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KUWAIT ORDERS IRAN ENVOY TO LEAVE

SOME IRAN MISSIONS ORDERED SHUT, DIPLOMATS EXPELLED

KUWAIT: Kuwait yesterday ordered the Iranian ambassador to leave the country, Iran's ISNA news agency reported, in an escalating row after the state's top court convicted a "terror" cell of links to the Islamic republic. "Under the pressure of Saudi interventionist policies, and the baseless accusation of Iranian interference ... Kuwait has announced that ... Alireza Enayati, the Iranian ambassador to Kuwait, must leave..." the Iranian Students News Agency said.

Kuwait's foreign ministry earlier yesterday said the state had expelled Iranian diplomats and closed some embassy missions. The action was taken after a cassation court ruling last month said "Iranian sides helped and supported the cell members," the ministry said in a statement. A senior government official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP around 15 diplomats were ordered to leave. Kuwait also ordered the closure of the Iranian "military, cultural and trade" mis-

sions, the official said.

Iranian state television said Kuwait's foreign ministry summoned Tehran's ambassador and ordered the number of diplomats to be cut from 19 to four and the closure of the cultural and military missions. State news agency KUNA, citing a foreign ministry source, said Kuwait had also decided to freeze any activities involving joint committees between the two countries. "Kuwait claims that Iran has tried to interfere in the internal affairs of the country," Iranian state television reported. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported that the country's foreign ministry summoned the Kuwaiti charge d'affaires in Tehran to explain the move. The ministry is protesting the call to cut the number of diplomats stationed in Kuwait, IRNA said.

Last month Kuwait's supreme court sentenced the mastermind of the so-called "Abdaly cell" to life in jail and condemned 20 others to various

prison terms for alleged links with Iran and Lebanese Shiite militia Hezbollah, and plotting terror attacks in Kuwait. State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Sabah, who is also acting information minister, confirmed Kuwait had taken diplomatic action against Iran. "Following the supreme court ruling on the case... the government of Kuwait has decided to take measures, in accordance with diplomatic norms and the Vienna Convention, towards its relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran," Sheikh Mohammad told AFP.

The row comes at a time when Kuwait is trying to mediate an end to the Gulf's worst diplomatic crisis in years, after Saudi Arabia and its allies cut ties with Qatar over accusations it is too close to Iran and funds extremists. A local newspaper reported on Monday that 14 of the cell's 26 members had fled to Iran by sea. They were convicted by a lower court early last year but acquitted on

appeals several months later and set free.

The cassation court, whose rulings are final, overturned their acquittal on June 18 and sentenced them to between five and 15 years in prison. The interior ministry confirmed on Tuesday that the 14 men were on the run but it said that they had not left the country through official exit points. The cell was busted in August 2015 and large quantities of arms, ammunition and explosives were seized from them, according to the Kuwaiti authorities.

Kuwaiti courts convicted them of working for Iran's Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah. They were also convicted of smuggling explosives from Iran. The only Iranian member of the cell was sentenced to death in absentia by the lower court early last year. Unlike fellow Gulf partners Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, Kuwait maintained good relations with Iran. — Agencies (See Page 8)



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Local Spotlight

DEFACING STATE UTILITIES



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Many people in Kuwait do not care about protecting state utilities. They think these belong to them and they can do whatever they want, even breaking and damaging them. This ill behavior has to stop.

Because of the imbalance in the demographic structure and the presence of residents of a multitude of nationalities, some are not aware of the importance of preserving the environment or general hygiene. It is normal to find public utilities on the beachside, for example, full of dirt, especially after weekends, or even cinemas after the end of the show, where you can see food remnants strewn on the ground in a disgusting way.

We can all see destruction of public recreational facilities like gardens and vandalism of toilets - even the theft of some of their contents and wastage of water, yet nothing is done to stop these acts. I had a neighbor in Shamiya whose maid used to waste a lot of water to wash one car or the front yard of the house. But the owner of the house seemed to get angry when I advised him not to waste too much water on a small yard. I even tried to speak to the maid, but her answer was: "My sponsor never says a thing, so why do you?" She is right, because both are careless about the importance of preserving the environment - especially the sponsor. He is the one who should care because he pays the bills - or maybe not!

It is regrettable that garbage containers are often in a bad condition - smelly and dirty. Garbage containers are also not separated by the type of waste - plastic, metal, paper, etc. The state allocates a garbage bin to each household. Garbage trucks arrive in the morning and the garbage is removed. But rubbish that is dumped on the ground is due to a cultural issue and ethics of residents. In our situation, maids are often not guided on the right behavior by their sponsors, so such outcomes are expected.

Another example is the throwing of waste on the street, which in addition to being an uncivilized act, is a violation of public utilities, because the street is public property that shouldn't be defiled. Throwing garbage from cars on streets or throwing it in public places and gardens is proof of ignorance, lack of respect and absence of fear of the law and punishment. This behavior can be confronted only by applying strict laws, such as traffic laws and large fines to force everyone to behave well.

I recall a comment of a young man who was throwing waste and food on the road. When asked why he was doing such a thing, he said there are cleaners who get paid to pick trash, so I am giving them work to do! Another example is when you see young women throwing garbage bags from their cars on the street without any sense of shame.

I hope to see judicial control given to the municipality by assigning some of its staff to observe people who do such things and hand them a fine. The penalties should range from warnings to large monetary penalties. Maybe then, the message will be received and we can see some change.

PHOTOS OF THE DAY



The incredible date

Sweet and rich, dates are one of the most popular and important local fruits in the Arabian Peninsula. Date can be traced back more than 6,000 years and grow in dozens of different varieties in the Gulf countries. Cultivated from the date palm tree, dates are highly nutritious and are bursting with fiber, potassium, copper, manganese, magnesium as well as several vitamins and of course its natural sugar. A handful of dates can satisfy

almost all the nutritional needs required for human survival. In Kuwait, dates start to come into season in the late summer and early fall. Date palms planted all across the city, in private gardens and public spaces, will be bagged - where the fruit in bunches is wrapped to protect it from falling and birds - and eventually the dates once ripened will be collected and distributed or sold at market. — Photos by KUNA

IN MY VIEW

THE VALUE OF AN INTERNSHIP: MY FAVORITE EPISODE IN COLLEGE LIFE

By Steffi Thomas

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My vacation was quite eventful this year because I had taken up an internship in Kuwait. The work experience I gained helped me realize the need to be involved in activities that engage and develop one's professional skills. Internships, part time jobs, trainee programs and summer work can all help a college student - both in their chosen field of study and also in preparing for work life.

The training received during the holidays gave me important insight into how a newspaper's editorial department works, the nuts and bolts of editing and how editor's determine what is 'newsworthy'.

A major addition to the experiences gained, is the development of interpersonal skills, an essential skill set in any field of work. Dealing with a variety of people - from different cultures, backgrounds, languages, etc. can also improve one's own communication skills, creativity, work performance and perspective on the world.

The exposure and training received in student life is an accolade to flaunt on resumes and even to impart the skills obtained in practical situations. It also helps one to face different situations wisely and maturely. I always sensed a warmth while dealing with my colleagues and learnt a good deal during my tenure as an intern at the Kuwait Times, which made going to work each day much easier than I thought it would be.

Engaging in productive undertakings is a great learning exercise and is absolutely beneficial in the long run. Programs involving physical exertion and cognitive abilities are recommended to be taken up as they are worthwhile means to spend vacations without guilt of wasting it all away.

The feeling of priority given as an employee will surely make us want to put in your best efforts in your respective department, which helps us affirm well to our interests and ultimately is a confidence booster.

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AH-A18REM

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1.5 Gh

169 kd 100

AH-A24REM

24000 BTU/hr

2 Gh

199 kd 100

WS18N37BSC1

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Al-Shamlan Mosque is one of the most famous landmarks in Mirqab, placed in the center of the roundabout on Abdulaziz Hamad Al Saqer Street.

Exploring Mirqab

One of Kuwait's oldest historical areas

By Faten Omar

As part of our occasional series exploring the various areas of Kuwait, Kuwait Times recently visited Mirqab in Kuwait City to discover this beautiful historic district. Mirqab is one of the oldest areas of Kuwait.

Once a thriving residential district of the old town, it is now home to some of Kuwait's most iconic buildings and towers and a major government and commercial hub. It is located to the

north of Safat Square, to the west of Naif Palace and south of Soor. Nearby districts include Salhiya, Qibla, Umm Siddah and Mansouriya.

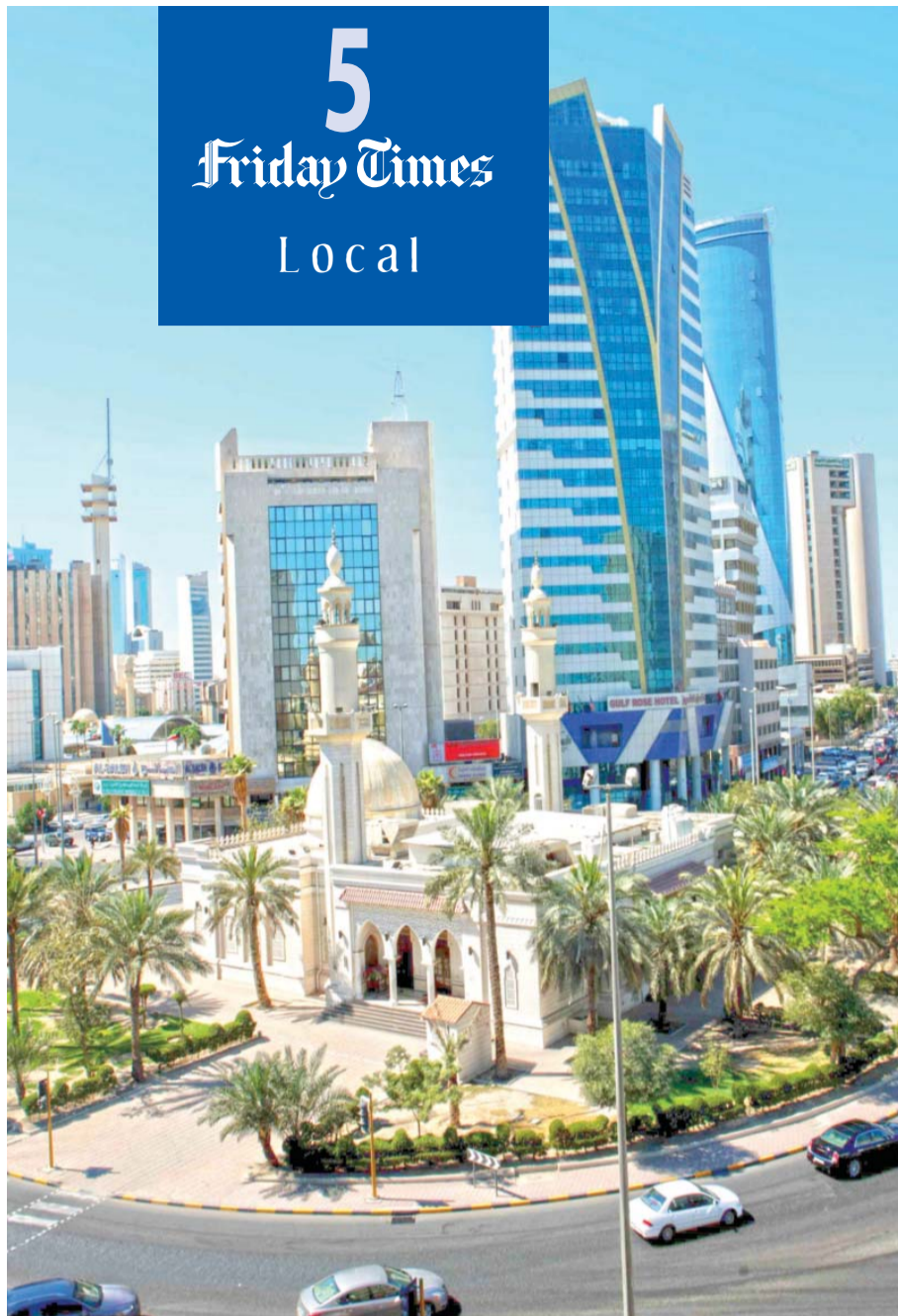
Mirqab is one of the largest areas of Kuwait but with the least population - a total of 9,848 residents, according to 2008 statistics. The inhabitants of this area used to be Arabs who migrated to Kuwait from Najd in the center of the Arabian Peninsula.

Nowadays, it is mostly inhabited by expat 'bachelors'. Driving around Mirqab, one can witness the heavy traffic during rush

hours. The area includes the ministries complex, Liberation Tower and Shamlan Mosque on a roundabout. Mirqab is also home to the busy Ministries Complex and hundreds of small to medium businesses as well as many corporate headquarters.

"Mirqab is considered one of the busiest areas in Kuwait where many companies have offices. One of the reasons for the growing number of companies setting up their headquarters in Mirqab is because it's the central link to Kuwait City," engineer Hamad Al-Dehani told Kuwait Times. "Keep in mind





The Kuwait Chamber of Commerce, the seat of business and industry in Kuwait, is also located in Mirqab.



that it is also has larger offices at reasonable prices.”

Dehani noted that the first diwaniya in Kuwait was located in Mirqab. This tradition was then adopted by the rest of Kuwaitis. The area’s most famous diwanias are the Al-Hmoud, Al-Shaya, Al-Wazzan, Al-Mutalqah, Al-Assimi and Al-Qassah. “Also, the first secondary school for girls was in Mirqab - Al-Banat Secondary School - that opened in 1959 near Al-Hamad Mosque and Al-Mirqab Club, a sports club

established in 1954 with the aim of contributing to raising the cultural and sports levels in Kuwait, but which closed in 1959,” Dehani added.

Talal Al-Ansari, Kuwaiti writer, said his family lived in Mirqab before moving to Sabah Al-Ahmad. He told Kuwait Times about the families who used to live in Mirqab - Al-Ansari, Al-Babtain, Al-Barrak, Al-Baluchi, Al-Tamimi, Al-Harbi, Al-Hasawi, Al-Refai, Al-Roumi, Al-Ruwaished, Al-Sultan, Al-

Sweilem, Al-Shaya and Al-Kandari.

He said the municipality has completed a study on the economic transformation of Kuwait City, with Mirqab to become a major financial district. “The municipality is requesting to amend the use of 47 residential plots in Mirqab - the 47 hectares will be allocated for the first financial and commercial center in Kuwait City to be developed in accordance to the 2030 urban plan of Kuwait,” Ansari said.



Kuwait Liberation Tower, completed in 1993, is another famous landmark in Mirqab which is visible from miles around.



Photos show various iconic landmarks and popular places in Mirqab, a historic neighborhood in Kuwait City. — Photos by Joseph Shagra and Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait Times



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Typically a white or light colored material is used to create the summer 'Al-Shllah', a loose fitting gown worn by men in Kuwait. — KUNA photos

Men's

traditional clothing reflects Kuwait climate, culture

It is no secret that clothes have always played part in displaying the cultural identity of people around the globe and this is very true when it comes to traditional garments worn by Kuwaiti men.

Though the design is almost identical all over the Gulf region, Kuwaiti traditional men's clothing have distinct features that separated them from the rest.

Speaking on the issue, cultural researcher Ghanima Al-Fahad said that traditions, social norms, as well as the climate played a crucial role in shaping men's clothing in Kuwait, which could be either very expensive or quite affordable. For example, "al-shllah", a loose type of garment made of light material, was worn by men at social occasions during summertime, said Al-Fahad, revealing that this type of clothing developed to the point that women, now, were wearing them, after applying some feminine touches of course.

She added that "al-zaboun", a coat imported from India, was another type of clothing that men wore over their "dishdashas", the traditional name given to a dress-like type of clothing. However, the type of clothing that showed the high status of a man among his peers was the "Bisht", a traditional cloak, worn by men who are well off, but now is very common during social occasions like weddings and official receptions, said the researcher.

Back to the dishdasha, Al-Fahad affirmed that this was the mainstay of men's clothing, but said that the design continued to evolve, or sometimes devolved, with fashion statements from the past, such as the cool 1960s cuff shirt worn under the dishdasha, making a comeback in our modern times. — KUNA



The type of clothing that showed the high status of a man among his peers was the 'bisht'.



The type of clothing that showed the high status of a man among his peers was the "Bisht"



Dishdashas are the traditional name given to a dress-like type of clothing that Kuwaiti men wear.



Social norms, as well as the climate played a crucial role in shaping men's clothing in Kuwait, which could be either very expensive or quite affordable.

MPs DEMAND ACTION OVER ESCAPE OF TERROR CONVICTS

LAWMAKERS SIGN REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY SESSION

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MPs began yesterday signing a request to hold an emergency session of the National Assembly to discuss the developments surrounding the escape of several members of a pro-Iran cell, on a day when Kuwait ordered Iranian diplomats to leave. Tabtabaei said on his Twitter account that he has prepared the request for the emergency session and placed it in his office for signatures. He posted images of a number of lawmakers signing the document.

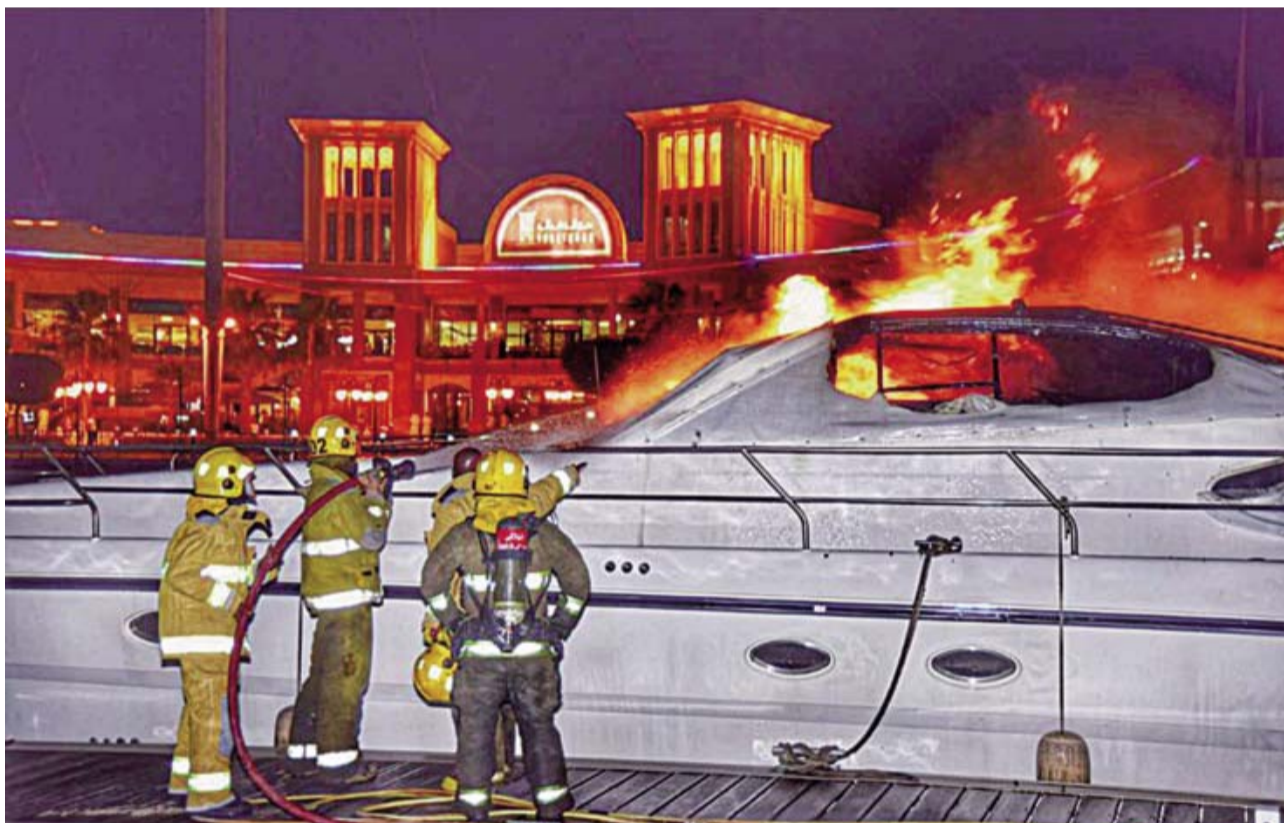
So far, 13 MPs have signed, but many others have supported the move. The request requires the signature of at least 33 MPs and must secure the government's approval. The Assembly is currently on summer recess and is due to start its next term in October. In his request, Tabtabaei said the debate should tackle the future of relations with Iran, placing Lebanese group Hezbollah on the list of terror organizations and debating the details of the ruling against the so-called "Abdaly cell".

The court of cassation last month sentenced the mastermind of the group to life in jail, condemned 20 others to various jail terms and acquitted two. Three other members remain at large. The court convicted them of forming a cell with links to Iran and Hezbollah, smuggling arms and explosives into Kuwait from Iran and plotting attacks in the country.

Several MPs have demanded that the government should be held responsible for the escape and some of them vowed to grill the prime minister over the issue. MP Khaled Al-Otaibi said it was a shame to see those who threatened the security and stability of the country flee without the security agencies succeeding in stopping them.

Otaibi said what happened proves the fact that there are other cells and individuals operating against the country and its interests. He called on the authorities to clarify the entire situation and hold to account those who failed to perform their duty. MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain said the issue of convicted members of a terror cell fleeing the country will not be allowed to pass without holding responsible officials to account.

Several MPs have demanded that the



Firemen tackle fires on a yacht in Souq Sharq (above) and a Khaitan building (below).

YACHT ON FIRE AT SHARQ MARINA

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firemen put out a fire in a 50-ft yacht at Souk Sharq marina. The yacht was isolated before fire fighters tackled the blaze. No injuries were reported. Separately, Ardiya, Subhan, backup and Sulaibkhat fire centers responded to a call about a fire in a "bachelor" residence in Khaitan. The house was evacuated and the fire put out without injuries.

Wanted people arrested

Several wanted people were arrested during inspection campaigns, resulting in the arrest of seven citizens with drugs. All were sent to concerned authorities.

Firemen feted

Director General of Kuwait Fire Service Directorate Lt General Khalid Al-Mikrad received the Head of the Arts Department at PAAET Dr Farida Shaaban, who presented him with artworks in appreciation of firemen's efforts.



Crime

Report

CUSTOMS FOILS BID TO SMUGGLE DRUGS IN GLOVES

KUWAIT: Air cargo customs officers foiled an attempt to smuggle one-and-a-half kilogram of heroin hidden in cricket gloves via courier. A customs source said the drugs arrived from Pakistan. Officers also prevented an Egyptian from smuggling 3,200 Tramadol pills in bags that arrived from his country. The drugs were found in three bags, which were 'cleared' and placed under surveillance. The man who came to claim them was arrested, and confessed the shipment belonged to him. He was sent to the Drugs Control General Department.

