by the Geneva-based WTO, which has 164 members and is responsible for the vast majority of global trade.

Under WTO rules, Britain would not be able to trade with its former EU partners on terms that would be any more advantageous than other countries that do not have trade agreements with the EU, such as the United States.

Most British exports to the EU would be subject to the EU's Common External Tariff, or CET, meaning that - all other things being equal - most British goods would instantly become less price-competitive in the EU. Goods coming into Britain from the EU would also be subject to tariffs, suggesting the sides would be inclined to agree on a new trade deal to lower the tariffs again. Free trade deals typically take years to negotiate, though.

It's not just about tariffs. Certain standards and regulations would still have to be met by British businesses if their products are going to make it to the European marketplace. The EU has limits on foods containing genetically-modified products, for example.

THE US EXAMPLE

Under WTO rules, Britain's trade relations would closely resemble those that currently exist between the US and the EU.

The two sides trade under conditions that the WTO describes as "most favored nation" status. It facilitates some trade but does not eliminate tariffs across the board. So US motor vehicle manufacturers pay a 10 percent tariff on most passenger cars. But minibuses can face a 16 percent charge while snowmobiles are slapped with only a 5 percent tariff.

It's the same complicated story across other sectors: there are about 15,000 different classification codes for goods. Tariffs on fish would vary not only depending on the species but also whether it's traded alive, fresh, frozen or filleted.

SOUNDS COSTLY

While the WTO option ensures that Britain gets back control of its borders and regains its ability to set regulations and taxes, many critics say it would diminish the country's trade and lead to bigger falls in

national income than other Brexit scenarios. Philip Hammond, Britain's treasury chief, has said the WTO option would "not be the most favored outcome."

And since services are not regulated by the WTO, Britain's crucial financial services could be seriously hurt because professionals would lose the automatic right to work anywhere in the EU. As a reflection of investor concerns, the pound has shed around 20 percent of its value since June's vote to leave the EU. It's now trading around \$1.22, compared with \$1.50 on the day of the vote. Less than a decade ago, the pound was flying high above \$2.

REALLY THAT BAD?

Many pro-Brexit campaigners think there's nothing intrinsically wrong with the WTO option, arguing that a proper cost-benefit analysis should include the boost that a newly sovereign Britain could get from trade deals with non-EU countries. They also say that the WTO option would be far better than a transitional deal that would extend the current bout of uncertainty.

Britain, they add, could also take a global lead in reducing tariffs to lower costs for its businesses. The downside on that, though, would be that the same firms would face more intense competition in the British marketplace. Chinese steel, for example, is cheaper than steel produced in Britain. Also, Brexit supporters note that the fall in the value of the pound provides a natural cushion by making British goods more price-competitive in the international marketplace, even with new tariffs.

NOTHING CLEAR WITH BREXIT

As with most things Brexit-related, there are many legal uncertainties even with the so-called WTO option. Britain would possibly have to reapply to enter the WTO as its membership is currently invested through the EU itself.

WTO chief Roberto Azevedo has said that Britain's renegotiation of its membership would be relatively straightforward. But that's another story. —AP



BEIJING: A client buys goods in a shopping mall in Beijing yesterday. Chinese exports fell more than expected in December, data showed yesterday. — AFP

CHINA ANNOUNCES WORST EXPORT FALL SINCE 2009

FEARS OF TRADE WAR WITH US LOOM

BEIJING: China's massive export engine sputtered for the second year in a row in 2016, with shipments falling in the face of persistently weak global demand and officials voicing fears of a trade war with the United States that is clouding the outlook for 2017.

In one week, China's leaders will see if President-elect Donald Trump makes good on a campaign pledge to brand Beijing a currency manipulator on his first day in office, and starts to follow up on a threat to slap high tariffs on Chinese goods. Even if the Trump administration takes no concrete action immediately, analysts say the spectre of deteriorating US-China trade and political ties is likely to weigh on the confidence of exporters and investors worldwide.

The world's largest trading nation posted gloomy data yesterday, with 2016 exports falling 7.7 percent and imports down 5.5 percent. The export drop was the second annual decline in a row and the worst since the depths of the global crisis in 2009. It will be tough for foreign trade to improve this year, especially if the inauguration of Trump and other major political changes limit the growth of China's exports due to greater protectionist measures, the country's customs agency said yesterday.

"The trend of anti-globalization is becoming increasingly evident, and China is the biggest victim of this trend," customs spokesman Huang Songping told reporters.

"We will pay close attention to foreign trade policy after Trump is inaugurated president," Huang said. Trump will be sworn in on Jan 20. China's trade surplus with the United States was \$366 billion in 2015, according to US customs data, which Trump could seize on in a bid to bring Beijing to the negotiating table to press for concessions, economists at Bank of America Merrill Lynch said in a recent research note. A sustained trade surplus of more than \$20 billion against the United States is one of three criteria used by the US Treasury to designate another country as a currency manipulator.

China is likely to point out that its own data showed the surplus fell to \$250.79 billion in 2016 from \$260.91 billion in 2015, but that may get short shrift in Washington.

"Our worry is that Trump's stance towards China's trade could bring about long-term structural weakness in China's exports," economists at ANZ said in a note.

"Trump's trade policy will likely motivate US businesses to

move their manufacturing facilities away from China, although the latter's efforts in promoting high-end manufacturing may offset part of the loss." On Wednesday, China may have set off a warning shot to the Trump administration. Beijing announced even higher anti-dumping duties on imports of certain animal feed from the United States than it proposed last year.

"Instead of caving in and trying to prepare voluntary export restraints like Japan did with their auto exports back in the 1980s, we believe China would start by strongly protesting against the labelling with the IMF, but not to initiate more aggressive retaliation ... immediately," the BofA Merrill Lynch Global Research report said. "That said, even a 'war of words' could weaken investor confidence not only in the US and China, but globally."

CHINA'S DECEMBER EXPORTS FALL

China's December exports fell by a more-than-expected 6.1 percent on-year, while imports beat forecasts slightly, growing 3.1 percent on its strong demand for commodities which has helped buoy global resources prices.

An unexpected 0.1 percent rise in shipments in November, while scant, had raised hopes that China was catching up to an export improvement being seen in some other Asian economies.

China reported a trade surplus of \$40.82 billion for December, versus November's \$44.61 billion. While the export picture has been grim all year, with shipments rising in only two months out of 12, import trends have been more encouraging of late, pointing to a pick-up in domestic demand as companies brought in more raw materials from iron ore to copper to help feed a construction boom.

China imported record amounts of crude oil, iron ore, copper and soybeans in 2016, plus large volumes of coal used for heating and in steelmaking.

"Trade protectionism is on the rise but China is relying more on domestic demand," said Wen Bin, an economist at Minsheng Bank in Beijing. Prolonged weakness in exports has forced China's government to rely on higher spending and massive bank lending to boost the economy, at the risk of adding to a huge pile of debt which some analysts warn is nearing danger levels. — Reuters

CHINA'S VANKE STRENGTHENS HAND AGAINST TAKEOVER BID

SHANGHAI: Shares in China's biggest property firm Vanke surged yesterday after it announced a stock-holding shift that could end a bid by private conglomerate Baoneng to pull off the country's first hostile blue-chip takeover.

Vanke's leadership has for more than a year sought to fend off Baoneng's advances, which also have prompted an official government denunciation of "barbarian" takeover attempts.

Baoneng had since 2015 built up a 25 percent stake to become Vanke's biggest shareholder in what has emerged as a test of how much progress China's often dysfunctional stock market and corporate world were making in opening up to free-market practices such as blue-chip takeovers.

But Vanke said in a statement to the Hong Kong stock exchange late Thursday that Chinese state-owned subway operator Shenzhen Metro Group, which is believed to be sympathetic to Vanke's top bosses, would purchase a 15.31 percent stake in the firm. Respected business journal Caixin reported yesterday that Shenzhen Metro Group may buy the 14.07 percent Vanke stake held by Guangzhou Evergrande, another major property firm, which would give it a bigger stake outright than Baoneng.

The state-run Shanghai Securities News said Shenzhen Metro's involvement "means Vanke's share-control battle took a significant step in the direction of a solution" in Vanke's favour.

Vanke shares have see-sawed amid the takeover battle and analysts said the latest move helps lay the turmoil to rest, with Vanke's land business a potential partner for the subway operator. "The synergy effect between Shenzhen Metro and Vanke would be great," said Dickie Wong, Hong Kong-based research director for Kingston Securities, calling the plans "the best outcome" for Vanke.

Vanke's Hong Kong-listed shares surged as much as 8.6 percent early Friday before ending the day at HK\$19.66, up 5.70 percent. Its shares on the Shenzhen market, China's second stock exchange after Shanghai, closed 6.91 percent higher at 21.81 yuan. — AFP

CHINA SLAP AT YUAN SHORTS BARELY TICKLED BIGGER BEARS

SINGAPORE/LONDON: China may have put a few short-term currency speculators to the sword last week, but long-term investors betting against the yuan are still standing, and they carry much more firepower. An abrupt tightening of yuan liquidity in Hong Kong, which traders believe was orchestrated by Chinese authorities, drove overnight rates on the offshore component of the yuan to record highs above 80 percent and made it prohibitively expensive for punters to borrow and short-sell the yuan.

That pulled the offshore yuan from lifetime lows near 7 per dollar, but did not alter expectations for the yuan to depreciate this year. Traders also suspect that while some of the hedge funds that routinely borrow short-term funds to speculate on the yuan might have been forced to square off their trades last week, the yuan bears are mostly longer-term funds with staying power.

"A lot of hedge funds do fund themselves overnight, but most people are in the three-month plus area, and it doesn't affect them," said Richard Benson, co-head of portfolio investment with Millennium Global in London. "Spot movement is spot movement, and you aren't forced to do anything."

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) hasn't explicitly confirmed it was behind the squeeze that drove interbank overnight CNH rates to 87 percent last Friday, from 4 percent a week earlier, and caused the biggest ever weekly gain in the offshore yuan against the dollar - just under 2 percent.

But that is the assumption of market professionals. "All they wanted to do is to create some uncertainty and to make sure that investors don't think the yuan is a one-way street," said Jean-Charles Sambor, deputy head of emerging market fixed income at BNP Paribas Investment Partners in London. "It wasn't a game of trying to wash out the CNH shorts, but it was a good way to ring the bell."

Sambor reckons the PBOC's actions were less targeted at any specific investor type and more about managing capital outflows from China, particularly at the turn of the year, when the annual \$50,000 foreign currency conversion quota is reset for domestic individuals. — Reuters

Kuwait Times
Weekender
www.kuwaittimes.net

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 2017

**Iconic Egyptian actress
Karima Mokhtar dies aged 82**

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Iconic Egyptian actress

Karima Mokhtar dies aged 82

Egyptian actress Karima Mokhtar has died aged 82 following a long battle with disease. The renowned actress starred in dozens of films, TV dramas and stage plays in a career spanning more than 50 years. Her funeral was held yesterday at the mosque of Amr Iban Al-As in Cairo, according to Sameh Al-Sariti, the president of Egyptian Actors' Syndicate.

Mokhtar was born in Cairo in 1934 under her real name Attyat Mohamed Al-Badry. She earned her bachelor's degree in theatre in 1963 and was active in the Egyptian TV entertainment industry since its outset. Her first role on the big screen soon followed in the film *Thaman Al-Horeya* (The Price of Freedom).

She starred in a string of successful films, including *Zeinab*, *A-Hafeed* (The Grandson), *Amira Hobi Ana* (Amira My Love), *Al-Shaytan Ya'ez* (The Devil Preaches) and *Al-Farah* (The Wedding). Her roles on television included classic soap operas such as *Yetraba Fi Ezo* (May He Grow Up Prosperous) and *Bardis*. Towards her later years, Mokhtar stood out in her portrayal of motherly characters. She was married to late film director and actor Nour Al-Demerdash. Her only son, Moataz Al-Demerdash, is the host of *Misr Al-Gidida* (New Egypt) on Al-Hayat TV channel.

— www.alaraby.co.uk



Scorsese warns against 'tossing away' spirituality

Hollywood legend Martin Scorsese said that despite "horrific" conflicts around the world involving religion "we shouldn't toss away spirituality". The Oscar-winning maker of "Taxi Driver" and "The Last Temptation of Christ" told reporters on Thursday that he had to overcome "monumental legal and financial problems" to make his latest film "Silence" about the martyrdom of hidden Catholics and Jesuit missionaries in Japan in the 17th century.

"I was constantly discouraged from making it by Hollywood," said the 74-year-old director, who insisted that the human need for spirituality cannot be ignored. He said his film, which he had been trying to make for two decades, was a meditation on the spiritual reflex. "It does exist. So how do we nurture it? Not necessarily through religion but in the spiritual meaning of being a human being." Scorsese said that while "there are horrific events going on in the world" tied to religion "we shouldn't toss away spirituality".

Scorsese met Pope Francis—who is himself a Jesuit—before screening the film at the Vatican last month. The epic has divided critics with many classing it among his best movies, while others were less moved. The director, who has described himself as a "lapsed Catholic, but I am Catholic—there's no way out of it", said "three or four great actors" had turned down parts in the film because they "couldn't take" its religious subject matter or "put themselves in that position" before Adam Driver and Liam Neeson signed up for the project. But Scorsese, who talked to reporters in Paris as the film opened across Europe, was unapologetic about the film addressing the big eternal questions.

'This is who I am'

"There is nothing really to hide. That is who I am. I can't be what's fashionable. I'm 74, this is it, and it has value. Somehow the film was interwoven with my personal life like no other picture," he added. Even the grueling shooting of the film in isolated mountain and coastal locations in Taiwan turned out to be a "mystical experience. It was an ordeal," Scorsese admitted. "I am a New Yorker, allergic to everything, who grew up in tenement corridors and I found myself on a mountain top."

He said he chose to stick with the title of Shusaku Endo's historical novel, "Silence", on which the film is based, because "if we come from silence and that is what we are going to, we should become comfortable with it". "The film demands of the audience a certain concentration," he said. The director said he had auditioned one great actor who later turned down the role on the set of his film "The Wolf of Wall Street", which starred Leonardo DiCaprio. But a spokesman for Scorsese later told AFP that he would not be clarifying who the actor was. — AFP



French actress Catherine Deneuve (left) and US film director Martin Scorsese (right) pose during the photocall of the movie 'Silence' in Paris. — AFP

Obama aide details Prince partnership in estate case

The political activist Van Jones on Thursday detailed an extensive but quiet partnership with Prince as he asked a court to make him a representative to the late pop star's heirs. A former adviser to President Barack Obama who has become a prominent commentator on CNN, Jones revealed after Prince's sudden death in April that the reclusive rocker had tapped him to support charitable work discreetly.

At a hearing in a Minnesota court, Jones spoke for the first time about his involvement in legal wrangling over his estate as two of Prince's heirs, including his sister Tyka Nelson, now want him to become their representative. A Yale-educated lawyer, Jones has spearheaded several projects to reduce poverty including by teaching computer code-writing to young people and bringing environmental jobs to blighted communities. Sporting a purple tie in the Carver County courtroom, he said that he received an anonymous check a decade ago that kept coming back no matter how many times he rejected it.

A lawyer finally told him by telephone, "Look, I can't tell you who this check is from, but I can tell you—favorite color is purple," Jones told the court. He said he received a call soon after: "Hello, this is Prince. I like what you're trying to build." "People misunderstand him as a musical genius," Jones said. "He had a genius for people, for human beings. The only way he could express that was through music." Prince, whose estate is estimated to be worth \$200-300 million, died from an accidental overdose of painkillers without leaving a will and with no recognized children. The court has been working through the claims, some of them colorful, of people who say they are his rightful heirs.

Siblings divided

Bremer Trust, a Minnesota institution trusted by Prince, was put in charge of his estate after his death but is seeking to transfer management to Comerica, a Dallas-based financial services company. The court must decide who will represent the family to Comerica. While two siblings support Jones, the others back Prince's longtime lawyer L. Londell McMillan. Speaking to the court, McMillan described himself as an expert on the music industry who successfully extracted Prince from a contract with Warner Brothers in the 1990s—when the pop star famously wrote "slave" on his cheek and changed his name to the unpronounceable "love symbol" to protest his conditions.

Jones told the court that he negotiated Prince's return to Warner Brothers in 2014, which brought the artist's master recordings back to him. But Jones cast himself not so much as a businessman but as a guardian of Prince's social mission. "I get enough attention in other parts of my life," he quipped. Jones held a short-lived position advising Obama on the green economy, resigning under pressure from Republicans who objected to his controversial past statements. After he quit, Jones said that Prince called him up and invited him to his Paisley Park estate. Jones said Prince told him to go to Jerusalem for two weeks and pray and then to write up things he wanted to do, promising to get them done. "He changed my life," Jones said. "That kept me going because I was depressed." Jones emerged on Election Day in November as a leading television critic of President-elect Donald Trump, calling his victory a "whitelash" against progress by minorities. — AFP



This file photo shows Van Jones arriving for the 102nd White House Correspondents' Association Dinner in Washington, DC, on April 30, 2016. — AFP

REVENGE OF THE FEMALE HORROR FILMMAKER

Spine-tingling teaser footage for "The Bye Bye Man" has delighted fans of horror with its offering of all the delicious tropes of a great spooky story. Ahead of its US release on Friday, its trailers have been serving up a bloodcurdling blend of slash, splatter, jump scares, terrified teenagers and a havoc-wreaking ghoul at the center of it all. But it departs from the average run-of-the-mill ghost story in one significant way—the gender of its director, Stacy Title.

Women flock to horror movies—in greater numbers than men, according to various box office surveys—yet until recently a female director was as rare a sight in the genre as a working cellar light or a cell phone with a signal. Over the last few years, however, a small but exhilarating new wave of critically-acclaimed breakout hits made by women have subverted expectations about what high quality horror should look like. From Jennifer Kent's "The Babadook" to "A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night," directed by Ana Lily Amirpour, women are elevating the genre beyond the scope of the traditional male-directed slasher.

The worldwide film industry has churned out many thousands of horror movies since Frenchman Georges Méliès directed "Le Manoir Du Diable" ("The Devil's Castle") in 1896. Yet the gender balance remains so out of whack that most user-generated lists of horror films directed by women since the early 20th century on the Internet Movie Database mention fewer than 100.

Lost generation

"There's a lost generation of very talented women that aren't working because unfortunately, or fortunately for men, it's a sexist business," Title told AFP. Set in 1990s Wisconsin, her movie follows three students who move into an old, off-campus house, where they find themselves preyed on by "The Bye Bye Man," a malevolent supernatural entity that terrorized unsuspecting victims decades earlier. The story comes from occult historian Robert Damon Schneck's 2005 compendium of the spooky and downright weird, "The President's Vampire: Strange-but-true Tales of the United States of America."

Schneck claims his story recalls the real-life experiences of a friend in Wisconsin, who told the author about encountering the



Stacy Title, the youngest woman ever nominated for an Oscar for directing a short movie, directed "The Bye Bye Man". — AFP

menacing supernatural being after playing with a Ouija board. The film boasts established stars like Faye Dunaway and Carrie-Anne Moss, but it is carried by Douglas Smith ("Ouija," "Terminator Genisys" and "Miss Sloane") playing an insecure teenage genius who investigates the Bye Bye Man myth. "I didn't seek out the movie because there was a female director but it was an interesting angle once I was already interested and in the audition process," Smith told AFP. "She was really artistically respectful. She really wanted to rehearse and just have long conversations and get our opinions."

'Groundedness'

The 47-year-old Title started out as an editor and investigative journalist, and was the youngest woman ever nominated for an Oscar for directing a short movie. She directed Cameron Diaz and Courtney B. Vance in 1996 black comedy "The Last Supper" and cultivated her horror chops directing "Snoop Dogg's Hood of Horror." "I hate to say it, but you close your eyes and imagine the president, it's a man. Whatever you think of Hillary Clinton, you know that she got hit a lot harder than a guy would've got hit," Title told AFP.—AFP



Actor Vin Diesel arrives by helicopter for the premiere of the film 'xXx Return of Xander Cage' in London. — AP photos



This image released by Universal Studios shows Charlize Theron, left, and Vin Diesel in a scene from 'The Fate of the Furious,' expected in theaters on April 14.



Hollywood actor Vin Diesel, left, and co-star Deepika Padukone attend a news conference to promote their film xXx: Return of Xander Cage in Mumbai, India.



Hollywood actor Vin Diesel, center, speaks with co-star Deepika Padukone, right, and director D. J. Caruso seated beside him during a press conference to promote their film xXx: Return of Xander Cage.

Vin Diesel gets traditional Indian welcome for 'xXx'

Women dressed in red saris and yellow turbans gave a traditional Indian welcome to action star Vin Diesel on Thursday as the American arrived to promote his new movie "xXx: Return of Zander Cage." Diesel was accompanied by Bollywood star Deepika Padukone, who is making her Hollywood debut in the film which began its international rollout yesterday. Dozens of women applied red vermilion dots - regarded as an auspicious symbol in India - to the foreheads of Diesel, Padukone and director D.J. Caruso

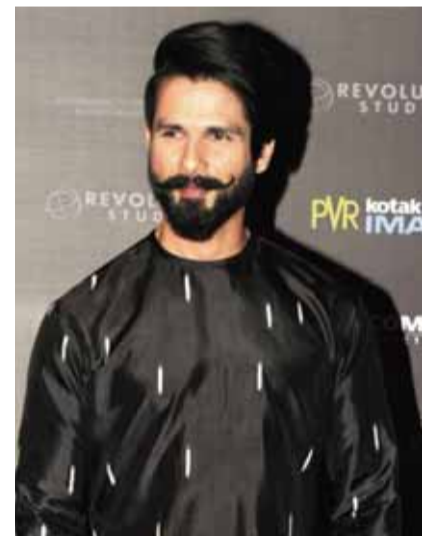
The film sees Diesel's return to the Zander Cage film franchise after starring in the first movie in 2002 but missing the sequel in 2005. Although thought to be long-dead, the athlete turned government operative in "xXx: Return of Zander Cage" comes out of exile and races to recover a sinister weapon. — Reuters



Indian Bollywood actor Irrfan Khan poses as he attends the premiere of Hollywood action thriller film - xXx: Return of Xander Cage.