Cabbie insulted

Three women verbally insulted a taxi driver who took them from Jabriya to Riggae. The three women asked the driver to take them to a salon, but when they reached there, they left without paying him. When he asked them to pay up, the women started shouting at him and threatened to beat him. The driver called police, but the women disappeared before their arrival.

Fight over staring

Ahmadi police broke up a fight between five persons in a mall's parking lot due to staring. They were charged at Fahaheel police station.

Waiter beaten

Two persons hit and ruptured the eardrum of an Egyptian waiter for being late in bringing their order in Jahra. The waiter was taken to Jahra Hospital by his colleagues. He said that the two started screaming at him, then beat him before escaping.

—Translated from the Arabic press

MPW ANNOUNCES DETOURS, PARTIAL ROAD OPENINGS

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Assistant Undersecretary for Roads Engineering at the Ministry of Public Works Ahmad Al-Hussan announced 21 partial road openings till the end of 2017. Hussan said the most important openings are the Second Ring Road segment that leads to the Arabian Gulf Road, the airport bridge from Jamal Abdunnasser Street, the bridge that connects the airport bridge and Jahra bridge in the direction of Jahra and the connection of Al-Sabah Hospital roundabout with the roundabout of the psychiatric hospital. Hussan said his department coordinates with the traffic department with regards to the openings.

The ministry said temporary alternative roads will be closed and replaced by permanent roads, so the traffic department made the following detours:

- Traffic heading towards residential Shuwaikh instead of the Second Ring Road to St 20 and Abdelrahman Al-Bader Street from Jahra Road until the permanent roads are completed.
- Traffic on the Second Ring Road towards Jahra will use the new road till it ends with Jahra Road in Kaifan.
- Traffic from Second Ring Road to Sheraton roundabout can use Jassem Mohammad Al-Saqer St in Shamiya, and from there to Jahra Road, then to the Sheraton roundabout.
- Traffic coming from Jahra bridge to the Second Ring Road can use the slope from the bridge before the Airport Road, then to Alexandria Road in Kaifan, then to the Second Ring Road.

SAUDI PRINCE ARRESTED OVER ABUSE VIDEOS

DUBAI: A Saudi prince has been arrested after a video emerged online purporting to show him abusing someone and pointing a rifle at another. King Salman ordered the arrest and interrogation of the prince on Wednesday, a day after short video clips were published on YouTube and shared on Twitter showing what appears to be a rifle pointed toward a man who is bleeding from the head and pleading. One clip, viewed more than 760,000 times, also shows 18 bottles of Johnnie Walker Red Label whisky displayed on a table and a wad of cash. The sale and consumption of alcohol in Saudi Arabia is forbidden. Another video clip shows a man sitting in a car, bleeding and being cursed at for parking in front of a house. Another clip shows what appears to be the prince punching and slapping a man who is sitting on a chair. The clips went viral in Saudi Arabia under an Arabic Twitter hashtag that said "prince transgresses on citizens".

Saudi Arabia's state TV reported Wednesday that the king ordered a full investigation into the incidents and the

arrest of Prince Saud bin Abdulaziz bin Musa'ed bin Saud bin Abdulaziz, as well as any associates that appeared in the clips. He ordered that no individual involved in the case be released until a court has issued a ruling in line with the country's Islamic Shariah laws.

In the order, King Salman urged people to remain vigilant in monitoring any exploitation of status or abuse of power. After he issued the order, a video seen nearly a quarter-million times showed the young, low-level prince, dressed in a black t-shirt and grey sweatpants, handcuffed and with his feet chained being escorted into a building by security officers. While many Saudis wrote in support of the king's decision on Twitter, outspoken rights activist Moudi Aljohani said the order actually points to how lax the authorities are when it comes to royals. The arrest comes a day after state media reported that a woman who was filmed walking around a historic Saudi fort in a miniskirt and crop top sparked outrage among conservatives for defying the kingdom's dress code for women, which

requires females to cover in public in long, loose robes. The outcry prompted police to detain and question her for several hours before she was released without charge.

While Saudi royals are given privileged status in the kingdom, in addition to undisclosed monthly allowances from the state, they are not immune to prosecution. In an extremely rare event, the kingdom executed a prince last October who had fatally shot another man. Saudi Arabia has one of the highest rates of executions in the world. Since ascending to throne in 2015, King Salman has branded himself a "decisive" leader. He has fired ministers caught on video being rude or insulting citizens. He also fired a senior royal court official who was filmed slapping a photographer.

Before becoming king, Salman served as the governor of the capital, Riyadh, and as defense minister. A leaked 2007 US Embassy memo said he "is often the referee in family disputes". He also reportedly oversaw a prison for wayward royals in Riyadh. —AP

SHAAB PARK CLOSED

KUWAIT: Shaab Park was closed yesterday for unknown reasons. A source at the entertainment park confirmed the closure, but could not provide a reason for the closure or confirm how long the closure would last.

US ENDS LAPTOP BAN ON MIDDLE EAST CARRIERS

DUBAI: The United States has ended a four month ban on passengers carrying laptops onboard US bound flights from certain airports in the Middle East and North Africa, bringing to an end one of the controversial travel restrictions imposed by President Donald Trump's administration. Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport was the last of 10 airports to be exempted from the ban, the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) confirmed in a tweet late on Wednesday local time. Middle East carriers have blamed Trump's travel restrictions, which include banning citizens of some Muslim majority countries from visiting the United States, for a downturn in demand on US routes. In March, the United States banned large electronics in cabins on flights from 10 airports in the Middle East and North Africa over concerns that explosives could be concealed in the devices taken onboard aircraft.

The ban has been lifted on the nine airlines affected - Emirates, Etihad Airways, Qatar Airways, Turkish Airlines, Saudi Arabian Airlines, Royal Jordanian, Kuwait Airways, EgyptAir and Royal Air Maroc - which are the only carriers to fly direct to the United States from the region. A ban on citizens of six Muslim-majority countries - Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen - remains in place though has been limited after several US court hearings challenged the restrictions. "The aviation industry has been trying to come together with a united message to governments and stakeholders about regulation and supporting the industry," said Will Horton, senior analyst at Australian aviation consultancy CAPA. "That was dealt a first blow from the travel ban and then a second from the large electronics ban."

Leading industry group the International Air Transport Association (IATA) criticized the laptop ban as ineffective, as security experts argued that militants could travel to the United States via Europe or elsewhere where the restrictions didn't apply. The restrictions were imposed as major US carriers American Airlines Group, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines resumed their campaign against the Gulf carriers Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways by pressuring the new US administration to renegotiate its open skies agreements with the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. However, US and Middle East officials said the campaign and the travel restrictions were not related. US officials lifted the ban after visiting the 10 airports in Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar and Turkey over the past three weeks to confirm new security measures announced last month were being implemented.

On Thursday, the US issued a revised directive to airlines around the world in response to requests that it clarify aviation security measures scheduled to start taking effect this week. The new requirements include enhanced passenger screening at foreign airports, increased security protocols around aircraft and in passenger areas and expanded canine screening. They affect 325,000 airline passengers on about 2,000 commercial flights arriving daily in the United States, on 180 airlines from 280 airports in 105 countries. —Reuters

US ENVOY LAUDS KUWAIT'S SUPPORT OF REGIONAL PEACE

KUWAIT: US Ambassador to the country Lawrence Silverman lauded Kuwait's strong role in supporting regional peace and security, a statement said yesterday. This praise came during a meeting between Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Ambassador Silverman, said the statement by the Ministry's Public Relations and Media Department.

During the meeting, Minister Khaled Al-Jarrah reaffirmed that relations with the US were strong and deep-rooted, hoping that both countries continue to explore ways to enhance them even further. Silverman, on his part, stressed the importance of meetings between Kuwaiti and US officials to coordinate efforts. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah meets US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman. —KUNA

THATCHER MULLED PLAN TO RESUPPLY EMBASSY DURING IRAQI OCCUPATION

KUWAIT: British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher weighed the idea of sending special forces to Kuwait during the 1990-1991 Iraqi occupation. According to an article in the Guardian newspaper citing newly released Downing Street papers, Thatcher studied a plan to send supplies to the besieged British embassy in Kuwait City via SAS-style raids.

According to the report, Percy Cradock, Thatcher's veteran foreign affairs adviser, was asked to investigate the possibility of using military special forces to provide food and other life sustaining necessities to British diplomats trapped inside the embassy. "Outside, the embassy is under the surveillance of guards. Kuwait City itself is dense with Iraqi infantry. The occupants reckon they have supplies to last 50 days (about the end of October with reduced communications activity). After that they will need water, food and fuel," Cradock reported back to Thatcher.

"We looked at the possibility of resupply of our embassy by means of a military operation. This has been carefully examined in the Ministry of Defense and the military view is that the hazards in relation to benefits would be excessive. Kuwait and its approaches are heavily defended. There are mines on the beaches and plentiful air defense. The sea approaches are patrolled by Iraqi fast boats. We have no available submarine and a sea approach would involve bringing a destroyer or frigate dangerously close to shore," he said.

British diplomatic staff were eventually moved to Baghdad in December 1990. The US-led coalition assault, known as Operation Desert Storm, started the following month, in January 1991, to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait.

IRAQ AIRPORTS OPEN TO KUWAITI FLIGHTS

BAGHDAD: All of Iraq's airports are open to Kuwaiti commercial flights, which will offer facilitations for the arrival of jets from the neighboring country, Iraq's Transportation Ministry said on Wednesday. The calls were made after both countries signed a cooperation agreement in the field of air transport in December last year.

In a statement, the ministry said that Iraq's second largest airport, Basra International, in particular, operates according to the 'open skies' agreement, which allows a free-market environment for the global airline industry. Commenting on the announcement, ministry spokesman Salem Mousa told KUNA that the move illustrates the state of openness between both countries in the field of commercial aviation and outlines their commitment to the development of transport cooperation.

Transport between the neighboring countries has recently increased, Mousa said, adding that it has now become mandatory to back this growth with tangible action on the ground, through the creation of further bilateral cooperation prospects. —KUNA

Friday Times

International

FRIDAY, JULY 21, 2017

**Netanyahu:
Metal detectors
crucial for
Jerusalem site**



**EU's Barnier
urges clarity in
Brexit talks**



**India gets new
president from
bottom of
Hindu caste
system**



WASHINGTON: This file photo shows US President Donald Trump with Attorney General Jeff Sessions, right, during the 36th Annual National Peace Officers Memorial Service at the US Capitol in Washington, DC. —AFP

TRUMP SAYS REGRETS HIRING ATTORNEY GENERAL

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump said he regretted his choice for attorney general Wednesday as he sought to protect himself from the growing firestorm over Russia's alleged election meddling which is engulfing his presidency. On the eve of the six-month mark of Trump's inauguration, it also emerged that senators will next week grill three of the pivotal players in the Trump campaign—including his eldest son—over swirling allegations of the presidential campaign's collusion with Russia.

The announcements came as the Trump administration and the Kremlin tried to quell an uproar about a previously undisclosed meeting between Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin during this month's G20 summit. Attorney General Jeff Sessions was one of the first senior Republican politicians to endorse Trump before last November's election and was rewarded by being appointed America's top law enforcement officer.

But he stood aside in March from overseeing an FBI-led probe into whether members of the Trump team colluded with Moscow during the election campaign after it emerged that Sessions had not disclosed during his Senate confirmation hearing that he met twice with the Russian ambassador to Washington. In an interview with the New York Times, Trump said Sessions had acted unfairly in

taking the job in the first place if he had felt in any way compromised.

"How do you take a job and then recuse yourself? If he would have recused himself before the job, I would have said, 'Thanks, Jeff, but I'm not going to take you,'" Trump said. "It's extremely unfair—and that's a mild word—to the president." Trump also criticized Sessions' performance at the Senate confirmation hearing in January, in which he denied meeting with any Russians when he had in fact met with the Russian ambassador.

Bad answers

"Jeff Sessions gave some bad answers," the president said in his interview with the Times. "He gave some answers that were simple questions and should have been simple answers, but they weren't." The Senate Intelligence Committee is now due to grill the president's son-in-law Jared Kushner, who is one of the most powerful figures in the Trump White House, in a closed-door session next Monday, his lawyer told CNN.

And two days later, the Senate Judiciary Committee will question Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr, and former campaign manager Paul Manafort about Russia's role, congressional officials announced on Wednesday. All three men

attended a controversial meeting with a Russian lawyer last year, in which they were expecting to receive dirt from Moscow on Trump's election rival Hillary Clinton. Trump Jr sent shockwaves through Washington last week by releasing a series of emails that detailed how he had attended the meeting after being promised "very high level and sensitive information" that was "part of Russia and its government's support for Mr Trump."

Both Trump Jr and Manafort were told in letters from the panel's senior members to "preserve all relevant documents in your possession... related to Russian interference in the 2016 election, including documents related to your or the Trump campaign's contacts with Russian government officials, associates or representatives." The senators said they would issue subpoenas if the witnesses did not produce the required documents. With Washington reeling from the stream of revelations, Trump has rushed to his son's defense, and lambasted what he calls a political "witch hunt".

But on Wednesday night a senior official made clear that the administration was cooperating with the investigation being conducted by a special counsel, former FBI director Robert Mueller, who is probing the Russia connection independently of the Senate panels. "I'm part of the Trump administration, and the

special counsel is reporting to me, and the answer to that is certainly yes," deputy attorney general Rod Rosenstein told Fox News. "We are providing appropriate cooperation to make sure the investigation is done properly."

Russia fever

Some critics have seized on the additional, previously undisclosed meeting between the US president and his Russian counterpart as more evidence that the Trump team are reluctant to come clean on anything involving Russia. The White House confirmed the politically sensitive sit-down over dinner on the final night of the G20 summit in Germany only after it was leaked, but has denied that it amounted to anything untoward.

"Once again, the Russia fever has caught up with the media and everybody ran out and tried to create a story that simply didn't exist," White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said at a briefing on Wednesday. That message was echoed by her Kremlin counterpart Dmitry Peskov. "The use of the terms 'secret' or 'confidential' for this meeting provokes absolute surprise and incomprehension." The meeting had been "officially accepted" by diplomatic channels, he added in comments reported by the Russia's TASS news agency.—AFP

IS FAMILIES, MOSUL DISPLACED LIVE SIDE-BY-SIDE IN IRAQ CAMP

AL-JADAA, Iraq: Like hundreds of thousands of other Iraqis, Maha lives with her boys at a camp for the displaced near Mosul. But there's a big difference—her father and husband worked and fought with the Islamic State jihadist group. "Men go off and do what they want, they never listen to us," said the young woman, a new arrival at the camp in the Al-Jadaa area, south of Mosul, by way of excuse for their actions.

The camp is home to 18,000 people displaced by several months of warfare in and around Mosul between IS and Iraqi security forces backed by the US-led international coalition also fighting the jihadists. More than 80 families, mostly women and children who had a husband or father among the ranks of IS, have this week been transferred to the Al-Jadaa camp. Maha's father worked for IS, distributing pensions to the families of dead fighters. He himself died in an air strike on the Maidan district of Mosul's Old City, the last to fall before Baghdad announced victory on July 10.

"When we left (Mosul), they questioned us. They told us they 'want the truth'. We told the truth," she said, without disclosing to AFP the fate of her husband. Originally from farmlands south of Mosul, her family moved to the city in October to escape the advancing Iraqi forces. "Nobody has harmed us. We have been well treated," said Maha, her face covered by a scarf that only revealed her eyes and a worried look. Hamza, five, and four-year-old Khattab were huddled around her legs, clutching her jalabiya robe in its autumnal colors of yellow, orange and red-brown.

We were living the good life

Unusually for the many camps for the displaced in northern Iraq, four armed soldiers kept watch near the area where the new arrivals have been resettled. But the women and children have freedom of movement outside their tents. Encircled by howling and crying small children in one of the tents, sisters Khawle and Nawal reminisced about the life they were forced to leave behind in Mosul. "They say they saved us. From who? They are the ones who bombed us. We were left to walk over bodies everywhere," said Nawal.

Khawle broke in with a sigh: "We were living the good life. They treated us well," she said of IS. Their father, a former bus driver in his 60s, had signed up with the jihadists to work as a mechanic. Saad Faraman of RNVDO, an Iraqi NGO in charge of running camps in Al-Jadaa, said: "It's our duty to accommodate them, to provide them with aid, just like we do for all the displaced." The IS-linked families were transferred from a "rehabilitation centre" in Bartalla, close to Mosul, which received at least 170 families before it was closed, according to Human Rights Watch, which last week criticised the existence of that camp. —AFP



MOSUL: Displaced Iraqis, who had fled the violence around the northern Iraqi city of Mosul as a result of a planned operation to retake the Iraqi city from jihadists, walk at the Jadaah camp on the outskirts of Al-Qayyarah, south of Mosul. —AFP



JERUSALEM: Israeli security forces stand guard in front of Palestinian Muslim worshippers praying outside Lions Gate, a main entrance to the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem's Old City, as the latter protest against new Israeli security measures implemented at the holy site following an attack that killed two Israeli policemen. —AFP

NETANYAHU: METAL DETECTORS CRUCIAL FOR JERUSALEM SITE

MUSLIM LEADERS CALL FOR MASS PROTESTS OVER METAL DETECTORS

JERUSALEM: Israel's public security minister said yesterday that metal detectors placed at a contested Jerusalem shrine after a deadly attack there are essential to maintain security, despite a Muslim call for mass protests in the city if they are not removed. Gilad Erdan told Israel's Army Radio that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will rule on the issue later in the day after he holds security consultations upon his return from a working visit to Europe. The Israeli security services are reportedly divided over what to do given the volatility surrounding the site.

But Erdan rejected Arab accusations that new Israeli measures were an attempt to expand control over the site and insisted they were necessary to carry out proper security checks. "The Israeli police needs these metal detectors so the security checks can give a proper response to the security considerations," he said. "I assume there are contacts internationally to try to calm the situation, but in my eyes there is no reason why the situation should not be calm."

Tensions are high ahead of today, the highlight of the Muslim religious week, when tens of thousands of Muslims typically attend prayers in the walled compound in Jerusalem's Old City. Muslim leaders have called for mass protests if the metal detectors are not moved before then.

Conflicts over the holy site - known as the Temple Mount to Jews and Noble Sanctuary to Muslims - have repeatedly triggered Israeli-Palestinian confrontations.

Three Arab gunmen launched an attack from there last week, killing two Israeli policemen at a gate to the Muslim-administered compound. In response, Israel began installing metal detectors - a security measure it said is used routinely at holy sites around the world. Muslim clerics have been urging the faithful to forego prayers in neighborhood mosques on Friday and converge on the shrine, in an attempt to draw larger crowds. Worshippers have been asked this week to pray in the streets rather than submit to the new security procedures.

Israeli capitulation

Netanyahu, who is in Hungary, held a pair of urgent phone conversations with his security chiefs Wednesday and appears to be under intense international pressure to back down. Netanyahu said Israel is in close contact with Jordan, the traditional Muslim custodian of the shrine, to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. Jordan's ruling Hashemite dynasty, with ancestry said to go back to Prophet Muhammad, derives much of its legitimacy from custodianship over the shrine.

The site remained quiet yesterday and

Azzam Khatib, the director of the site's Muslim administration, or Waqf, said he was hopeful an arrangement could be found before the Friday prayers. "We will never ever accept any changes in the mosque, and Israel has to put an end to this crisis by removing the metal detectors," he said. Nationalist Israeli politicians have been pressuring Netanyahu from the opposite direction.

Education Minister Naftali Bennett, leader of the pro-settler Jewish Home party, warned of an Israeli "capitulation" that "will damage Israel's power of deterrence and will endanger the lives of the visitors, the worshippers and the police officers." After last week's shooting, Israel closed the site for two days for searches. It was only the third closure since Israel captured the shrine, along with east Jerusalem and other territories, in the 1967 Mideast war.

The closure drew wide condemnation from the Muslim world. Israel began opening the site gradually on Sunday. Jews revere the 37-acre raised platform as the site of their biblical temples. It is the holiest site in Judaism and the nearby Western Wall, a remnant of one of the temples, is the holiest place where Jews can pray. Muslims believe the hilltop marks the spot from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven. It is Islam's third-holiest site after Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia.—AFP

REBEL AMBUSH KILLS 28 FIGHTERS NEAR DAMASCUS

BEIRUT: At least 28 Syrian government soldiers and pro-regime fighters were killed Wednesday in a rebel ambush in the Eastern Ghouta region near Damascus, a monitor said yesterday. The fighters came under attack by the Army of Islam rebel group as they attempted to advance in the town of Al-Rihan, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The Eastern Ghouta region is a major rebel stronghold near the capital, and it has been the frequent target of govern-

ment military operations. Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman said rebels opened fire on the government troops as they entered an area where the opposition fighters had planted mines. He said the ambush was the deadliest incident for government fighters in Eastern Ghouta since February 2016, when 76 regime troops were killed in Tal Sawane. Eastern Ghouta is in one of the four proposed "de-escalation zones" designated in an agreement reached by government allies

Iran and Russia and rebel backer Turkey in May.

But the deal has yet to be fully implemented over disagreements on the monitoring mechanism for the safe zones. In recent weeks, government warplanes have bombed the Ain Terma area that links Eastern Ghouta to the rebel-held parts of the Damascus neighborhood of Jobar. More than 330,000 people have been killed in Syria since its conflict broke out in March 2011 with anti-government protests. —AFP

ASSAILANT TRIES TO STAB ISRAELI SOLDIERS IN WEST BANK, SHOT DEAD

JERUSALEM: An assailant tried to stab Israeli soldiers south of Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank yesterday and was shot dead, the Israeli army said. "An assailant armed with a knife attempted to stab (Israeli) soldiers at a checkpoint in Tekoa. In response to the immediate threat, forces fired shots towards the assailant," a military statement said,

with a spokeswoman confirming the suspect's death to AFP. No soldiers were reported wounded and no immediate details were available on the assailant's identity. The vast majority of such cases have involved Palestinian attackers.

Last week, a Palestinian attempted to ram his car at soldiers manning the same checkpoint before exiting the

vehicle armed with a knife and trying to stab the troops. He was shot dead. A wave of unrest that broke out in October 2015 has claimed the lives of at least 284 Palestinians or Arab Israelis, 44 Israelis, two Americans, two Jordanians, an Eritrean, a Sudanese and a Briton, according to an AFP toll.

Israeli authorities say most of the

Palestinians killed were carrying out knife, gun or car-ramming attacks. Others were shot dead in protests and clashes, while some were killed in Israeli air strikes on the Gaza Strip. The violence has greatly subsided in recent months, though an attack near a sensitive Jerusalem holy site last week that killed two policemen has boosted tensions.—AFP

PHILIPPINES ORDERS ARRESTS AS COMMUNIST TALKS CLOSE TO COLLAPSE

MANILA: The Philippine government ordered the arrest yesterday of communist rebel leaders involved in peace talks, the day after a guerrilla ambush left five presidential bodyguards wounded in the latest escalation of the half century-long conflict. The insurgents have been engaged in off-and-on peace talks with Manila to end one of the world's longest insurgencies that has claimed tens of thousands of lives, since President Rodrigo Duterte was elected last year.

But the government suspended formal peace talks in May, and yesterday chief government lawyer Jose Calida said guerrilla leaders who were let out of prison to take part in talks were now subject to arrest. "The Solicitor General already instructed the... solicitors to ask the courts to cancel the bail bonds of the (rebel) consultants, order their arrests, and recommit them to their detention facilities," Calida's office said in a statement.

"The conditions (for their conditional release) provide that should the formal peace negotiations cease or fail, their bond shall be deemed automatically cancelled," it added. Duterte had freed more than a dozen rebel leaders so they could fly to Europe and serve as consultants to their peace negotiating team, made up mostly of exiled senior communist figures. The talks were cancelled by the government due to deadly guerrilla attacks on security forces, with the two sides failing to agree to a ceasefire.

After Wednesday's attacks by the communists' 4,000-member armed wing the New People's Army—during which gunmen opened fire on two Presidential Security Group vehicles on the southern island of Mindanao—Manila called off a planned informal meeting, saying the situation on the ground was not conducive for peace talks. "You can just imagine that if the president is on board that vehicle, he could have been assassinated," military spokesman Colonel Edgard Arevalo told reporters yesterday.

The rebels said yesterday their armed attacks were in response to Duterte's plan to extend his 60-day martial law proclamation to the end of the year for Mindanao, the southern third of the country where the rebellion is concentrated. Arevalo said the rebels had killed two off-duty Marines in an ambush in another part of the country this week. "Clearly the (rebels) have no intention to genuinely pursue peace negotiations but merely to buy time to consolidate to recruit and to beef up their ranks," he added. Duterte had said he needed a longer martial rule to defeat Islamist militants holed up in the city of Marawi in a near-two-month battle that has left more than 550 people dead.—AFP



HANOI: In this photograph, a bicycle vendor offering her merchandise in the streets of Hanoi pedals past a high end merchandise mall in the center of the city.—AFP



KENYA: This file photo shows a Samburu man grazing cattle alongside wildlife in the wilds of the Laikipia county.—AFP

BOKO HARAM SUSPECTS KILLED, TORTURED IN CAMEROON CUSTODY

LIBREVILLE: Cameroon's security forces were yesterday accused of torturing hundreds of Boko Haram suspects, leading to dozens of deaths, in what Amnesty International said was a war crime. The global human rights monitor said US and French military were also seen at one site where the abuses allegedly took place and urged Washington and Paris to investigate. Boko Haram's Islamist insurgency has devastated northeast Nigeria since it began in 2009, and the violence has spread to neighboring countries, including northern Cameroon.

Cameroonian troops are part of a regional military force that has been successful in forcing them out of captured territory in northeast Nigeria since early 2015. Amnesty's regional director for West and Central Africa, Alioune Tine, said Boko Haram had committed atrocities and war crimes in Cameroon. "But nothing could justify the callous and widespread practice of torture committed by the security forces against ordinary Cameroonians, who are often arrested without any evidence and forced to endure unimaginable pain," he said. "These horrific violations amount to war crimes," he added in a statement, calling for an independent investigation.

Crackdown

Amnesty said it had unearthed 101 cases of secret detention and documented at least 24 different types of torture at more than 20 different sites in Cameroon between 2013 and 2017. Four of the locations were military bases, two were run by the intelligence

services, one was a private residence and another was a school. But most of the torture happened at the headquarters of the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR), which has led the fight against Boko Haram, and the DGRE intelligence agency.

The majority of victims were men aged between 18 and 45 and from the Far North region, which has been repeatedly attacked by suicide and bomb attacks. Women, children and people with physical and mental disabilities were also targeted. All were accused of support for the Islamic State group affiliate, it was alleged. Torture methods included beating suspects with an electric cable while having water thrown on them, beatings to secure confessions and the use of excruciating stress positions.

Deprivation of food, water and medical treatment was also used; 32 of the 101 victims said they had seen people die because of the torture and ill-treatment. The allegations—similar to those made against the military in Nigeria—are not the first against Cameroon, which has been criticized before for its heavy-handed crackdown. Last year, more than 100 people were sentenced to death by a military court, while three students were jailed for 10 years for sharing a joke about Boko Haram by text message. A Radio France Internationale reporter also received a 10-year prison term for allegedly supporting the jihadists.

Abuse probe

The report, "Cameroon's Secret

Torture Chambers: Human Rights Violations and War Crimes in the Fight Against Boko Haram", said US and French troops were at one of the torture sites. Washington in 2015 sent some 300 soldiers to northern Cameroon to conduct intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations against Boko Haram. That includes an unnamed drone operation over the restive border region with Nigeria, run from a base in the northern city of Garoua.

France, the former colonial power in Cameroon, runs its counter-terrorism operations against jihadist groups in the Sahel region from the Chadian capital, N'Djamena. Amnesty said it had written to the US and French embassies in Cameroon to ask about their military's presence at the BIR base in Salak, near the Far North region capital, Maroua. Tine said Washington and other international partners "should investigate the degree to which their personnel were aware of illegal detention and torture at the Salak base".

They should also establish whether troops reported it to their superiors and the Cameroon authorities, he added. The US ambassador to Yaounde, Michael S. Hoza, wrote in response that it took seriously any allegation of human rights abuses by Cameroonian security forces. Some BIR units in Salak and elsewhere were not receiving US assistance "because of credible information implicating those units in the commission of (gross violation of human rights)", he added. Amnesty said they had received no immediate response from the French embassy.—AFP

GERMANY VOWS TO OVERHAUL TURKEY TIES AS ROW ESCALATES

BERLIN: Germany yesterday vowed stinging measures impacting tourism and investment in Turkey and a full "overhaul" of their troubled relations, signaling its patience has snapped after Ankara's arrests of human rights activists.

The foreign ministry stepped up its travel advisory for the NATO ally, warning it could no longer guarantee its citizens' safety amid "arbitrary" mass arrests, a step set to impact Turkey's crucial tourism sector. Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel, a day after summoning Turkey's ambassador, returned from holidays to Berlin to deliver his unusually strong comments towards President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Relations between Turkey and Germany, home to three million ethnic Turks, have been badly strained, particularly since the failed coup attempt a year ago against Erdogan. Gabriel said Germany would review state guarantees for foreign investment in Turkey and urge businesses against putting their money there, and also review its support for EU financial flows to the long-time aspirant to membership of the bloc. A Social Democrat, Gabriel made clear he was speaking for the coalition government led by conservative Chancellor Angela Merkel and that she had cleared the tough statement before.

He recalled that Turkey, having long seen itself as "a member of the European family", had leveled Nazi jibes at Germany, and accused Erdogan of worsening a crisis that Berlin had repeatedly sought to ease through dialogue. He accused Erdogan of trying to muzzle "every critical voice" with mass arrests in sweeping crackdowns since the failed coup against him just over a year ago. Gabriel stressed that Germany still wanted to rebuild relations with its long-time ally, while urging Erdogan's government "to return to European values". —AFP

GANGSTER HEAD OF 'MAFIA CAPITALE' SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS

ROME: The ringleader of a gang who's criminal tentacles reached into almost every department of Rome's City Hall was sentenced to 20 years in prison by an Italian court yesterday. Massimo Carminati, 59, a convicted gangster with a history of involvement with violent far-right groups, had been accused along with 45 others of operating a "mafia-style" network that used extortion, fraud and theft to divert millions of euros destined for public services into their own pockets. His right-hand man and fellow defendant Salvatore Buzzi, 61, was handed a 19-year jail term by the court at the capital city's Rebibbia jail.

The scandal, which led to a 20-month trial in the high-security prison, had been dubbed "Mafia Capitale" by the media. But judge Rosanna Ianniello said Carminati and Buzzi were guilty of corruption but not of mafia association. "The sentence is stiff, but the whole trial revolved around the question: 'Was it mafia or not?'," Carminati's lawyer Ippolita Naso said. "Mafia Capitale does not exist," she said. Of the 46 people on trial, five were acquitted, including two men accused by prosecutors of being the link between the criminal band and the powerful 'Ndrangheta mafia in Calabria in southern Italy.

Deep wound

Carminati and Buzzi were already behind bars in prisons in Parma and Tolmezzo where they were kept under the notoriously harsh 41-bis regime,



ROME: This file photo shows prosecutor Giuseppe Cascini, left, speaking next to Buno Giosue Naso (center), the lawyer of Massimo Carminati (right), at Rome's tribunal, on the opening day of the Mafia Capitale trial, a case related to the alleged infiltration of City Hall by a mafia network. — AFP

aimed at cutting mafia inmates off completely from their former criminal associates. "The 41-bis will have to be repealed. But who will give Carminati back the 22 months spent under it?" lawyer Giosue Bruno Naso said. Carminati and Buzzi watched the verdict by video conference, Carminati standing to hear his sentence while Buzzi sat and took notes.

One-eyed Carminati was given a 10-year prison term in 1998 for membership of the Banda della Magliana, a criminal crew which ruled Rome's underworld in the 1970s and 1980s. Carminati's brother

Sergio told media at the court that the trial was "ridiculous. Massimo is still paying for the 1980s". In 1983, Buzzi received a 30-year prison sentence for the murder of an accomplice in a forged cheques racket. He served only six years after pursuing his education and successfully portraying himself as a reformed character.

The Rome scandal had been a major factor in leaving the city so cash-strapped it can barely afford to repair its buses when they break down, fill potholes in its streets or prevent trees from falling over for lack of upkeep. — AFP



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EU'S BARNIER URGES CLARITY IN BREXIT TALKS

DAVIS: 'SOLUTION REQUIRES FLEXIBILITY FROM BOTH SIDES

BRUSSELS: The EU's Brexit negotiator called on Britain yesterday to give more clarity on key issues including its exit bill and the rights of citizens after the second round of talks wrapped up in Brussels. Michel Barnier said "fundamental" differences had emerged during this week's negotiations with British counterpart David Davis. "We require this clarification on the financial settlement, citizens rights and on Ireland," Barnier, a former French foreign minister and European Commissioner, told a joint press conference with Davis.

The negotiations are dealing with issues around Britain's divorce-Britain's exit bill, the rights of EU citizens living in Britain, and the Northern Ireland border-with talks on a future trade deal only set to start if leaders decide in October there has been "sufficient progress". The EU wants an outline deal agreed by October 2018, so that the European and British parliaments can approve it in time for Brexit day, which is scheduled for the end of March 2019.

Barnier warned there was a "fundamental divergence" with Britain on

net amount of 100 billion euros, a sum London has dismissed as "extortionate". "Clarification of the United Kingdom's position is essential" on the bill, Barnier said. "We want an orderly exit, and an orderly exit requires Britain to settle its accounts."

Scallops and lamb

Davis was due to host Barnier later yesterday at the British ambassador's residence in Brussels to discuss the progress of the negotiations over a meal of Scottish scallops followed by lamb, a British official said. The lunch will be the two negotiators' first discussion on what is officially British soil after all their previous talks took place at the headquarters of the European Commission, the EU's executive arm. Davis himself has only been in Brussels on Monday and Thursday, with a team of 98 British negotiators looking after most of the talks in the interim on his behalf. Despite the EU's call for more clarity, sources close to the negotiations said Britain would not agree on any figure for the divorce bill until the very end of the talks. The disagreement over the European Court of Justice promises to come up throughout the negotiations, the sources added. On the border between Ireland and the British province of Northern Ireland, there has been "goodwill" over maintaining the Good Friday peace agreement and on keeping the common travel area on the island, sources said.

But agreement on how to prevent a "hard border" for the movement of goods and people in Ireland will have to wait until later, they said. British officials meanwhile rejected "ludicrous" reports that it had come into the talks unprepared, following a photograph of an empty-handed Davis on Monday across the table from Barnier, who had a stack of papers.—AFP



BRUSSELS: The EU chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier, right, and British Secretary of State David Davis address the media after a week of negotiations at EU headquarters in Brussels, yesterday. — AP

Davis said the talks had been "robust but constructive" but that there was "a lot left to talk about." "A solution will require flexibility from both sides," he added. The Brexit talks are the second round since negotiations formally began in June, a year after Britain's historic referendum vote to leave the 28-member European Union.

whether the EU's top court would keep jurisdiction over the rights of three million European citizens living in Britain after the UK leaves the bloc. Barnier also urged Britain to set out its position on the amount that Brussels says it must pay before leaving, to settle its obligations under the EU budget.

The EU estimates that Britain owes a

COLLEAGUES DEMAND ANSWERS A YEAR AFTER KIEV JOURNALIST SLAYING

KIEV: Journalists gathered in Kiev yesterday to demand results from a stalled investigation into the car bomb killing of prominent independent reporter Pavel Sheremet one year after his death. Some five hundred friends, former colleagues and activists began a procession at the site in the centre of the Ukrainian capital where Sheremet's car was blown apart by a remotely controlled device as he sat at the wheel.

The murder of 44-year-old Sheremet—a native of Belarus who was critical of both Ukraine's pro-Western authorities and Russia-sent shockwaves through the tight-knit media community in crisis-hit Ukraine. "Afterwards, many journalists in Ukraine didn't feel they were safe," Mustafa Nayem, a former colleague and current ruling party MP, said. "We are very disappointed that we don't have answers to many questions: Who did it? Who ordered it? How did it happen? And, why was Pavel killed?"

The chief editor of the Ukrainska Pravda news site where Sheremet worked, Sevghil Musayeva, slammed the official investigation into his murder as "absolutely woeful." Little progress and no arrests have been made by the probe despite Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko insisting it was a "matter of honour" to find those responsible. Investigators in Kiev have suggested that Moscow could have had a hand in the

killing—one of several high-profile assassinations in Kiev recently—but have provided no firm evidence to back up their claims.

Call for independent probe

A documentary from the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project released in May alleged Sheremet was under surveillance by Ukrainian intelligence agents around the time of his death and that they may have seen the bomb being planted. "Authorities say Russia is the prime suspect, but the lack of progress in the case, coupled with evidence pointing to possible Ukrainian involvement, weaken Kiev's credibility and suggest the need for an independent probe," the Committee to Protect Journalists said in a report this month.

Sheremet began his career in his homeland Belarus, where he founded the popular Belarussky Partizan opposition website before being expelled by the country's authoritarian government. He moved to Ukraine after quitting working for Russian state TV in 2014 over his critical views of Moscow's meddling in Ukraine. Sheremet wrote opinion pieces and conducted interviews with top officials in which he demanded answers for the slow pace of Kiev's efforts to stamp out embedded corruption and achieve sustainable growth. — AFP



ISTRES: French President Emmanuel Macron, center, meets with troops during a visit at an air force base (BA 125) in Istres, France yesterday. — AFP

FRENCH PRESIDENT SEEKS TO REPAIR DAMAGE AFTER ARMY CHIEF QUILTS

ISTRES, France: French President Emmanuel Macron was to address troops at an air base yesterday as he sought to repair the damage following the resignation of a highly-regarded military chief who challenged the government's budget cuts. Macron flew to the base in Istres, southern France, a day after General Pierre de Villiers quit in the wake of a row over the government's plans to slash 850 million euros from his budget. De Villiers stepped aside after being publicly slapped down by Macron in front of the troops for telling a parliamentary committee he would not allow the armed forces to be "screwed".

The 39-year-old president's handling of the dispute with the 60-year-old general was widely criticized by his opponents and the press as heavy-handed. Macron, who last week told the armed forces "I am your boss", stood his ground after de Villiers' departure, saying "it is not the job of the head of the armed forces" to question the budget. The president also stood by his pledge to raise the defense budget again in 2018, saying: "I'm behind our troops."

In a sign of his popularity with the rank and file, staff at the defense ministry gave de Villiers a rousing sendoff as he left for the last time on Wednesday, forming a guard of honor amid rapturous applause. The video of his departure was posted on the official Twitter account of the chiefs of staff with the message: "Thank you". In his resignation statement, the general said he had no choice but to step aside in the face of the planned cuts.

"I no longer feel able to ensure the sustainability of the model of the armed forces that I think is necessary to guarantee the protection of France and the French people," he said. General Francois Lecointre, a 55-year-old hero of the wars in the Balkans, was named as de Villiers's replacement. He accompanied Macron to the airbase yesterday.

Shot self in foot

The French press held Macron chiefly responsible for the dispute, which many commentators saw as the first misstep of his two-month-old presidency. The conservative Le Figaro daily accused the president of "shooting himself in the foot" in behaving "like a little departmental head who is obliged to remind everyone who's boss". The leftist Liberation newspaper said Macron's "little authoritarian fit" could be a sign he was drunk on power and said he was time for the youthful leader "to grow up a bit". Macron's defense cuts-part of a 4.5-billion-euro reduction in spending aimed at reducing France's budget deficit—were viewed by the military as a betrayal after his strong show of support for the armed forces during his first weeks in office.

Action man

Macron's first foreign trip was to Mali, where he met French troops engaged in counter-terrorism operations. Earlier this month, he was photographed being winched action man-style onto a nuclear submarine from a helicopter. The president's office said he would use the speech at the air base to "reiterate his support for the armed forces, reminding them of his campaign pledge to increase the defense budget as well as his ambitious plans for them in a difficult international environment". Seen as one of the finest officers of his generation, de Villiers' departure triggered howls of indignation from the opposition. — AFP

VENEZUELA STRIKE TESTS MADURO AS PRESSURE BUILDS

CARACAS: A 24-hour nationwide strike in Venezuela yesterday is set to increase pressure on beleaguered President Nicolas Maduro, whose policies have put him on a collision course with the United States. The opposition called the stoppage after holding an unofficial plebiscite last weekend in which a third of Venezuela's voters cast ballots rejecting Maduro and his policies. Chief among them is the president's plan to hold an election July 30 to choose a 545-member citizens' body, called a Constituent Assembly, to rewrite the constitution.

US President Donald Trump has threatened "swift economic actions" against Venezuela if that election happens. The European Union, the United Nations, the Organization of American States and the Catholic Church have all condemned Maduro's plan. They fear the move—seen by

the opposition and Trump as a bid for dictatorship—will irretrievably worsen the political crisis in Venezuela, and risk adding to a death toll that currently stands at 97 since anti-Maduro street protests turned violent in April.

Final offensive

But Maduro has vowed to forge on "now more than ever" after Trump's threat, and to punish "conspirators" who try to stop him. His labor minister, Nestor Ovalles, warned that companies in Venezuela that joined the strike yesterday would be "sanctioned." And the military reaffirmed its loyalty to Maduro by saying it would protect the polling. The opposition, which controls the National Assembly, sees the strike as the launch of a "final offensive" including civil disobedience and further protests designed to force

Maduro out of office through early elections.

Previous efforts to bring about a recall referendum against Maduro were stymied by electoral authorities and judges who have systematically sided with the president. With efforts at negotiations between both sides also exhausted, the stalemate risks worsening the deteriorating situation ordinary Venezuelans are enduring. Their oil-rich nation is staggering under a lack of food and medicine, triple-digit inflation, rising crime and dire currency controls that enrich a few at the expense of the many.

Maduro has blamed the crisis on low global oil prices and an economic "war" waged on him by the United States and the right-wing opposition.

But the opposition says the crisis is due to government mismanagement, including nationalizations and state

appropriations of firms, and generally inept policies by Maduro and his late predecessor Hugo Chavez.

US sanctions 'effective'?

It's not clear what "actions" Trump is considering against Venezuela, but oil could be a key pressure point. Around a third of Venezuela's crude production is exported to the US market. "All options are on the table," a senior White House official said Tuesday. But Geoff Thale, with the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) lobbying group, told AFP he was "very skeptical that unilateral US sanctions (would be) effective." "They are more likely to make the government feel they have no option but to resist, and they offer the government a nationalist rallying cry against the US," he said. — AFP



NEW JERSEY: This file photo shows US President Donald Trump as he arrives at the 72nd US Women's Open Golf Championship at Trump National Golf Course in Bedminster, New Jersey. — AFP

WHAT TRUMP CAN STILL DO TO SALVAGE 2017, AND WIN IN 2020

WASHINGTON: Thursday marks six months in power for US president Donald Trump. Fellow Republicans hope to turn the page on a relatively fruitless debut and lift a trophy with tax reform before his first year is out. Since January 20 the president has rolled back 14 regulations set by his predecessor Barack Obama, notably on environmental and industry rules. He also claimed a critical victory with the Senate's confirmation of conservative judge Neil Gorsuch onto the US Supreme Court, and has signed numerous executive orders.

"What we've done over a short period of time, and what we're going to be doing over the next six months, will be incredible," the billionaire businessman-turned-politician said Monday. But a grand legislative accomplishment has eluded him, including his long-pledged repeal of the health care reforms that was Obama's signature domestic achievement—and which have divided Republicans. Despite intense pressure from the president, including a White House meeting with Senate Republicans Wednesday, lawmakers appear eager to move on.

"Last time I looked, Congress goes on for two years," observed Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, sounding intent on not getting bogged down on health care beyond the upcoming summer break. "We'll be moving onto comprehensive tax reform and to infrastructure," he added. "There's much work left to be done." House Speaker Paul Ryan echoed the roll-up-our-sleeves sentiment. "Welfare reform and tax reform are the two big things we've got to do to complete our year for our fall agenda, and infrastructure," he said on radio's Mike Gallagher Show Wednesday. "So we're rocking and rolling here. But yes, America is tuning on TV and they see Russia this and they see countdown this and Trump tweeted that," he added. "We're not letting that stuff distract us."

Trump unveiled the outline of historic tax cuts in April, shortly before the 100-day mark of his presidency. The proposal seeks to slash the corporate tax rate from 35 percent to 15 percent, although the figures are not set in stone. — AFP

SEN JOHN MCCAIN DIAGNOSED WITH BRAIN TUMOR AFTER CLOT IS REMOVED

WASHINGTON: Sen. John McCain, the 2008 Republican presidential nominee, Vietnam prisoner of war and political maverick in Congress for more than three decades, has been diagnosed with an aggressive type of brain tumor. The 80-year-old Arizona lawmaker has glioblastoma, according to doctors at the Mayo Clinic in Phoenix, where McCain had a blood clot removed from above his left eye last Friday. He and his family are considering further treatment, including chemotherapy and radiation.