Indian Bollywood actress Kalki Koechlin.



Indian Bollywood actor Shahid Kapoor.

Directors Guild announces nominees for film achievement

It was another sunny day Thursday for Damien Chazelle's Los Angeles musical "La La Land" and Barry Jenkins' coming-of-age tale "Moonlight" on the long journey to the Oscars.

After winning the top film awards at the Golden Globes, Chazelle and Jenkins both scored their first nomination for a Directors Guild Award, further enhancing the likelihood of an Oscar nod. The guild's nominees for outstanding directorial achievement for a feature film also included "Manchester by the Sea" director Kenneth Lonergan, "Lion" director Garth Davis and Denis Villeneuve of "Arrival."

Davis is also nominated for best first feature along with Nate Parker for "Birth of a Nation." Publicity about a 17-year-old rape allegation against Parker had seemed to sink his chances for

awards. Parker was acquitted. Other first feature nominees include Dan Trachtenberg for "10 Cloverfield Lane," Tim Miller for "Deadpool" and Kelly Fremon Craig for "The Edge of Seventeen."

While the DGA nominees for feature film achievement rarely match up exactly with nods for the Academy Award, the guild choices can be a formidable predictor of the eventual Oscar winner. With nearly 16,000 members, including television and commercial directors, the guild often selects a more populist lineup when compared with the selections of the nearly 400 members of the directors' branch of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Last year, Alejandro G. Inarritu picked up the feature film award for "The Revenant" before going on to win best director at the Oscars.

Voting for Oscar nominations closes today, and nominees will be announced on Jan 24. With nominations from the Producers Guild this week, "La La Land," "Moonlight" and "Manchester by the Sea" appear to be the front runners. Notably absent from the guild nominations were Martin Scorsese for "Silence," Denzel Washington for "Fences" and Mel Gibson for "Hacksaw Ridge," a film that left the Golden Globes empty-handed. Winners of the 69th annual Directors Guild awards will be announced at a dinner in Los Angeles on Feb 4. — AP



The Palladian-style mansion of Villa Sandi, a winery in Italy's prosecco country. — AP photos



Photo shows Treviso in Northern Italy.



Photo shows one of Treviso, Italy's many canals.



Photo shows an overview of vineyards in Valdobbiadene, Italy.

Explore the region of Northern Italy that's home to prosecco

You know prosecco as the fruity Italian bubbly that's a fun and affordable way to celebrate the holidays as well as a bright accompaniment to a light meal. But this popular sparkling white drink can also be part of your vacation plans. Just like that other famous fizz, drink, it hails from a region that welcomes visitors who like to travel glass in hand.

From exploring hillside villages to strolling beside the tranquil canals of the city of Treviso, there's plenty to do, eat, see and sip in prosecco country. And since this is still a relatively undiscovered spot, prices aren't at the sky-high pitch of better-known places. Here are a few things to know before you go.

Where to go

Prosecco is made in two regions in Northern Italy—the Veneto, also home to Venice, and neighboring Friuli Venezia Giulia. The main city is Treviso, about a half-hour from Venice by train, an hour by car.

You can make this a day trip from Venice, renting a car, booking a trip through a touring company or hiring a guide and meeting at the rental car office. Here is one list of authorized guides. For longer stays, you can either make Treviso a jumping-off point for the surrounding country or plot a course from town to town. A popular trail is the Strada del Prosecco (prosecco route) which winds from the town of Conegliano to the village of Valdobbiadene.

Where to stay

In Treviso, Relais San Nicolo, close to the Treviso train station and Treviso Cathedral, is comfortable and features unique, period furnishings. Rooms start at about \$100. Check out the wineries and restaurants you plan to visit, as they may have small guest houses attached (see Villa Sandi and Restaurant Parco Gambrinus below).



Photo shows a man holding an umbrella while walking in front of one of the archways of the Palazzo dei Trecento in Treviso, Italy.

What to see

Treviso gets upstaged by grand dame Venice, but this city is worth at least an afternoon's stroll. Check out the Knight's Loggia on Via Martiri della Libertà, a 13th century building which still has the remains of frescoes on its walls. In the center of town you'll find the Piazza dei Signori, with its Palazzo dei Trecento (Palace of the 300), home to the municipal council. The building was bombed in World War II; a jagged scar on the restored wall bears testament.

In the palace loggia you'll find the remains of the Fontana delle Tette, a fountain made in the 16th century in the shape of a woman that, you guessed it, sprayed water from each breast. On special days, the fountain dispensed wine. To see a replica (water only), head northwest on Piazza dei Signori, turn right on Vicolo Podesta and look for the statue to your left in the shopping arcade. It's tucked away in a small courtyard; you may need to ask for directions. Other attractions include the fish market, 22 Via Isola, open mornings except Sundays and Mondays. Also popular, taking a walk or bike ride along the tow path, known as the Resterà, that runs alongside the Sile River.

What to eat

In Treviso, Toni del Spin, 7 Via Inferiore, is a tavern in the historic center serving traditional food with prices around \$25 for a meal excluding drinks. In Valdobbiadene the Salis Ristorante Enoteca, 52 Strada di Saccol, is set on a hillside with a great view of the vineyards of Cartizze, the premium grape-growing region of prosecco country. Main courses start at around \$15. In San Polo di Piave, Restaurant Parco Gambrinus, Via Capitello 18, is known for its crayfish, which are served along with substantial bibs and written "commandments" on how best to enjoy them. Main courses start at around \$25. Rooms are also available in the adjacent inn, about \$100 for a double room. — AP



Photo shows a wooden handmade frame by New Orleans based Alyse studio owner Alyse Rodriguez.



Beyond Popsicle sticks: Tips for DIY picture frames



File photo shows a wooden handmade frame by New Orleans based Alyse studio owner Alyse Rodriguez.

Think back to kindergarten and your first picture frame, proudly put together out of glued Popsicle sticks, some yarn and maybe a splash of glitter. Voila! Functional art.

DIY picture frames - whether by adults or children - are still the bedrock of meaningful crafts projects. Printing out a photo of a loved one or landscape and displaying it in a frame elevates that image above the ocean of others that we post online or keep tucked away on cell phones and laptops. Here are some tips on how to make a picture frame out of wood and other materials, from book covers and fabric to those always popular Popsicle sticks.

Ideas and inspirations

New Orleans-based Alyse Rodriguez, 32, began making frames and home decor as a hobby while working as an accountant, but transitioned her Etsy.com store into a full-time studio and business last year. "I start with inspiration, from travel, my home and my clothes to playing the piano, and amalgamate all that into ideas, the color palettes and pattern design," she said.

Her Color Collection, made of two or three thick pieces of birch plywood glued side-by-side and hand-painted with acrylic paint in lime green, coral and other unusual colors, with the photo secured on top, reflects her bohemian style. Her new Mali Collection features right-angled frames made of smooth poplar, with a stained finish. Geometric patterns - squiggles, arrows, dots - inspired by African, handmade cotton fabric dyed with fermented mud, called mud cloth, are then screen-printed on the surface.



File photo shows wooden handmade frames by New Orleans based Alyse studio owner Alyse Rodriguez. — AP photos

"The way that I approach wood is like the way an artist approaches a blank canvas," Rodriguez said.

The right materials

If you're interested in making a right-angled wooden frame - four pieces of wood glued together at the joints and secured with nails or staples - Rodriguez recommends sticking to poplar. It's smooth, lightweight, easy to sand down, and has a fine texture. Timothy Holton, 58, of Berkeley, California, who founded the shop Holton Studio Frame-Makers in 1993, suggests investing in high-quality hardwoods such as cherry, oak and maple.

A table saw is one way to cut the wood; you can buy one at a local woodshop, he said. Or Rodriguez suggests having pieces cut for you at chain stores such as Lowe's and Home Depot that have cutting machines. Rodriguez, who also quilts, used to make frames out of plywood wrapped in fabric and glued in the back with fabric adhesive, like a fabric-covered book, with the photo on top.

Or you could take a hardcover book, carve out a rectangle in the middle of the cover, pop out the piece, and tape a photo in its place. For a simple, rustic frame, great to make with kids, combine four twigs to form a rectangle, and then bind them with string at the corners. "The simplest frame, if it's really made well, feels compelling and has integrity to it," said Holton.

That makes the process of fitting, gluing and nailing the pieces together important. First use a strong wood glue, such as Titebond, and wait for it to dry. "If you wait 24 hours, you have to use an axe to get those pieces of wood apart," Rodriguez joked.

To hold two pieces together at a perfect right angle to dry, use a miter clamp or other type of frame clamp. A picture frame stapler gun or nail gun are helpful when securing the frame in the back, after gluing. For kids, break out those Popsicle sticks, and buy colorfully patterned Japanese washi tape. Crafts blog Eighteen25.com recommends rolling out a strip of washi tape, sticky side up, and laying the Popsicle sticks on top, wrapping the washi tape around their edges. Then glue two plain sticks across your decorated sticks, to hold everything together. Glue a magnet on the back and a photo on the front.

Have fun decorating

"To me, the finish work is the best part. That's where the design really comes into play, and you can have fun," said Rodriguez. Head to a paint or art supply store and get color swatches, play with color combinations and buy inexpensive acrylic paint samples, said Rodriguez. She likes to use 1-inch-thick craft paint brushes. Use a pencil eraser dipped in paint or a stencil to create patterns.

Rodriguez made her first picture frame in 2011 with a stencil of a mask that she actually glued to the frame and then spray-painted gold. She now also incorporates braided leather and burlap into her frame designs. Your decorated frame should be personal, reflecting the picture in it. "The frame says, 'This matters. This is something I care about, that you should care about too,'" says Holton. — AP



Photo shows New Orleans based Alyse studio owner Alyse Rodriguez, who makes artistic wooden picture frames and rustic home decor, painting a frame.

Ask a Designer: Using yellow well

Gorgeous shades of yellow have become increasingly popular in home decor, a trend that seems set to continue in the coming year. Yellow is prominent in the Sherwin-Williams color forecast for 2017, while Pantone describes their new "color of the year," called Greenery, as "a fresh and zesty yellow-green." "We haven't seen yellow this popular since the '80s," says New York-based interior designer Young Huh. And in the months to come, she says, "we will see more and more of it as accent colors and as whole room colors."

But while yellow is having a moment, many shades of it can be challenging to use successfully. We've asked Huh and two other design experts - Florida-based interior designer Andrew Howard and Kayla Kitts, managing editor of special projects for HGTV.com - to share tips on using this sunny, cheerful color.

Where to use it

A recent report by Zillow Digs found that homes with white-painted kitchens sell for \$1,400 less than homes with yellow kitchens. If yellow walls seem like too big a leap, Howard suggests using yellow for upholstery and pillows or for kitchen cabinets. In addition to kitchens, Huh says yellow is catching on for entries and hallways "because it makes these utilitarian spaces cheerful." In hallways, it adds a sense of sunshine in a space with little natural light.



Kitts suggests using yellow in "small, more compact spaces that you're looking to make larger," like a powder room. She also says you might want to reject some conventional wisdom that yellow is too bright and busy for a bedroom, especially if it doubles as a home office. A warm yellow can energize the space, while still feeling relaxing. "The trick with yellow is that most people don't even know they like it until they see it in a space," says Howard. "Don't be afraid to go big. I once painted an entire

laundry room yellow and everyone that sees it loves it."

Favorite shades

Yellow is "such a fresh color, and instantly adds life to any space you use it in," says Howard. He suggests starting with a primary yellow and then bringing in other colors for balance: "A room that is yellow by itself will get overwhelming. It needs a blue or green or even a lavender to cool it down a bit."

Kitts and Huh are both fans of more citrusy yellows, and even chartreuse. "I especially like Pantone's primrose yellow because, like the color of the year, Greenery, there is an acid element which makes the color more exciting and edgy," says Huh. "It's a color we see in nature, but in an electric way. This is not your grandma's yellow. It's fashion forward and forward thinking."

These colors look great paired with gray or blue shades. "Pale yellow is also a wonderful ground color for extravagant colorful prints," says Huh. Even in its softer incarnations, "it evokes hope, sunshine and brightness."

Kitts agrees: "Buttery shades are really great for adding a warm glow and making a space feel cozy." In rooms that get a lot of natural sunlight, she says, even more neutral yellows like cornsilk will offer that optimistic energy that characterizes yellow.

Challenges

No shade of yellow is impossible to use, but do choose with care. Kitts says that if you'll be painting walls yellow, test out a shade and view it throughout the day to see how it changes in different types of natural light and with different lamps. You might have to live with a sample of a bright, lemon yellow for a few weeks to make sure it's something you want long-term. Yet going with paler yellows isn't always a safer bet.

"Yellow can be tricky, because if it is too pale and the room it is in is relatively dark or gets cool, north-facing light, the color will look dingy rather than cheerful or calming," says Huh. "In England, where the weather can be drab, period rooms are painted bright yellows. Nancy Lancaster's famous yellow drawing room is perhaps the greatest and most popular example of a striking yellow room." Contrast can also help: "Yellow needs to be paired with a cooler color to have it work effectively," says Howard. "It cannot be the only color in a room."

So take time to choose shades that delight you. "The yellows that are trending now are the ones that are not pure yellows, but tertiary colors," says Huh. "These are not classic yellows that you may have seen in the past. They're either refreshing or deep moody yellow, and will inspire more emotion than a pure yellow. Because of this, we'll see these yellows in smaller moments, accents such as contrast pillows or on one upholstered chair in a room." Despite its challenges, yellow is an easy color to love, says Howard. "In the last couple of years we remembered how much we always loved it," he says. "I am really excited to see it popping up more and more, and hope that it's not a trend but a permanent fixture in how we decorate." — AP

Dramatic touches of yellow bring warmth and energy to contrast with the crisp whites and soft, natural wood tones in this relaxing sunroom, designed by New York-based interior designer Young Huh. — AP photos





A vehicle passes snow plowed high along US-6 near Loveland Pass.

FOR SKI RESORTS IN WESTERN US, TOO MUCH SNOW IS A GOOD WOE

For ski resorts in Colorado and the Sierra Nevada, it's a good problem to have: too much snow. Recent storms walloping mountains across the West dropped up to 10 feet of snow, creating thrilling powdery runs. But once avalanche danger emerged on roads and at the slopes, several resorts made the unusual move of shutting down.

While the closures cost resorts income from lift tickets, the businesses will likely make it up in the long run by promoting the fresh snow on Twitter and getting more people excited to come up and carve powder turns. "It's like you just go out and get barreled, you drop in and come up, an' pah! Drop back down. Powder everywhere in your face, you know? ... Mashed potato powder," said John Lencki, a New Hampshire native skiing Thursday at Arapahoe Basin Ski Area.

It's a change from previous years beleaguered by drought. Even this season, the Colorado snowpack got off to its worst start in more than 30 years, forcing some ski areas to push back opening day this fall. Some resorts dug out in time for the holiday weekend, though the forecast in Colorado calls for more snow Friday and Sunday. Here's a look at the problems - and joy - a thick blanket of snow can bring to ski resorts in the West:

How often do resorts close because of too much snow?

Heavy snow typically does not affect resort operations, but it often creates problems on the roads leading to the slopes, said Chris Linsmayer, a spokesman for Colorado Ski Country USA, an industry group representing more than 20 resorts. "It's extremely rare (for snow to close a resort). I've been skiing my whole life and it's never happened to me," he said.

It's hard to say how often resorts close because of heavy snow, but most agree it's unusual. Dan Lavelly, who has lived in the Lake Tahoe area for decades, was looking forward to heading to the Mount Rose ski resort southwest of Reno. More than 10 feet of snow fell in about a week at some area resorts. "In all my years, it's so rare to have too much snow," Lavelly said Wednesday. "Having a season pass - you pretty much live for these conditions. You want 2 or 3 feet of fresh powder, and you want to go play in it."

Wintry conditions close resorts in the Sierra

Nevada, the mountains spanning California and Nevada, more often than those in Colorado because they get massive amounts of snow all at once, said Michael Berry, president of the National Ski Areas Association.

Why were the resorts in Colorado closed?

Avalanches pose problems, more so on roads than at the resorts. Ski patrollers use explosives to mitigate slides every day and close portions of resorts that are at risk. "We have closures and we have ropes. We have gates, and we really try to steer people to specific areas of the hill to keep them out of avalanche terrain," said Ryan Evanczyk, a ski patroller at Arapahoe Basin. But "the big message here is not necessarily the mountain is unsafe, but the roads to get to and from the mountain were unsafe," Linsmayer said. Despite the closures, the snow led to bragging rights.

Crested Butte Mountain Resort in western Colorado shut down its lifts late Monday out of concern for guests and employees because of high winds and heavy, wet snow. Officials tweeted a photo of it piled high at a measuring station with the line, "We officially #buriedthebutte." "It has definitely helped our publicity, this week for sure," spokeswoman Erica Mueller said.

Monarch Mountain ski area closed for a day this week because of work to control avalanches on a nearby mountain pass, tweeting a photo of powder stacked next to its sign with the hashtag #toomuch-snow. And after Arapahoe Basin closed because of slide danger on another highway, it simply posted, "Snow, Snow, Snow." In the Sierra Nevada, road closures and the threat of avalanches closed resorts around Lake Tahoe closed for several days this week. Some reopened Thursday.

How much snow has fallen?

The three Colorado resorts that closed received 3 to 5 feet over the previous few days. In the Sierra Nevada, storms dumped the most snow the mountains have seen in six years, the National Weather Service in Reno said. It helped ease the effects of California's lingering drought, with federal monitors saying Thursday that more than 40 percent of California is out of drought.

Why is Colorado seeing extreme avalanche danger?

"The simple answer is we've gotten a lot of snow in a short amount of time," said Ethan Greene, director of the Colorado Avalanche Information Center. He compared the snowpack to the construction of a building. If you build one story at a time, the foundation has a chance to adjust to the added weight.



"But if you plunk down a 20-story building in a couple of minutes, it's likely to break," he said. "When you have this amount of snow in a couple of days, it piles up really fast and the snowpack has a hard time adjusting to the new load. "With that rapid loading - a lot of weight in a short amount of time - it becomes unstable," Greene said. — AP

Snow Safety Patroller Ryan Evanczyk stands on the mountainside at Arapahoe Basin ski area, where he works in Arapahoe, Colo.

—AP photos



Foreign customers sit inside the newly reopened Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka, Bangladesh. — AP photos



A foreign customer waits at the counter of the newly reopened Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka, Bangladesh.



Dwin Islam Rakib, a survivor of the July 1 attack at Holey Artisan Bakery, works at the reopened restaurant.



Shahriar Ahmed, a survivor of the July 1 attack at Holey Artisan Bakery, works at the reopened restaurant.

Bangladesh cafe hit by brutal hostage-taking attack reopens

The Bangladesh cafe besieged by militants who killed 20 hostages last year has quietly reopened a few blocks away from its old, bloodied site, which remains taped off by investigating police. For Shahriar Ahmed and the 16 other staffers, some of whom were working during the horrifying siege, the reopening of Holey Artisan Bakery represents hope and a new beginning. "This is beautiful to come back here with all my dearest colleagues," Ahmed said while preparing a cappuccino for a customer on Thursday. "Our old, familiar guests are coming and congratulating us, congratulating from their hearts."

The July 1 attack by five young Bangladeshi extremists stunned the nation and drew condemnation from abroad. The attackers held dozens hostage overnight, quizzing them on details of the Quran and killing some of those who failed to answer to their satisfaction. When Bangladeshi police and soldiers stormed the restaurant the next morning, killing all five attackers, they found a gruesome scene of torture and killings. Twenty hostages including 17 foreigners were dead.

The government responded by cracking down on extremist groups in the country, blaming one in particular - Jumatul Mujahedeen Bangladesh - but dismissing claims of responsibility by the Middle Eastern extremist group the Islamic State. It followed several years of smaller attacks targeting scores of individuals deemed by extremists to be enemies of radical Islam, including secularists, writers, religious minorities, foreign aid workers and activists.

The cafe reopened Tuesday in a section of a shopping mall. The new location is smaller, doesn't have a backyard and there's no view of the lake overlooking the Gulshan diplomatic zone that had drawn so many in the past. The previous site remains closed to the public and is under the control of police who are still investigating the attack. The new cafe is already doing brisk business.



Bangladeshi employees work inside the newly reopened Holey Artisan Bakery.

The mood is cheerful, with many customers greeting the waiters with smiles.

"You can't compare it with the old place," one owner, Sadat Mehedi, said while wiping down a tabletop. "This is definitely small in size, but we have the same spirit. It's heartening that our tables are full." He said reopening the restaurant after last year's traumatic attack was "all about hope and aspiration to start again, to keep the spirit up." "We want to grow again, want to create more jobs," he said. As one customer took a seat, a server named Rocky cried, "Welcome back, ma'am! We are ready to serve you." She ordered an ice cream for her daughter, a toddler. "They all know me, we know them all," Rocky explained. "It's lovely to see them again." — AP



Bangladeshi employees work inside the newly reopened Holey Artisan Bakery.