"Subsequent tissue pathology revealed that a primary brain tumor known as a glioblastoma was associated with the blood clot," his office said in a statement late Wednesday. According to the American Brain Tumor Association, more than 12,000 people a year are diagnosed with glioblastoma, the same type of tumor that struck McCain's close Democratic colleague in legislative battles, the late Ted Kennedy of Massachusetts. The American Cancer Society puts the five-year survival rate for patients over 55 at about 4 percent.

The senator and chairman of the Armed Services Committee had been recovering at his Arizona home. His absence forced Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., to delay action on health care legislation. South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham said he spoke to McCain Wednesday evening and that McCain said: "Yeah, I'm going to have to stay here a little bit longer, take some treatments. I'll be back." In a statement on Twitter, his daughter, Meghan McCain, spoke of the shock of the news and the anxiety over what happens next.

"My love for my father is boundless and like any daughter I cannot and do not wish to be in a world without him. I have faith that those days remain far away," she said. As word spread of his diagnosis, presidents past and present along with McCain's current and former Senate colleagues offered support in an outpouring rarely seen in Washington. "Senator John McCain has always been a fighter. Melania and I send our thoughts and prayers to Senator McCain, Cindy, and their entire family. Get well soon," President Donald Trump said.

Barack Obama, who dashed McCain's dreams of the presidency, said in a tweet: "John McCain is an American hero & one



WASHINGTON: This file photo shows Senator John McCain (R-AZ) during a Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee hearing on the nomination for General John Kelly, USMC (Ret.) to be Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. — AFP

of the bravest fighters I've ever known. Cancer doesn't know what it's up against. Give it hell, John." McCain has a lifetime of near-death experiences - surviving the July 1967 fire and explosion on the USS Forrestal that killed 134 sailors; flying into power lines in Spain; the October 1967 shoot-down of his Navy aircraft and fall into Truc Bach Lake in Hanoi; and 5 1/2 years in a North Vietnamese prison.

Trademark verve

"The Hanoi Hilton couldn't break John McCain's spirit many years ago, so Barbara and I know - with confidence - he and his family will meet this latest battle in his singular life of service with courage and determination," said former President George H.W. Bush. Politics aside, McCain and Bill Clinton developed a strong friendship, and the former president said: "As he's shown his entire life, don't bet against John McCain. Best wishes to him for a swift recovery." The junior senator from Arizona, Republican Jeff Flake, said yesterday that McCain told him about his tumor only at the end of a telephone conversation, saying he was "feeling fine, but I might have some chemotherapy in my future." Flake said on ABC's "Good Morning America" that his colleague is "optimistic, obviously. He's John McCain.

That's what we'd expect."

In the past, McCain had been treated for melanoma, but a primary tumor is unrelated. Doctors said McCain is recovering from his surgery "amazingly well" and his underlying health is excellent. With his irascible grin and fighter-pilot moxie, McCain was elected to the Senate from Arizona six times, most recently last year, but twice thwarted in seeking the presidency. An upstart presidential bid in 2000 didn't last long. Eight years later, he fought back from the brink of defeat to win the GOP nomination, only to be overpowered by Obama. McCain chose a little-known Alaska governor as his running mate in that race, and helped turn Sarah Palin into a national political figure.

After losing to Obama in an electoral landslide, McCain returned to the Senate, determined not to be defined by a failed presidential campaign. And when Republicans took control of the Senate in 2015, McCain embraced his new job as chairman of the powerful Armed Services Committee, eager to play a big role "in defeating the forces of radical Islam that want to destroy America."

Throughout his long tenure in Congress, McCain has played his role with trademark verve, at one hearing dismissing a protester by calling out, "Get out of here, you low-life scum."

He tangled with McConnell over campaign finance, joined forces with Democrats on immigration and most recently had a very public spat with Sen. Rand Paul. McCain said the Kentucky Republican was working for Russian President Vladimir Putin after he blocked a vote on allowing Montenegro into NATO. Paul said McCain had gotten "unhinged." Early in the 2016 campaign, McCain largely held his tongue when Trump questioned his status as a war hero by saying: "He was a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren't captured."

McCain stuck by Trump at times seemingly through gritted teeth - until the release a month before the election of a lewd audio in which Trump said he could kiss and grab women. Declaring that the breaking point, McCain withdrew his support. In an interview with The Associated Press in 2013, McCain spoke of his decades in Congress, legislative achievements and political defeats. — AP

PAKISTANI TAXI APP OFFERS RIDE WITH A MARRIAGE MATCHMAKER

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistan app-based taxi service has launched an unusual add on, offering passengers the chance to share their ride with a marriage matchmaker. Users in Pakistan woke on Wednesday to an unexpected notification from Careem—an Uber-like taxi hailing app popular in Muslim countries: Have a 'rishta aunty' accompany you during your ride.

Rishta aunts, as marriage matchmakers are known in South Asia, keep detailed records of eligible men and women—from education level and

salary, to height, weight and even skin tone—and will set you up with your future spouse, for a fee.

Usually portrayed in popular culture as bespectacled women with a clipboard of names and an ancient Nokia mobile, the aunts have had an update thanks to Careem. The "rishta" service—which has only been rolled out for two days in two cities in Pakistan—quickly had the country's vocal Twitterati on overdrive. "Careem is the halal Tinder now, except that there's a rishta aunty who'll do the swiping for

you," joked Twitter user CrazeeGentleman. But many were speculating that it was just a marketing ploy by the taxi app service.

"Driving with rishta aunty a success for @CareemPAK already, it's 11.33 AM and half the marketers in my list are talking about it," wrote Amnaa Tariq on Twitter.

Careem Pakistan was quick to defend the move as a legitimate service. "We'd noticed that rishtas are a popular topic of discussion among our more senior users. So we've launched

this service in order to help the younger people find a right match," said Careem Pakistan's head of public affairs Sibtain Naqvi, according to local media. "During the ride people can tell the aunty their preferences and the Aunty will later get in touch with them with a suitable rishta (relationship)," Naqvi added. It's not the first time that the taxi app has sought to diversify. In January the firm rolled out "Careem Doctor", offering to bring a medical professional to your doorstep.—AFP

INDIA GETS NEW PRESIDENT FROM BOTTOM OF HINDU CASTE SYSTEM

KOVIND WOULD HELP MODI TIGHTEN HIS GRIP ON POWER

NEW DELHI: Ram Nath Kovind was elected India's new president yesterday, the second time since independence a head of state has been chosen from the bottom of the Hindu caste system. Kovind won the largely ceremonial position with more than 65 percent of the

vote by members of India's parliament and state assemblies, the election commission said. The 71-year-old former lawyer and state governor from the marginalized Dalit community was nominated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party for post.

The opposition Congress Party also put forward a Dalit candidate, a former parliamentary speaker Meira Kumar. But Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party assembled enough electoral college votes to push through its candidate and the outcome was expected. "Congratulations to Shri Ram Nath Kovind Ji on being elected the President of India! Best wishes for a fruitful and inspiring tenure," Modi wrote on Twitter. Analysts said the election of Kovind would help Modi tighten his grip on power and accrue political capital by sending an important message to the Dalits, a long-dissained electoral group once known as "untouchables".

Dalits, who number around 200 million in the nation of 1.3 billion, are among India's poorest communities and relegated to the margins of society. Despite legal protection, discrimination is rife and Dalits are routinely denied access to education and other advancement opportunities.

Modi had hailed the rise of Kovind, the son of a farmer and former Supreme Court lawyer, from "a humble background". India's prime minister wields executive power, but the president can send back some parliamentary bills for reconsideration and also plays a guiding role in the process of forming governments.—AFP



NEW DELHI: In this file photo, Ram Nath Kovind, center, waves to media upon arrival at the airport in New Delhi, India.—AP



SHIMLA, India: Demonstrators march along a street during a Shimla Nagrik Sabha rally against the rape and murder of a teenage girl, in Kotkhai, Shimla district, in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, yesterday.—AFP

RIOTS, STRIKES AS INDIA RAPE ACCUSED KILLED IN CUSTODY

SHIMLA: A man accused of the gang rape and murder of a girl in northern India has been killed in police custody, an official said yesterday, sparking angry riots in the usually tranquil Himalayan region. Hundreds of protesters furious over the police handling of the case chanted "we want justice" in the popular tourist hill resort of Shimla, with businesses remaining closed in some parts of Himachal Pradesh state.

There have been vigils and strikes across the region since the 16-year-old victim was found naked and mutilated in a forest, with many accusing police of bungling the investigation. Tensions escalated further after a suspect held for the gruesome crime was killed in his cell by another inmate during a scuffle. Nepalese national Suraj Singh, struck his head against the wall "and was taken to hospital where he was declared dead," said Z.H. Zaidi, the police inspector general.

News of his death triggered fury, with rioters torching a police station and vehicles. The brutality of the crime shocked residents in Himachal Pradesh, a Himalayan state with some of India's lowest rates of sexual violence, and prompted calls for a swift investigation. An autopsy confirmed the girl was gang raped and strangled. She sustained severe injuries in the assault, including a broken leg. Six men were arrested but those calling for swift justice accused police of bungling the case, saying the main culprits were still at large.

"The main accused is roaming free. How can anyone die in police custody?" one protester in Shimla told Indian broadcaster NDTV yesterday. India has a gruesome record on rape. Nearly 40,000 rape cases are reported every year but the real number is thought to be much higher, with victims wary of how their complaints will be handled. Nearly 2,200 rapes were registered in 2015 in the Indian capital New Delhi, an average of six per day. Himachal Pradesh recorded 244 rapes that same year, among the lowest rates in India.—AFP

BUS CRASH KILLS 28 IN NORTHERN INDIA

SHIMLA: At least 28 people were killed yesterday after a bus plunged into a deep gorge in a Himalayan region of northern India popular with tourists, police said. The accident occurred around 100 kilometers from the hill resort of Shimla in Himachal Pradesh state, said police superintendent Soumiya Sambasivan. "28 people have died and seven are injured. All the bodies have been identified," she said. The bus was taking around 40 people from Kinnaur district towards Solan when it rolled roughly 200 meters down a gorge to the banks of a river.

Images from the scene showed emergency workers conducting a rescue operation with the help of local volunteers. Last week, 16 pilgrims died in a bus crash in neigh-

boring Jammu and Kashmir state, while in April 44 people were killed in Himachal Pradesh in a similar accident. India has some of the world's

highest traffic fatalities with more than 150,000 deaths annually due to poor roads, badly maintained vehicles and reckless driving.—AFP



SHIMLA, India: The wreckage of a bus lies in a gorge following an accident near the Indian town of Rampur yesterday.—AFP

INDIA SAYS IT HAS INTERNATIONAL BACKING IN BORDER DISPUTE WITH CHINA

FOREIGN DIPLOMATS SHOCKED BY INDIA'S ILLEGAL TRESPASS

NEW DELHI: India's stand in its border dispute with China is supported by other countries, Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj said yesterday as she praised tiny Bhutan for standing up to China in the row. Swaraj reaffirmed that India's security could be jeopardized if China takes over the zone where the frontiers of India, China and Bhutan meet. The standoff started more than a month ago after Chinese troops started building a road on the remote plateau, which is disputed by China and Bhutan. Indian troops moved in to the flashpoint zone to halt the work.

"All the countries understand that India's stand is not wrong. Justice is on our side, this is being accepted by all other countries," the minister told the upper house of the Indian parliament. China has also declared that it has international support, with its foreign ministry saying on Tuesday that foreign diplomats were "shocked" by India's "illegal trespass". Swaraj praised Bhutan, one of the world's smallest countries, for taking an "aggressive" stand and not bowing to its giant neighbor.

Bhutan has said construction of the road is "a direct violation" of agreements with China. Bhutan and China do not have diplomatic relations. India, which fought a war with China in 1962 over a separate part of the disputed Himalayan border, supports Bhutan's claim. "There is a written agreement signed in 2012 which states that the

issue of trijunction (the border where the three countries meet) should be decided by India, China and ... Bhutan," Swaraj said. "All this while China has been building roads... various activities have been going on.

This time they brought bulldozers and excavators and their intention is to reach the trijunction. "They want to end the status quo of this trijunction unilaterally," she added. China has said Indian

troops should "unconditionally" withdraw to the Indian side before talks can start on the dispute. Swaraj said China must also pull back its troops for any dialogue to happen.

India and China have vied for influence in South Asia, with Beijing ploughing large sums into infrastructure projects in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Bhutan has remained closely allied to India.—AFP



HONG KONG: This file photo shows China's President Xi Jinping inspecting People's Liberation Army soldiers at a barracks in Hong Kong.—AFP

CHINESE LEADERSHIP SHAKE-UP SIGNALS XI POWER PLAY

BEIJING: A sudden leadership change in one of China's biggest cities has highlighted President Xi Jinping's ambition to consolidate his grip on power at an upcoming major political gathering, analysts say. Former Xi aide Chen Miner was named Communist Party chief in Chongqing last weekend, abruptly replacing a politician who was once widely regarded as a contender for promotion to China's top political body. The shake-up in the southwestern megalopolis may signal that Xi is maneuvering to stack the national leadership with his supporters at the Communist Party congress later this year.

During the meeting, Xi is widely expected to secure a second five year term, but what is less clear is who will depart or ascend to the Politburo standing committee, the group of seven politicians who run the world's second largest economy. Chen replaced Sun Zhengcai, a member of the 25-person Politburo who was once a favorite for promotion to the standing committee. Chongqing, with a population exceeding 30 million, is best known to China watchers as the stronghold of Bo Xilai, the outspoken former official who became one of the highest-profile targets of Xi's anti-corruption campaign.

Bo, who is now serving a life sentence, was rumored to be part of a network plotting to stop Xi from assuming control of the party in 2012, and Sun was charged with erasing his influence on the city. In February, party discipline inspectors publicly rebuked Sun for failing to get the job done, leaving his future in question. The city must "resolutely remove the bad impact" of Bo's case, Chen told city officials shortly after the announcement of his promotion, according to the Chongqing Daily. While no reason was given for the leadership switch, the South China Morning Post reported that Sun was under investigation by the Communist Party. The failure to "purge Bo's poison" was likely a factor in the decision to replace Sun, said Hu Xingdou, an expert on China's governance at the Beijing Institute of Technology. But "his removal from office is probably because he directly or indirectly affected Xi Jinping's personnel plans for the 19th Party Congress," he said.

The dominant voice

Chen first worked with Xi in 2002, when the president became party chief of eastern Zhejiang province. In late 2012, the former propaganda chief's career kicked into overdrive following Xi's ascension to the head of the Communist Party. Chen became governor of southwest Guizhou province in 2013, adding the title of party secretary in 2015. "He's an important member of Xi's 'New Zhejiang Army,'" Hu said, referring to the group of allies who worked with the president when he was the province's party chief.

"He is a person who Xi Jinping very much trusts and relies on." Chen's promotion has "smashed" expectations that Sun would be promoted to the politburo standing committee during the Party Congress this fall, said Chen Daoyin, an associate professor at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law. The promotion, he said, was part of a campaign by Xi to dismantle the system of political succession established by his direct predecessor Hu Jintao and former premier Wen Jiabao, who have maintained considerable influence even in retirement.—AFP



BEIJING: In this file photo, an Indian national flag is flown next to the Chinese national emblem during a welcome ceremony for visiting Indian officials outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.—AP

CHINA'S BANNED BOOKS FADE FROM HONG KONG

HONG KONG: The annual Hong Kong book fair has always been a source of politically sensitive titles banned in China, but this year fewer were on display as the city faces growing pressure under an increasingly assertive Beijing. Several publishing houses were still displaying controversial books at the harbor front convention centre as part of a fair that attracts more than a million visitors over six days. But the number has shrunk since the disappearance of five city booksellers who worked for a publisher specializing in salacious titles about Chinese political leaders.

They vanished almost two years ago and resurfaced on the mainland, where one still remains in custody. Since then, mainstream bookstores in Hong Kong have removed titles likely to offend Chinese authorities and smaller producers have shied away from rocking the boat. It comes as many fear that Beijing is tightening its grip on semi-autonomous Hong Kong and threatening its cherished freedoms. Greenfield Bookstore has long sold banned works at the book fair and this year displayed titles about late Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo and former Chinese leader Mao Zedong.

But a store manager who identified himself only as Mr Tam estimated the overall number of politically sensitive books on sale across the fair was down as much as 70 percent. "There are less of these books coming out. Some of the smaller and independent companies, they haven't come back," he said. Hong Kong book store owner Paul Tang said that production of gossipy books on Chinese leaders has seen a significant decline since the

disappearance of the five booksellers.

Mainland customers who used to travel over the border to snap them up have also stayed away, he said. "A lot of publishers are self censoring and afraid to produce more books," Tang said. Flipping through a title about late Nobel laureate Liu at the Greenfield stall, housewife Wincy Chan said she was disappointed the book fair did not address the elephant in the room—Liu's death last week in Chinese custody. "They are avoiding the topic with the theme of travel," said Chan, in her 50s, referring to the fair's focus this year. Chan said she was worried politically sensitive books would not be available in the future.

But some hope a new wave of writers and satirists will keep the political debate alive. At the stall belonging to 100 Most, a lifestyle magazine also known for its irreverent take on Hong Kong and Chinese politics, titles included student protest leader Joshua Wong's memoirs and a book about the 2014 pro-democracy Umbrella Movement. Book-lover Matthew Mok who was browsing the stall said taking a lighthearted approach could be a solution. "You can't directly talk about things that the Communist Party finds sensitive—you need a funny way of going into the topic to make the books attractive," Mok, 17, said.—AFP

MALAYSIA DETAINS BANGLADESHI ACTIVIST

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has detained a prominent Bangladesh activist, civil groups said yesterday, describing the government action as "harassment" against human rights defenders. Adilur Rahman Khan, secretary of the rights group Odhikar, was detained after arriving at Kuala Lumpur International Airport early yesterday, activists said. He was due to speak at a two-day conference organized by the Anti-Death Penalty Asia Network. Rights group Voice of the Malaysian People (Suaram) said Khan was being kept incommunicado at the airport's immigration lock-up and appealed for his release.

"Suaram calls for his immediate release and demand that the immigration department stop its persistent harassment against human rights

defenders visiting Malaysia," it said in a statement. Immigration authorities could not be reached for comment. Malaysia often denies foreign pro-democracy activists entry into the country without giving explanation. The Asian Human Rights Commission urged the international human rights community "to immediately intervene in this case, and secure Khan's release from arbitrary detention".

The commission said it was worried that the detention of Khan, his country's former deputy attorney general, "is the result of collusion between governments in Bangladesh and Malaysia". In the past, Khan's group has been critical of human rights violations allegedly committed by Bangladeshi security forces, including torture and extra-judicial killings.—AFP

MH370 SEARCH REVEALS HIDDEN UNDERSEA WORLD

SYDNEY: The painstaking search for missing flight MH370 has uncovered a previously unknown undersea world of volcanoes, deep valleys and soaring ridges, according to detailed maps released by Australia. Although no trace of the Malaysia Airlines plane was found during the search in the southern Indian Ocean—the most expensive ever of its kind—large volumes of data showing a detailed picture of the sea floor had to be collected to guide the probe. Scientists are hopeful the new maps will give their community greater insight into oceans.

"It is estimated that only 10 to 15 percent of the world's oceans have been surveyed with the kind of technology used in the search for MH370," Geoscience Australia's environmental geoscience chief Stuart Minchin said late Wednesday. "(That makes) this remote part of the Indian Ocean among the most thoroughly mapped regions of the deep ocean on the planet. "So this data is unique both because of the remote location of the search area, and because of the sheer scale of the area surveyed."

Minchin said the maps would also be useful for future scientific research, such

as oceanographic and habitat modeling. Australia, Malaysia and China suspended the deep sea hunt in January, almost three years after the Boeing 777 disappeared with 239 people on board. The hunt—based on satellite analysis of the jet's likely trajectory after it diverted from its flight path—covered a 120,000 square-kilometer designated zone, an area slightly smaller than England. Two shipwrecks were discovered during the search but no trace of the plane, deepening one of the most enduring mysteries of the aviation age.

However, the data revealed ridges six kilometers wide and 15 kilometers long that rise 1,500 meters above the sea floor, as well as fault valleys 1,200 meters deep and five kilometers wide. A second set of data will be released in mid-2018. While the search for the missing plane has been called off, Canberra has said it could be restarted if new evidence about the specific location of the aircraft emerges. "We remain hopeful that new information will come to light and that at some point in the future the aircraft will be located," Australia's Transport Minister Darren Chester said.

Australia's national science body



AT SEA: This file photo shows crew members looking out the cockpit windows of a RNZAF P3 Orion during search operations for wreckage and debris of missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 in the southern Indian Ocean, near the coast of Western Australia.—AFP

CSIRO released a report in April confirming that MH370 was "most likely" north of the former search zone. Three fragments from the plane have been recovered washed up on western Indian Ocean shores, including a two-meter

wing part known as a flaperon found on La Reunion island. Speculation on the cause of the plane's disappearance has focused primarily on possible hijacking, rogue pilot action or mechanical failure, but nothing has yet been proved.—AFP



MARAWI CITY: In this photo provided by the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, left, clad in a camouflage uniform inspects firearms recovered from Muslim militants during his unannounced visit to Camp Ranao in Marawi city in southern Philippines.—AP

DUTERTE FLIES TO BESIEGED CITY, WARNS OF OTHER ATTACKS

MANILA: The Philippine president flew for the first time yesterday to a besieged southern city to cheer troops who have been trying to quell a nearly two-month uprising by Islamic State group-linked militants, who he warned were plotting to attack other cities. Clad in a camouflage uniform, President Rodrigo Duterte gave a talk to troops and inspected recovered rebel rifles and other weapons in a military camp in Marawi city that is outside of the battle zone but remains dangerous because of stray bullets. His past attempts to fly to the lakeside city were aborted because of bad weather.

"The soldiers and police are very happy over his visit because this proves that the president is very firm, very dedicated in supporting most specially the operations here," military spokesman Lt. Col. Jo-ar Herrera told reporters. Duterte thanked the troops for their heroism and sacrifices, Herrera said. Duterte told Congress in a letter this week that even though troops have regained control of much of Marawi and killed hundreds of militants, "the rebellion persists and a lot more remains to be done to completely quell the same."