A foreigner walks at the newly reopened Holey Artisan Bakery.



TOKYO: Nintendo's new video game console Switch is displayed at a presentation in Tokyo yesterday.—AFP Photos



TOKYO: Visitors play Nintendo's new video game console Switch during its presentation in Tokyo yesterday.

NINTENDO REBOOTS WITH NEW SWITCH GAME CONSOLE

'AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE WITH REALISTIC PHYSICAL SENSATIONS'

TOKYO: Nintendo unveiled its new Switch game console yesterday, which works both at home and on-the-go, as it tries to offset disappointing Wii U sales and compete with Sony's big-selling PlayStation 4. The hybrid device which goes on sale March 3 for \$299.99 comes as Nintendo also dips its toe into the mobile gaming market following its big brand win after Pokemon Go's worldwide success. At a Tokyo media briefing, the company said the console is packed full of Nintendo's "entertainment DNA", taking elements of earlier devices including the 3DS handheld and motion-sensor Wii.

Switch has a removable screen that lets players dock it at home and also use it on the go like a tablet computer with detachable controllers called Joy-Con on both sides. It uses cartridges rather than discs. The idea is to give users a more immersive experience with realistic physical sensations matched to

what is happening on-screen, the firm said. A remote control feature means players don't always have to keep their eyes on screen while punching the air in a boxing game or getting into a gun duel. Only eight games will be available when the system goes on sale in March including a Legend of Zelda offering. But there are some 80 more games in the pipeline, Nintendo said.

Yesterday's launch is "a key turning point for Nintendo's earnings and share price", Daiwa Securities said before the event. Similar briefings were held in Paris, London, Frankfurt and New York later yesterday. Switch got off to an inauspicious start in October when a sneak peak at the console left gamers and analysts underwhelmed and with many unanswered questions. Nintendo's Tokyo-listed stock dived after it released a three-minute video about the product on YouTube. Yesterday, its shares

dropped 5.75 percent to 23,750 yen.

'Nintendo-esque'

Switch will be crucial for Nintendo, which needs a hit product to offset the flagging fortunes of the Wii U and 3DS, as rival Sony racks up huge sales of the PS4 — it has sold more than 50 million units globally since its debut in late 2013. In November, Sony started selling the \$400 PS4 Pro, which promises even sharper graphics than earlier versions. Switch underscores how Nintendo tends to look at gaming as fun play while Sony's big focus has been on visuals, said gaming specialist Hirokazu Hamamura. "It's a Nintendo-esque game console that shows how the company sees gaming as 'play' rather than image arts," Hamamura said at the event.

After struggling to fix its weak finances, Nintendo abandoned a long-held consoles-only policy and decided to enter the smart-

phone game market. Last year, the Super Mario and Donkey Kong maker released "Miitomo"—a free-to-play and interactive game-as-it tries to compete in an industry that has increasingly gone online. It scored another hit with the Pokemon Go app released in July, but the impact on Nintendo's profits will be limited.

The company is the creator of the Pokemon franchise but does not own the license for the game, which was developed and distributed by US-based Niantic, a spinoff of Google. Last month, Nintendo released the Super Mario Run game for iPhones, which topped download charts and drew more than 40 million downloads globally in the first four days after its release, according to the company. But analysts warned its popularity could be hampered by a relatively high \$10 price tag for access to the full game, since many online offerings are free.—AFP



TOKYO: People make line up for Nintendo's new video game console Switch during its presentation in Tokyo yesterday.



TOKYO: President of Nintendo Tatsumi Kimishima speaks during a presentation event of the new Nintendo Switch in Tokyo, yesterday.

FACEBOOK TAKES ON A BIGGER ROLE IN JOURNALISM

NEW YORK: Facebook is launching a journalism project aimed at strengthening its ties with media organizations to help them expand their audiences, come up with new products and generally promote trusted news in today's "post-truth" era. The project is in its early stages and as such, light on specifics. But the company envisions Facebook engineers working with news organizations to create new ways of telling stories and novel advertising or subscription models, right from the early stages of development. The company also wants to help promote "news literacy" and support local news. "It's very early in the process but certainly something we are really excited about," said Dave Merrell, lead product manager at The Washington Post, which is among the news organizations working with Facebook. "We worked with Facebook on numerous products over the years, but often were not involved in the product development stage."

Instant gratification

With "Instant Articles," launched in 2015, the social network hosts and displays news items directly instead of pointing users to news websites. Such instant stories load faster on Facebook than those on outside links, and Facebook gives participating publishers a cut of the advertising revenue from Instant Articles. But publishers also lose some of their ability to connect with their readers, understand their browsing habits and direct them to other stories and video.

So Facebook plans to start testing a new feature of Instant Articles that will show readers multiple stories from the same news organization. As part of that change, Facebook could also improve the way its algorithms recommend other stories - that "people also shared" - to users. Its automated system has sometimes suggested purported news articles that included unverified information or that were only marginally related to the original story.

Facebook grows up

The move suggests Facebook is starting to accept its outsized influence over how people get their news, even if it's not a traditional publisher itself. According to the Pew Research Center, more than 40 percent of American adults get news on Facebook. And it follows the company's announcement last month that it is taking new measures to curb the spread of fake and misleading news on its huge and influential network. The news literacy aspect of the project is relevant to that effort. Facebook says it will work with outside organizations on how to help "people in our community have the information they need to make decisions about which sources to trust."

To start, the company is working with the News Literacy Project to produce a series of public service advertisements on the issue. But Facebook acknowledges that its efforts to fight fake news, such as by making it easier for users to report false articles and working with outside fact-checkers to debunk such stories, are still very early. The journalism project's goal is to increase transparency and help Facebook figure out its role in news, Facebook product director Fidji Simo said in an interview. "(With) being a new kind of platform comes a new kind of responsibility," she said. "It's definitely something we are thinking about very carefully." Working with news organizations, she added, will hopefully lead to products that will be "better than what we would have done on our own."—AP



PHILADELPHIA: In this file photo, the Facebook logo is displayed on an iPad in Philadelphia.—AP



SALT LAKE CITY: In this file photo, an examiner at an FBI digital forensics lab views data extracted easily from a smartphone, in Salt Lake City.—AP

PHONE HACKING COMPANY FALLS VICTIM TO HACKERS

SALT LAKE CITY: Cellebrite, a digital forensics firm known for helping law enforcement crack into locked smartphones, has itself fallen victim to hackers. Technology news website Motherboard said Thursday that it had obtained 900 gigabytes of data related to the Israel-based company. It said the trove of data includes customer information, databases and technical data about the company's products. Cellebrite released a statement Thursday acknowledging that one of its external web servers had been hacked, adding that that it's investigating the extent of the breach.

Data dump

Motherboard journalist Joseph Cox said that an unidentified hacker gave him 900 gigabytes of data from Cellebrite's servers. In a series of messages posted to Twitter, he said that most of the data consisted of technical information, evidence and log files but that some of the information contained customer data. In an article, Cox wrote that the trove contained messages from authorities in Russia, Turkey and the Arab Gulf. Cellebrite could be in for more unwelcome attention. Cox said that Motherboard would "likely be doing more stories from the data." According to Cellebrite, the server in question included a database backup of an old license management system. It said the hackers accessed basic user contact information and encrypted passwords for users who had not yet moved to the company's new system. While Cellebrite says it's not aware of any risk to customers as a result of the breach, it's still advising them to change their passwords.

Hacking the hackers

Cellebrite, founded in 1999, has contracts with the FBI dating back to at least

2013. The firm makes devices that allow law enforcement to extract and decode data such as contacts, pictures and text messages from more than 15,000 kinds of smartphones and other mobile devices. It also makes commercial products that companies can use to help their customers transfer data from old phones to new ones. The company found itself in the spotlight last year after some industry observers speculated that it might have helped the FBI hack into an iPhone used by one of the

killer in the San Bernardino, California, mass shooting.

That phone was the subject of a major legal fight between the FBI and Apple; the company refused to help break iPhone security. The FBI dropped its case after finding another way into the phone. Cellebrite claims to do business with thousands of law enforcement and intelligence agencies, militaries and governments in more than 100 countries. But its involvement in the San Bernardino case was never proven.—AP

MONOPOLY SUIT AGAINST APPLE'S APP STORE GETS NEW LIFE

SAN FRANCISCO: A US appeals court on Thursday revived a civil suit accusing Apple of creating a monopoly by making its App Store the only place to buy iPhone applications. The suit, initially filed in late 2011, seeks hundreds of millions of dollars in damages based on the reasoning that the lack of competition pushed app prices higher. An appellate court panel in San Francisco reversed a lower court judge's decision to derail the suit on the grounds iPhone owners were doing business with app creators and not Apple at the online shop.

"The panel reversed the dismissal for lack of statutory standing of an antitrust complaint alleging that Apple, Inc., monopolized and attempted to monopolize the market for iPhone apps," the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit said in a written ruling. "The panel held that the plaintiffs were direct purchasers of iPhone apps from Apple, rather than the app developers, and therefore had standing to sue." The ruling gave a green light for the suit to resume, paving the

way for a potential big-money payout or even an open market for apps for Apple devices. Apple launched the iPhone in 2007, creating a walled garden into which only applications approved by the California-based company were permitted.

A year later, Apple launched the App Store as an online shop for apps and other content for iPhones, with the company getting to approve offerings and taking 30 percent of the price of what third-party developers sold there. In the motion that got the case dismissed, Apple had argued that iPhone owners were doing business with app makers and therefore lacked the standing to sue the company in the matter. However, the appellate panel ruled that Apple "is a distributor of the iPhone apps, selling them directly to purchasers through its App Store." "Because Apple is a distributor, Plaintiffs have standing under Illinois Brick to sue Apple for allegedly monopolizing and attempting to monopolize the sale of iPhone apps," it said.—AFP

BBC FIRST

- 00:30 Benidorm
- 01:25 Doctors
- 02:00 Doctors
- 02:30 Sherlock
- 04:05 Doctors
- 04:35 Doctors
- 05:05 Death In Paradise
- 06:00 Doctors
- 06:30 Doctors
- 07:00 Doctors
- 07:30 Doctors
- 08:00 Doctors
- 08:30 Doctors
- 09:00 Eastenders
- 09:30 Eastenders
- 10:30 Eastenders
- 11:00 Eastenders
- 11:30 Dickensian
- 12:15 Dickensian
- 13:00 Dickensian
- 13:50 Casually
- 14:45 Doctors
- 15:15 Doctors
- 15:45 Dickensian
- 16:30 Dickensian
- 17:15 Dickensian
- 18:00 Doctors
- 18:30 Eastenders
- 19:05 Death In Paradise
- 20:00 Last Tango In Halifax
- 21:00 Poldark
- 22:00 Sherlock
- 23:40 Doctors

- 04:40 WAGs Miami
- 05:30 Celebrity Style Story
- 06:00 WAGs Miami
- 06:55 E! News
- 07:10 WAGs Miami
- 08:10 E! News
- 09:05 WAGs Miami
- 09:55 WAGs Miami
- 10:45 Mariah's World
- 11:35 Mariah's World
- 12:25 Mariah's World
- 13:15 E! News
- 13:45 So Cosmo
- 14:15 Celebrity Style Story
- 14:45 Celebrity Style Story
- 15:15 Rob & Chyna
- 16:10 Live From The Red Carpet
- 18:00 Fashion Police
- 19:00 E! News
- 20:00 Celebrity Style Story
- 20:30 Celebrity Style Story
- 21:00 Botched
- 21:30 So Cosmo
- 22:00 Mariah's World
- 23:00 E! News
- 23:30 Celebrity Style Story

- 12:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 12:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 13:00 Chopped
- 14:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 14:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 15:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 15:30 The Pioneer Woman
- 16:00 Siba's Table
- 16:30 Siba's Table
- 17:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 17:30 Anna Olson: Bake
- 18:00 Man Fire Food
- 18:30 Man Fire Food
- 19:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 19:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 20:00 Restaurant Stakeout
- 21:00 Mystery Diners
- 21:30 Mystery Diners
- 22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 22:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 23:00 Man Fire Food
- 23:30 Man Fire Food

- 18:15 Murdoch Mysteries
- 19:05 Big Star's Little Star
- 20:00 Surprise Surprise
- 20:50 Jericho
- 21:35 Endeavour
- 23:05 Coronation Street
- 23:30 Coronation Street
- 23:50 Coronation Street

- 13:30 Say Yes To The Dress
- 13:55 Sweet 15: Quinceanera
- 14:45 Say Yes To The Dress: Randy Knows Best
- 15:10 Say Yes To The Dress: Randy Knows Best
- 15:35 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 16:00 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 16:25 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 16:50 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 17:15 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
- 17:40 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 18:30 Belief
- 19:20 Toddlers & Tiaras: Coach Wars
- 20:10 Ugly House To Lovely House
- 21:00 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 21:50 Belief
- 22:40 Full Face Transplant: Body Bizarre
- 23:30 Little And Looking For Love

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY

- 00:30 Happy Endings
- 01:00 Happy Endings
- 01:30 Divorce
- 02:00 Divorce
- 02:30 Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll
- 03:00 Black-Ish
- 03:30 Kevin Can Wait
- 04:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 05:30 Breaking In
- 06:00 Til Death
- 06:30 Living With Fran
- 07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 08:00 The Bill Engvall Show
- 08:30 Breaking In
- 09:00 Black-Ish
- 09:30 Kevin Can Wait
- 10:00 Fresh Off The Boat
- 10:30 Living With Fran
- 11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 12:00 Til Death
- 12:30 The Bill Engvall Show
- 13:00 Breaking In
- 13:30 Living With Fran
- 14:00 Kevin Can Wait
- 14:30 Kevin Can Wait
- 15:00 Fresh Off The Boat
- 15:30 Happy Endings
- 16:00 Happy Endings
- 16:30 Til Death
- 17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
- 18:00 2 Broke Girls
- 18:30 Life In Pieces
- 19:00 Playing House
- 19:30 Playing House
- 20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
- 21:00 Happy Endings
- 21:30 Happy Endings
- 22:00 Saturday Night Live
- 23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers

OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 00:00 Girl House
- 02:00 The Man With The Iron Fists
- 04:00 Jurassic Hunters
- 06:00 Taken 3
- 08:00 Echo Effect
- 10:00 Con Air
- 12:00 The Last Survivors
- 14:00 Taken 3
- 16:00 Reign Of Assassins
- 18:00 Con Air
- 20:00 Ant-Man
- 22:00 Blackhat

OSN MOVIES DRAMA

- 01:00 Red Wing
- 03:00 War Book
- 05:00 Life Of A King
- 06:45 Jappeloup
- 09:00 Boychoir
- 11:00 Red Wing
- 13:00 Rosewater
- 15:00 Every Thing Will Be Fine
- 17:00 Boychoir
- 19:00 Stranded
- 21:00 Touched With Fire
- 23:00 Third Person

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

- 01:00 Houba! On The Trail Of Marsupilami
- 03:00 Paddington
- 05:00 Scooby-Doo! Moon Monster Madness
- 07:00 Houba! On The Trail Of Marsupilami
- 09:00 Frozen
- 11:00 Paddington
- 13:00 Minions
- 15:00 Paranorman
- 17:00 Hotel Transylvania 2
- 19:00 The Incredible Adventures Of Professor Branestawm
- 21:00 Minions
- 23:00 Paranorman

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 01:00 Slow West
- 02:45 The Walk
- 05:00 A Royal Night Out
- 06:45 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part I
- 09:00 The Walk
- 11:00 The Peanuts Movie
- 12:30 Daddy's Home
- 14:15 Bridge Of Spies
- 16:45 Spotlight
- 19:00 The Intern
- 21:00 The Boss
- 22:45 Sisters

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 Stung
- 02:00 Easy A
- 04:00 Angus Thongs And Perfect Snogging
- 06:00 Honeymooners
- 08:00 Big Ass Spider!
- 10:00 Angus Thongs And Perfect Snogging
- 12:00 Easy A
- 14:00 Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey
- 16:00 Big Ass Spider!
- 18:00 Blue Streak
- 20:00 Spanglish
- 22:15 Hot Tub Time Machine 2

COMEDY CENTRAL

- 00:00 Important Things With Demetri Martin
- 00:25 DI Hughley: The Endangered List
- 01:15 Chappelle's Show
- 01:40 Another Period
- 02:05 South Park
- 02:30 South Park
- 03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
- 03:25 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
- 04:15 Key And Peele
- 04:40 Key And Peele
- 05:05 Ridiculousness
- 05:30 Ridiculousness
- 05:55 Ridiculousness
- 06:20 Workaholics
- 06:50 Workaholics
- 07:15 Workaholics
- 07:40 Key And Peele
- 08:05 Key And Peele
- 08:30 Workaholics
- 08:55 Workaholics
- 09:20 Tosh.0
- 09:45 Tosh.0
- 10:10 Ridiculousness
- 10:35 Ridiculousness
- 11:00 Life Or Debt
- 11:50 Tosh.0
- 12:15 Tosh.0
- 12:40 Framework
- 13:30 Urban Tarzan
- 13:55 Ridiculousness
- 14:20 Ridiculousness
- 14:45 Ridiculousness
- 15:10 Hungry Investors
- 16:00 Workaholics
- 16:30 Workaholics
- 16:55 Key And Peele
- 17:25 Key And Peele
- 17:50 The It Crowd
- 18:15 I Live With Models
- 18:39 Brotherhood
- 19:03 The Jim Gaffigan Show
- 19:27 Idiotsitter
- 19:50 Idiotsitter
- 20:13 Tosh.0
- 20:37 Tosh.0
- 21:00 The Daily Show - Global Edition
- 21:30 Kroll Show
- 21:54 Important Things With Demetri Martin
- 22:18 The Meltdown With Jonah And Kumail
- 22:42 The Meltdown With Jonah And Kumail
- 23:05 The Half Hour
- 23:30 The Daily Show - Global Edition

food network

- 00:00 Follow Donal... To Europe
- 00:30 Follow Donal... To Europe
- 01:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 01:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 02:00 Man Fire Food
- 02:30 Man Fire Food
- 03:00 Chopped
- 04:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 05:00 Barefoot Contessa
- 05:30 Barefoot Contessa
- 06:00 Chopped
- 07:00 Barefoot Contessa
- 07:30 Barefoot Contessa
- 08:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 08:30 The Pioneer Woman
- 09:00 Siba's Table
- 09:30 Siba's Table
- 10:00 Anna Olson: Bake
- 10:30 Anna Olson: Bake
- 11:00 Man Fire Food
- 11:30 Man Fire Food

itv CHOICE

- 00:10 The Chase
- 01:00 Tracey Ullman's Show
- 01:30 Emmerdale
- 01:55 Emmerdale
- 02:20 Emmerdale
- 02:45 Emmerdale
- 03:10 Emmerdale
- 03:35 Emmerdale
- 03:55 Coronation Street
- 04:20 Coronation Street
- 04:45 Coronation Street
- 05:10 Coronation Street
- 05:35 Coronation Street
- 06:00 Endeavour
- 07:35 Murdoch Mysteries
- 08:25 Murdoch Mysteries
- 09:20 Safe House
- 10:10 Safe House
- 11:00 Jericho
- 11:50 Tracey Ullman's Show
- 12:20 Alphabetical
- 13:15 5 Star Family Reunion
- 14:05 Big Star's Little Star
- 15:00 Surprise Surprise
- 15:55 Endeavour
- 17:25 Murdoch Mysteries



TAKEN 3 ON OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 00:05 Famously Single
- 00:55 Famously Single
- 01:50 E! News
- 02:50 WAGs Miami
- 03:45 WAGs Miami

EHD

OSN FIRST HD

- 00:00 Bates Motel
- 01:00 Secrets And Lies
- 02:00 Timeless
- 03:00 American Crime
- 04:00 Good Morning America
- 06:00 Prison Break
- 07:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 08:00 Unforgettable
- 09:00 Heartbeat
- 10:00 Prison Break
- 11:00 Unforgettable
- 12:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 13:00 Once Upon A Time Special
- 14:00 Heartbeat
- 15:00 Royal Pains
- 16:00 Live Good Morning America - Weekend
- 17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
- 18:00 Grey's Anatomy
- 19:00 The Fosters
- 20:00 The Blacklist
- 21:00 Better Call Saul
- 22:00 Better Call Saul
- 23:00 Grimm

TLC HD

- 00:20 Fat Chance
- 01:10 Love In The City
- 02:00 Return To Amish
- 02:50 Monsters Inside Me
- 03:35 Twirl Life
- 04:20 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 06:00 Kate Plus 8
- 06:50 Kate Plus 8
- 07:40 Kate Plus 8
- 08:30 Toddlers & Tiaras: Coach Wars
- 09:20 Weighing Up The Enemy
- 10:10 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 11:00 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 11:50 Say Yes To The Dress
- 12:15 Say Yes To The Dress
- 12:40 Say Yes To The Dress
- 13:05 Say Yes To The Dress

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 2017

OSN MOVIES HD
FESTIVAL

- 01:30 The Dark Half
- 04:00 The Judge
- 06:30 Steve Jobs: The Man In The Machine
- 09:00 Middle Of Nowhere
- 10:45 The Girl
- 12:30 The Judge
- 15:00 The Truth About Emanuel
- 17:00 Middle Of Nowhere
- 18:45 Hard Eight
- 20:30 Interstellar
- 23:30 The Birdcage

OSN MOVIES HD
KIDS

- 01:15 True Story Of Puss'n Boots
- 02:45 Daddy I'm A Zombie
- 04:15 Yellowbird
- 06:00 Jock The Hero Dog
- 07:30 Bamse And The City Of Thieves
- 09:00 Harriet The Spy
- 10:45 The Wild Thornberrys Movie
- 12:30 Daddy I'm A Zombie
- 14:15 When Marnie Was There
- 16:00 Evolution Man
- 18:00 Harriet The Spy
- 20:00 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
- 21:45 When Marnie Was There
- 23:30 Evolution Man

OSN MOVIES
PREMIERE

- 00:00 Last Stop
- 02:00 Transcendence
- 04:00 Big Miracle
- 05:45 Snow White And The Huntsman
- 08:00 With This Ring
- 10:00 The Bounty Hunter
- 12:00 Steve Jobs
- 14:00 The Song
- 16:00 With This Ring
- 18:00 The Good Lie
- 20:00 Nina
- 22:00 Forsaken

STAR MOVIES HD

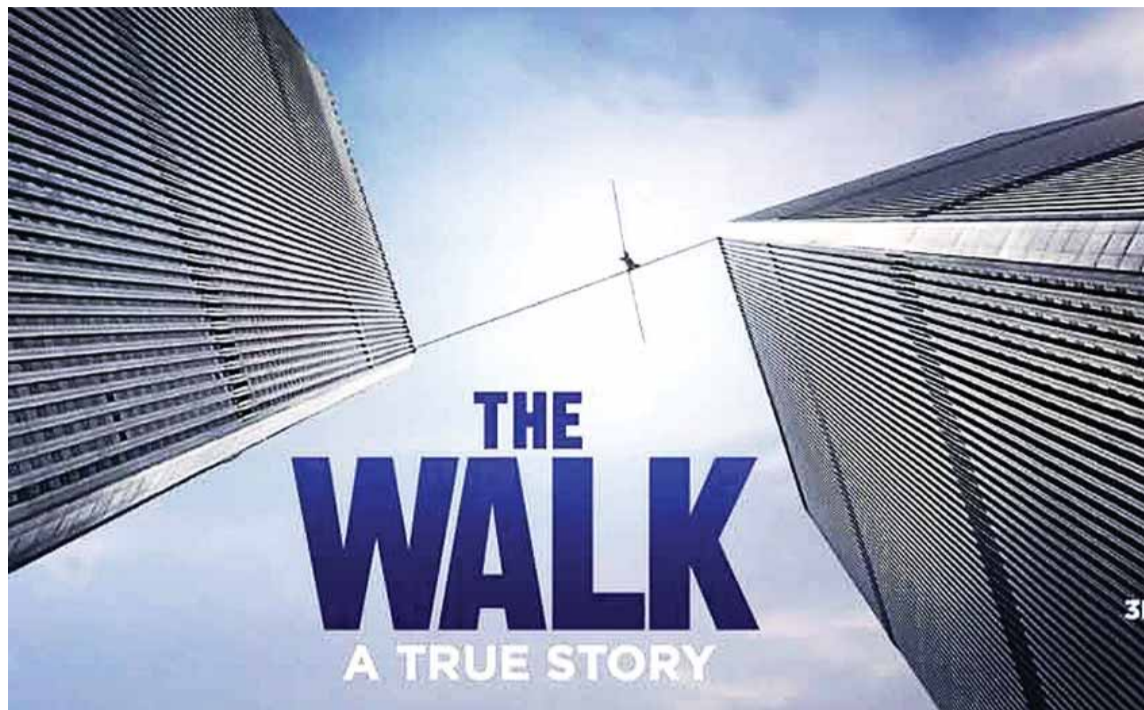
- 01:15 You Kill Me
- 02:45 Jersey Girl
- 04:30 The Woman In Black
- 06:15 Committed
- 07:45 Venom
- 09:15 August: Osage County
- 11:30 Heartlands
- 13:00 The One
- 14:30 Man To Man
- 16:30 Dr. T And The Women
- 18:30 You Kill Me
- 20:00 Real Steel
- 22:15 First Snow

sundance CHANNEL

- 01:20 Freddie Mercury: The Great Pretender
- 02:50 Queen: Days Of Our Lives
- 04:55 Leidi
- 05:15 The Trip To Bountiful
- 07:00 Kill The Poor
- 08:30 Krishna
- 09:55 A Bronx Tale
- 11:55 Banksy Does New York
- 13:15 Bones Brigade: An Autobiography
- 15:05 Nani
- 15:30 Mr. Kaplan
- 17:10 Hold On Me
- 17:30 Kill The Poor
- 19:00 Krishna
- 20:30 Street Thief
- 22:00 Bad Lieutenant
- 23:35 A Bronx Tale

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:50 River Monsters
- 01:45 Gorilla School
- 02:10 Gorilla School
- 02:40 Wild Animal Repo
- 03:35 Tanked
- 04:25 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
- 05:15 Gator Boys



THE WALK ON OSN MOVIES HD

- 06:02 River Monsters
- 06:49 Wild Animal Repo
- 07:36 Night
- 08:00 Night
- 08:25 Wild Animal Repo
- 09:15 Lone Star Law
- 10:10 Wild Animal Rescue
- 11:05 Wildest Islands Of Indonesia
- 12:00 Treehouse Masters
- 12:55 Gorilla School
- 13:20 Gorilla School
- 13:50 Running With Wolves
- 14:45 Wild Iberia
- 15:40 North America
- 16:35 Growing Up...: Wolves
- 17:30 Living With Wolves
- 18:25 Penguins On A Plane: Great Animal Moves
- 19:20 Lone Star Law
- 20:15 Wild Animal Repo
- 21:10 Wild Animal Rescue
- 22:05 Treehouse Masters
- 23:00 Lone Star Law
- 23:55 Gator Boys

ci crime & investigation network

- 00:00 They Took Our Child, We Got Her Back
- 01:00 The Haunting Of...
- 02:00 My Haunted House
- 03:00 Monster In My Family
- 04:00 They Took Our Child, We Got Her Back
- 05:00 The Haunting Of...
- 06:00 My Haunted House
- 07:00 Fred Dinenage: Murder Casebook
- 08:00 The First 48
- 09:00 Crime Stories
- 10:00 Deadly Wives
- 11:00 Deadly Wives
- 12:00 Deadly Wives
- 13:00 Deadly Wives
- 14:00 Deadly Wives
- 15:00 Deadly Wives
- 16:00 Deadly Wives
- 17:00 Deadly Wives
- 18:00 Deadly Wives
- 19:00 It Takes A Killer
- 19:30 It Takes A Killer
- 20:00 It Takes A Killer
- 20:30 It Takes A Killer
- 21:00 It Takes A Killer
- 21:30 It Takes A Killer
- 22:00 It Takes A Killer
- 22:30 It Takes A Killer
- 23:00 Measuring Evil: Britain's Worst Killers

- 05:05 How It's Made
- 05:30 Storm Chasers
- 06:20 Mythbusters
- 07:00 Kenny The Shark
- 07:25 Kenny The Shark
- 07:50 Adventure 8: Zoo Games
- 08:15 Adventure 8: Zoo Games
- 08:40 K9 Cops
- 09:30 K9 Cops
- 10:20 K9 Cops
- 11:10 K9 Cops
- 12:00 K9 Cops
- 12:50 Mythbusters
- 13:40 Mythbusters
- 14:30 Mythbusters
- 15:20 Mythbusters
- 16:10 Mythbusters
- 17:00 Invent It Rich
- 17:50 Invent It Rich
- 18:40 Space Voyages
- 19:30 The Carbonaro Effect
- 19:55 The Carbonaro Effect
- 20:20 Lost & Found With Mike & Jesse
- 21:10 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
- 22:00 Destroyed In Seconds
- 22:25 Destroyed In Seconds
- 22:50 What Happened Next?
- 23:15 What Happened Next?
- 23:40 The Carbonaro Effect



- 00:40 Judgment Day: Prison Or Parole
- 01:30 A Crime To Remember
- 02:20 Blood Relatives
- 03:10 True Nightmares
- 04:00 Judgment Day: Prison Or Parole
- 04:48 I Almost Got Away With It
- 05:36 Vanity Fair Confidential
- 06:24 Suspicion
- 07:12 Blood Relatives
- 08:00 Tabloid With Jerry Springer
- 08:50 Vanity Fair Confidential
- 09:40 Vanity Fair Confidential
- 10:30 Vanity Fair Confidential
- 11:20 Vanity Fair Confidential
- 12:10 Nowhere To Hide
- 13:00 I Almost Got Away With It
- 17:10 Evil-In-Law
- 18:00 I'd Kill For You
- 18:50 I'd Kill For You
- 19:40 I'd Kill For You
- 20:30 I'd Kill For You
- 21:20 I'd Kill For You
- 22:10 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 22:35 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
- 23:00 Women In Prison
- 23:50 Paranormal Lockdown

Discovery CHANNEL HD

- 00:20 Gold Rush
- 01:10 Fast N' Loud
- 02:00 Misfit Garage
- 02:50 Street Outlaws

- 03:40 How Do They Do It?
- 04:05 How Do They Do It?
- 04:30 How Do They Do It?
- 05:00 How Do They Do It?
- 05:30 How Do They Do It?
- 06:00 Storage Hunters UK
- 06:25 Storage Hunters UK
- 06:50 The Liquidator
- 07:15 The Liquidator
- 07:40 Storage Hunters UK
- 08:05 How Do They Do It?
- 08:30 How Do They Do It?
- 08:55 How Do They Do It?
- 09:20 How Do They Do It?
- 09:45 How Do They Do It?
- 10:10 Gold Rush
- 11:00 Deadliest Catch
- 11:50 Sean Conway - Running Britain
- 12:40 Fast N' Loud
- 13:30 Fast N' Loud
- 14:20 Fast N' Loud
- 15:10 Fast N' Loud
- 16:00 Fast N' Loud
- 16:50 Misfit Garage
- 17:40 Kings Of The Wild
- 18:30 Impossible Engineering
- 19:20 Marooned With Ed Stafford
- 20:10 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
- 21:00 Life After: Chernobyl
- 21:50 Curse Of The Frozen Gold
- 22:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier
- 23:30 Gold Rush

H2 HD

- 00:00 The Universe
- 01:00 How The States Got Their Shape
- 02:00 Ancient Impossible
- 03:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 03:50 Ancient Aliens
- 04:40 Serial Killer Earth
- 05:30 The Universe
- 06:20 How The States Got Their Shape
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- 09:00 America's Book Of Secrets
- 10:00 Ancient Aliens
- 11:00 Serial Killer Earth
- 12:00 The Universe
- 13:00 Ancient Aliens
- 14:00 Ancient Aliens
- 15:00 Ancient Aliens
- 16:00 Ancient Aliens
- 17:00 Ancient Aliens
- 18:00 Ancient Aliens
- 19:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
- 20:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
- 21:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
- 22:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files
- 23:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files

H HISTORY

- 00:20 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
- 01:10 Leepu And Pitbull
- 02:00 Fifth Gear
- 02:50 Pawn Stars

- 03:15 Pawn Stars South Africa
- 03:40 Pawn Stars South Africa
- 04:05 Pawn Stars Australia
- 04:30 Pawn Stars Australia
- 05:00 Mankind The Story Of All Of Us
- 06:00 Storage Wars Texas
- 06:25 Storage Wars Texas
- 06:50 Pawn Stars South Africa
- 07:15 Pawn Stars South Africa
- 07:40 American Pickers
- 08:30 American Restoration
- 09:20 Leepu And Pitbull
- 10:10 Fifth Gear
- 11:00 Shipping Wars
- 11:25 Shipping Wars
- 11:50 Ice Road Truckers
- 12:40 Ax Men
- 13:30 Battle 360
- 14:20 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
- 15:10 Sean Bean On Waterloo
- 16:00 Storage Wars Texas
- 16:25 Storage Wars Texas
- 16:50 Counting Cars
- 17:15 Car Hunters
- 17:40 Pawn Stars
- 18:05 Storage Wars: Best Of
- 18:30 Mountain Men
- 19:20 American Pickers
- 20:10 The Curse Of Oak Island
- 21:00 The Curse Of Oak Island
- 21:50 Hunting Hitler
- 22:40 DB Cooper: Case Closed?

NAT GEO people HD

- 00:10 The Food Files
- 00:35 The Food Files
- 01:00 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
- 01:25 The Food Files
- 01:50 Gok's Chinese Takeaway
- 02:40 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
- 03:05 Grandma's Boy
- 03:30 Grandma's Boy
- 03:55 Wineroads
- 04:20 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
- 04:45 The Game Chef
- 05:10 Rustic Adventures Italy
- 05:35 A Is For Apple
- 06:00 A Is For Apple
- 06:25 A Is For Apple
- 06:50 Ariana's Persian Kitchen
- 07:15 Cesar To The Rescue
- 08:05 The Wine Show
- 08:55 World's Biggest Festiva
- 09:45 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
- 10:10 What's For Sale?
- 10:35 What's For Sale?
- 11:00 Street Food Around The World
- 11:25 Grandma's Boy
- 11:50 Grandma's Boy
- 12:15 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 12:40 Sara's Australia Unveiled
- 13:05 The Food Files
- 13:35 Gok's Chinese Takeaway
- 14:30 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
- 14:55 Grandma's Boy
- 15:25 Grandma's Boy
- 15:50 Wineroads
- 16:20 Bondi Rescue Outback Adventure
- 17:15 Carnival Eats
- 17:40 A Is For Apple
- 18:10 A Is For Apple
- 18:35 A Is For Apple
- 19:05 Grandma's Boy
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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD

- 00:10 Locked Up Abroad
- 01:00 The Border
- 02:00 Nazi Underworld
- 02:55 WW2 Hell Under The Sea
- 03:50 Megastructures
- 04:45 Mega Factories
- 05:40 Air Crash Investigation
- 06:35 Years Of Living Dangerously
- 07:30 Dog Whisperer
- 08:25 Cesar's Recruit: Asia
- 08:50 Desperate Hours
- 09:20 Continent 7: Antarctica
- 10:15 Highway Thru Hell
- 11:10 Dirty Rotten Survival



Try the flavor of buffalo chicken wings without the chicken

By Melissa D'arabian

I've loved chicken wings since long before they were ever a cute little bar menu item, looking more like tiny drumsticks than an actual Z-shaped wing. My mom, a savvy penny-pinching college student when I was born, included chicken wings on our weekly dinner menu rotation throughout my childhood; fried chicken skin was practically a major food group. In college, when I discovered spicy, buttery buffalo wings, I was in pool-hall heaven. Now, as an adult, I still love all things buffalo-flavored. I'll pour spicy sauce straight from the bottle onto anything from roasted cauliflower to scrambled eggs. Meatballs, which are a big favorite around our house, are no exception.

Meatballs are an excellent family menu staple - I just swap out flavors according to our tastes (and pantry), and even make a bunch ahead of time to keep in the freezer for busy weeknights. They are also an ideal appetizer treat for events like movie night or watching Sunday football.

Turns out, baked meatballs are a great way to get both the flavor and fun of buffalo wings without the fried chicken skin derailing our nutritious eating. Lean ground beef is my favorite meat to use (96 percent lean beef offers over 20 grams of protein for fewer than 6 grams of fat per 4-ounce serving), but ground turkey also works great. Adding blue cheese and spicy buffalo sauce straight into the meatball means a complete visit to buffalo heaven all in one non-fried bite.

Try using a small ice-cream scoop to measure out even meatballs, and then bake on a parchment-lined baking sheet or in a mini-muffin pan sprayed with nonstick spray. Sometimes I dunk the cooked meatballs in extra sauce, rendering them too messy and spicy for my kiddos, but perfect for me, who doesn't mind going through multiple napkins in a sitting. But for the average meatball

eater watching the game, let's call swimming in sauce an optional, if delicious, step.

BUFFALO STYLE MEATBALLS

Ingredients

Servings: 10 servings, 2 meatballs each
 1 egg white
 3 tablespoons spicy buffalo sauce (like Frank's, or hot chili sauce)
 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
 1 1/2 teaspoon granulated garlic
 1 pound lean ground beef (95 percent lean)
 1/2 cup blue cheese crumbles
 1/2 cup whole wheat panko breadcrumbs (or plain breadcrumbs)
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
 Oil mister, or nonstick cooking spray

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. and line a baking sheet with parchment paper. In a large bowl, use a fork to mix together the egg white, buffalo sauce, paprika, garlic and salt and pepper until blended. Add the beef and mix well with your hands. Then mix in the blue cheese and breadcrumbs. Let sit for 5 minutes. If mixture is too wet to form into balls, add in another tablespoon or two of breadcrumbs. Form the meat into golf-sized balls, and place on lined baking sheet. (Or use a mini-muffin pan sprayed with nonstick spray.) Spray the meatballs lightly with oil from the mister (or nonstick spray). Bake 15 minutes and then remove from the oven. Mix together the melted butter and buffalo sauce in a small bowl. Turn the meatballs, and brush with the basting sauce. Return to the oven until cooked through, about 5 more minutes. If desired, toss the meatballs in extra sauce in a large bowl (optional, but tasty and messy!). —AP

Let five-spice powder turn a 'blah' chicken into warm spice



Melissa D'arabian

Eating healthy on a budget and tight schedule means the boneless skinless chicken breast makes frequent appearances on our dinner table. It's a smart choice as a lean protein - one cup of cubed chicken breast has a whopping 43 grams of protein yet only 5 grams of fat (fewer than 2 of those are saturated).

But the chicken breast story goes beyond protein gram counts. White meat chicken provides a sizeable chunk of our daily requirements for several vitamins and minerals, most notably B6, niacin, phosphorous and selenium, and smaller quantities of a slew of others. Impressive stats from the cut of meat that goes on mega-sale about every 4 weeks, and freezes so well that you can stock up when it does.

The problem with this wallet-friendly nutrient wonder is that it is so mild and low-fat (read: low-flavor) that it can become "blah" and uninspired on the weekly family menu, elegantly referred to as being in a rut. The lower fat also puts this protein at high risk for drying out. Today's recipe solves both those problems while also staying weeknight-speedy. Five-Spice Chicken in Orange Broth is a skillet chicken that starts on the stovetop with a quick sear and then finishes in the oven, bathed in an aromatic orange juice broth, simmering to juicy perfection.

If you don't have five-spice blend on hand, I suggest it as a worthy purchase, because its warm spicy flavors (think ginger, anise and cinnamon) add a perfect depth to a ton of dishes, both savory and sweet. However, feel free to experiment with

similar spices or blends (such a pumpkin pie spice). Another recommended purchase: an instant-read thermometer, which will improve your meat-cookery overall, so you can stop cooking the chicken as soon as it reaches 160 degrees. A final tip: most chicken breasts are larger than one serving. Consider serving the meat already sliced on a platter, and you'll find that two or three breasts will easily feed a family of four.

FIVE-SPICE CHICKEN BREAST IN ORANGE BROTH

Ingredients

Start to finish: 40 minutes

Servings: 4

1 1/2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breast, about 3 breasts
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon olive oil
salt and pepper
1 large onion, diced (about 1 1/2 cup diced)
1 teaspoon Chinese five-spice (spice blend available at regular grocery stores)
3/4 teaspoon ground cumin
3-4 carrots, trimmed and halved both crossways and lengthwise
4 garlic cloves, smashed
3/4 cup orange juice (fresh or carton)
1 cup low-sodium chicken broth, plus extra if needed
Chopped cilantro for garnish (or parsley, if preferred)

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Pat the

chicken breasts dry with a paper towel, trim visible fat, and season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle the flour over both sides of the chicken breasts and lightly press the flour into the meat. In a large oven-safe skillet, heat the olive oil over medium high flame. Brown the chicken breasts until golden, about 3-5 minutes per side. Remove the chicken and set aside on a plate (it will not be fully cooked). Add the onion to the same pan with a pinch of salt and stir with a wooden spoon. Once the onions are translucent, about 2-3 minutes, add the five-spice, cumin, carrots and garlic, and cook until very fragrant, about 3 minutes.

Increase temperature to high and deglaze the pan with a liquid of your choice, scraping up any crusty bits on the bottom of the pan as it bubbles for a minute. Add the orange juice and 1 cup of broth and stir. Return the chicken breasts to the pan, including any juices that have accumulated on the plate. Add extra broth (or just water) so that liquid level is about 1/4 the way up the chicken breasts. Spoon some of the sauce on top of each breast. Bring the mixture to a simmer and then place in the oven to continue cooking until the chicken breasts reach 160 degrees F, about 15-20 more minutes. Remove the chicken from the oven and let rest a few minutes before slicing and serving with the carrots and the fragrant broth spooned on top. Garnish with fresh cilantro.

DID YOU EAT YOUR VEGGIES? URINE TEST CAN TELL

PARIS: A simple urine test can reveal whether you had steamed fish or a fat-riddled steak for dinner, and could one day end dietary dishonesty, according to a study published yesterday. The test may also boost the health of people suffering from diabetes, obesity or heart disease, the study said. Monitoring calories is notoriously difficult outside a clinical setting because people are often reluctant to admit what they have-or have not-eaten. Still under development, the five-minute lab test identifies biological markers in urine that are specific to different food groups, researchers reported in *The Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology*.

For now, the pee probe can distinguish between red meat, fish and chicken, and provides a good indication of fat, sugar, fibre and protein intake as well. "We're not at the stage

yet where the test can tell us a person ate 15 chips yesterday and two sausages," said co-author John Mathers, a professor at the Human Nutrition Research Centre at Newcastle University in England. "But it's on its way." In trials, some 60 percent of people under-report their intake of foods they know to be unhealthy, and over-report consumption of fruit and vegetables, research has shown.