The militants' leadership, he said, remains largely intact and has funded diversionary attacks on other southern cities. The seven-page letter, a copy of which was seen by reporters Thursday, aims to convince lawmakers to extend Duterte's 60-day declaration of martial law in the south until the end of the year. The statements in the letter appear to differ from his assurance last week that the Marawi crisis, the most serious he has faced so far, could end in 10 to 15 days.—AP

THAI COURT CHARGES DISGRACED JET-SET MONK WITH RAPE, FRAUD

'SMART ID CARDS' TO RECORD MONK CRIMINAL HISTORY

BANGKOK: A Thai court charged a disgraced former monk yesterday with the rape of an underage girl, fraud and money laundering, after he was extradited from the United States. Thailand is an overwhelmingly Buddhist nation with around 300,000 men in orange robes, but the clergy are beset by high-profile scandals. Wiraphon Sukphon, 37, was arrested on arrival at Bangkok's main airport late Wednesday from the US where he established an unofficial Buddhist teaching centre after fleeing Thailand in 2013. He faces a total of five charges, including raping a minor under 15 years old, which carries a jail term of up to 20 years.

"The Criminal Court has accepted to hear the case against Wiraphon," Worranan Srilum, a spokesman for the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) police unit, said. The monk, who has denied the charges, was taken to Bangkok Remand Prison after the hearing. He did not apply for bail, according to his lawyer. Wiraphon made headlines in 2013 when footage emerged of him with two other monks on a private jet wearing sunglasses and wielding Louis Vuitton designer bags—earning him the tabloid moniker the 'jet-set monk'.

A subsequent probe seized \$770,000 of his assets, including a Porsche and a Mercedes Benz car, and multiple bank accounts. He fathered a child with the girl he raped. The scandal-mired cleric went by the name Luang Pu Nen Kham to back-up claims he was the reincarnation of a famous miracle-performing monk. His temple in the rural town of Buriram disrobed him after the allegations surfaced and he fled the kingdom. But he continued to act as a monk, establishing a Buddhist centre in California. In May a

US court ordered his extradition after a request from Thai authorities.

Sex, drugs and murder

Buddhism is weaved closely into the social fabric of Thailand. All Thai men are expected by social convention to spend some time in orange robes. It is a stint aimed at bestowing discipline, religious knowledge and good karma on the monk and his family. Yet the clergy is dogged by negative publicity, with recent extortion, sex, drugs, gambling and murder scandals involving monks shocking the Thai public. Buddhist authorities want to clean-up the image of the clergy and keep a tighter check on temple finances. Last week the Thai

junta trailed the idea of "smart ID cards" for each monk to record any criminal history and prevent people using orange robes for personal benefit. The junta is also engaged in a long-running feud with the Dhammakaya temple a rich and powerful Buddhist sect whose give-to-receive narrative draws the allegiance of many wealthy Thai families. In March this year the junta was left red-faced after it was forced to call off a weeks-long hunt for the sect's former abbot at the 1,000-acre temple site on Bangkok's outskirts. The septuagenarian abbot, who is accused of embezzling \$33 million, evaded arrest despite a search of the temple by hundreds of security forces.—AFP



BANGKOK: This handout taken by the Department of Special Investigation (DSI) yesterday shows Buddhist monk Wiraphon Sukphon speaking to DSI officials in Bangkok.—AFP

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Lifestyle

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Lebanese singer Ragheb Alama performs during the 53rd session of the International Festival of Carthage at the Roman Theatre of Carthage on July 19, 2017 in Tunis. — AFP

Syrian actors bring cost of war home to NY audience



Director Omar Abusaada poses for a portrait after a dress rehearsal for 'While I was Waiting' at Gerald W Lynch Theater at John Jay College in New York City. — AFP photos



Actors Hanan Chkir (left) and Mohammad Alrefai (right) perform during a dress rehearsal for 'While I was Waiting'.

Syrian actors bring cost of war home to NY audience

'We need to see the human side of what is going on in Syria'

Six Syrian actors battled a fraught US visa process to tread the boards in New York this week, seeking to impress on American theatergoers the human cost of a war raging halfway round the world. Nothing could be further from the typical summer entertainment in this city of flamboyant wealth and consumption, sizzling under a July heat wave and thousands of miles from the horrors unfolding in Syria.

Yet the US premiere of "While I Was Waiting" won a standing ovation from New Yorkers moved Wednesday by the realization that those trapped by the war are ordinary people just like them. "Anyone in New York is going to understand the characters immediately," said Sam Sacks, a 37-year-old writer who was at the opening night at the annual Lincoln Center Festival. "They seem like people who could be our neighbors here." The play tells the story of Taim, a young filmmaker left in a coma after being beaten at a Damascus checkpoint, and how his mother, sister, girlfriend and other friends react to his plight.

As the characters grapple with past hurts and brutal realities, the drama spotlights how their middle-class lives have been upended by the now six-year conflict that has killed more than 320,000 people. The Arabic-language play, with English subtitles, seeks to dive behind grisly media headlines about gas attacks, beheadings, and a repressive regime to show a more human perspective.

'All humans'

A kiss shared on stage, love of music, hiding a joint from a visiting mother and liberated young women may surprise some who harbor stereotypes about life in a Muslim-majority Arab country. "It just confirmed that we're all humans and we're in this boat together. It doesn't seem to have a resolution, I hope it will soon," said Henrietta Gwaltney, a New York social worker. The four-night production brings six actors as well as additional Syrian crew members to New York. Ultimately, only one technical member of the group was denied a US visa.



(From left) Actors Reham Kassar, Mohammad Alrashi, Mohammad Alrefai and Nanda Mohammad perform during a dress rehearsal for 'While I was Waiting'.

Written by playwright Mohammad Al Attar, the play premiered in Brussels last year and has already toured Europe and Japan. Its US run lasts until Saturday. Nanda Mohammad, one of the actresses, sees New York as a two-fold experience—showcasing Syrian artistry in a city with little knowledge of it, and making a political statement to challenge stereotypes. "I'm not sure if we can make any change... But at the end I think it's essential to do it," she told AFP. "You must do good art, or there's no reason to do it, and the people must enjoy it, even if it's about Syria."

'Don't hope'

"I'm really amazed by the American people," says Mohammad, who currently lives in Egypt. "I think they are nicer than I imagined." Festival director Nigel Redden believed the tale would resonate with New York theatergoers, not least in a city hostile to the policies of President Donald Trump.

"This year it seemed particularly right to look at current events," he said. "We need to see the human side of what is going on in Syria." The Lincoln Center initiated the visa applications around the time Trump announced his first travel ban on visa-holders from Syria and six other Muslim majority countries. Director Omar Abusaada, who lives in Damascus and visited the United States in 2010, called it "the most hard process for a visa, ever."

But if he worries that US audiences have a distorted impression of Syria, twisted by a media too focused on President Bashar al-Assad and the Islamic State extremist group, he worries even more that Syrians at home are losing hope that art can make a difference. "They don't hope that much from the world outside," he told AFP. "I still really believe that's important, but I think for the majority of Syrians who are inside Syria, this is not important anymore." — AFP



Actors Hanan Chkir (left) and Nanda Mohammad (right) perform during a dress rehearsal.

Homecooked meals, ice cream offer relief from Syria Raqa fight

On a day off from the Raqa front line, Syrian fighter Iskandar was busy chopping up chicken and garlic cloves for a steaming pot of homecooked mulukhiyah stew. He stirred the ingredients for the dish into a large pot perched atop a gas canister, set up in an abandoned home in Jazra, a western suburb of Raqa. "I used to love going into the kitchen with my mum so I learned from her. This is the first meal I'm cooking on the front," the 28-year-old fighter with the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said excitedly.

He and comrades from the US-backed SDF have been battling Islamic State group jihadists for control of Raqa, the de facto capital of IS's Syrian territory since 2014. The SDF has spent months encircling the city and finally broke into it in early June. After long stretches away from home, Iskandar and his comrades have grown nostalgic for a traditional meal. "We got bored of the food that we get every day. It's not that we don't like it, but we're sick of eggplant, kebab and grilled meat," he told AFP.

Fellow fighters requested an old favorite: mulukhiyah, an aromatic stew made with bitter green leaves, lemon juice, a heavy dose of garlic and chicken, and typically served over white rice. Iskandar got to work, finding dried mulukhiyah leaves in an abandoned Jazra home and venturing to nearby shops to buy the other ingredients. "I hope they forgive us. We picked them so we could eat," said Iskandar of the green leaves.

Chicken, beans, meat pies

"If there's any other dish they want, I'm ready: stuffed vegetables, oven-roasted chicken, beans," Iskandar said proudly. He flipped a yellow towel behind his neck to dab at the sweat gathering on his skin as his colleagues hovered nearby, impatient for the mouthwatering meal. Some were spread out under the shade of a grapevine while others sat inside, where a sputtering air conditioning unit provided the only reprieve from the heat.

A refrigerator inside was stacked with bottles of water, ice cubes and a plate of chopped cucumbers that Iskandar would toss into some refreshing yoghurt. Typically, meals for fighters on the western front are prepared in the village of Hawi Al-Hawa, less than two kilometers (one mile) from Raqa. The meals are usually made by a team of chefs the previous day so that they can be speedily delivered to hungry fighters on the front lines.

"Every day, we deliver 5,000 lunches and 5,000 dinners," said Hoghar, a kitchen logistics coordinator wearing fatigues and eyeglasses. Outside, SDF members loaded plastic bags filled with bread loaves and cubed white cheese as rows of massive pots lay drying in the sun. "We get requests from the fighters and we try to fill them as much as we can. They mostly ask for vegetables and fruit," Hoghar said. Recently, fighters have been saying they crave meat pies, which the chefs plan to prepare in Kobane—a three-hour drive away—because there are no bakeries in Hawi Al-Hawa, Hoghar said. "We'll transport them in refrigerated trucks, then we'll distribute them from here."

Ice-cold

Nearby, the SDF has been churning out another key commodity: ice. With temperatures rising above 45 degrees Celsius (112 Fahrenheit) across northern Syria, fighters have been struggling to stay cool and hydrated. The militia has struck a deal with the owner of a small ice factory on the outskirts of Hawi Al-Hawa, allowing them to freeze water there if they pay for the materials and diesel. "Our forces are getting exhausted and they needed something to cool them down," said SDF fighter Mohiyddin Mohammad, 38, as the machine produced blocks of ice.

The blocks are transported to fighters closer to the front, who say they are indispensable. "The most important thing for us is to get ice so that the water can stay cold," said 22-year-old militiaman Matay. "In this heat, it's not enough to be in the shade, to shower, or to pour bottles of water on our heads." Near the factory, fighters were savoring vanilla ice cream distributed from a truck. During lulls in the fighting, Matay said he and other fighters in the Arab-Kurdish force rush to a small creek north of the village for a refreshing dip. "We go to the river so we can swim, shower or even wash our clothes and take a break from this heat." — AFP

Wind-chime festival: Cooling sounds drive away heat in Japan

A Japanese traditional wind-chime festival has opened at a Buddhist temple near Tokyo, just in time for the official arrival of summer. Japanese wind-chimes, called "furin," are one of the items most associated with the hottest season because of their refreshing sound in a country with oppressively high humidity. The Japanese Meteorological Agency on Wednesday announced the end

of this year's rainy season in the Tokyo area, officially heralding the start of summer. At Heiken Temple in Kawasaki, south of Tokyo, some 30,000 wind-chimes collected from throughout Japan are exhibited and on sale, Ryuei Hara, a temple monk, told AFP.

"Furin are originally from China, where people used to hang bells under the eaves as charms to drive away evil," he

said. "In Japan, wind-chimes have become an item enjoyed for their sound and to feel cool during summer." Many of the chimes are made of glass, while others use iron or pottery to produce distinctive high-pitched sounds. About 300,000 visitors are expected over the five-day festival through Sunday, Hara said. — AFP



Brazilian Havaianas flip-flops are displayed at a store in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP photos



Brazilian Havaianas flip-flops are displayed at a store.

Havaianas: The flip-flops emblematic of Brazil-corruption and all

You'd be hard pressed to find an item more representative of Brazil than Havaianas: those brand-name flip-flops adopted by just about every inhabitant, rich or poor, as well as tourists seduced by the beach vibe.

Now the footwear find themselves linked with a more somber aspect of Brazil that has been grabbing headlines recently—corruption. Last week, to pay off a mega \$3.2 billion fine over 25 years for various graft cases, the Brazilian brothers Joesley et Wesley Batista started selling off assets they controlled through their J&F group, whose main business is being the world's biggest meat processor.

J&F had a 54-percent stake in Alpargatas, the parent company of Havaianas. That was purchased by three holding firms: Itausa, Cambuhy Investimentos and Brasil Warrant. The Havaianas success story started in 1962, riding the sudden international popularity of flip-flops in the post-WWII boom. Inspired by traditional Japanese rice-straw sandals, the origin of the rubber-soled flip-flops is variously claimed by Brazil, Australia and New Zealand. But it was Havaianas that emerged as the most recognizable brand of the toe-strap footwear. The brand name comes from the Portuguese spelling of another tropical playground: Hawaii.

'Cool' for all classes

It was a big marketing push in the 1990s that burnished the Havaianas name, along with a colorful range of designs. The



Brazilian firm now sells more than 150 different models, from the basic beach pair for \$5, to ones with tropical motifs and a tiny Brazilian flag for \$9, right up to custom Swarovski gem-encrusted luxury options for more than \$60. In a Copacabana shop, Solange Brascher, a 55-year-old employee in a telecoms company, bought an average-priced pair for her daughter. "Before, there was an idea of them being for poor people," she said. "But now all social classes wear them because they're cool."

Havaianas sells more than 200 million pairs each year, 16 percent of them exported. For sheer Brazilian-ness, they rank up there with soccer and samba. "They're the first thing I bought when I arrived, to give to friends," a young Portuguese tourist, Beatriz Rodrigues, said. "I've already bought 10 pairs and I'm going to buy another 10 because they're much more expensive in Europe." Today, Alpargatas, whose headquarters is in Sao Paulo, has more than 700 sales outlets in more than 100 countries. "Havaianas represent the Brazilian soul, and is an object of desire, synonymous with a Brazil that works," opined Claudio Goldberg, economic professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation.

Celebrity feet

Certainly they have attracted star power. Havaianas have adorned the feet of Madonna, David Beckham, and Kim Kardashian, who flaunted ones designed by the jeweler H. Stern with gold settings worth \$18,000. When Havaianas rolled out their first pairs they were a basic white rubber sole with blue toe straps. Then in 1969 an employee accidentally painted the straps green. To Alpargatas' surprise, the variation took off, and from then on Havaianas started playing with colors and then designs.

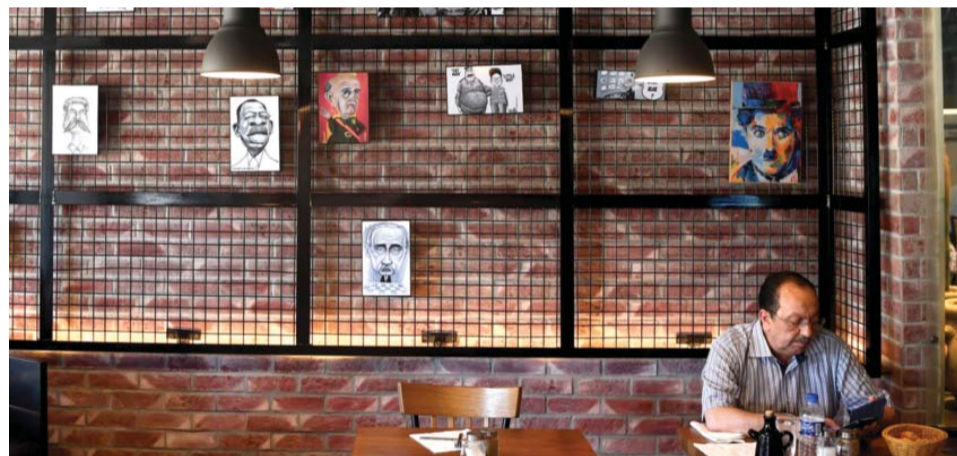
The company asserts that two-thirds of the people in Brazil—total population 200 million—buy on average one pair of Havaianas a year. And that if all the pairs it had sold in its history were laid end-to-end they would circle the Earth 62 times. But how will the whiff of corruption wafting from its former owners affect the brand? "It's already a good thing that such a brand is remaining Brazilian," Goldberg said. The company "won't lose its identity." As for the new owners, they've said they want to expand further into the US market. And the current management of the famous footwear won't get the boot. — AFP



A woman walks past a Brazilian Havaianas flip-flops store in Sao Paulo, Brazil.



'Freedom' steak on menu at 'Le Dictateur' in Tunis



A steak dubbed the "Grilled Freedom" is just one stand-out dish on the menu of the Tunisian capital's "Le Dictateur" restaurant, which is not exactly to the taste of officialdom. Six years after the North African country's revolution that sparked the Arab Spring, "Le Dictateur" vies for the foodie business in the upmarket Cite Ennasr suburb of Tunis. "We had to make ourselves known, to come up with a name and concept that attracted attention because good cuisine alone is often not enough," said owner Seif Ben Hammouda.

"Dictatorship was a taboo subject for decades, and it's still very relevant here as efforts continue to bring about freedom and democracy," said the savvy entrepreneur in his 30s. Against a bricked background, portraits that include Charlie Chaplin aping Adolf Hitler are mounted behind cages on the walls, creating a prison-like atmosphere. Joseph Stalin and Melania Trump, wife of the US president, compete for space in murals on other walls, as a picture of Russian President Vladimir Putin also looks down on diners.

The oppressive theme extends to the menu, with signature dishes such as "Grilled Freedom", "Anarchy", "Opposition" and "Putsch" on offer. "I wanted to take full advantage of the freedom of expression that's been the main achievement of the revolution," said the restaurateur, who returned in 2008 from France where he studied marketing and management. But he still waited for several years after the 2011 fall of Tunisian dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali before beginning his bold culinary venture.

doors under the daring name and logo of a figure resembling North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un but also sporting a Hitler moustache. The Tunisian authorities were "very much disturbed", Ben Hammouda told AFP, and a wave of municipal and even some state officials descended on "Le Dictateur" to check it out. The reasons they gave were that his paperwork and the hygienic conditions on the premises had to pass muster.

However, Ben Hammouda was also directly asked to change the establishment's name and logo—"to avoid problems", as he was advised by one minister. The project was all considered "a bit shocking", Ben Hammouda said. But the fuss that was whipped up in the media only served to advertise "Le Dictateur" and bring in a stream of curious punters. "The first time I came was to see what it looked like, this 'culinary dictatorship' that was so upsetting the authorities," said Malek.

He spoke as he was about to tuck into a "Citizen" salad and "Salazar" pasta named after Portugal's late dictator, Antonio de Oliveira Salazar. "Le Dictateur" was eventually given permission to keep its bold restaurant sign, after a compromise was struck in which the Kim-look-alike logo was stripped of its toothbrush moustache. "I'm enormously thankful to the authorities for all the free publicity," said Ben Hammouda, who stressed that the quality of the food remained his priority. Hungry first-time visitor Chawki was eager to find out if the fare on offer lived up to the hype. "Thinking about these dictators can put you off your meal. But let's hope the food is good," he said. — AFP

Scrutinized by officials

Only last March did the restaurant open its





Cara Delevingne attends the premiere of EuropaCorp and STX Entertainment's 'Valerian and The City of a Thousand Planets' at TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California. — AFP

Delevingne: Model, actress 'hopeless romantic'

The world's press are gathered at a news conference for Luc Besson's "Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets" and Dane DeHaan is waxing lyrical about co-star Cara Delevingne. The pair spent six months in Paris filming as intergalactic special ops agents Valerian and Laureline in the \$180 million blockbuster, which comes out today, and DeHaan was clearly bowled over by Delevingne's infectious joie de vivre.

"I was just so happy to see her every day and be around her and feed off that energy," DeHaan told reporters at the event in Beverly Hills. It sounds like the usual mutual back-slapping in which actors indulge on promotional tours but he is clearly being sincere, and in any case it is the kind of observation frequently made by people who have worked with the 24-year-old Londoner.

One of the world's most in-demand models, Delevingne has earned millions of dollars walking the runways of London, Paris and Milan for the likes of Burberry and Chanel, and graced countless covers of Vogue. But acting has always been her first love. Her rise in movies since her debut in Joe Wright's "Anna Karenina" (2012) alongside Keira Knightley has been swift, with starring parts in teen fable "Paper Towns" and the super-villain blockbuster "Suicide Squad."

Role model

Making the transition into acting when you are already well-known is not as easy as it looks. Former sports stars and other celebrities often observe that while their famous faces get them auditions, they have to work twice as hard to be taken seriously. Two years ago, Delevingne appeared on a local US morning talk show to promote "Paper Towns" and was asked a series of patronizing questions, including whether she had read the source novel by John Green. Not only had she done her homework, but she has since written a coming-of-age novel of her own.

"There will always be people like that, no matter what," she told AFP in an interview after the news conference. "I think it's just another opportunity for me to stand my ground and prove I have done the work. I do work very hard and I'm determined to prove those people wrong." An influential voice on social media with more than 40 million Instagram followers, Delevingne has been praised for being a beacon to teenagers struggling with their emotions by speaking openly about her bisexuality and her battles with depression as a 15-year-old. "I'm very blessed to have a strong influence with young girls and teenagers," she said. "That's been my goal since I was younger, to be a role model, for young girls to be able to look up to me, because I'm following every single one of my dreams that I've had in my life through hard work and determination."

'Natural born actress'

When he was casting for the part of Laureline, Besson immediately thought of Delevingne as an actress who could live up to the spirit of empowerment her brave, whip-smart character embodies as Valerian's crime-fighting equal. "She became a model by accident because a scout guy met her and said, 'You will take good pictures.' But she's not made for that," Besson told AFP. "She succeeds at that because she's funny but for me she's a natural born actress. I was amazed by her capacity and I think she's at the beginning of a long, long career."

Critics have observed that the character of Laureline is something of a paradox—an intrepid, independent woman who nevertheless defines her happiness in terms of her success in finding love. "That's what I love about life generally, the dichotomies of everything. Of course I understand the whole thing of wanting to be a woman who can look after herself and be completely independent," Delevingne told AFP. —AFP

Q&A: Casey Affleck goes under a sheet for 'A Ghost Story'

Casey Affleck plays the ghost in the new David Lowery film, "A Ghost Story." For most of the movie, expanding wide Friday, he's silent and cloaked in a white sheet with eye holes cut out as he returns to his home to look in on his still-living partner played by Rooney Mara. It's a weird, wild, sometimes funny and breathtakingly gorgeous film that will leave you thinking about the big ideas of love, life, eternity.