Fried sausage and cola

"A major weakness in all nutrition and diet studies is that we have no true measure of what people eat," said senior author Gary Frost, a professor at the Department of Medicine at Imperial College London. Fibbing about food not only bedevils scientists studying nutrition, but also doctors treating diseases aggravated by poor diet. Excess

sugar, fat and salt intake, for example, is implicated in a host of conditions, from heart attacks and strokes, to high blood pressure and diabetes. But doctors can only help patients design healthier diets if they know what they are actually eating.

To develop the urine test, researchers at three universities asked 19 volunteers to adhere to four different diets ranging from super healthy to artery-clogging. They were observed in a research facility for three days and nights. The least healthy menu featured sugary cereal, whole milk, and buttered white toast for breakfast, followed by fried sausage, potato waffles, full-sugar cola, burgers with melted cheese, and chocolate for lunch and dinner. Meals at the other end of the spectrum had whole wheat cereal, low fat milk, steamed fish and boiled veg-

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"For the first time, this research offers an objective way of assessing the overall healthiness of people's diets without all the hassles, biases and errors of recording what we've eaten," Mathers said. The next step, he said, is to test a larger group of people. The researchers hope to make the test commercially available within two years, which would allow the public to send urine samples to a clinic for testing. —AFP



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DES MOINES, Iowa: South Korea is in the throes of a bird flu outbreak has asked the United States to ship it shell eggs, marking the first time the Asian country has sought to buy large quantities of fresh US eggs. The demand is good for a US egg industry that's awash in the product, having replenished its flocks after the 2015 bird flu outbreak and ending up with an oversupply that sent domestic prices to industry lows - about 79 cents a dozen earlier this month.

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The agreement to export shell eggs was announced Friday by the US Department of Agriculture, which kept prices from sliding further, according to Urner Berry protein market analyst Brian Moscoquiri. Although deals are



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WASHINGTON: A next step for smart watches and fitness trackers? Wearable gadgets gave a Stanford University professor an early warning that he was getting sick before he ever felt any symptoms of Lyme disease. Geneticist Michael Snyder never had Lyme's characteristic bulls-eye rash. But a smart watch and other sensors charted changes in Snyder's heart rate and oxygen levels during a family vacation. Eventually a fever struck that led to his diagnosis.

Say "wearables," and step-counting fitness trackers spring to mind. It's not clear if they really make a difference in users' health. Now Snyder's team at Stanford is starting to find out, tracking the everyday lives of several dozen volunteers wearing devices that monitor more than mere activity. He envisions one day having wearables that act as a sort of "check engine" light indicating it's time to see the doctor. "One way to look at this is, these are the equivalent of oral thermometers but you're measuring yourself all the time," said Snyder, senior author of a report released Thursday on the project.

Among the earliest hints: Changes in people's day-to-day physiology may flag when certain ailments are brewing, from colds to Lyme to Type 2 diabetes, researchers reported in the journal *PLOS Biology*. Interest in wearable sensors is growing along with efforts to personalize medicine, as scientists learn how to tailor treatments and preventive care to people's genes, environment and lifestyle. The sensors are expected to be a part of the National Institutes of Health's huge "precision medicine" study, planned to begin later this year.

But a first step is learning what's normal for different people under different conditions. The Stanford team is collecting reams of data - as many as 250,000 daily measurements - from volunteers who wear up to eight activity monitors or other sensors of varying sizes that measure heart rate, blood oxygen, skin temperature, sleep, calories expended, exercise and even exposure to radiation. That's paired with occasional laboratory tests to measure blood chemistry and some genetic information.

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THE GOOD, BAD AND UNKNOWN ABOUT MARIJUANA'S HEALTH EFFECTS

NEW YORK: It can almost certainly ease chronic pain and might help some people sleep, but it may also raise the risk of getting schizophrenia and trigger heart attacks. Those are among the conclusions about marijuana reached by a federal advisory panel in a report released Thursday. The experts also called for a national effort to learn more about marijuana and its chemical cousins, including similarly acting compounds called cannabinoids.

The current lack of scientific information "poses a public health risk," said the report, from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. Patients, health care professionals and policy makers need more evidence to make sound decisions, it said. For marijuana users or those considering it, "there's very little to guide them" on amounts and health risks, said Dr Marie McCormick of the Harvard School of Public Health, who headed the committee.

Several factors have limited research. While the federal government has approved some medicines containing ingredients found in marijuana, it still classifies marijuana as illegal and imposes restrictions on research. So scientists have to jump through bureaucratic hoops that some find daunting, the report said. A federal focus on paying for studies of potential harms has also hampered research into possible health benefits, the report said. The range of marijuana products available for study has also been restricted, although the government is expanding the number of approved suppliers.

Twenty-eight states and the

District of Columbia have legalized marijuana for a variety of medical uses, and eight of those states plus the district have also legalized it for recreational use. The report lists nearly 100 conclusions about marijuana and its similarly acting chemical cousins, drawing on studies published since 1999. Committee members cautioned that most conclusions are based on statistical links between use and health, rather than direct demonstrations of cause and effect.

The review found strong evidence that marijuana can treat chronic pain in adults and that similar compounds ease nausea from chemotherapy, with varying degrees of evidence for treating muscle stiffness and spasms in multiple sclerosis. Limited evidence says marijuana or the other compounds can boost appetite in people with HIV or AIDS, and ease symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, the report concluded. But it said there's not enough research to say whether they're effective for treating cancers, irritable bowel syndrome, epilepsy, or certain symptoms of Parkinson's disease, or helping people beat addictions.

There may be more evidence soon: a study in Colorado is investigating the use of marijuana to treat PTSD in veterans. Turning to potential harms, the committee concluded:

- Strong evidence links marijuana use to the risk of developing schizophrenia and other causes of psychosis, with the highest risk among the most frequent users.
- Some work suggests a small



ALBION, Illinois: In this file photo, marijuana grows at a medical marijuana cultivation center in Albion, Ill.—AP

increased risk for developing depressive disorders, but there's no evidence either way on whether it affects the course or symptoms of such disorders, or the risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder.

- There's a strong indication that using marijuana before driving increases the risk of a traffic accident, but no clear link to workplace accidents or injuries, or death from a marijuana overdose.

- There's limited evidence for the idea that it hurts school achievement, raises unemployment rates or harms social functioning.

- For pregnant women who

smoke pot, there's a strong indication of reduced birthweight but only weak evidence of any effect on pregnancy complications for the mother, or an infant's need for admission to intensive care. There's not enough evidence to show whether it affects the child later, like sudden infant death syndrome or substance use.

- Some evidence suggests there's no link to lung cancer in marijuana smokers. But there's no evidence, or insufficient evidence, to support or rebut any link to developing cancers of the prostate, cervix, bladder, or esophagus.

- Substantial evidence links pot smoking to worse respiratory symptoms and more frequent episodes of chronic bronchitis.

- There's a weak suggestion that smoking marijuana can trigger a heart attack, especially for people at high risk of heart disease. But there's no evidence either way on whether chronic use affects a person's risk of a heart attack.

- Some evidence suggests a link between using marijuana and developing a dependence on or abuse of other substances, including alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs. —AP

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Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF

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Several factors have limited research. While the federal government has approved some medicines containing ingredients found in marijuana, it still classifies marijuana as illegal and imposes restrictions on research. So scientists have to jump through bureaucratic hoops that some find daunting, the report said. A federal focus on paying for studies of potential harms has also hampered research into possible health benefits, the report said. The range of marijuana products available for study has also been restricted, although the government is expanding the number of approved suppliers.

Twenty-eight states and the

District of Columbia have legalized marijuana for a variety of medical uses, and eight of those states plus the district have also legalized it for recreational use. The report lists nearly 100 conclusions about marijuana and its similarly acting chemical cousins, drawing on studies published since 1999. Committee members cautioned that most conclusions are based on statistical links between use and health, rather than direct demonstrations of cause and effect.

The review found strong evidence that marijuana can treat chronic pain in adults and that similar compounds ease nausea from chemotherapy, with varying degrees of evidence for treating muscle stiffness and spasms in multiple sclerosis. Limited evidence says marijuana or the other compounds can boost appetite in people with HIV or AIDS, and ease symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, the report concluded. But it said there's not enough research to say whether they're effective for treating cancers, irritable bowel syndrome, epilepsy, or certain symptoms of Parkinson's disease, or helping people beat addictions.

There may be more evidence soon: a study in Colorado is investigating the use of marijuana to treat PTSD in veterans. Turning to potential harms, the committee concluded:

- Strong evidence links marijuana use to the risk of developing schizophrenia and other causes of psychosis, with the highest risk among the most frequent users.
- Some work suggests a small



ALBION, Illinois: In this file photo, marijuana grows at a medical marijuana cultivation center in Albion, Ill.—AP

increased risk for developing depressive disorders, but there's no evidence either way on whether it affects the course or symptoms of such disorders, or the risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder.

- There's a strong indication that using marijuana before driving increases the risk of a traffic accident, but no clear link to workplace accidents or injuries, or death from a marijuana overdose.

- There's limited evidence for the idea that it hurts school achievement, raises unemployment rates or harms social functioning.

- For pregnant women who

smoke pot, there's a strong indication of reduced birthweight but only weak evidence of any effect on pregnancy complications for the mother, or an infant's need for admission to intensive care. There's not enough evidence to show whether it affects the child later, like sudden infant death syndrome or substance use.

- Some evidence suggests there's no link to lung cancer in marijuana smokers. But there's no evidence, or insufficient evidence, to support or rebut any link to developing cancers of the prostate, cervix, bladder, or esophagus.

- Substantial evidence links pot smoking to worse respiratory symptoms and more frequent episodes of chronic bronchitis.

- There's a weak suggestion that smoking marijuana can trigger a heart attack, especially for people at high risk of heart disease. But there's no evidence either way on whether chronic use affects a person's risk of a heart attack.

- Some evidence suggests a link between using marijuana and developing a dependence on or abuse of other substances, including alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs. —AP

CLINIC

PAGE

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

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



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (12/01/2017 TO 18/01/2017)

SHARQIA-1
MOANA 11:45 AM
MOANA 2:00 PM
MOANA 4:15 PM
DANGAL -Hindi 6:30 PM
THE GREAT WALL 9:45 PM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 3:30 PM
GAUTAMIPUTRA SATAKARNI -Telugu 6:30 PM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 9:30 PM
THE GREAT WALL 12:15 AM

SHARQIA-2
A MONSTER CALLS 12:45 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 3:00 PM
GAUTAMIPUTRA SATAKARNI -Telugu 4:00 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 5:15 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 7:30 PM
THE GREAT WALL 7:30 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 9:45 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 12:05 AM

SHARQIA-3
PATRIOTS DAY 1:15 PM
MOANA 1:45 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 4:00 PM
MOANA 4:30 PM
THE GREAT WALL 6:45 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 6:45 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 9:00 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 11:45 PM

MUHALAB-1
THE GREAT WALL 1:00 PM
DANGAL -Hindi 3:45 PM
DANGAL -Hindi 7:00 PM
NO THU+FRI+MON
THE GREAT WALL 10:15 PM
NO THU+FRI+MON
THE GREAT WALL 1:30 PM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 4:00 PM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 7:00 PM
THU+FRI+MON
GAUTAMIPUTRA SATAKARNI -Telugu 10:00 PM
THU+FRI+MON
THE GREAT WALL 12:45 AM

MUHALAB-2
PATRIOTS DAY 11:30 AM
GAUTAMIPUTRA SATAKARNI -Telugu 2:00 PM
FRIMOANA 2:15 PM
MOANA 4:45 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 7:00 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 9:45 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 12:30 AM

MUHALAB-3
A MONSTER CALLS 12:15 PM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 1:45 PM
FRI
A MONSTER CALLS 2:30 PM
NO FRI
A MONSTER CALLS 4:45 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 7:15 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 9:30 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 11:45 PM

FANAR-1
THE GREAT WALL 11:30 AM
THE GREAT WALL 2:00 PM
NO FRI
SURF'S UP 2: WAVEMANIA 4:15 PM
NO FRI
THE GREAT WALL 6:00 PM
NO THU+FRI+MON
ASSASSIN'S CREED 8:15 PM
NO THU+FRI+MON
THE GREAT WALL 10:45 PM
NO THU+FRI+MON
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 3:30 PM
FRI
GAUTAMIPUTRA SATAKARNI -Telugu 6:30 PM
THU+FRI+MON
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 9:30 PM
THU+FRI+MON
ASSASSIN'S CREED 1:00 AM

FANAR-2
PATRIOTS DAY 1:30 PM
MOANA 4:15 PM
BAIRAVAA - Tamil 6:30 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 9:45 PM

PATRIOTS DAY 12:30 AM
FANAR-3
SURF'S UP 2: WAVEMANIA 11:45 AM
SURF'S UP 2: WAVEMANIA 1:45 PM
DANGAL -Hindi 3:30 PM
NO FRI
GAUTAMIPUTRA SATAKARNI -Telugu 3:45 PM
FRI
DANGAL -Hindi 6:45 PM
NO THU+FRI+MON
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 7:00 PM
THU+FRI+MON
DANGAL -Hindi 10:00 PM
THE GREAT WALL 1:15 AM

MARINA-1
THE GREAT WALL 1:15 PM
MOANA 3:30 PM
MOANA 5:45 PM
THE GREAT WALL 8:00 PM
THE GREAT WALL 10:15 PM
THE GREAT WALL 12:30 AM

MARINA-2
A MONSTER CALLS 12:15 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 2:45 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 5:00 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 7:15 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 9:30 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 11:45 PM

MARINA-3
PATRIOTS DAY 1:00 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED 1:30 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 3:45 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 6:30 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 9:15 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 12:05 AM

AVENUES-1
WARRIOR'S GATE 12:30 PM
WARRIOR'S GATE 3:00 PM
WARRIOR'S GATE 5:30 PM
WARRIOR'S GATE 7:45 PM
WARRIOR'S GATE 10:15 PM
WARRIOR'S GATE 12:30 AM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 7:30 PM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 10:30 PM
WARRIOR'S GATE 1:15 AM

AVENUES-2
MOANA -3D- 4DX 1:15 PM
MOANA -3D- 4DX 3:45 PM
MOANA -3D- 4DX 6:00 PM
THE GREAT WALL -3D- 4DX 8:15 PM
THE GREAT WALL -3D- 4DX 10:30 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED -3D- 4DX 12:45 AM

AVENUES-3
THE GREAT WALL 1:30 PM
THE GREAT WALL 4:15 PM
THE GREAT WALL 7:00 PM
THE GREAT WALL 9:45 PM
GAUTAMIPUTRA SATAKARNI -Telugu 1:30 PM
GAUTAMIPUTRA SATAKARNI -Telugu 4:15 PM
GAUTAMIPUTRA SATAKARNI -Telugu 7:00 PM
GAUTAMIPUTRA SATAKARNI -Telugu 9:45 PM
THE GREAT WALL 12:30 AM

AVENUES-4
A MONSTER CALLS 12:15 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 2:30 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 4:45 PM
Special Show "LEVEL UP" 4:45 PM
DANGAL -Hindi 7:00 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 10:15 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 12:30 AM

AVENUES-5
PATRIOTS DAY 11:45 AM
PATRIOTS DAY 2:30 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 5:15 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 8:00 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 11:00 PM

AVENUES-6
PATRIOTS DAY 12:30 PM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 1:45 PM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 4:45 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 3:15 PM

PATRIOTS DAY 6:00 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 8:45 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 11:30 PM

360°- 1
PATRIOTS DAY 1:30 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 4:15 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 7:00 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 9:45 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 12:30 AM

360°- 2
WARRIOR'S GATE 11:30 AM
DANGAL -Hindi 1:45 PM
DANGAL -Hindi 5:00 PM
DANGAL -Hindi 8:15 PM
DANGAL -Hindi 11:30 PM

360°- 3
ASSASSIN'S CREED 11:30 AM
ASSASSIN'S CREED 1:45 PM
SING 4:15 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED 6:45 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED 9:15 PM
ASSASSIN'S CREED 11:45 PM

AL-KOUT.1
A MONSTER CALLS 1:15 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 3:30 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 5:45 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 8:00 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 10:15 PM
THE GREAT WALL 12:30 AM

AL-KOUT.2
THE GREAT WALL 12:00 PM
MOANA 2:15 PM
MOANA 4:30 PM
MOANA 6:45 PM
THE GREAT WALL 9:15 PM
THE GREAT WALL 11:30 PM

AL-KOUT.3
PATRIOTS DAY 12:45 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 3:30 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 6:30 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 9:30 PM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 3:30 PM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 6:30 PM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 9:30 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 12:15 AM

AL-KOUT.4
WARRIOR'S GATE 12:30 PM
WARRIOR'S GATE 3:00 PM
WARRIOR'S GATE 5:15 PM
THE GREAT WALL 7:30 PM
WARRIOR'S GATE 9:45 PM
WARRIOR'S GATE 12:05 AM

BAIRAQ-1
A MONSTER CALLS 12:15 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 2:30 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 4:45 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 7:00 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 9:15 PM
A MONSTER CALLS 11:30 PM

BAIRAQ-2
THE GREAT WALL 1:00 PM
MOANA 3:30 PM
MOANA 5:45 PM
MOANA 8:00 PM
THE GREAT WALL 10:15 PM
THE GREAT WALL 12:30 AM

BAIRAQ-3
SURF'S UP 2: WAVEMANIA 12:45 PM
SURF'S UP 2: WAVEMANIA 2:45 PM
SURF'S UP 2: WAVEMANIA 4:30 PM
DANGAL -Hindi 6:30 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 9:45 PM
PATRIOTS DAY 12:30 AM

PLAZA
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 3:45 PM
GAUTAMIPUTRA SATAKARNI -Telugu 6:45 PM
KHAIDI NO. 150 -Telugu 10:00 PM

LAILA
THE GREAT WALL 3:30 PM

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Danny Ameerkhan S/o Abdul Khader Ameerkhan holder of Indian PP No. J3624269 hereby change my name as Muhammad Ameerkhan, with immediate effect. (C 5256)

ACCOMMODATION

Sharing accommodation for Filipino Bachelor ONLY near Big Jamiya Farwaniya. Available already, Contact 66826412 or 97512782 9-1-2017

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr: 05:20
Shorook 06:44
Duhr: 11:57
Asr: 14:51
Maghrib: 17:11
Isha: 18:32



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
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322

SATURDAY, JANUARY 14, 2017



DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Saturday 14/1/2017

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
KLM	413	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:25
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30
CLX	852	Luxembourg	00:35
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55
RJA	642	Amman	01:05
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50
DLH	635	Doha	01:55
MSC	511	Alexandria	02:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:05
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30
KAC	412	Bangkok	02:50
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55
KKK	6506	Istanbul	02:55
FDB	069	Dubai	03:05
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10
KAC	358	Kochi	03:30
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30
KAC	206	Islamabad	03:30
KAC	546	Cairo	03:55
FEG	931	Alexandria	04:00
KAC	418	Manila	04:25
UAE	873	Dubai	04:55
JZR	503	Luxor	05:10
JZR	529	Asyut	05:15
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20
KAC	344	Chennai	05:35
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:45
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55
KAC	384	Delhi	06:05
KAC	364	Colombo	06:05
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	06:25
BAW	157	London	06:40
PAL	668	Manila/Dubai	07:00
KAC	204	Lahore	07:15
FDB	5061	Dubai	07:15
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50
KAC	302	Mumbai	08:20
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40
KAC	382	Delhi	08:45
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05
KAC	352	Kochi	09:10
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00
AVV	653	Sohag	10:10
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:15
IRM	1188	Mashhad	11:15
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30
FDK	801	Damascus	11:45
JZR	563	Sohag	12:00
SYR	343	Latakia	12:05
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30
JZR	239	Amman	12:45
FDB	075	Dubai	12:50
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00
IAW	157	Al Najaf	13:25
BON	101	Sarajevo	13:30
KAC	564	Amman	13:40
KAC	788	Jeddah	13:45
KNE	231	Riyadh	13:55
KAC	672	Dubai	14:00
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20
KAC	692	Muscat	14:30
GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40
KAC	542	Cairo	14:45
KNE	529	Jeddah	14:55
KAC	618	Doha	15:00
KNE	683	Madinah	15:05
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15
KAC	286	Dhaka	15:20
OMA	645	Muscat	15:35
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:50
MSR	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	15:50
KAC	154	Istanbul	15:55
SAW	705	Damascus	16:00
SVA	504	Madinah	16:00
KNE	531	Jeddah	16:05
QTR	1072	Doha	16:10
JZR	535	Cairo	16:10
FDB	051	Dubai	16:25
JZR	357	Mashhad	16:25
JZR	787	Riyadh	16:25
KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	16:35
RJA	640	Amman	16:55
KAC	118	New York	17:00
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30

JZR	777	Jeddah	17:45
JZR	325	Al Najaf	17:50
NIA	251	Alexandria	17:55
SVA	500	Jeddah	18:00
UAE	875	Dubai	18:00
FDB	063	Dubai	18:10
JZR	177	Dubai	18:20
MSR	620	Cairo	18:30
QTR	1080	Doha	18:50
IRA	669	Mashhad	18:55
SYR	341	Damascus	19:00
KAC	512	Mashhad	19:20
ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30
KAC	502	Beirut	19:30
CLX	856	Luxembourg	19:35
KAC	674	Dubai	19:45
FDB	057	Dubai	19:50
KAC	104	London	19:50
KAC	166	Rome	19:55
KNE	381	Taif	19:55
MSR	618	Alexandria	20:05
OMA	647	Muscat	20:10
JZR	189	Dubai	20:15
QTR	1088	Doha	20:35
KAC	562	Amman	20:40
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:45
KAC	174	Munich	20:45
FDB	5053	Dubai	20:50
KAC	616	Bahrain	20:50
JAI	572	Mumbai	20:55
KAC	786	Jeddah	21:15
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20
MEA	402	Beirut	21:20
ALK	229	Colombo	21:25
UAE	859	Dubai	21:40
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45
QTR	1082	Doha	22:00
JZR	125	Bahrain	22:05
KLM	415	Amsterdam/Dammam	22:05
NIA	151	Cairo	22:10
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15
AIC	987	Chennai/Hyderabad	22:25
JZR	241	Amman	22:45
KNE	533	Jeddah	22:45
KAC	164	Paris	22:55
KAC	1544	Cairo	22:55
JZR	185	Dubai	23:15
FDB	071	Dubai	23:45
JAI	574	Mumbai	23:50

Departure Flights on Saturday 14/1/2017

Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
PIA	240	Sialkot	00:40
FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
JAI	573	Mumbai	00:50
BBC	044	Doha/Chittagong/Dhaka	01:30
KLM	413	Amsterdam	01:50
KAC	417	Manila	02:00
CLX	853	Luxembourg	02:05
THY	773	Istanbul	02:25
KAC	285	Dhaka	02:25
SAI	442	Lahore	02:30
DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:55
MSC	512	Alexandria	03:05
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
PGT	859	Istanbul	03:35
KAC	103	London	03:40
UAE	854	Dubai	03:45
KKK	6505	Istanbul	03:55
OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
MSR	613	Cairo	04:10
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:10
QTR	1077	Doha	04:40
FEG	938	Sohag	05:00
JZR	562	Sohag	05:25
QTR	1087	Doha	05:50
FDB	070	Dubai	06:30
KAC	153	Istanbul	06:50
UAE	874	Dubai	06:50
THY	771	Istanbul	06:50
JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
KAC	165	Rome	06:55
RJA	643	Amman	07:05
JZR	238	Amman	07:10
KAC	541	Cairo	07:15
GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
KAC	163	Paris	07:25
KAC	173	Munich	07:35
KAC	787	Jeddah	07:45
FDB	5062	Dubai	07:55
KAC	563	Amman	08:00
BAW	156	London	08:40
FDB	054	Dubai	08:55
KAC	117	SNN/New York	09:00
KAC	691	Muscat	09:00
KAC	671	Dubai	09:15

JZR	534	Cairo	09:15
KAC	101	London	09:35
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
UAE	856	Dubai	09:55
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10
JZR	356	Mashhad	10:25
KAC	411	Bangkok	10:30
FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
QTR	1071	Doha	10:40
SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00
KAC	617	Doha	11:10
AVV	654	Asyut	11:10
KAC	501	Beirut	11:15
GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
RBG	554	Alexandria	11:55
KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	12:05
JZR	776	Jeddah	12:05
IRM	1189	Mashhad	12:30
FDK	802	Damascus	12:45
SYR	344	Latakia	13:05
JZR	786	Riyadh	13:10
KAC	511	Mashhad	13:15
MSC	402	Alexandria	13:30
JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
FDB	076	Dubai	14:05
UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	324	Al Najaf	14:25
IAW	158	Al Najaf	14:25
KNE	382	Taif	14:50
BON	102	Sarajevo	14:55
KAC	561	Amman	15:00
KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
KAC	785	Jeddah	15:15
PAL	669	Dubai/Manila	15:20
GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
JZR	188	Dubai	15:40
QTR	1079	Doha	15:40
KAC	1543	Cairo	15:55
KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
KNE	684	Madinah	16:00
KAC	357	Kochi	16:20
ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
ABY	128	Sharjah	16:30
OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	16:50
SAW	706	Damascus	16:55
KNE	532	Jeddah	16:55
KAC	675	Dubai	17:00
SVA	505	Madinah	17:00
JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
JZR	240	Amman	17:15
FDB	052	Dubai	17:25
KAC	615	Bahrain	17:35
QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
RJA	641	Amman	17:55
KAC	353	BLR	18:15
SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	205	Islamabad	18:25
JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
JZR	554	Alexandria	18:55
NIA	252	Alexandria	18:55
FDB	064	Dubai	19:05
JZR	124	Bahrain	19:15
MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
SVA	501	Jeddah	19:30
QTR	1081	Doha	19:50
IRA	666	Esfahan	19:55
SYR	342	Damascus	20:00
ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
KAC	383	Delhi	20:30
KAC	361	Colombo	20:35
FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
KAC	775	Riyadh	20:45
KNE	232	Riyadh	20:55
CLX	856	Hong Kong	21:05
MSR	607	Luxor	21:05
OMA	648	Muscat	21:10
KAC	345	Ahmedabad	21:30
QTR	1089	Doha	21:35
DLH	634	Doha	21:35
KAC	741	Dammam	21:45
FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
KAC	351	Kochi	22:00
ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:15
MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
KAC	301	Mumbai	22:45
KAC	381	Delhi	22:45
UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
KLM	415	Dammam/Amsterdam	23:05
ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
NIA	152	Cairo	23:10
QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
KNE	534	Jeddah	23:35

WORDSEARCH PUZZLE

Family Ties

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a special occasion for families.

WEHPENRELATIVESF
 STELPiRTREHTAFRS
 SBROTHERSAMRWEBR
 KCMESDEMPPEOLIOE
 LILOHLEAOTOAMDNT
 OGNACTRWSTTUETDS
 FEENNEOIYIHSSNDI
 FGUNNCSROLCEEEAS
 SANTEFENBEWRRUH
 PISILOSSNFDEEAGU
 RRWALNLDLTLCPHS
 IRHIIBAOIOIAPT
 NALSFNIGERUHEEA
 GMUDTECSNYNRTRN
 EOASYNEGORPTUSND
 CDITNERAPDNARGON

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| ANCESTOR | FATHER | MOTHER | SISTERS |
| AUNT | FOLKS | NEICE | SON |
| BOND | GENEALOGY | NEPHEW | SPOUSE |
| BROTHERS | GRANDPARENT | NEWLYWED | STEPPARENT |
| CHILDREN | HALF BROTHER | OFFSPRING | TRIPLETS |
| CLAN | HALF SISTER | PARENTS | TWINS |
| COUSINS | HUSBAND | PROGENY | UNCLE |
| DAD | KIN | RELATIONS | WIFE |
| DAUGHTER | MARRIAGE | RELATIVES | |
| DESCENDANTS | MOM | SIBLING | |

Yesterday's Solution

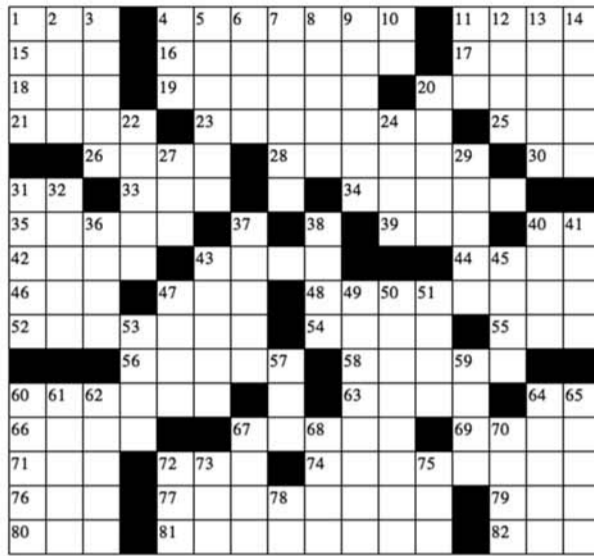
Elvis

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

- | | | | |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| AARON | GOOD LUCK CHARM | LITTLE SISTER | STUCK ON YOU |
| ALL SHOOK UP | GOSPEL | LOVE ME TENDER | SUN RECORDS |
| BLUE HAWAII | GRACELAND | MEMPHIS | SURRENDER |
| BURNING LOVE | GYRATING | ONE NIGHT | SUSPICIOUS MINDS |
| CLAMBAKE | HEARTBREAK HOTEL | PRISCILLA | THE KING |
| COLONEL PARKER | HOUND DOG | RCA | TOO MUCH |
| DON'T BE CRUEL | IN THE GHETTO | RETURN TO SENDER | TUPELO |
| DRAFTED | JAILHOUSE ROCK | ROCKABILLY | U.S. ARMY |
| G.I. BLUES | KENTUCKY RAIN | ROUSTABOUT | VERNON |
| GIRL HAPPY | KING CREOLE | SHE'S NOT YOU | VIVA LAS VEGAS |
| GLADYS | LISA MARIE | | |

The hidden sentence is: YOU CAN DO ANYTHING BUT LAY OFF OF MY BLUE SUEDE SHOES

CROSSWORD 1490



ACROSS

1. Relating to a recently developed fashion or style.
4. Under a curse.
11. An independent group of closely related Chadic languages spoken in the area between the Biu-Mandara and East Chadic languages.
15. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
16. A city in southwestern Virginia.
17. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
18. A human limb.
19. A person who buys.
21. Singing jazz.
23. In a murderous frenzy as if possessed by a demon.
25. An audiotape recording of sound.
26. Footwear shaped to fit the foot (below the ankle) with a flexible upper of leather or plastic and a sole and heel of heavier material.
28. A resident of Utah.
30. An expression of greeting.
31. A metric unit of volume equal to one tenth of a liter.
33. Late time of life.
34. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
35. Tropical American tree grown in southern United States having a whitish pink-tinted fruit.
39. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
42. A dissolute man in fashionable society.
44. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
46. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
48. Gladly and cordially received or admitted.
52. Become gelatinous.
54. Knock unconscious or senseless.
55. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
56. A desert in southern Israel.
58. Follower of Rastafarianism.
60. A large fleet.
63. (Welsh) Corresponds to Iris Ler.
66. Anything that serves as an enticement.
69. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
71. A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
74. Recurring again and again.
76. The seat within a bishop's diocese where his cathedral is located adv.
77. The mountain range in Caucasia between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea that forms part of the traditional border between Europe and Asia.
79. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
80. To make a mistake or be incorrect.
81. A public register showing the details of ownership and value of land.
82. Any of various long-tailed rodents similar to but larger than a mouse.

DOWN

1. A master's degree in library science.
2. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
3. Remove gas from.
4. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
5. (of hair) Made tidy with a comb.
6. A strip of land projecting into a body of water.
7. Not according with the facts.
8. A shelter with perches for fowl or other birds.
9. Make a high-pitched, screeching noise, as of a door.
10. A brittle silver-white metalloid element that is related to selenium and sulfur.
11. One-thousandth of an equivalent.
12. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
13. A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
14. Italian violin maker in Cremona.
20. Jordan's port.
22. The subject matter of a conversation or discussion.
24. Fertility goddess in ancient Greek mythology.
27. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
29. Australian clover fern.
32. An extensive grassy and nearly treeless plain (especially in Latin America).
36. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
37. A river that rises in central Germany and flows north to join the Elbe River.
38. An awkward stupid person.
40. In bed.
41. An informal term for a father.
43. God of wealth and love.
45. Type genus of the Amiidae.
47. Food for domestic livestock.
49. (comparative and superlative of 'early') More early than.
50. City in northeast Pakistan.
51. Enjoying or affording comforting warmth and shelter especially in a small space.
53. Any of various small biting flies.
57. A magnetic tape recorder for recording (and playing back) TV programs.
59. The form of RNA that attaches the correct amino acid to the protein chain that is being synthesized at the ribosome of the cell (according to directions coded in the mRNA).
61. Someone who drives racing cars at high speeds.
62. A liturgical headdress worn by bishops on formal occasions.
64. A drama set to music.
65. Egyptian statesman who (as President of Egypt) negotiated a peace treaty with Menachem Begin of Israel (1918-1981).
67. (computer science) A data transmission rate (bits/second) for modems.
68. A river that rises in northeastern Turkey (near the source of the Euphrates) and flows generally eastward through Armenia to the Caspian Sea.
70. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
72. Being one hundred more than two hundred.
73. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
75. The compass point midway between east and southeast.
78. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

PACKERS AND COWBOYS DECADE-LONG HISTORY

GREEN BAY: The Dallas Cowboys and Green Bay Packers go way back, as in the 1967 NFL championship game played in such frigid conditions at Lambeau Field that it is known in league annals as the "Ice Bowl." Cowboys receiver Dez Bryant has more recent memories, and they're painful for reasons other than the cold.

Two of the league's marquee franchises share a post-season history that dates back five decades. They have met seven previous times in the playoffs, with Dallas holding a 4-3 edge going into the divisional round game tomorrow against the Packers at AT&T Stadium. While the teams may not be heated divisional rivals, their postseason meetings often leave an impression.

"I hope the Cowboys don't spoil it, or I'll be really (angry) if they do," said former Packers offensive lineman Jerry Kramer. He was one of the blockers for Hall of Famer Bart Starr's game-winning, 1-yard quarterback sneak with 13 seconds left in the fourth quarter of Green Bay's 21-17 win in the Ice Bowl. Each team has made 32 postseason appearances, tied with the New York Giants for most in NFL history.

Dallas and Green Bay have unique owners. For the Cowboys, owner Jerry Jones is part-showman, part-personnel executive and part-spokesman. Dallas plays in a cavernous, modern stadium in a sprawling suburb. Green Bay plays in the league's smallest market. Lambeau Field is the league's longest-tenured stadium, situated in the middle of a blue-collar neighborhood. It's the only publicly owned franchise in the NFL.

"Part of it is, I don't think the organizations could be more different. Their stadium and our stadium - ours is iconic, an older stadium. Their (stadium) is glitzy," Packers president Mark Murphy said. "But I have tremendous respect for the Dallas organization and Jerry." A look back at some postseason highlights of postseason between the teams:

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Fifty years ago on Jan. 1, the teams met in the 1966 NFL championship game, which took on new meaning since the winner would represent the league in the first Super Bowl against the AFL winner. Starr was 19 of 28 for 304 yards and four touchdown passes in the 34-27 victory at the Cotton Bowl in Dallas. The Packers went on to beat the Kansas City Chiefs in the Super Bowl. After joining the NFL as an expansion franchise in 1960, Dallas started a streak of 20 straight winning seasons in 1966.

ICE BOWL

The temperature was minus-13 at kickoff on Dec 31, 1967, when the Cowboys and Packers met at Lambeau in a classic NFL championship game. Cowboys equipment staff gave players a salve to rub on to keep warm, and put Saran Wrap around feet in an attempt to add another layer of warmth. There wasn't much of a rivalry then because the Cowboys were still relatively new to the league, Kramer said, though the seeds of a rivalry were planted.

DALLAS DOMINATION

The Cowboys dominated in the mid-1990s with a star-studded lineup led by the Hall of Fame trio of Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith and Michael Irvin. Dallas hosted the Packers and another future Hall of Famer, quarterback Brett Favre, for three straight seasons, from 1993-95, all Cowboys victories. Kramer remembers a weekend in which he attended one of those playoff games and got frustrated by the brash and confident Cowboys. His anger boiled over in a radio interview.

"There wasn't anything about any of them that I liked," Kramer recalled this week. He has become friends with former Dallas players, though his heart remains with the Packers. The loss in the 1995 NFC title game served as a learning experience for Green Bay. The Packers went on to beat New England in the Super Bowl in the 1996 season. "Every year, you got better, you learned from your mistakes," former center Frank Winters said. "From a motivational point ... you tried to overcome those adversities, tried to learn from them and move forward." They didn't face the Cowboys in the playoffs that year after Dallas was knocked out by Carolina. The Packers returned to the Super Bowl the following season, losing to Denver. "I think the signature 'win' for the Packers was a loss, and that was the NFC championship in 1995 in Dallas," former Packers linebacker George Koonce said. — AP



SAN DIEGO: In this Nov 16, 2014, file photo, the San Diego Chargers play against the Oakland Raiders during the first half of an NFL football game at Qualcomm Stadium. (INSET) Bre Priest gives the thumbs down while wearing a t-shirt mocking the team at San Diego Chargers headquarters after the team announced that it will move to Los Angeles. — AP photos

CHARGERS' NEXT MOVE? CHASING RESPECT IN SPORTS-SATURATED LA

LOS ANGELES: The Chargers were the biggest story in Los Angeles for about four hours. On the same rainy Thursday that the Chargers announced their relocation up the Southern California coast, the Los Angeles Rams hired 30-year-old Sean McVay to become the youngest head coach in NFL history. Welcome to LA, Bolts. You're no longer the greatest show in town.

While their franchise value soars and their stadium future becomes secure, the Chargers realize they face a lengthy struggle to gather respect, attention and a durable fan base among the roughly 19 million people who inhabit the five counties around Los Angeles, the nation's second-largest city. Chargers owner Dean Spanos' first public comments acknowledged the difficulty of the task they've accepted in leaving San Diego after 56 years.

"Our entire organization knows that we have a tremendous amount of work to do," Spanos said. "We must earn the respect and support of LA football fans. We must get back to winning. And we must make a meaningful contribution, not just on the field, but off the field as a leader and champion for the community. The Chargers are determined to fight for LA, and we are excited to get started." Indeed, the Chargers are entering quite a competition.

Athletics powerhouses

The Chargers relocated exactly one year to the day after the NFL's 21-year absence from LA ended with the Rams' official move back to town. The Southland will be home to two teams apiece in five professional sports after Major League Soccer's expansion LAFC arrives downtown next year. The wildly popular Lakers and Dodgers rule their respective calendar months. The

Clippers, Kings and Anaheim Ducks are perennial playoff teams. The Los Angeles Angels drew 3 million fans last season while losing 88 games.

There are collegiate athletics powerhouses at USC and UCLA, along with innumerable outdoor sporting pursuits around an entertainment-saturated metropolis that doesn't get obsessed with sports in the first place. Even among die-hard NFL fans, the Chargers will be at least a distant third-place team in their two-team market next fall. The Rams have a generational fan base that never gave up on them during 21 years in St Louis, and the Raiders are still wildly popular in Los Angeles from their 1982-94 run at the Coliseum - along with that outlaw franchise's status as a California lifestyle brand as much as a sports team.

But one intriguing aspect of the Chargers' machinations is their choice to play their next two seasons at StubHub Center, the LA Galaxy's compact soccer stadium in suburban Carson. Even with an expansion in capacity to 30,000 seats, it will be small by NFL standards - or even by some Texas high school football standards.

The Chargers and the Galaxy's owners, sports conglomerate AEG, have plans for expansion and improvement of the modest facilities around StubHub. Yet playing in a small stadium should protect the Chargers from the unpleasant optics of thousands of empty seats while they attempt to build a fan base. The Raiders' annual road game against the AFC West rival Chargers should be a fascinating sight this fall, but the Chargers hope they'll benefit from their temporary home by providing an unusually intimate setting for fans - and whatever ticket prices the market will bear.

Bold and innovative

"I would like to commend the Chargers on this bold and innovative decision to move to StubHub Center," AEG President and CEO Dan Beckerman said. "It is truly a testament to how strongly the Chargers feel about the fan experience and their willingness to create something special for people in Southern California."

The Rams were ripped on social media and by rival fans for empty seats this season at the cavernous Coliseum, which doesn't look full even with 80,000 people in attendance. The Chargers' games will be packed by comparison - even if the crowds are one-third of the Rams' turnouts. The Chargers' training complex is expected to be in Costa Mesa, 40 miles southeast of Los Angeles amid the Orange County fan base often cited by the Chargers as evidence of their appeal in the area.

But pure winning would be the easiest way to get LA fans' attention, and the Chargers could be in position to do that more quickly than the Rams, who are rebuilding from a 4-12 season with the youngest head coach in NFL history. The Chargers fired head coach Mike McCoy after going 5-11, but their new boss will inherit a team with decent talent around 35-year-old Philip Rivers, one of the league's most consistent veteran quarterbacks - assuming the father of seven has no qualms about moving to family-friendly Orange County.

Rivers' \$83.25 million contract extension through 2019 kicked in this season, and a good coach could put the Chargers in position for a quick return to the postseason - somewhere the Rams haven't been since the 2004 season. "LA chargers does not change our main goal and that's winning," Chargers cornerback Casey Hayward tweeted. "LA let's make this year great." — AP

'SIR ANDY' SEEKS END TO AUST OPEN AGONY

MELBOURNE: Having snatched Novak Djokovic's world number one ranking in a thrilling late-season raid, Andy Murray will bid to storm the Serb's Melbourne Park fortress and capture an elusive Australian Open title after five agonizing near misses. Murray enters the year's first grand slam in unknown territory, rated as top seed for the first time in his 12th campaign and with a 'Sir' in front of his name as the recipient of a knighthood from Britain's New Year's honors list.

The Scot also brings the knowledge that 10 years of hard graft to reach the summit of the men's game could end in a heartbeat if defending champion Djokovic has his way. "I'd say Novak Djokovic is still the biggest threat to the number one ranking," Murray said in Doha where he kicked off his season. "His record in Australia is incredible. He has won it six times and won a number of finals against me too so I'm

expecting him to play very well there."

Few players know how heavy lies the crown as fellow 29-year-old Djokovic, who spoke of hungrier wolves snapping at his heels after his defeat over Murray last year, his fourth in a Melbourne Park final between the pair. Long the alpha male of the pack, Djokovic completed his sweep of grand slam titles at last year's French Open then fell away dramatically in the second half of the season.

Only last week, however, the Serb fired an ominous warning to Murray by snapping his 28-match winning streak in a fiery three-set decider to defend his Qatar Open title. Djokovic joined Roy Emerson as the most successful men's champion at the Australian Open last year and can take sole possession of the record with a seventh crown, having won in 2008, 2011-13 and 2015-16. Murray is saddled with a less enviable record, having become only the second man in the profes-

sional era to lose five finals at a single grand slam when defeated last year.