Affleck, coming off of a best actor win for "Manchester by the Sea" and an awards season marred by intense public scrutiny around a past civil sexual harassment lawsuit, is dipping his toes back in the spotlight to promote the film. He spoke to The Associated Press about his year and moving on. This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

AP: Congratulations on "A Ghost Story." It is not a scary film per se, but it has truly haunted me.

AFFLECK: It's been great how much people have responded to it. Usually you have some sense of what a movie is going to be and this is probably the film that turned out most differently than what I expected.

AP: The ghost costume you have to wear is incredible.

AFFLECK: I can't think of another single costume in another movie where so much of the movie depended on it working. The sheet looks simple but it wasn't just a sheet and it was hard to get it to look that way. It was a perfect balance of not being exactly scary, but not seeming silly and also not seeming slapdash.

AP: How did they convince you to be in a movie where you are acting through a sheet most of the time?

AFFLECK: I may be unusual, I can't say for sure in this regard, but when I heard that I was like, "I'm totally in." The idea of being hidden somehow was so appealing to me. And David doesn't have to persuade me. I have so much fun working with him and Rooney and his producers. It was a three-second conversation.

AP: People have really latched on to that long take of Rooney eating the pie.

AFFLECK: There was quite a bit of build up to that. What kind of pie is it going to be? Where is the pie coming from? Who is making the pie? Rooney had strangely never eaten a pie which is the weirdest thing. There are lots of things I haven't eaten, but you'd think a pie is something you'd have come across at some point.

AP: It's a fairly contemplative film, do you think it has a broader audience than just cinephiles?

AFFLECK: I don't really consider myself a cinephile. I have pretty mainstream tastes. I have an appetite for some difficult movies like Tarkovsky movies or Bela Tarr movies. But I also kind of really just love "World War Z" too. And I love this movie. I think it's really, really moving and romantic and sweet and full of ideas that I wasn't really aware of. A good movie tends to bring out all of these ideas from other things that you read and this movie does that in a way that's really accessible. I don't think it's a weird,

esoteric, experimental art house movie at all. It's very touching, just not dumbed down.

AP: You've worked with David three times now, what do you think his future holds?

AFFLECK: I think he's one of our most interesting directors. I would bet that he has a very long career marked by very different types of movies in the same vein as the Coen brothers or Stanley Kubrick. And I bet, just like those guys, there will be a few masterpieces in there.

AP: And you're directing a feature now too called "Light of My Life"?

AFFLECK: Just finished a first cut. It's torture. You have to sit there with something you wrote, acted in, were there every day directing. You see the first (cut) and think, "Wow, I've made one of the worst movies of all time." I've been reassured by directors who I really love who make great movies that that's always their experience too.

AP: Finally, the year was coupled with both a professional high in your best actor win and intense public scrutiny of you personally. Do you have any reflections on that experience?

AFFLECK: There were very high moments and there were some difficult challenges. Winning an Oscar was such a high it was an out of body experience. I was genuinely honored by that and the other awards for "Manchester." Publicizing a movie is, you know, something that I'm used to. That's part of my job and I have no complaints talking about the work. The challenges of being spoken about personally in the media were very sobering and they really hurt, especially my family which is what I really cared about.

And it was confusing because it was all so at odds with my core values. The more kindness and compassion we can find for all people, the better all our lives will be. And I believe harassment of any kind is completely unacceptable. Bullying and mistreatment of anyone is totally abhorrent. Everyone should be treated with respect in the workplace and anywhere else. That's what I teach my kids and it's how I try to live my life.

However, I couldn't and can't talk about it as it related to me because everyone involved signed something saying we wouldn't talk about it and that it has been settled to the mutual satisfaction of all parties. That's all we can say. So I am just trying to move on. Period. Ultimately, I am really glad that there's a heightened cultural awareness around those issues. I took my kids to the Women's March in Vancouver where I was working and there were a lot of people there. It was a family event and I got the sense that this generation of kids growing up, my own included, are going to be filled with a sense of activist empowerment and they're going to be loud voices for social justice. I think that that might be the silver lining. — AP



In this file photo, actor Casey Affleck arrives at the 2013 AFI Fest premiere of 'Out of the Furnace' in Los Angeles.



This image released by A24 shows Rooney Mara in a scene from the film, "A Ghost Story."

—AP photos

Pair salmon with beans and you've got a hearty summer supper



By Melissa D'arabian

Sometimes, it's just too hot to turn on the stove. The key is to stock up your kitchen with "healthy convenience food" that doesn't require any heat, such as fresh produce, canned beans, canned fish and small boxes of pre-cooked legumes found in the prepared produce section. You can throw together a hearty meal in minutes without breaking a sweat. Sure, you will pay an extra dollar or two for steamed lentils, for instance, but if having a well-stocked fridge keeps you from hitting the drive-thru even once, then you'll come ahead financially (and nutritionally).

Canned salmon is one of my favorite healthy fast-foods. When it goes on sale, you can stock up the pantry with a few cans of it, making wild salmon downright inexpensive. Not only is canned salmon full of protein (12 g grams of protein per 2 ounces of fish) and omega-3 fatty acids, but it actually has more calcium than its fresh counterpart, since the small bones stay in the meat (and go unnoticed; remove any large bones, however). Pair the salmon with beans or legumes plus some chopped fresh vegetables and vinaigrette, and you've got a dish hearty enough for a summertime supper. And it will keep nicely in the fridge, so you can graze on this fiber and protein filled salad for a day or two no problem.

Today's recipe, a Lentil and Salmon Salad with Smoky Mustard Dressing, was inspired by my favorite bagel toppings - red onion, tomato, capers, salmon and a hint of smokiness in the vinaigrette, which elevates the canned salmon into a little wink at lox. The flavors marry into a surprisingly complex dish, never hinting at the fact that this recipe is of the 5-minute-dump-stir-and-serve variety.

LENTIL AND SALMON SALAD WITH SMOKY MUSTARD DRESSING

Ingredients

Servings: 6
 Start to finish: 10 minutes
 2 1/2 cups cooked lentils
 2 medium tomatoes, chopped (about 1 1/2 cups)
 1 medium cucumber, seeded and chopped (about 1 cup)
 1/4 medium red onion, chopped
 3 tablespoons capers
 8 ounces canned wild salmon, large bones and skin removed
 1/4 cup lightly chopped dill leaves
 1/3 cup Lemon-Dijon vinaigrette, recipe follows
 Salt and pepper
 Lemon-Dijon Vinaigrette:
 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
 1 teaspoon smoked paprika
 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
 1 tablespoon water
 3 tablespoons olive oil
 Salt and pepper

Preparation

Mix (or layer) the lentils, tomatoes, onion, cucumber, capers and salmon in a large salad bowl or on a platter. In a small bowl, whisk together the mustard, smoked paprika, lemon juice, vinegar and water until smooth. Drizzle in the olive oil while whisking to make an emulsion. Season with salt and pepper. Pour 1/3 cup of the dressing over the salad. Top with the fresh dill leaves. Toss and enjoy. Serve on leafy greens, if desired. Will keep for two days in refrigerator, in covered glass container. — AP

Nutrition information per serving

211 calories; 64 calories from fat; 7 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 25 mg cholesterol; 364 mg sodium; 20 g carbohydrate; 8 g fiber; 3 g sugar; 18 g protein.

Go ahead, dive into the veggie noodle world with 'zoodles'

By Melissa D'Arabian

Vegetable "noodles" are super trendy, and summer is the best time to make them since the king of veggie noodle - zucchini - is ubiquitous, and inexpensive. Go ahead and load up, because zucchini is a true powerhouse of vitamins. One cup provides over a third of your daily vitamin C, and about 10 percent of five additional vitamins and minerals, and weighs in at under 20 calories.

While "zoodles" are easily the most popular noodle, noodles can be made from a variety of vegetables. Try other summer squashes, winter squash such as butter-nut, beet, carrot, sweet potato, and parsnips. Veggie noodles are easy to make, too. You can buy an inexpensive spiralizer to make quick work of cutting perfectly-shaped noodles.

Or, you can even use your vegetable peeler to shave long, thin ribbons from your vegetables; no special equipment needed. Cooking the noodles is quick: usually by steaming or sauteeing briefly. Some veggies, like summer squash, can be left completely raw if you want, and made into a cold summer noodle-like salad.

If you have been seeking the perfect recipe to dip your toe in the veggie noodle world, today's recipe is perfect. Sunshine

Vegetable Ribbons can be made in mere minutes using only a vegetable peeler and a pan as equipment. The flavors are bright and familiar: a little garlic, lemon, toasted pine nuts and nutty parmesan cheese. Serve this as a pretty first course, as a side dish or even as a vegetarian main course with a thick slice of crusty Italian bread on the side. Once you've mastered the vegetable peeler noodle, get creative and explore the endless options for this new technique, swapping in vegetables for pasta in your favorite recipes.

2 zucchini
2 teaspoons olive oil
1 garlic clove, minced
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons toasted pine nuts
1 ounce parmesan cheese, shaved into shards with a vegetable peeler
Lemon zest or fresh herbs for garnish, optional
Freshly ground black pepper

SUNSHINE VEGETABLE RIBBONS

Ingredients

Servings: 4
Start to finish: 15 minutes
2 large carrots, peeled
2 crookneck squashes (yellow summer squash)

Preparation

Use a vegetable peeler to shave long, thin ribbons (like flat noodles) of the vegetables. (You will likely have a thin core remaining of each vegetable that you'll have to use for another purpose.) Heat the olive oil over medium heat in a large saute pan. Add the garlic and saute for one minute, until fragrant. Add the vegetable ribbons, a pinch of salt, and stir. Add the lemon juice and cover with a lid for just one minute (or longer if you want very soft ribbons). Remove the lid, and remove from heat. Serve on four plates, topped with pine nuts, parmesan cheese, black pepper and lemon zest or fresh herbs, if desired. — AP



A Conversation of Ice and Fire: Diving into the world of Game of Thrones



Episode I

By Aakash and Vishal Bakaya

'Game of Thrones', the world's biggest cultural phenomenal landed this week and I thought - 'what better way to celebrate the occasion than reviewing it with my brother'. My elder brother Vishal and I are both mega fans of 'Song of Ice and Fire' and we'll be taking a look at each episode this season and provide a run-down and re-cap of all the major and minor moments. Episode 1 'Dragonstone' got the season off to a rough start but before we get to the season opener, let's provide a small glimpse of our take on the show.

We both agree the show has lost its way in recent years, when did the flaws really start?

Vishal: The flaws really started from season 5 onwards. I was a book reader before I watched the show yet the first 5 seasons of the show seemed almost faultless. GOT didn't seem to have those hiccups that plague most adaptations and it really seemed to do the books justice. The flaws I mainly refer to now are evident - there's a lack of nuance and a clumsy attitude towards the story telling with the numerous plot holes and having characters going from one place to another in an instant. Also entire scenes seem to simply set up social media talking points (which used to be organic once) and these attempts to almost 'pander' to the audience really sticks out, even more so in a fantasy setting.

Aakash: Yeah the fifth season was definitely the weakest run of the show. It gave us the notorious 'Sansa marries Ramsay' plot and of course Dorne. I remember being really excited for the 5th season. One of my first entertainment articles was 'Why you should be watching Game of Thrones' which I wrote in anticipation of the 5th season. It started with the killing of the King Beyond the Wall in such lackluster fashion and before it could settle down after that they threw Sansa in Winterfell. The sixth season was buried with those same issues. Character development completely stalled with Dany and Arya going nowhere...

V: The horrendous, lazy dialogues that make the characters sound like they were born in 1991.

A: The show tends to forget they are writing in a medieval/fantasy setting and this 'modern' writing tone really stands out.

Getting to the 7th season - how did the first episode do

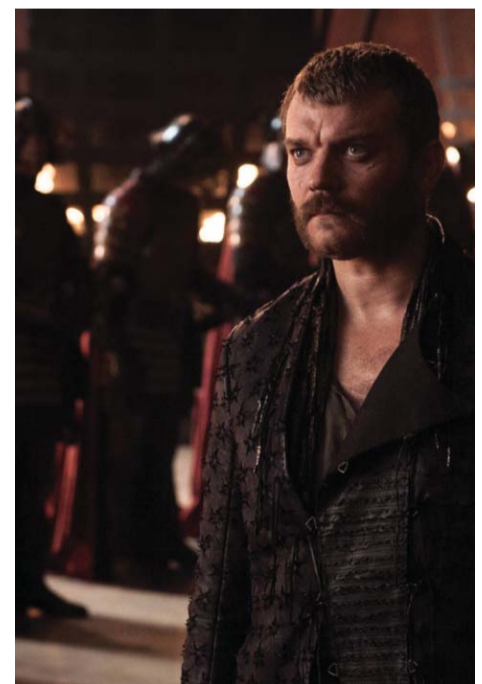
A: Like the 5 season openers before it, the show was resetting the board. The common phrase used for this is 'resetting the chess pieces' - a term I don't really like using.

V: I think it's also called 'table-setting'?

A: 'Table-setting' does sounds more apt. In any case, the episode was filled with it. It got some characters in new locations and reiterated

where we left them in the last season. But it seemed slower than the other season openers for some reason.

V: It was the repetition. Like the Jon scene takes place maybe 5 minutes after where we left off. It also felt similar because once again we get Lyanna Mormont shouting at someone 50 years her senior. Also Arya was still in the same Frey hall and she ends up doing the same thing but on a slightly bigger scale.



A: Yeah I wish they did something different with setting this time for Arya's latest killing spree. Maybe a little set-up would have made things more interesting instead of the bland, soulless scene we end up getting.

V: In contrast however, when we move to King's Landing, the scene shines because it feels like things have progressed beyond the Sept explosion and we are getting this really intense scene between two characters who have no clue how to feel about each other anymore.

A: It was easily the best scene of the episode. They allowed Lena and Nicolas to really act off each other which is refreshing because so much of the current style of character dialogue has been exposition dumps. When Jamie brings up Tommen and you see Cersei still in denial, you can really see the characters struggling in their own personal turmoil. It shows how much depth the actors can bring to the table when given the chance.

The final scene with Dany though feels exactly the opposite because she ends up just staring at things. The significance of her finally going back home is muted and strangely emotionless. The fact that her character hasn't got even the bare minimum of character development in the last few seasons really starts to show here.

V: None, not at all. The scene was good aesthetically but it was drawn out for much too long. The writers also seem to have forgotten Tyrion is a main character and could have at least used him to provide some wit or significance to the setting.

Minor/side characters - where do we go now?

A: Something D and D (the creators) can do to redeem themselves is to really flesh out and make the minor characters great again. For example, Davos is really starting to feel really useless now. I don't see his expertise being used by either the writers or by the people around him. The Hound has some potential but I don't know how he or the Brotherhood without Banners can help so much.

V: According to the episodes plot device AKA staring into the fire - they are set to head towards Eastwatch by the Sea. So we might get a tag-team with them and the Wildlings who are heading there as well. They are definitely setting up something there but as of now it looks interesting at least.

A: Let's get to Varys and Littlefinger - our spy masters and prominent players of the Game of Thrones since the very beginning. They also are seemingly...redundant? Pointless?

V: I feel like the nature of the characters aren't as useful. Now when the show is moving towards giant battles, magic and White-Walkers their political schemes aren't really being used at all.

A: True but they remain key players though. They've moved from the council in King's Landing to their own chosen councils - one in

the North and the other now in Dragonstone. Hopefully D&D give them something or anything to work with.

Characterization of our major players both old and new

A: So let's get to characters we haven't touched on yet mainly - Arya, Sam and the re-introduction of Euron as the new lead singer of Avenged Sevenfold. So Arya has come a long way from getting stabbed last season. Her ability to regenerate her wounds and murder at will would make even Deadpool a little jealous.

V: Deadpool has way more personality than current Arya.

A: And is able to crack a joke once in a while. In any case, she's just killed an entire House and it looks like she's heading to the capital which I would prefer. I feel there's more room for her character to grow there rather than just go to Winterfell, which is one of the show's last major emotional story beats.

V: Her journey in previous seasons really showed the vast spectrum of what her character was going through. From childish innocence to dealing with tragedy and trying to understand her growth process, you really wanted to see how she is going to deal with her current situation. Bravos halted that progress tremendously and gave us little to no real growth and she started to become more and more two-dimensional.

A: She's also suffering from the burden of the writers putting this heavy plot armor on her and it makes everything both uninteresting and predictable. Getting to Sam Tarly for a moment, how are you finding his character development especially after he has being put in this new, difficult and sh*t-filled scenario in Oldtown.

V: As a character, I don't feel like Sam has too many problems right now. All credit to the actor, he's still believable and consistent as Sam. He's still the guy determined to do the right thing and even though he's been put in Oldtown and they are overworking him like hell - he's not type of person to easily give up. Still you feel for him throughout and that's not something I can say for most of the major players anymore.

A: Ok so finally let's get to Euron. I hate when characters take a complete 360 degree turn in between seasons and this is no exception. Trying to avoid comparisons to the book version



who is a completely different person all together, I find this new Euron very...comedic. I'm sure he wasn't trying to be funny but I ended up laughing at his bad Jack Sparrow-like swagger and goofy attitude. The fact that he looked like he's on tour with a nu-metal band made that scene all the more hilarious.

V: I don't get why they had to make him childish in a way. It's hard to take him even remotely seriously in his current state. If he ends up becoming the chief antagonist of the season (that's not a White Walker), it's going to be very sad. Like you brought up, they keep changing his mannerisms and it comes off more confusing than anything else. Who knows maybe in his next scene he'll have a mohawk and start singing Linkin Park's 'In The End'.

A: If nothing else, I too am anticipating more top-notch comedy from Euron.

Hopes for the season ahead

V: I am clinging to a very slim hope that the rest of the season at least veers towards elements that made the show so popular. Things like great characters, unpredictable plot developments and paying a little more attention to detail. Given that we only have seven episodes this season, we might see a lot more of the characters teleport and other occurrences of lazy writing like that.

A: Totally agree. I hope they've looked back at the earlier seasons as a whole and remember what made those episodes really work even in isolation. I also hope they've stayed away from social media reactions and give us something truer to the world George created for the finale. Understandably it's hard for the creators themselves to keep things fresh seven seasons. D&D clearly want to wrap things up but that shouldn't consume their entire mentality.



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Trek Nar Phu and escape

Nepal's

apple pie trail



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The ancient entrance gate to Phu village.

If you love trekking but can't live without wi-fi or banana pancakes, stop reading now. Snaking off from Nepal's legendary Annapurna Circuit, the wild, rarely-visited, valleys of Nar and Phu are slowly opening up to independent trekkers, offering a window onto one of Nepal's most untouched, Tibetan-influenced quarters.

Leaving the Apple Pie Trail

In the company of an obligatory guide, I started my expedition at Koto (2600m), a small village on the Annapurna Circuit route, kissing goodbye to the creature comforts of pizza, apple pie and Facebook updates. Within minutes of joining the narrow, unmarked trail, the number of trekkers slowed to a trickle. For the next seven days, I would see more porters than walkers on this 'blink and you'd miss it' track. With no roads or mechanized transport, all goods enter Nar Phu this way, carried by mule, yak or human muscle.

Climbing onwards through lush conifer forests above the raging white-water of the Nar Khola, there was little to do but soak up the sounds of nature. A cluster of simple bhattis (food stalls) made for a pleasant lunch stop before the trail beat an increasingly vertiginous path towards the treeline. Breathlessly, I gained the ridge at a lonely chorten (stupa) and basked in front of sensational views of the coming route - aloof, snow-capped peaks, brittle, jagged cliffs, and deep, plummeting gorges.

After crossing the stream on a wobbly suspension bridge, I spotted a dusty mule trail zigzagging west, high above the gravity-defying monastery of Nar Phedi, but that would come later in the trek. First, I needed to tackle the barren ridges and sheer rock walls of the winding Phu valley, striking north towards Tibet. I could feel the altitude as I rolled into Meta (3530m), set in a high bowl on the valley side, where a simple lodge offered a meal of daal bhaat (lentil and rice) and a rustic bed for the night.



The crude trail tracing the cliffs towards Phu



Vast, empty terrain looking down from the Kang La.

Striking north to Phu

To ease with acclimatization, I spent an extra night at Meta, passing the time with a gentle day trek towards the base camp for ascents of Kang Garu peak (6981m), before continuing north, on a path that dipped in and out of deep ravines as it slowly twisted towards Phu. The effects of the Annapurna rain shadow became increasingly apparent as the landscape became rougher and drier, with fantastically eroded cliffs and gnarled, stunted juniper bushes.

Every time I heard a stone dislodged from above, I scanned the slopes for a glimpse of wild tahr (mountain goat) or blue sheep, both often seen on these rugged trails. Eventually, the trail climbed onto the high pastures around ruined Chyakhu (3700m), where a brace of bhattis served up a welcome meal of daal bhaat, fuel for the final push to Phu. It took several more hours, following a narrow, precipitous gorge, to reach the crumbling entrance gate to Phu. The village itself though was still half an hour away, and I was glad to drop my pack when I finally reached Phu's solitary lodge.

It's wise to spend to spend two days in Phu because of the altitude, a giddy 4070m, so I devoted the time to exploring the village, a stack of Tibetan-style mud and stone houses, bedecked with prayer flags and crowned by

stacks of firewood. The upper part of Phu village suffered extensive earthquake damage and was mostly in ruins, but a set of steep switchbacks delivered me to the doorstep of Tashi Lhakhang Gumpa, further up the ridge, where a friendly nun proffered a cup of butter tea and invited me to view the shrine's inner sanctum.

Those with time could spend several happy days exploring the ridges around Phu. Above Tashi Lhakhang Gumpa, with its 360 degree views, a wild trail strikes north towards Tibet, while a more easterly track tracks the glacial moraine to Himlung Base camp (4920m). For less ambitious trekkers, there are awe-inspiring views from the bowl-shaped hanging valley that perches enticingly atop the terraced fields rising above Phu village.