Bookmakers see little chance of the title going to anyone other from Djokovic and Murray but US Open champion Stan Wawrinka is the most fancied of the rest. Beating Djokovic on the blue courts of Melbourne Park invariably means winning the title and Wawrinka managed it a blockbuster quarter-final in 2014 on the way to claiming the trophy. Crowds will clamor for four-times champion Roger Federer to go deep in the tournament as he returns to grand slam action after a long layoff from a knee injury. But seeded 17th, Federer faces a treacherous first week, with fifth seed Kei Nishikori a likely third round opponent before a possible quarter-final against Murray. Ninth-seeded Spaniard Nadal, the 2009 champion, can also expect raucous support as he bids to shrug off two barren years at the grand slams. — Reuters



RIO DE JANEIRO: In this Sunday, Aug 7, 2016 file photo, Serena Williams, of the United States, reaches for a return against Daria Gavrilova, of Australia, at the 2016 Summer Olympics. — AP

IT'S ALL ABOUT SERENA AT MELBOURNE PARK

SYDNEY: For the last few years the main question regarding the women's draw at the Australian Open has been who or what can prevent Serena Williams from adding to her impressive collection of Melbourne Park titles. The answer for most of that time has been injury and, until proved otherwise, most deem it wise to continue working on the assumption that, even if not fully fit, Williams remains more than a match for any player on the women's circuit.

So, although the 35-year-old is seeded second, has played two matches in the last four months—losing one—and has drawn a tricky assignment in Belinda Bencic in round one, she is still favourite to secure her seventh Australian Open crown. Success would mean a 23rd grand slam singles title for the American, allowing Williams to pull clear of German Steffi Graf as the most decorated women's singles player in the professional era. Williams lost the number one ranking when she was beaten by Karolina Pliskova in the US Open semi-finals last September and, wrestling with a shoulder problem, did not

play again until last week's Auckland Classic. The rankings beneficiary was German Angelique Kerber, who also took away her Australian Open crown with a brilliant performance in last year's final.

In the absence of 2008 champion Maria Sharapova, who is serving out the remainder of a doping ban, and twice winner Victoria Azarenka, who has just had a baby, top seed Kerber again looks like being the most likely to threaten Williams's dominance. The 28-year-old reached the final of three of the four grand slams last year, adding a second grand slam title when she beat Pliskova to win the US Open, and a second Melbourne crown would move her further away from the pack.

Unimpressive warm-up

While her warm-up performances have been unimpressive, Kerber could have a reasonably easy ride in the opening round against 61st-ranked Ukrainian Lesia Tsurenko, who withdrew from the Hobart International with a viral illness yesterday. Third seed Agnieszka Radwanska has little

grand slam pedigree beyond a single appearance in the Wimbledon final and will have to pick herself up after a humbling experience in yesterday's Sydney International final.

The 27-year-old Pole was quite simply blown off the court by Britain's world number 10 Johanna Konta, who went on a fairytale run to the Melbourne semi-finals last year and looks a reasonable bet to go deep into the tournament this year. Spain's seventh seed Garbine Muguruza, who also owns a grand slam crown after her French Open triumph last year, will open her account against 109th-ranked New Zealander Marina Erakovic.

Even if she has never been past the fourth round in Melbourne, the 23-year-old Muguruza feels the year's first grand slam is a little more open this year. "It is a little bit more equal than last year," she told reporters in Melbourne on Thursday. "There are a lot of girls that can hold the trophy (so) it is going to be a big battle to see who is the best in these two weeks." — Reuters

PAKISTAN, W INDIES IN WORLD CUP SCRAMBLE

NEW DELHI: Pakistan ramp up their bid to ensure a spot at the 2019 World Cup and avoid the humiliation of playing minnows to make it to the 50-over showpiece event. In the week that football's world governing body FIFA announced an expanded 48-team World Cup in 2026, the battle to be one of only 10 countries at cricket's showpiece in two years' time has been brought sharply into focus.

There now follows a nerve-racking race against time with September 30 the cut-off point to ensure a guaranteed finals place as one of the top eight teams and avoid the minefield of qualification. The International Cricket Council (ICC) has long declared that the 2019 event in England and Wales would be controversially pruned down from a 14-team event which took place in Australia and New Zealand in 2015.

While eight of the top-ranked sides will get direct qualification, the four bottom-placed nations will lock horns with associate countries in a qualifier to book the final two spots. Pakistan—the 1992 champions—are precariously placed at eighth spot on 89 points—two behind Bangladesh, who will host the qualifiers in 2018, and two ahead of the West Indies.

The Azhar Ali-led side will need to win their five-match ODI series against table-toppers and current world champions Australia starting Friday to enhance their chances of qualifying directly for the event. Third-ranked India will also take on England in three one-day internationals starting on Sunday 15 as the clock ticks for the final placings to settle down. Two-time World Cup champions West Indies, currently ranked ninth in the 12-team table, are another big nation that might have to battle it out in the qualifiers.

The reigning World Twenty20 champions have been far from convincing in the 50-over format, but they are scheduled to play 12 ODI games before the September deadline. The Jason Holder-led side are scheduled to host England and then Pakistan between February and May before they tour the United Kingdom for six ODIs in August-September. The bite-sized new World Cup leaves little room for the six associate members to make an entry as Pakistan, West Indies or Bangladesh will stay firm favourites to book the last two spots should they slip into the qualifying stage.

Rising nations like Ireland, Scotland and Afghanistan—they played the 2015 World Cup in Australia and New Zealand—may be the worst affected by the trimming down. ICC chief president Dave Richardson had talked about "commercial implications" behind the move of sizing down the event, leaving many of the associate nations furious. Ireland captain William Porterfield termed the move as an "absolute joke" which will spell the "death of cricket" as the minnows made their presence felt in the last edition after beating West Indies in a league match. — AFP



WELLINGTON: Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan waves to the crowd as he walks from the field after being bowled during day two of the first international Test cricket match between New Zealand and Bangladesh at the Basin Reserve. — AFP

SHAKIB DOUBLE CENTURY CRUSHES NEW ZEALAND

WELLINGTON: Bangladesh hammered New Zealand with a double century by Shakib Al Hasan in a record-breaking second day of the first Test in Wellington yesterday. But they kept declaration plans after reaching 542-7 on day two, and New Zealand insisted they were still in the game. Shakib scored a Bangladesh innings record of 217 and captain Mushfiqur Rahim added 159 in a 359-run stand, which set a record for any Bangladesh partnership. Mushfiqur described the tourists' position as "really satisfying".

"Let's see," was his message to New Zealand when questioned whether a declaration was likely overnight. "That's one job done but there's still three days to go. Anything's possible," he said, adding Bangladesh were determined to erase their nightmare build-up to the Test when they lost all six one-day and Twenty20 matches.

Shakib called his seven hours at the crease "one of proudest days" of his career as he moved up to second on the list of prolific Bangladesh batsmen with 3,146 to his name behind Tamim Iqbal's 3,405. He said he did not realize he had broken Tamim's record for the highest Test innings by a Bangladesh player until he reached 207 and saw the opener stand and applaud in the stands. "I thought his score was 214 but when I ran that single and saw Tamim was clapping I thought OK—the highest."

Black Caps still hopeful

But as Bangladesh bathed in the glory of dominating the first two days of the Test, and blasting 388 runs at nearly four an over on the second day, New Zealand fast bowler Tim Southee refused to accept a result for the home side was out of the question.

"They've come out and played extremely well after losing the toss and they've played in an aggressive manner," he said, indicating the Test could go down to the wire on the fifth day. "We'll come back with a plan of hopefully knocking these (last three wickets) over and then trying to go as big as we can." Shakib and Mushfiqur both fell in the final session after setting Bangladesh up for their 542, which is the third-highest first innings at the traditional bowl-first Basin Reserve in its 59-Test history.

With the wind and rain that disrupted day one out of the picture, New Zealand had early success in the fourth over when Mominul Haque fell for 64 and honours were even with Bangladesh at 160-4. But for the next 82 overs Shakib and

Mushfiqur were in command as they batted at nearly 4.4 an over and with an element of luck.

Shakib was dropped on four by Mitchell Santner late on the first day and dropped by Ross Taylor on 189. He survived a tight appeal on 137 when wicketkeeper BJ Watling took what appeared to be a sensational diving catch down the leg side only for replays to show he briefly grounded the ball on hitting the turf.

It was Wagner who eventually claimed the wicket when a tired Shakib chopped an attempted cut onto his stumps. Mushfiqur had a heart-stopping moment on 78 when an inside edge off Trent Boult brushed the stumps but the bails stayed on and the ball went through to the boundary. Boult eventually claimed his wicket with a wide delivery that Mushfiqur attempted to drive but succeeded only in edging to Watling. Wagner was the most successful New Zealand bowler with three for 124 while Boult had two for 121 and Southee two for 144. — AFP

WADE TON HELPS BEAT PAKISTAN IN 1ST ODI

BRISBANE: Matthew Wade hit a thrilling last-ball century to set up a 92-run victory for Australia over Pakistan in the first one-day international at the Gabba yesterday. Wicketkeeper Wade boosted Australia to 268 for nine off their 50 overs after the batting top order had slumped to 78 for five. Seamer James Faulkner then took four wickets for 32 to help Australia dismiss Pakistan for 176 off 42.4 overs.

Pakistan were well placed with Australia five down in the 17th over before Wade and Glenn Maxwell (60) put on 82 runs for the sixth wicket to push on. The tourists could not put any pressure on the Australians in their innings with skipper Azhar Ali injuring a hamstring and Babar Azam topscoring with 33. Mohammad Amir struck early with the key wickets of adventurous opener David Warner and skipper Steve Smith with successive balls to have Australian rocking at 13 for two in the fifth over.

"It was challenging at the top, it was swinging and seaming around," man-of-the-match Wade said. "Maxi (Maxwell) took the pressure off me, and I was just looking to get him on strike. I was absolutely cooked (by the last over). Wade, who has been under pressure to score runs after a lean spell, hit seven fours and two sixes in his knock for his first ODI century.

Quirky best

Maxwell was at his quirky best with reverse sweeps and improvised stroke-making in his 60 off 56 balls with seven boundaries before he was out to a false shot. Maxwell was dismissed in the 31st over with Australia at 160 for six when he attempted to flick Hasan Ali over mid-wicket only to hit the ball with the high part of his bat and dolly an easy catch to Mohammad Hafeez.

Pakistan soon struck trouble in their innings losing the free-scoring Sharjeel Khan for 18 off 22 balls, falling to Faulkner. Skipper Azhar Ali injured a hamstring and retired hurt only to return in pain and try and help his side late innings before he became another Faulkner victim for 24. "It's a bit sore, but hopefully it will recover soon," Azhar said. "The physio will have a better look and see how far I can get. Hopefully I can take part in the next game."

Babar Azam, batting at No.4, top scored with 33 off 46 balls before he edged to Steve Smith at slip off Pat Cummins. "We thought from five down for 78 we can get them out early, but unfortunately it didn't happen," Azhar said. Smith said Australia paid for being in too much of a hurry at the top of their innings. "It was a pretty average start. We were in a bit of a hurry, to be fair," Smith said. "I thought Matthew Wade played an exceptional innings. 270 was around par, it was a bit of a slow wicket. "We bat all the way down. Mitchell Starc is batting at No. 10 at the moment. We've got a long order. The second match in the five-ODI series will be played in Melbourne tomorrow. — AFP

DHONI: TEAM WILL SEE SUCCESS UNDER KOHLI

PUNE: Mahendra Singh Dhoni, widely seen as Indian cricket's best captain, said yesterday the team would do even better under his replacement, Virat Kohli, days ahead of a limited-overs clash with England. Kohli had a squad of young players and fast bowlers that could produce an unprecedented run of wins, Dhoni said in his first comments to the media since stepping aside from captaining the limited-overs side earlier this month. Kohli took over, becoming the skipper in all three formats of the game.

"You look at the kind of talent they have got and at the same time the age group they are in," Dhoni told reporters in Pune, where the hosts will meet England in the first of the three one-day international series tomorrow. "If everything goes well they have the potential to plan for the next 10-12 years if not more ... We have a pool of fast bowlers who can bowl well in any conditions." Dhoni rose from the cricketing backwaters of India's Jharkhand to lead the game's most passionately-followed team, before quitting test cricket in late 2014.

The 35-year-old wicketkeeper-batsman has captained

India to the three International Cricket Council trophies - the 50-over World Cup, the World Twenty20 and the Champions Trophy.

"This team has the potential to do well in all formats irrespective of where we are playing ... When it comes to winning games, they should win games more than any other captain or team has won," Dhoni said.

Dhoni said he never believed in multiple captains and he had made up his mind long back to hand over the reins to Kohli, who replaced him as test captain earlier. "I am somebody who believes... split captaincy is something that doesn't really work," Dhoni said. "I always believed that with the Indian team, one player leading the team in all formats is something very crucial.

"It was something that was always in my mind. Virat took over the test captaincy and I wanted him to have some time over there and then get into the full captaincy role. He was always ready." India are already the world's top-ranked test side, second in the shortest Twenty20 format and third in the 50-over version of the game. — Reuters



SAN ANTONIO: Los Angeles Lakers center Tarik Black (28) reaches for a rebound between San Antonio Spurs defenders LaMarcus Aldridge, left, and Kawhi Leonard (2) during the first half of an NBA basketball game. —AP

SPURS DEMOLISH SLUMPING LAKERS

LOS ANGELES: Kawhi Leonard poured in 31 points in just three quarters as the San Antonio Spurs dominated in every facet of play Thursday with an emphatic 134-94 blowout of the Los Angeles Lakers. San Antonio's 134 points were a season high, as were the 72 points scored by the Spurs in the first half and the overall margin of victory of 40 points. Pau Gasol added 22 points for San Antonio, while LaMarcus Aldridge and Tony Parker added 13 each, all in just three quarters of the lopsided game.

The Spurs also got 12 points from Jonathan Simmons and 10 from DeJuaney Murray and a game-high 12 rebounds from Dewayne Dedmon. San Antonio was a bad mood heading into Thursday's home game after losing by three points to the Milwaukee Bucks on Tuesday. The Spurs took out their frustrations on a meek Laker team as four of San Antonio's starters finished in double figures at AT&T Center.

"I respect the way the Spurs played tonight—granted we didn't put up a ton of fight—but it's beautiful to see championship teams and the way they came out after one loss," Lakers coach Luke Walton said. "How (that loss) made them play and how sharp they were—there's a lot to learn from being in this game, from watching them. I didn't think we showed up to meet the challenge." All 13 players who took the floor for San Antonio scored, and the Spurs (31-8) outshot Los Angeles 60 percent to 41 percent.

"You always want to handle a loss by bouncing back the next night," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. The lowly Lakers dropped to 15-28 on the season. They were once the "Showtime" darlings of the NBA but have been on a steady downward spiral ever since the passing of club owner and team architect Jerry Buss in 2013. The Lakers were led Thursday by Julius Randle's 22 points, but the rest of Los Angeles' starters managed just 20 total points.

KNICKS 104, BULLS 89

Carmelo Anthony had 23 points, nine rebounds and six

assists, Derrick Rose and Joakim Noah delivered big games against their former team, and the New York Knicks beat the short-handed Chicago Bulls 104-89 on Thursday night. Rose scored 17 points in his return to Madison Square Garden after skipping the last game here, and Noah finished with 12 points and 15 rebounds as the Knicks snapped a three-game losing streak. Rookie forward Mindaugas Kuzminskas had a season-high 19 points. The Knicks bounced back from a loss at the buzzer in Philadelphia on Wednesday to win for the first time this season on the second night of back-to-back games. Dwyane Wade scored 22 for the Bulls, who were missing star swingman Jimmy Butler, Nikola Mirotic and Denzel Valentine, all because of illness. They dropped their third straight. Playing without starting forward Kristaps Porzingis, New York won for just the second time in 11 games.

WARRIORS 127, PISTONS 107

Klay Thompson returned from a one-game absence for rest and had 23 points as Golden State got more balanced scoring to beat Detroit. Stephen Curry scored 24 points, Kevin Durant had 25 points, nine assists and six rebounds, and Draymond Green dished out 13 assists for his fifth game in the last eight in double digits. Marcus Morris scored 21 points to lead the Pistons. Curry, Durant and Thompson scored at least 20 points in the same game for the 13th time this season. The Warriors notched their NBA-leading 27th game with 30 or more assists and won their seventh straight at home against the Pistons dating to Feb. 27 2010.

MAVERICKS 113, SUNS 108

Deron Williams had 23 points and 15 assists, and Dallas defeated Phoenix in the fourth NBA regular-season game played in Mexico. Williams shot 9 for 15 from the field in a matchup of struggling Western Conference teams. Harrison Barnes added 22 points and Dirk Nowitzki scored 18 for the Mavericks, who broke a three-game losing streak. Devin

Booker scored 29 of his 39 points in the fourth quarter for the Suns. Tyson Chandler had 14 points and 19 rebounds against his former team. Dallas and Phoenix are tied for the worst record in the West at 12-27. The game was the first of two that the Suns will play south of the border. Mexico is hosting two games in one season for the first time in NBA history.

NUGGETS 140, PACERS 112

Nikola Jokic had 22 points and 10 rebounds, and Denver emphatically ended a five-game losing streak by beating Indiana in the NBA's Global Games series at O2 Arena. Wilson Chandler added 21 points, and Danilo Gallinari had 18 for the Nuggets. They outscored the Pacers 39-20 in the third quarter, shooting 73.7 percent in the period to put it away. Denver trailed only once, when Kevin Seraphin gave the Pacers a 31-30 lead early in the second quarter, and finished with a season high in scoring. CJ Miles had 20 points, and Jeff Teague added 14 points and nine assists for Indiana. The Pacers had won five in a row, scoring at least 120 points in each victory.

PELICANS 104, NETS 95

Tyreke Evans scored a season-high 29 points and New Orleans, playing without All-Star big man Anthony Davis, handed Brooklyn its eighth straight defeat. Terrence Jones added 24 points and 12 rebounds for New Orleans (16-24), which improved to 6-13 on the road by winning both games during its stay in New York City. Jrue Holiday scored 21 and Solomon Hill had 14 points and 10 rebounds for the Pelicans, who closed the game on a 13-1 run. Davis sat out with a bruised left hip sustained during Monday night's win over the Knicks at Madison Square Garden. He is second in the NBA in scoring, averaging 29.1 points, and ranks sixth with more than 12 rebounds per game. Brook Lopez led the Nets with 20 points, but Brooklyn (8-30) has dropped 13 of 14 and owns the worst record in the league. — Agencies

GUINEA AIM TO EXTEND LEICESTER-LIKE STREAK

LIBREVILLE: Shock qualifiers Guinea-Bissau face hosts Gabon today in the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations opener, hoping to continue a Leicester City-like run in the competition. Traditional underachievers Leicester were the sensational winners of the 2015-2016 English Premier League, giving football minnows across the world belief that nothing is impossible.

The West Africans were dismissed as 'cannon fodder' two years ago in an elimination group including former champions Zambia and Congo Brazzaville. But they finished first with a game to spare after back-to-back victories over Kenya and a thrilling triumph against Zambia in a packed Bissau stadium. Now, a rusty squad known as the 'wild dogs' whose last competitive match was four months ago, must raise their game to an even higher level in their Cup of Nations tournament debut.

"We eliminated former champions Congo

and Zambia and can perform even better. The squad will work ceaselessly to achieve good results," promised coach Baciro Cande. "My squad comprises 23 proud professional footballers who are thinking only of bringing joy to the people of Guinea-Bissau. "The best way to achieve that is by winning matches and qualifying for the quarter-finals in our Africa Cup debut.

Gabon superstar

While virtually all the Guinea-Bissau squad are unknown beyond the borders of the former Portuguese colony, Gabon boast a superstar in striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang. The 27-year-old Borussia Dortmund goal machine, born in France to a Gabonese father and Spanish mother, has a particular desire to succeed in front of his home crowd. When Gabon co-hosted the 2012 Cup of Nations with Equatorial Guinea, they were eliminated by Mali in the

quarter-finals on penalties. Only one spot-kick in the shootout was missed and the culprit was Aubameyang, whose father Pierre Aubame once captained the national team known as the Panthers. The striker wept as he left the Libreville pitch, saying "my people expected more from me. I am so disappointed to have let them down." Gabon played competitively only twice last year-failing to score in World Cup draws with Morocco and Mali-leaving Spanish coach Jose-Antonio Camacho a tad apprehensive. The former Real Madrid and Spain handler took charge only last month after underperforming Portuguese Jorge Costa was axed. Depleted Cameroon face unpredictable Burkina Faso in the second match of an opening-day Group A double-header at the 40,000-seat Stade de l'Amitié in the Gabon capital.

Eight of the Cameroon preliminary squad withdrew, including Liverpool defender Joel

Matip and Schalke striker Eric-Maxim Choupo-Moting, saying their club careers took priority. "We are victims of blackmail," lamented official Simon Lyonga, accusing European club managers of encouraging players to snub the 23-day African football festival.

When the dust settled, Belgium-born coach Hugo Broos named regular Lorient scorer Benjamin Moukandjo as the new skipper of the Indomitable Lions. Predicting how the Burkinabe will perform under Portuguese coach Paulo Duarte is a hazardous task. No-hopers in 2013, they reached the final before losing narrowly to Nigeria. A couple of years later, they performed woefully, bowing out after the first round without a win. What the Stallions do possess is abundant Cup of Nations experience with the likes of defender Bakary Kone, midfielder and captain Charles Kabore and attacker Jonathan Pitroipa. —AFP

NO ROOM FOR ERROR FOR PSG

PARIS: With one eye twitching in the direction of Barcelona in the Champions League, Paris Saint-Germain head into their first taste of 2017 French league action with ground to make up. Today's game at a Rennes side with realistic designs on Europe will, PSG hope, reignite their form after an opening half of the campaign which saw four defeats and left them five points adrift of Ligue 1 table-toppers Nice.