Winding west to Nar

After an uneasy, altitude-affected sleep, I donned my pack once again and retraced my steps back along the Phu Khola, striking west just before Meta on the same trail I had spotted on my way north. A low suspension bridge at the base of eroded hoodoos provided access to the charming monastery at Nar Phedi (3510m), set on a serene ledge surrounded by fluttering prayer flags, nightmare ravines and sawtooth pinnacles. Despite their humble circumstances, the monks offer lodgings for trekkers and I sat with the novices on

their evening puja (prayer) ceremony before joining in a hearty communal meal of thukpa (Tibetan noodle soup). Sleep came easier at this lower altitude, and I was well rested for the climb to Nar. A twisting trail carried me up above the clouds, passing scattered mule trains and an atmospheric octagonal chorten, before a bend in the trail revealed the green barley fields of Nar village (4180m), stacked against the hillside. The sun was still high in the sky, leaving plenty of time to explore the dirt paths winding between stone houses and ancient Kagyud school gompas, and that evening, I stocked up on extra carbs in preparation for the high point of the trek literally: the 5320m Kang La (5320m).

Reaching this lofty eyrie is a much more challenging undertaking than the legendary Thorung La (5416m) on the Annapurna Circuit. Above Nar, benign pastures soon give way to lose scree and rocky moraine, and a crudely-defined path, switches back and forth past tattered prayer flags, to reach several spirit-crushing false summits before finally cresting the misty, knife-edge pass. Gasping for breath, I paused to take a congratulatory selfie on the boot-wide high-point and scanned the landscape. I could pick out the distant houses of Manang, the thin ribbon of Humde airstrip, and the main Annapurna circuit, two vertical kilometers below, while the

snow-capped crags of Annapurna III and IV hijacked the horizon.

The final day promised long hours of testing trekking, descending tentatively at an insanely steep angle before the path leveled out onto open scree slopes. Here, the loose gravel worked in my favor as I was able to almost ski down the slopes, crossing yards with each skittering slide. From here, it was downhill all the way to Ngawal (3750m), the final stop on the trek. Nevertheless, my knees were close to crumpling as I finally rolled into the village, where the Annapurna Circuit trinity of banana pancakes, apple pie and wi-fi awaited. After a week off the apple-pie trail, I wasn't entirely sad to rejoin the merry throng.

Nar Phu Practicalities

Nar Phu is a restricted area, and trekkers can only enter with a special permit, which must be issued through an accredited trekking agency, who will also arrange the obligatory guide. At the time of writing, the cost for the Nar Phu permit ranged from US\$75 to \$90 depending on the season; this is only valid for seven days so you must complete the trek in this timeframe. Be aware of the risk of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS) on this route; there is a large altitude gain from Koto to Meta and it is essential to be acclimatized to conditions above 3000m before attempting this trek. (www.lonelyplanet.com)



The skies swirl above Nar Phedi Gumpa



Villagers returning from the fields near Phu



Aries (March 21-April 19)

In the workplace today, you perform successfully, as you exhibit your ability to get past the surface of things and separate the thing that has real worth. Your presence in a group situation has a decided effect. Others may feel that nothing is a secret from you. You do not have to leave home to escape from the rat race. Family, home and security seem just about ideal to you. You may be very imaginative with your home and domestic setup. A sense of community and unity permeates your family life. Your ideal dream is a private one and heaven is as close as work and family. You are creative when it comes to partnerships or lovers; you seem to establish unusual and different relationships. You may find that a love relationship will deepen during this time.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This day is one of those amazing days when everything works together. Situations are almost tailor-made and it is easy to see which path is the one to take. Opportunities prevail and you may find yourself deciding that it is time to write a book. You certainly have enough material to write on any one of your favorite subjects. There may be some question in your mind about needing a change in your position at work. Check out the inner-office openings and you will be able to move into a place that gives you some challenges. You may decide to do some special cooking this evening, and if you have your windows open, you may find some uninvited guests are willing to taste your experimental recipe. Everybody has fun!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You are always interested in being of help to others. You enjoy teaching or helping young people use their creative mind with their use of words. Your sense of humor is not missing from your communications today. There are many practical ideas available to you, especially related to your job or skills. Careful, a customer may tell you a sad story to get a special deal. You appreciate, care and are concerned but not much can fool you. This afternoon you may enjoy a community project. Perhaps you and your family will help to contribute towards the beautification of your neighborhood. If everyone participates, the value of property could increase. You are constantly on the side of humanism at every turn.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You could be most persuasive with others and expressive in speech and communication. You are a natural for self-expression and others enjoy listening to your particular ideas and thoughts. The initiative is yours and you will find positive end results develop from your enthusiasm to achieve. This is a day to dare to be a little unconventional. You will prosper through new insights, inventions and an independent point of view. Your career could open up by taking the road less traveled or by daring to be more involved in the development of business: new approaches. You are inspired to motivate others with your creative and inventive ways. What-if types of questions seem to be the keys that turn you into the wizard all enjoy having on their side.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may find yourself having a difference of opinion with others today. This, however, is the only way to introduce new ways of thinking among your particular business comrades. Make it a point to remove the emotions, and if you find others getting emotional, excuse yourself from the conversation. There will be other opportunities to expand upon some new idea. Given time, your ideas will gain recognition. Real insight into your own inner workings could surface now and in a manageable form. You may be in the mood for penetrating conversation this evening. Perhaps a book or magazine on the latest electronic techniques would be mesmerizing. A friend you have not heard from in some time may give you a call. Old times are fun to review.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Throwing caution to the wind, you could ignore whatever responsibilities you have and pursue a particular objective today. You have animal-like instincts when it comes to big business and this is a good time to use those instincts. You are where the action is most intense. Your mind will get through the unimportant and straight to the bottom line. Some may even respect your tenacity and it is exciting to be near you. You may tend to take paths at right angles to your real ambitions if you let yourself become distracted. If you have a co-worker friend that will join you in a project, you can keep each other focused; talk about staying focused before you begin. This afternoon you may enjoy some creative activity with some form of art, theater, sports, etc.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a very lucky day for making plans or decisions and finding your way through just about any problem you may uncover. You will be feeling successful and able to cope with whatever comes across your path. Good advice from a guide may be forthcoming. You are very fortunate in being able to grow and progress throughout your life without major difficulties. You can always find the resources you require at hand plus the necessary instruction in how to use them. Your love of job and practical skills makes you a fine manager and businessperson. You bring passion to your work. Your mind is full of practical ideas, especially related to your job or skills. You are always coming up with new ideas; this is a productive day.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

A rebellious streak could affect your career now-careful. Your sense of independence may tend to kick over the apple cart and upset everything. Your progress and success may be at the expense of your more unconventional tendencies-a source of struggle. You prefer a career that accents your own devotion to the dreams and ideals you stand for these days. Working with groups in a spirit of cooperation is a natural. Everything conspires to value and to bring out your unique and unusual qualities. You may find that someone close to you understands and is supportive of your eccentricities. You could come up with new solutions. There is an opportunity this evening to understand a difficult person; you listen and love.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You would like to tell someone off at work today but you will benefit from just moving your thoughts to another place. . . Perhaps the next adventure you will take with the money you earn. You are at your most practical when it comes to working with others and your efforts today do not go unnoticed. You usually know just what to do. You may be moved to appreciate the beauty in your life and those around you. A sense of humor is one of the necessary ingredients to make a tough situation easier to handle. Be careful that you do not overspend or indulge too much just now. You may feel like involving yourself in some sort of celebration this evening-a celebration of life. There are new insights regarding home life.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

A rebellious streak could affect your career now-careful. Your sense of independence may tend to kick over the apple cart and upset everything. Your progress and success may be at the expense of your more unconventional tendencies-a source of struggle. You prefer a career that accents your own devotion to the dreams and ideals you stand for these days. Working with groups in a spirit of cooperation is a natural. Everything conspires to value and to bring out your unique and unusual qualities. You may find that someone close to you understands and is supportive of your eccentricities. You could come up with new solutions. There is an opportunity this evening to understand a difficult person; you listen and love.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

There is an emphasis on communication, expression of ideas and the connections between things, places and people. What goes on in your mind is the all-important motivation in your life. You tend towards mental pursuits and admire intelligence. You are very flexible and other-oriented today. Perhaps you can be all things to all people, giving them what they require. You are probably a smooth talker with a quick wit and ready tongue. You know and understand more than you let on and life changes seldom take you by surprise. You have a great deal of control over your actions. Communicating and getting your message across to others is at a high just now. You know just how to maneuver yourself into the right places; now is the time to get ahead.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Others may try to sway you from your project today. Allow for the interruptions and then you can return to your choice activity. You know that spring has sprung with all the beauty around you. A trip to the park with a sketchpad may allow you to bring a sample of spring into your own home. Give your charitable urges attention and find something that really gives you great joy to contribute your time and energies toward-at least once every two weeks. Today you may decide to join a therapeutic horsemanship group that aids handicapped people. You will find many rewards when you volunteer in surroundings that make you happy. This evening is a good time for surrounding yourself with friends. A new novel keeps you busy tonight.

COUNTRY CODES

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



00:20 Wheeler Dealers
 01:05 Ocean Warriors
 01:50 How Do They Do It?
 02:35 Storage Hunters UK
 03:20 Fast N' Loud
 04:05 Mega Shippers
 04:50 Gold Rush
 05:35 How Do They Do It?
 06:00 Blowing Up History
 06:45 Strip The City
 07:30 Gold Divers
 08:15 Deadliest Catch
 09:00 How Do They Do It?
 09:25 The Island With Bear Grylls
 10:10 The Wheel: Survival Games
 10:55 Megastorm: World's Biggest Typhoon
 11:40 Mega Trains
 12:25 How Do They Do It?
 12:47 Fast N' Loud
 13:32 How It's Made: Dream Cars
 14:17 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
 15:02 Strip The City
 20:10 How Do They Do It?
 20:35 How Do They Do It?
 21:00 Fast N' Loud
 21:50 Sacred Steel Bikes
 22:40 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
 23:30 Deadliest Catch



00:00 The First 48
 01:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
 02:00 Homicide Hunter
 03:00 The First 48
 05:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
 06:00 Evil Up Close
 07:00 Evil Up Close
 08:00 The First 48
 09:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
 10:00 Killers
 11:00 Killers: Behind The Myth
 12:00 Killers: Behind The Myth
 13:00 Killers: Behind The Myth
 14:00 The First 48
 15:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
 16:00 Evil Up Close
 17:00 Homicide Hunter
 18:00 Homicide Hunter
 19:00 The First 48
 20:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
 21:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
 22:00 The Killing Of Jonbenet: Her Father Speaks



00:30 The Big Brain Theory
 01:20 Weather Top Tens
 02:10 Storm Chasers
 03:00 Destroyed In Seconds
 03:25 Destroyed In Seconds
 03:50 Ultimate Survival
 04:40 How It's Made
 05:05 How It's Made
 05:30 Dirty Jobs
 06:20 Mythbusters
 07:00 Doki
 07:25 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
 07:50 Bad Dog
 08:40 How It's Made
 09:05 How It's Made
 09:30 The Big Brain Theory
 10:20 Mythbusters
 11:10 React To That
 11:35 React To That
 12:00 React To That
 12:25 React To That
 12:50 React To That
 13:15 React To That
 13:40 React To That
 14:05 React To That
 14:30 Doki
 14:55 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
 15:20 Bad Dog
 16:10 The Big Brain Theory
 17:00 Now That's Funny
 17:50 The Carbonaro Effect
 18:15 The Carbonaro Effect
 18:40 Troy
 19:30 How It's Made
 19:55 How It's Made
 20:20 Mythbusters
 21:10 Now That's Funny
 22:00 The Carbonaro Effect
 22:25 The Carbonaro Effect
 22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
 23:15 Destroyed In Seconds



00:00 Hank Zipzer
 00:25 Alex & Co.
 00:45 The Hive
 00:50 Evermoor Chronicles
 01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 02:05 Binny And The Ghost
 02:55 Hank Zipzer
 03:15 The Hive
 03:20 Hank Zipzer
 03:45 Alex & Co.
 04:10 Alex & Co.
 04:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
 05:25 Binny And The Ghost
 05:45 The Hive
 05:50 The 7D
 06:00 Jessie
 06:50 The Adventures Of Disney Fairies
 07:15 Tsum Tsum Shorts
 07:20 Elena Of Avalor
 07:45 The Zhuzhus
 08:10 Bizaardvark
 08:35 Bunk'd
 09:00 Stuck In The Middle
 09:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
 09:50 Best Friends Whenever
 10:15 Liv And Maddie
 10:40 High School Musical
 12:20 Jessie
 12:45 Jessie
 13:10 Girl Meets World
 13:35 Austin & Ally
 14:00 Austin & Ally
 14:25 Lolirock
 14:50 The Zhuzhus
 15:15 Whisker Haven Tales With The Palace Pets

15:20 Bizaardvark
 15:45 Elena Of Avalor
 16:10 Liv And Maddie
 16:35 Geek Charming
 18:10 Welcome To The Ronks
 18:25 Alex & Co.
 18:50 Best Friends Whenever
 19:15 Star Darlings
 19:20 Liv And Maddie
 19:45 Mako Mermaids
 20:10 The Adventures Of Disney Fairies
 20:35 Cracked
 20:40 Alex & Co.
 21:05 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
 21:30 Stuck In The Middle
 21:55 Tsum Tsum Shorts
 22:00 Bunk'd
 22:50 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir



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

05:45 Loopdidoo
 06:00 Zou
 06:15 Calimero
 06:30 Loopdidoo
 06:45 Henry Hugglemonster
 07:00 Sofia The First
 07:25 PJ Masks
 07:50 The Lion Guard
 08:15 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
 08:40 Doc McStuffins
 09:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
 09:35 Disney Lights, Camera, Lexi!
 09:40 Sofia The First: The Curse Of Princess Ivy
 10:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
 11:00 PJ Masks
 11:25 Goldie & Bear
 11:50 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
 12:15 Sofia The First
 12:40 The Lion Guard
 13:10 Doc McStuffins
 13:35 PJ Masks
 14:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
 14:30 The Lion Guard
 14:55 Unbungalievable
 15:00 Goldie & Bear
 15:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
 16:00 Disney Lights, Camera, Lexi!
 16:05 Mickey's Monster Musical
 16:50 PJ Masks
 17:05 Doc McStuffins
 17:35 The Lion Guard
 18:05 PJ Masks
 18:35 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
 19:05 Sofia The First
 19:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
 20:05 The Lion Guard
 20:35 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
 21:00 Goldie & Bear



06:00 Gravity Falls
 06:25 Disney11
 06:50 Supa Strikas
 07:15 Right Now Kapow
 07:40 Future-Worm!
 08:05 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
 08:10 K.C. Undercover
 08:35 Milo Murphy's Law
 09:00 Walk The Prank
 09:25 Supa Strikas
 09:50 Gravity Falls
 10:15 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
 10:20 K.C. Undercover
 10:45 Right Now Kapow
 11:10 Lab Rats
 11:35 Mech-X4
 12:00 Teen Beach 2
 13:45 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
 14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
 14:15 Future-Worm!
 14:40 Kirby Buckets
 15:05 Lab Rats
 15:30 Walk The Prank
 15:55 Right Now Kapow
 16:25 K.C. Undercover
 16:50 Disney11
 17:15 Mech-X4
 17:40 Milo Murphy's Law
 18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
 18:10 Gravity Falls
 18:35 Lab Rats
 19:00 Supa Strikas
 19:25 Milo Murphy's Law
 19:50 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
 19:55 K.C. Undercover
 20:20 Mech-X4
 20:45 Disney11
 21:10 Walk The Prank
 21:35 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
 21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
 21:45 Lab Rats
 22:10 Lab Rats
 22:35 Phineas And Ferb
 23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am



00:05 Famously Single
 00:55 Famously Single
 01:50 E! News
 02:50 Celebrity Style Story
 03:20 Celebrity Style Story
 03:50 WAGs Miami
 04:40 WAGs Miami
 05:30 Celebrity Style Story
 06:00 La Clippers Dance Squad
 06:55 E! News
 07:10 La Clippers Dance Squad
 08:10 E! News: Daily Pop
 09:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
 12:00 E! News
 12:15 Rob & Chyna
 13:10 Rob & Chyna
 14:05 Rob & Chyna
 15:00 E! News
 15:15 E! News: Daily Pop
 16:15 Botched
 17:10 Botched
 18:05 Botched
 19:00 E! News
 20:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
 21:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
 22:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
 23:00 E! News



00:10 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
 01:00 Emmerdale
 01:30 Coronation Street
 02:00 Coronation Street
 02:30 Royal Recipes
 03:25 Prince Harry In Africa
 04:20 Royal Stories
 04:50 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs
 05:15 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
 06:10 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
 07:05 Royal Recipes
 08:00 Prince Harry In Africa
 09:00 Royal Stories
 09:30 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs
 10:00 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
 10:55 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
 11:50 Royal Recipes
 12:45 Emmerdale
 13:15 Emmerdale

13:45 Coronation Street
 14:15 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
 15:10 Royal Recipes
 16:00 Inside Windsor Castle
 16:55 Royal Stories
 17:25 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs
 17:50 Autopsy: The Last Hours Of...
 18:45 Emmerdale
 19:15 Emmerdale
 19:45 Coronation Street
 20:10 Royal Recipes
 21:00 Inside Windsor Castle
 21:55 Royal Stories
 22:25 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Dogs



00:15 Testing The Menu With Nic Watt
 00:45 The Food Files
 01:10 Carnival Eats
 01:40 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
 02:35 Island Hunter
 03:30 Street Food Around The World
 03:55 Carnival Eats
 04:25 Confucius Was A Foodie
 05:20 Cesar Millan's Dog Nation
 06:15 Dog Whisperer
 07:10 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
 08:05 Island Hunter
 09:00 Street Food Around The World
 09:25 Carnival Eats
 09:55 Confucius Was A Foodie
 10:50 Cesar Millan's Dog Nation
 11:45 Dog Whisperer
 12:40 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
 13:35 Island Hunter
 14:30 Street Food Around The World
 14:55 Carnival Eats
 15:25 Confucius Was A Foodie
 16:20 Cesar Millan's Dog Nation
 17:15 Dog Whisperer
 18:10 Chasing Time
 18:35 Chasing Time
 19:05 Confucius Was A Foodie
 20:00 Cesar Millan's Dog Nation
 21:00 Dog Whisperer
 22:00 Chasing Time
 22:25 Chasing Time
 22:55 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces



00:10 Supercar Megabuild
 01:00 Restrepo: Outpost Afghanistan
 02:00 Locked Up Abroad
 03:00 World's Most Extreme
 04:00 Supercar Megabuild
 05:00 Yukon Gold
 06:00 Science Of Stupid
 06:30 Science Of Stupid
 07:00 Primal Survivor
 08:00 Years Of Living Dangerously
 09:00 Yukon Gold
 10:00 Locked Up Abroad
 11:00 Border Wars
 12:00 China's Golden Monkeys
 13:00 Science Of Stupid
 13:30 Science Of Stupid
 14:00 Years Of Living Dangerously
 15:00 Scam City
 16:00 Locked Up Abroad
 17:00 Border Wars
 18:00 Undercover USA
 19:00 Primal Survivor
 20:00 Locked Up Abroad
 20:50 Border Wars
 21:40 Undercover USA
 22:30 Primal Survivor
 23:20 Science Of Stupid



00:20 Croc Labyrinth
 01:10 Rescue Ink
 02:00 Cobra Mafia
 02:50 The Monster Project
 03:45 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
 04:40 Prehistoric Predators
 05:35 Cobra Mafia
 06:30 The Monster Project
 07:25 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
 08:20 Prehistoric Predators
 09:15 Safari Live
 10:10 Savage Island Giants
 11:05 Mind Of A Giant
 12:00 Manta Mystery
 12:55 Hyena Coast
 13:50 The Monster Project



TEKKEN: KAZUYA'S REVENGE ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

- 14:45 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
- 15:40 Prehistoric Predators
- 16:35 David Attenborough's Rise Of Animals
- 17:30 Penguin Central
- 18:25 Hollywood Bear Tragedy
- 19:20 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
- 20:10 Prehistoric Predators
- 21:00 David Attenborough's Rise Of Animals
- 21:50 Penguin Central
- 22:40 Hollywood Bear Tragedy
- 23:30 Manta Mystery



- 00:02 Max & Ruby
- 00:26 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 00:36 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 00:46 The Day Henry Met
- 00:51 The Day Henry Met
- 00:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 01:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 01:42 Zack & Quack
- 02:03 Team Umizoomi
- 02:25 Olive The Ostrich
- 02:30 Olive The Ostrich
- 02:35 Paw Patrol
- 02:58 Little Charmers
- 03:10 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 03:21 Dora The Explorer
- 03:44 Max & Ruby
- 04:07 Nella The Princess Knight
- 04:30 Shimmer And Shine
- 04:53 Dora And Friends
- 05:16 Zack & Quack
- 05:27 The Day Henry Met
- 05:32 The Day Henry Met
- 05:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 06:00 Rusty Rivets
- 06:12 Paw Patrol
- 06:37 Dora The Explorer
- 07:00 Zack & Quack
- 07:21 Bubble Guppies
- 07:44 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 08:07 Paw Patrol
- 08:30 Shimmer And Shine
- 08:53 Nella The Princess Knight
- 09:15 The Day Henry Met
- 09:22 Paw Patrol
- 09:45 Rusty Rivets
- 09:57 Bubble Guppies
- 10:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 10:40 Zack & Quack
- 10:52 Team Umizoomi
- 11:15 Shimmer And Shine
- 11:38 Shimmer And Shine
- 12:01 Max & Ruby
- 12:25 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 12:36 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 12:47 The Day Henry Met
- 12:52 The Day Henry Met
- 12:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 13:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 13:41 Zack & Quack
- 14:03 Team Umizoomi
- 14:25 Olive The Ostrich
- 14:30 Olive The Ostrich
- 14:35 Paw Patrol
- 14:58 Little Charmers
- 15:10 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 15:22 Dora The Explorer
- 15:44 Max & Ruby
- 16:07 Nella The Princess Knight
- 16:31 Shimmer And Shine
- 16:54 Dora And Friends
- 17:17 Zack & Quack
- 17:29 The Day Henry Met
- 17:34 The Day Henry Met
- 17:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 18:00 Rusty Rivets
- 18:13 Paw Patrol
- 18:37 Dora The Explorer
- 19:00 Zack & Quack
- 19:21 Bubble Guppies
- 19:44 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 20:07 Paw Patrol
- 20:30 Shimmer And Shine
- 20:53 Nella The Princess Knight
- 21:15 The Day Henry Met
- 21:22 Paw Patrol
- 21:45 Rusty Rivets
- 21:57 Bubble Guppies
- 22:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 22:40 Zack & Quack
- 22:52 Team Umizoomi
- 23:15 Shimmer And Shine
- 23:38 Shimmer And Shine