With Monaco also three points above them, PSG have work to do if they are to rekindle ambitions of a fifth straight championship success and third straight domestic treble.

And with Nice unlikely to slip up Sunday at home to lowly Metz, midfielder Adrien Rabiot knows the Paris side cannot afford to get distracted by the prospect of the visit of Barcelona on Valentine's Day. "We told ourselves we have a number of targets and we want to win everything. We've started the second part of the season well," Rabiot told France television after a midweek league cup win over Metz.

More domestic dominance on all fronts looks to be a minimum target for Spanish coach Unai Emery, who managed a hat-trick of Europa League triumphs with Sevilla before heading to Paris to replace Laurent Blanc. New attacking impetus has arrived in the shape of German international star and 2014 world champion Julian Draxler, recruited for 40 million euros (\$42 million) from Wolfsburg.

While PSG look to fine-tune their handsomely monied but spluttering motor, Nice and Monaco are showing that the game in the French south consists of more than Marseille. With Marseille in sixth place and looking unlikely to capture a Champions League slot, Riviera neighbors Nice and Monaco—who play Marseille this weekend—are going great guns.

Nice, buoyed by the recent arrival of Chinese, US and Middle East investment, won all four of their league crowns in the 1950s but have failed to each such heights since. They finished fourth last term. They ended their December league program with a draw against Bordeaux, rescued despite sendings-off for former Liverpool misfit Mario Balotelli and Younes Belhanda. Balotelli won't feature against Metz because of suspension.

Monaco's task appears more tricky away at Marseille. Marseille media report that the club is determined to bring in fresh blood in the transfer window and is keeping an eye on the situation regarding West Ham's French striker Dimitri Payet, who has told the Londoners he'd like a move and harbors hopes of a return to the Stade Velodrome. Another name reputedly in the frame is veteran Ivorian striker and former OM and Chelsea favorite Didier Drogba. — AFP



LIBREVILLE: President of Gabon, Ali Bongo Ondimba jokes with American-born Nigerian recording artist, Davido (L) during a visit at the Stade de l'Amitié Sino Stadium yesterday. — AFP

IVORIANS IMPRESS AS 'AUBA', MAHREZ LEAD STARS PARADE

LIBREVILLE: New-look Ivory Coast are preparing to defend the Africa Cup of Nations, which kicks off in Gabon today, buoyed by encouraging results and impressive form from new recruit Wilfried Zaha. The Crystal Palace flier hopes to make an impact in a competition that boasts Europe-based stars like Riyad Mahrez of Algeria, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang of Gabon and Sadio Mane of Senegal.

Zaha is a timely addition as many former stars like the Toure brothers Kolo and Yaya have retired and star winger Gervinho is injured. Abidjan-born Zaha has been lured to the African champions by the possibilities of Cup of Nations and World Cup glory after two friendly appearances for adopted country England. He set up the crucial goal in a 2-1 warm-up win over Sweden last Sunday and scored in a 3-0 thumping of fellow Cup of Nations qualifiers Uganda three days later.

Ahead of the training camp in the United Arab Emirates, France-born coach

Michel Dussuyer admitted he was concerned about a scarcity of goals. Ivory Coast are in a challenging Group C and kick off their campaign on Monday against Emmanuel Adebayor-captained Togo, followed by showdowns with the Democratic Republic of Congo and Morocco.

"The objective is, of course, to defend the title that was proudly acquired in 2015," said Dussuyer, one of 12 European or South American coaches in the 16-team tournament. "It will not be easy. There are fine teams who aspire to win the trophy, but we have the weapons to go far."

Morocco are coached by Frenchman Herve Renard, who guided the Ivorians two years ago to their second Cup of Nations title. "I have made reaching the quarter-finals an objective that we absolutely must attain. If we get there, then we will see what we can do," said the perennially bronzed and white-shirted Renard. He also coached Zambia to glory the last time the Africa Cup was staged in

Gabon-jointly with Equatorial Guinea in 2012. Lightning-quick striker Aubameyang carries the hopes of Gabon, who are expected to make the quarter-finals from a Group A that includes four-time champions but severely depleted Cameroon, Burkina Faso and shock qualifiers Guinea-Bissau. As the Borussia Dortmund striker prepares to carry the hopes of the small central African nation on his shoulders, fleet-footed Mahrez will aim to top a magnificent 12 months by taking Algeria to the February 5 final and their continental title since 1990.

Major contenders

Mahrez heads for Gabon fresh from winning the African Player of the Year prize for 2016, pipping last year's winner Aubameyang. "The next thing after this award is the Africa Cup of Nations. My team will try to do good things there," the France-born star of Leicester City's sensational Premier League title triumph said after securing the CAF prize. —AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Marouane Fellaini, second left, celebrates after scoring his sides second goal of the game during the English League Cup semifinal, 1st leg, soccer match between Manchester United and Hull at Old Trafford stadium. —AP

PREMIER LEAGUE PREVIEW

UNITED BRACING FOR LIVERPOOL CRUNCH, CHELSEA EYE RECOVERY

LONDON: Manchester United have a golden opportunity to haul themselves into the Premier League title race at the expense of bitter rivals Liverpool this weekend, while leaders Chelsea will look to steady their nerves at Leicester. United go into the Old Trafford showdown in fine fettle after beating Hull in the League Cup semi-final first leg in midweek to extend their winning streak in all competitions to nine matches.

Jose Mourinho's sixth-placed side still trail Chelsea by 10 points and lag five behind second-placed Liverpool. But victory on Sunday, with Mourinho calling for United fans to raise the roof, would be a significant statement of intent. Zlatan Ibrahimovic has been a key figure in United's recent surge and despite his team's current position the Swedish striker has set his sights on adding a Premier League medal to the league titles he won in Spain, Italy, France and Holland.

"I'm chasing the head trophy, the Premier League, that is my aim," said Ibrahimovic, who has 13 league goals this season. "I try to help the team and do what I'm best at—scoring goals, playing good and creating chances for my team-mates." In contrast to United, Liverpool—after emerging as title contenders thanks to a four-match winning run in December—have suffered a dip.

A draw at Sunderland in the league was followed by an FA Cup stalemate

against fourth-tier Plymouth and a 1-0 defeat in the League Cup semi-final first leg at Southampton. Manager Jurgen Klopp will hope the return against Southampton of Brazil forward Philippe Coutinho after seven weeks out with an ankle injury provides a timely boost for his team, who were held to a 0-0 draw by United in October.

Unhappy return?

By the time Liverpool kick off at Old Trafford they could be eight points behind Chelsea, who face struggling champions Leicester at the King Power Stadium 24 hours earlier. Chelsea's 2-0 defeat at Tottenham last week halted their 13-match winning run in the league, but the west London club received a welcome boost in midweek with the news that their plan to redevelop their Stamford Bridge stadium into a 60,000-capacity arena has been approved.

On the field, midfielder N'Golo Kante will make a first appearance at Leicester since his £30 million pre-season transfer. Kante was the driving force behind Leicester's incredible title triumph and his absence has been felt as the Foxes have slumped to within six points of the relegation zone. Leicester boss Claudio Ranieri called on the club's fans to salute Kante, but he hopes his side can make it an unhappy

return. "I hope our fans give to Kante a warm welcome as he was our champion. It's important to remember what he gave to us," Ranieri said. "We respect Chelsea a lot but we are ready to fight and ready to try to win." Third-placed Tottenham can extend their winning run in the league to six matches when they host West Bromwich Albion, but boss Mauricio Pochettino isn't getting carried away by that impressive success against Chelsea.

"Today it's about maturity and learning from this period. It doesn't mean that we will win every game," he said. "It's important to show that maturity we did against Chelsea, that is important for trying to be more realistic and fighting for a bigger objective." Manchester City, in fourth, look to maintain the momentum from their FA Cup thrashing of West Ham when they travel to Everton, while fifth-placed Arsenal, eight points behind Chelsea, can't afford a slip at second-bottom Swansea.

It will be an emotional day at Vicarage Road as Watford pay their respects to former manager Graham Taylor following his death on Thursday aged 72. Taylor, who suffered a suspected heart attack, led Watford into the top flight twice in two spells lasting a combined 15 years and the club plan a minute's applause and other tributes before their home match against Middlesbrough. —AFP

MILAN SET JUVE CLASH

MILAN: Juraj Kucka and Giacomo Bonaventura struck in four second-half minutes to fire AC Milan to a thrilling 2-1 Italian Cup win over Torino and a quarter-final tie with Juventus on Thursday. It means one of this season's Cup quarters will be a repeat of the 2015 Cup final, when Juventus beat Milan on their way to a second successive league and Cup double.

Milan, who recently beat Juventus in Doha to claim the Italian Super Cup, won their home league fixture with the Serie A champions earlier this season. But Vincenzo Montella's resurgent Rossoneri initially struggled to settle at a rain-lashed San Siro, and seemed destined to suffer an upset when Italy striker Andrea Belotti pounced from close range to beat Gianluigi Donnarumma down low on 27 minutes.

Torino rejected a reported bid of 65m euros from Arsenal recently for Belotti, and he underlined the reasons why by coming close to claiming his second moments later with a deflected effort from Adem Ljajic's smart cutback. Milan's best effort prior to the end of a mediocre first half was a stunning volley from Kucka that shaved Joe Hart's post. But a head injury to England 'keeper Hart, which left him requiring a headband wrap following a clash with Gianluca Lapadula early in the second half, gave the hosts a spur.

Lapadula left his foot trailing over the 'keeper's head and face minutes after the restart and there was worry initially as Hart lay motionless on the ground. After treatment, Hart was soon back up smiling and happy to see a glancing header by Suso go wide of his upright on 55 minutes. Milan had sniffed the chance of a fightback and after a brief period of pressure Suso dribbled his way past two players before forcing Hart to parry low at his far post.

The 'keeper could only push the ball into the path of Bonaventura, who found Kucka at the far post for the midfielder to fire high into the net from a tight angle. Three minutes later Suso provided his second assist of the game, finding Bonaventura on the edge of the box with a crisp cross that Bonaventura fired past Hart. Donnarumma did well to deny Belotti twice in the space of five minutes, although Milan spurned several chances at the end when Bonaventura and Lapadula, twice, fired wide of the target. — AFP



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

African Nations Cup		
Gabon v Bissau	beIN SPORTS	19:00
Burkina Faso v Cameroon	beIN SPORTS	22:00
English Premier League		
Tottenham Hotspur v Albion	beIN SPORTS	15:30
Sunderland v Stoke City	beIN SPORTS	18:00
West Ham United v Crystal Palace	beIN SPORTS	18:00
Watford v Middlesbrough	beIN SPORTS	18:00
Hull City v Bournemouth	beIN SPORTS	18:00
Burnley v Southampton	beIN SPORTS	18:00
Swansea City v Arsenal	beIN SPORTS	18:00
Leicester City v Chelsea	beIN SPORTS	20:30
Spanish League Primera Div. 1		
Leganes v Bilbao	beIN SPORTS	15:00
Barcelona v Las Palmas	beIN SPORTS	18:15
Atletico de Madrid v Real Betis	beIN SPORTS	20:30
Deportivo La Coruna v Villarreal	beIN SPORTS	22:45
Italian Calcio League Serie A		
Crotone v Bologna	beIN SPORTS	20:00
Inter Milano v Chievo Verona	beIN SPORTS	22:45

DEL PIERO TIPS JUVENTUS TO OUTPLAY FIORENTINA

MILAN: Juventus great Alessandro Del Piero said he scored "perhaps the best goal of my career" against Fiorentina, and he expects the Old Lady to continue outplaying La Viola when the sides meet tomorrow. For Del Piero, Juventus v Fiorentina is a "derby" and one in which he struck a superb volley with the outside of his boot to seal a 3-2 win for Juve in December 1994.

It was "perhaps the best and most significant goal of my career," the now retired Del Piero told media in Florence where he was unveiling a new fashion line. In a later fixture between the sides, Del Piero hit a hat-trick to overtake Giampiero Boniperti's 178-goal tally for the club, set in 1961.

"And I also got that hat-trick that allowed me to overtake Boniperti's record," he added. "This fixture is always special. It can be very tough and tense at times. For me, it's a derby." Del Piero, 42, hit a career tally of 290 goals for Juventus in a career that saw him win the World Cup (2006), six Serie A titles and the Champions League as well as three runner-up medals from the competition.

He is fully behind the Turin giants' bid for a record sixth consecutive league title, but urged caution. "Juventus are a step ahead of the rest," said Del Piero. "But the championship isn't over. Roma and Napoli are not far behind and will be the ones worrying Juventus most." Roma, four points adrift, face a tricky trip to Udinese yesterday while Napoli, seven points off the top in third, should have no problem beating rock-bottom Pescara.

Growing exodus

While Fiorentina have been busy playing down reports star striker Nikola Kalinic could join a growing exodus of top players to China, Juventus took another step towards a third consecutive league and Cup double. They showed class during the first half of a 3-2 Italian Cup last 16 win over Atalanta in midweek that saw Paulo Dybala hit a great opening volley and set up strike partner Mario Mandzukic for Juve's second.

With Croatian starlet Marko Pjaca fully recovered following a two-month injury lay-off, Juve coach Massimiliano Allegri was able to rest Argentine striker Gonzalo Higuain. Fiorentina have lost their last four league games with the Turin giants, scraping their last point from a scoreless home draw in December 2014, and are 18 points adrift in ninth. But Venezuelan midfielder Tomas Rincon, who signed a three-and-a-half-year deal when he arrived in Turin from Genoa last week, said Paulo Sousa's men can't be taken for granted.

"They're a class side. We have to take them just as seriously as the rest of the league take Juventus," said Rincon. Roma defender Kostas Manolas has called for an end to throwing away points against "smaller" teams as they look to avoid a potential banana skin. Udinese gave Inter Milan a scare before succumbing 2-1 defeat at the Friuli stadium last week, and Manolas warned against a repeat of Roma's trip to Cagliari last August when they threw away a two-goal lead.

"When you're up two-nil away from home you don't finish the match 2-2. We are a top side and shouldn't be drawing games like these," said Manolas. Napoli host struggling Pescara looking for a second home win four days after a sealing their Italian Cup quarter-final spot with a 3-1 cruise over second division La Spezia. Inter Milan, seventh at 12 points behind Juventus, can close the gap with a home win over Chievo while on Monday city rivals AC Milan, nine points off the pace in fifth, face Torino for the second time in four days. Milan beat Torino 2-1 at the San Siro on Thursday to secure their spot in the Italian Cup quarter-final. — AFP



TURIN: Juventus' Paulo Dybala celebrates after scoring during an Italian Cup, round of 16 soccer match, at the Juventus Stadium. — AP



SEVILLE: Sevilla's Argentinian midfielder Matias Kranevitter (R) vies with Real Madrid's Dominican forward Mariano during the Spanish Copa del Rey (King's Cup) round of 16 second leg football match Sevilla FC vs Real Madrid CF at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium. — AFP

LA LIGA PREVIEW

TOP TWO COLLIDE IN LATEST CHALLENGE FOR FLYING REAL

MADRID: Cristiano Ronaldo returns for Real Madrid as the European champions put their Spanish record 40-game unbeaten run on the line for the second time in four days in a top of the table clash at Sevilla tomorrow. Victory for the hosts would blow the La Liga title race wide open with Sevilla closing to within one point of Real, who also still have a game in hand.

Ronaldo was once again rested in the week he was crowned FIFA's Player of the Year for 2016 as Real booked their place in the Copa del Rey quarter-finals on Thursday by surpassing Barcelona's previous best unbeaten run of 39 games. However, Sevilla were just seconds away from inflicting Real's first defeat in eight months as Karim Benzema salvaged a 3-3 draw on the night deep into stoppage time as Real progressed 6-3 on aggregate.

Despite the drama, both sides had an eye on arguably the biggest game of the Liga season so far tomorrow that will fully test Sevilla's credentials as title challengers. "We will have to suffer just as much on Sunday," said Madrid boss Zinedine Zidane. "It is a hard place to go and they have very good players, but it is what faces every weekend and this weekend will be especially difficult."

Jorge Sampaoli's men moved up

Barcelona into second with a hugely impressive 4-0 win at sixth-placed Real Sociedad last weekend and will be back to full strength as Mariano, Steven N'Zonzi and Franco Vazquez were all rested in midweek. Zidane will also be able to welcome back Luka Modric as he too was rested, whilst captain Sergio Ramos, Mateo Kovacic and Lucas Vazquez made their first appearances of 2017 after returning from injury on Thursday.

'MSN' back in form

Sevilla are likely to kick-off at the Sanchez Pizjuan back down in third should Barca avoid defeat when they welcome Las Palmas to the Camp Nou today. The champions have won just two of their last six La Liga games, but did register a first win of 2017 at the third attempt with a 3-1 win over Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday to edge into the Cup quarter-finals 4-3 on aggregate.

"It is important for our confidence. We wanted and needed a result like that," said Luis Suarez, after netting his 100th Barca goal. "We are calm, working hard and know that the results will come." Further goals from Neymar and Lionel Messi, from a third stupendous free-kick in as many games, took Barca's

'MSN' to 302 goals as a trio since Suarez signed in 2014.

However, tellingly it was the first time all three had scored in the same game since September as Neymar ended a three-month goal drought. "We are on a run where the opponents need very few chances to score against us and we are finding it difficult in the final third," said Barca boss Luis Enrique.

"I am sure that will be fleeting because the attitude that in all of the players and now we have to go on a run of victories." Las Palmas demonstrated their ability to spring a surprise with two late goals to win 3-2 at Atletico Madrid on Tuesday despite falling short of the Copa del Rey quarters 4-3 on aggregate. Atletico will look to bounce back and solidify their place in the top four when Real Betis visit the Vicente Calderon today.

The bottom two also clash this weekend as Granada welcome Osasuna with both side having managed just one La Liga win in 17 games so far this season. However, they remain just four and five points adrift of safety thanks to Valencia's woes as, with interim coach Voro confirmed in charge till the end of the season, they go in search of a first league win since October at home to Espanyol tomorrow. — AFP

Sports



Shakib double century crushes New Zealand

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SEVILLE: Real Madrid's Marco Asensio, second left, celebrates with teammates and Real Madrid's coach Zidane during a Spain's King's Cup soccer match between Real Madrid and Sevilla at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan stadium. — AP

REAL SETS 40-GAME UNBEATEN RECORD

MADRID: Karim Benzema struck deep into stoppage time as Real Madrid set a new Spanish record by extending their unbeaten run to 40 games in a thrilling 3-3 draw at Sevilla to progress to the Copa del Rey quarter-finals on Thursday. Holding a 3-0 first leg lead, a Cristiano Ronaldo-less Real looked set for defeat for the first time in eight months as an own goal from Danilo and second-half strikes from Stefan Jovetic and Vicente Iborra saw Sevilla lead 3-1 inside the final 10 minutes.

However, Sergio Ramos's penalty and substitute Benzema salvaged Madrid's run, which now surpasses the 39-game unbeaten run set by Barcelona last season. "Possibly they deserved to win the game, but we fought until the end," Real boss Zinedine Zidane told GoTV. "They deserved more tonight, but the tie is two games and (over the two legs) it is logical that we go through."

Both coaches named weakened sides with one eye on tomorrow's crunch top of the table La Liga clash between the two back at the Sanchez Pizjuan. However, it was Sevilla who settled first as they forced Madrid onto the back foot from the

off. "We had a lot of chances, at least 15 against a team of the stature of Madrid," said Sevilla coach Jorge Sampaoli. "We were very close. Unfortunately, we couldn't take our chances to show the difference there was between the teams."

Big name absentees

Kiko Casilla had already been forced into two saves from Sergio Escudero and Joaquin Correa before Danilo powered a header into his own net after just 10 minutes. In the absence of Ronaldo and Benzema, Mariano Diaz was handed a rare start up front and nearly leveled in bizarre fashion as Sevilla 'keeper David Soria's clearance ricocheted off the striker and inches wide. However, most of the action in the first-half came at the other end as Casilla saved three times in quick succession from Wissam Ben Yedder and Luciano Vietto to prevent Real falling further behind. Toni Kroos fired inches wide just before the break, but the vital away goal the visitors needed to kill off the tie arrived in spectacular fashion three minutes into the second-half.

Marco Asensio pounced on a clearance from a Sevilla cor-

ner on the edge of his own area and ran the length of the field barely challenged before slotting below Soria. That left Sevilla needing an unlikely four more goals to qualify, but they continued to pour forward as on-loan Inter Milan forward Jovetic marked his debut by volleying home Escudero's cross six minutes later.

Sampaoli threw on first-team regulars Samir Nasri and Vitolo in search of more goals. And Madrid's record run appeared to be over when Iborra forced the ball home from close range to make it 3-1 with just 13 minutes remaining. However, Casemiro was adjudged to have been pushed inside the area by Matias Kranevitter five minutes later.

Against his former club, Ramos showed remarkable calm to chip the resulting spot-kick down the middle of the goal. And Benzema provided the final sting in the tale three minutes into added time when he saw off two tired Sevilla challenges before firing low past Soria to seal a 6-3 aggregate win. Earlier, Celta Vigo and Eibar completed their progress into the last eight having already built-up three-goal first leg leads over Valencia and Osasuna respectively. — AFP