QUANTUM OF SOLACE ON OSN MOVIES HD



- 01:10 Black Rose
- 02:40 Tekken: Kazuya's Revenge
- 04:20 Rivers Nine
- 06:00 Mission To Mars
- 08:00 Black Rose
- 09:35 Tekken: Kazuya's Revenge
- 11:10 Road Wars
- 12:45 Mission To Mars
- 14:45 Hudson Hawk
- 16:30 King Arthur
- 18:40 Road Wars
- 20:15 Hitman: Agent 47
- 22:00 We Still Kill The Old Way
- 23:40 The Dead Lands



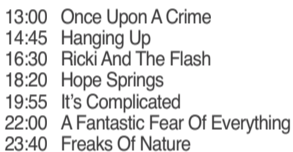
- 00:35 Hannah Montana Movie
- 02:20 Marvel Super Hero Adventures: Frost Fight
- 03:40 The Great Gilly Hopkins
- 05:20 A Bug's Life
- 07:00 Hannah Montana Movie
- 08:45 Marvel Super Hero Adventures: Frost Fight
- 10:05 Tuck Everlasting
- 11:40 The Great Gilly Hopkins
- 13:20 Meet The Robinsons
- 15:00 Hotel Transylvania 2
- 16:35 Ice Princess
- 18:20 The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement
- 20:15 Herbie Fully Loaded
- 22:00 Meet The Robinsons



- 00:00 Bram Stoker's Dracula
- 02:15 Reign Over Me
- 04:30 Quantum Of Solace
- 06:35 The Blind Side
- 08:55 The Bad News Bears
- 10:50 Quantum Of Solace
- 12:40 Sherlock Holmes
- 14:50 127 Hours
- 16:30 Gulliver's Travels
- 18:00 S.W.A.T.
- 20:00 Skyfall
- 22:25 There's Something About Mary



- 01:30 Playing It Cool
- 03:10 Parenthood
- 05:20 Crazy On The Outside
- 07:05 Confessions Of A Shopaholic
- 09:00 Parenthood
- 11:10 Confessions Of A Shopaholic



- 13:00 Once Upon A Crime
- 14:45 Hanging Up
- 16:30 Ricki And The Flash
- 18:20 Hope Springs
- 19:55 It's Complicated
- 22:00 A Fantastic Fear Of Everything
- 23:40 Freaks Of Nature



- 00:15 Hungry Hearts
- 02:15 The Theory Of Everything
- 04:25 Steve Jobs: The Man In The Machine
- 06:40 The Man Who Wasn't There
- 08:35 Jappeloup
- 10:45 We Are Many
- 12:35 The Theory Of Everything
- 14:45 Wildlike
- 16:30 The Yellow Handkerchief
- 18:10 Freedom Writers
- 20:15 Hard Eight
- 22:00 Goodfellas



- 00:05 Mia And The Migoo
- 01:40 Albert
- 03:05 Mamma Moo And Crow
- 04:25 Capture The Flag
- 06:00 Ghosthunters On Icy Trails
- 07:40 Bee Movie
- 09:15 Lego: Scooby Doo Haunted Hollywood
- 10:35 A Town Called Panic
- 12:20 Albert
- 13:45 Mamma Moo And Crow
- 15:05 Frog Kingdom
- 16:35 Lego: Scooby Doo Haunted Hollywood
- 17:55 Izzie's Way Home
- 19:15 Pooh's Heffalump Movie
- 20:25 Frog Kingdom
- 21:55 Bee Movie
- 23:30 A Town Called Panic



- 00:30 How Do They Do It?
- 00:55 Food Factory
- 01:20 Food Factory USA
- 01:45 Food Factory USA
- 02:10 Extreme Engineering
- 03:00 Weird Or What?
- 03:48 Mythbusters
- 04:36 How Do They Do It?
- 05:00 Food Factory
- 05:24 Food Factory USA
- 05:48 Food Factory USA
- 06:12 Extreme Engineering
- 07:00 How Do They Do It?
- 07:26 Weird Or What?
- 08:14 Mythbusters



- 09:02 Extreme Engineering
- 09:50 How Do They Do It?
- 10:14 Food Factory
- 10:38 Food Factory USA
- 11:02 Food Factory USA
- 11:26 Weird Or What?
- 12:14 Mythbusters
- 13:02 How Do They Do It?
- 13:26 Food Factory
- 13:50 Extreme Engineering
- 14:38 Weird Or What?
- 15:26 Food Factory USA
- 15:50 Food Factory USA
- 16:14 Mythbusters
- 17:02 Extreme Engineering
- 17:50 Prototype This
- 18:40 Mythbusters
- 19:30 Mythbusters: The Search
- 20:20 How Do They Do It?
- 20:45 Food Factory
- 21:10 Mega Builders
- 22:00 Mythbusters: The Search



- 00:20 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 01:05 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 01:50 90 Day Fianc?: Happily Ever After?
- 02:35 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 03:20 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm
- 04:05 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 04:50 Ultimate Shopper
- 05:35 Say Yes To The Dress
- 06:00 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm
- 06:45 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm
- 07:30 Little People, Big World: Wedding Farm
- 08:15 Kate Plus 8
- 09:00 Say Yes To The Dress
- 09:25 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 10:10 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 10:55 Love At First Swipe
- 11:17 Love At First Swipe
- 11:40 Love At First Swipe
- 12:02 Love At First Swipe
- 12:25 Love At First Swipe
- 12:47 Love At First Swipe
- 13:10 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
- 14:40 Cake Boss
- 15:02 Cake Boss
- 15:25 Cake Boss
- 15:47 Cake Boss
- 17:50 Suddenly Rich
- 18:50 Kate Plus 8
- 19:40 Cake Boss
- 20:10 Say Yes To The Dress
- 20:35 Say Yes To The Dress
- 21:00 Kate Plus 8
- 21:50 Sister Wives
- 22:40 I'm Fat: What's Your Problem?
- 23:30 Return To Amish



- 00:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 01:00 History's Greatest Blunders
- 02:00 Brad Meltzer's Lost History
- 02:50 Ancient Aliens
- 03:40 What Really Happened
- 04:30 Engineering Disasters
- 05:20 Ancient Discoveries
- 06:10 The Universe
- 07:00 History's Greatest Blunders
- 08:00 Brad Meltzer's Lost History
- 09:00 Ancient Aliens
- 10:00 What Really Happened
- 11:00 The Universe
- 12:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 13:00 History's Greatest Blunders
- 14:00 Brad Meltzer's Lost History
- 15:00 Ancient Aliens
- 16:00 What Really Happened
- 17:00 The Universe
- 18:00 Ancient Discoveries
- 19:00 History's Greatest Blunders

- 19:30 History's Greatest Blunders
- 20:00 Brad Meltzer's Lost History
- 21:00 Ancient Aliens
- 22:00 The Lost Evidence



- 00:20 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
- 01:10 Lost Worlds
- 02:00 Ax Men
- 02:50 Storage Wars
- 03:15 American Pickers
- 04:05 Pawn Stars
- 05:00 Mountain Men
- 06:00 Hunting Hitler
- 06:50 Time Team
- 07:40 American Pickers
- 08:30 Ronnie O'Sullivan's American Hustle
- 09:20 Mountain Men
- 11:00 American Pickers
- 11:50 American Pickers
- 12:40 Lost In Transmission
- 13:30 Pawn Stars
- 15:10 Detroit Steel
- 16:00 American Pickers
- 16:50 The Curse Of Oak Island
- 18:30 Car Hunters
- 18:55 Car Hunters
- 19:20 Counting Cars
- 20:10 Mountain Men
- 21:00 Sean Bean On Waterloo
- 21:50 The Warfighters
- 22:40 Forged In Fire
- 23:30 Football: A Brief History By Alfie Allen



- 00:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
- 01:00 Private Chef
- 02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 03:00 Man Fire Food
- 03:30 Man Fire Food
- 04:00 Chopped
- 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 06:00 Barefoot Contessa
- 07:00 The Kitchen
- 08:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 09:00 Siba's Table
- 10:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 11:00 The Kitchen
- 12:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 13:00 Siba's Table
- 14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 15:00 Chopped
- 16:00 The Kitchen
- 17:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 18:00 Chopped
- 19:00 Chopped Junior
- 20:00 Paul Hollywood - City Bakes
- 21:00 Reza's African Kitchen
- 22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 22:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
- 23:00 Chopped



HUNGRY HEARTS ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

WORD SEARCH

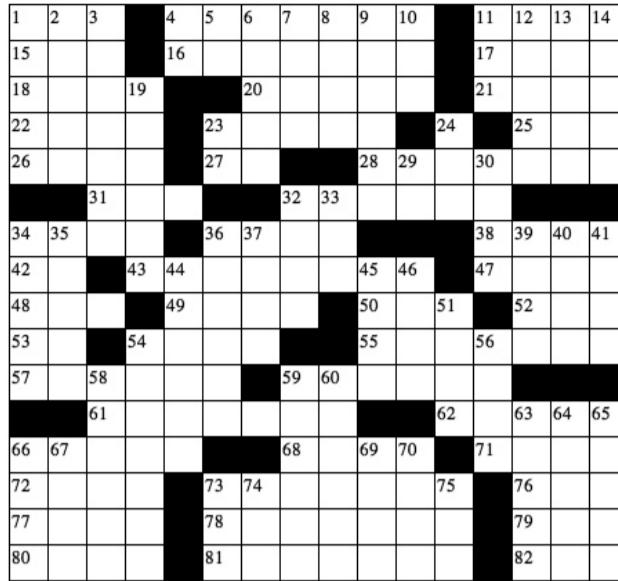
Moods & Emotions 1

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

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

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

CROSSWORD 1665



ACROSS

- Feline mammal usually having thick soft fur and being unable to roar.
- A tan discoloration of a woman's face that is associated with pregnancy or with the use of oral contraceptives.
- Slightly open.
- Relating to or containing the azo radical.
- Of or relating to the island republic of Nauru or its residents.
- A very attractive or seductive looking woman.
- A young male horse under the age of four.
- Genus of large deciduous nut-bearing trees.
- A material effigy that is worshipped as a god.
- A town in Hawaii on the island of Hawaii.
- Used of a single unit or thing.
- A ballistic missile that is capable of traveling from one continent to another.
- A bachelor's degree in science.
- Feeling or caused to feel uneasy and self-conscious.
- A defensive missile designed to shoot down incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles.
- Long green edible beaked pods of the okra plant.
- A vigorous blow.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- A famous waterfall in Venezuela.
- A Loloish language.
- A fluorocarbon with chlorine.
- A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
- A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
- Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.
- A state in northwestern North America.
- Situated in front of the anus.
- Any warm-blooded vertebrate having the skin more or less covered with hair.
- The first of the Old Testament patriarchs and the father of Isaac.
- The Mongol people living in the central and eastern parts of Outer Mongolia.
- A family of Sino-Tibetan languages spoken in southeastern Asia.
- An enclosed armored military vehicle.
- A branch of the Tai languages.
- (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
- A master's degree in business.
- One of the jointed appendages of an animal used for locomotion or grasping.
- An ancient city is southern Greece.
- Tag the base runner to get him out.
- 100 toea equal 1 kina.
- Adapt anew.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

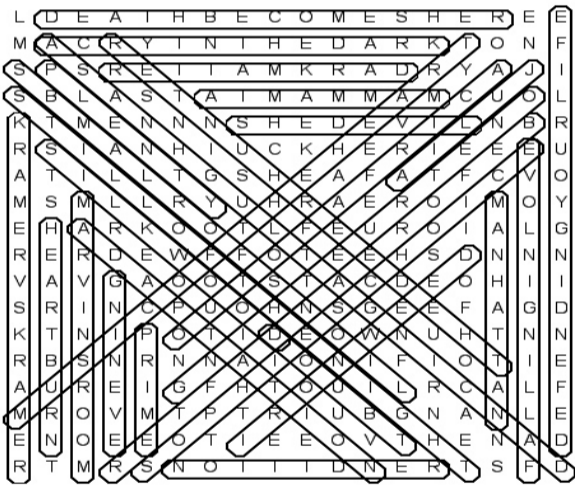
DOWN

- A mountain in the Andes in Argentina (22,047 feet high).
- (geology) Before the appearance of life.

- A gate or bar across a toll bridge or toll road which is lifted when the toll is paid.
- A hard brittle gray polyvalent metallic element that resembles iron but is not magnetic.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- United States screenwriter and filmmaker (born in 1944).
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- The muscular back part of the shank.
- Hawthorn of southern United States bearing juicy acid scarlet fruit often used in jellies or preserves.
- (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
- (Old Testament) The fourth son of Jacob who was forebear of one of the tribes of Israel.
- Isolated from others.
- Subject to a ruling authority.
- An alloy of copper and zinc (and sometimes arsenic) used to imitate gold in cheap jewelry and for gilding.
- A metallic element having four allotropic forms.
- East Indian tree bearing a profusion of intense vermilion velvet-textured blooms and yielding a yellow dye.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- An island in the Netherlands Antilles that is the top of an extinct volcano.
- Obtained from various tropical plants.
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- Czech novelist who wrote in German about a nightmarish world of isolated and troubled individuals (1883-1924).
- Remote city of Kazakhstan that (ostensibly for security reasons) was made the capital in 1998.
- The compass point that is one point north of northeast.
- A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
- One of the two main branches of orthodox Islam.
- An interior passage or corridor onto which rooms open.
- Medium-sized tree-dwelling monkey of the Amazon basin.
- A system of one or more computers and associated software with common storage.
- Made from residue of grapes or apples after pressing.
- An accidental hole that allows something (fluid or light etc.) to enter or escape.
- Tropical American tree with large peltate leaves and hollow stems.
- By bad luck.
- Title used for a married Frenchwoman.
- The basic unit of money in Macao.
- Filled with the emotional impact of overwhelming surprise or shock.
- A genus of Lamnidae.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Jordan's port.
- A genus of European owls.
- (Babylonian) A goddess of the watery deep and daughter of Ea.
- Strike sharply.
- The rate at which heat is produced by an individual in a resting state.
- A strong solution of sodium or potassium hydroxide.
- Come into the possession of something concrete or abstract.

Yesterday's Solution

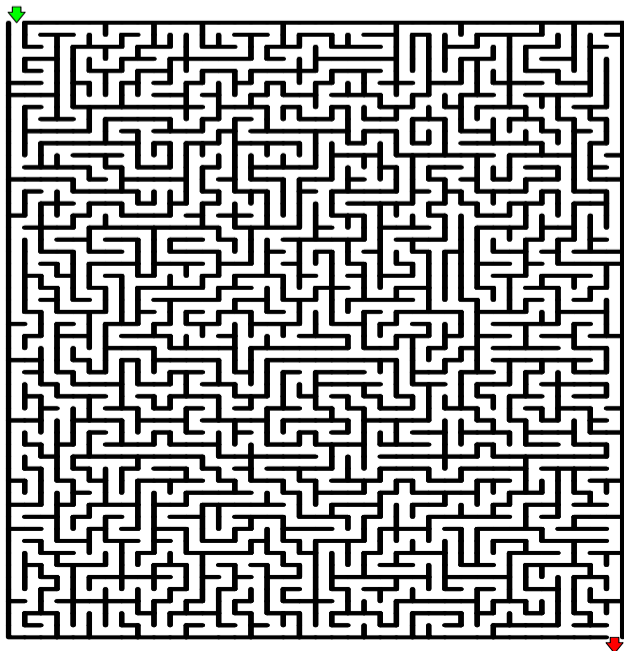
Meryl Streep Movies



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

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

CHALLENGING MAZE



Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

CAMPAIGNER WITH DRUG PAST WARNS OF 'CHEMSEX' HIV LINK

LONDON: The sexual health expert credited with coining the term "chemsex" told AFP that drug-laced sexual encounters are boosting HIV infections in gay communities. David Stuart, who manages the chemsex support program at a pioneering clinic in Soho, was himself involved in drugs and escorting and contracted HIV before turning his life around after a 2005 arrest.

"These drugs are contributing phenomenally to the HIV epidemic," Stuart said in an interview at the clinic in the heart of London's gay community. "They are not the drugs of the past-happy dancy drugs-they are much more problematic," he said. Stuart defines chemsex as the "use of drugs for sex" which is "associated with certain behaviors such as hooking up online, high number of partners and high prevalence of HIV and sexually-transmitted disease."

Chemsex drugs, such as crystal methamphetamine, mephedrone and GBL "tapped into something that disinhibits sexual feelings," he said. Condomless sex and communal drug use at chemsex parties are partly to blame for continued high levels of new HIV infections which have been at around 6,000 people a year since 2009. "We have about 30 people coming to our building every day, perhaps because they have been exposed to HIV, maybe through condomless sex or sharing needles. "We know that between 60 and 80 percent of those guys... are here because they have been in some kind of chemsex environment," he said.

Drugs 'part of our culture'

The practice mushroomed with the smartphone revolution, which has facilitated the buying of drugs and the hooking up of willing partners through smartphone apps such as Grindr. But he believes focusing on the public health issues is to diminish the full impact that the trend is having on the community.

"GBL is a very dangerous drug," he said. "One millilitre might be enough to give me the appropriate high I am looking for, 1.8 could kill me. One gay man dies every 12 days from GBL in London." He added: "There are so many other harms associated to it: lifestyle and well-being, the ability to have sober sex, the ability to form intimacies and maintain them, getting to work on Monday, spending time with family and friends." — AFP

AIDS CLAIMED 1MN LIVES IN 2016: UN

PARIS: AIDS claimed a million lives in 2016, almost half the 2005 toll that marked the peak of the deadly epidemic, said a UN report yesterday proclaiming "the scales have tipped". Not only are new HIV infections and deaths declining, but more people than ever are on life-saving treatment, according to data published ahead of an AIDS science conference opening in Paris on Sunday. Experts warned, however, that much of the progress can be undone by growing resistance to HIV drugs.

Unless something is done, drug-resistant virus strains may infect an extra 105,000 people and kill 135,000 over the next five years, and boost treatment costs by \$650 million (560 million euros), said the World Health Organization (WHO). According to a UNAIDS global roundup, 19.5 million of 36.7 million people living with HIV in 2016 had access to treatment. This marked the first time that more than half of infected people were receiving anti-retroviral treatment, which rolls back the AIDS virus but does not completely eliminate it.

"We could get 2.4 million new people on treatment" in 2016, UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibe told journalists in Paris. "We are saving lives." The report said AIDS-related deaths have fallen from 1.9 million in 2005 to one million in 2016, adding that "for the first time the scales have tipped." The year 2016 saw 1.8 million new infections, almost half the record number of some 3.5 million in 1997, said UNAIDS.

In total, 76.1 million people have been infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, since the epidemic started in the 1980s. Some 35 million have died. "Communities and families are thriving as AIDS is being pushed back," said Sidibe.



HANSHAN, China: This file photo taken on November 30, 2009 shows Chinese students showing a handmade red ribbon one day ahead of the World AIDS Day, at a school. — AFP

"As we bring the epidemic under control, health outcomes are improving and nations are becoming stronger." As yet, there is no HIV vaccine or cure, and infected people rely on lifelong anti-retroviral therapy to stop the virus replicating.

Without treatment, HIV-infected people go on to develop AIDS, a syndrome that weakens the immune system and leaves the body exposed to opportunistic infections such as tuberculosis, and some types of cancer. Treatment carries side effects and is costly, but allows infected people to be healthier for longer.

'More work to do'

Most progress has been made in east and southern Africa, the region that was hardest hit by the epidemic and where

many interventions were focused. Since 2010, AIDS-related deaths in the region declined by 42 percent. The region accounts for half the world's infected population, with women and girls disproportionately affected at 60 percent.

Sixty percent of all people who receive anti-retroviral therapy live in east and southern Africa which, along with west and central Europe and the Americas, is on target to meet the so-called 90-90-90 targets set by the UN, said the report. By 2020, states the plan, 90 percent of infected people must know their status, of whom 90 percent must be on treatment. In 90 percent of those, the virus will be "suppressed" by medicine to the extent that it cannot function or replicate. — AFP

CLINIC PAGE

Kuwait Times
248 33 199

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
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 (20/07/2017 TO 26/07/2017)

SHARQIA-1		
CARS 3	11:45 AM	
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	2:00 PM	
CARS 3	4:00 PM	
CARS 3	6:15 PM	
LONDON HEIST	8:30 PM	
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	10:30 PM	
LONDON HEIST	12:30 AM	
SHARQIA-2		
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	12:15 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	3:00 PM	
DESPICABLE ME 3	5:45 PM	
BABY DRIVER	7:45 PM	
BABY DRIVER	10:00 PM	
BABY DRIVER	12:15 AM	
SHARQIA-3		
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	1:00 PM	
DESPICABLE ME 3	1:45 PM	
FRI		
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	3:45 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	6:30 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	9:15 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	12:05 AM	
MUHALAB-1		
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	12:20 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	2:20 PM	
FIDAA - Telugu	2:00 PM	
FRI		
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	5:15 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	7:15 PM	
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	10:00 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	12:05 AM	
MUHALAB-2		
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	11:45 AM	
CARS 3	2:30 PM	
CARS 3	4:45 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	7:00 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	9:45 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	12:30 AM	
MUHALAB-3		
DESPICABLE ME 3	12:00 PM	
DESPICABLE ME 3	2:00 PM	
DESPICABLE ME 3	4:00 PM	
BABY DRIVER	6:00 PM	
BABY DRIVER	8:15 PM	
BABY DRIVER	10:30 PM	
BABY DRIVER	12:45 AM	
FANAR-1		
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	12:30 PM	
DESPICABLE ME 3	2:30 PM	
LONDON HEIST	4:30 PM	
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	6:30 PM	
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	8:30 PM	
LONDON HEIST	10:30 PM	
LONDON HEIST	12:30 AM	
FANAR-2		
DESPICABLE ME 3	12:00 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	2:00 PM	
DESPICABLE ME 3	4:45 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	6:45 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	9:35 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	12:20 AM	
FANAR-3		
RAILROAD TIGERS	1:00 PM	
RAILROAD TIGERS	3:15 PM	
TUBELIGHT (Hindi)	5:30 PM	
MUNNA MICHAEL - Hindi	8:15 PM	
RAILROAD TIGERS	11:00 PM	
RAILROAD TIGERS	1:15 AM	
FANAR-4		
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	11:45 AM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	2:30 PM	
BABY DRIVER	5:15 PM	
BABY DRIVER	7:30 PM	
BABY DRIVER	9:45 PM	
BABY DRIVER	12:05 AM	
FANAR-5		
CARS 3	12:30 PM	
CARS 3	2:45 PM	
CARS 3	5:00 PM	
CARS 3	7:15 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	9:30 PM	

SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	12:15 AM	
MARINA-1		
CARS 3	1:00 PM	
CARS 3	3:15 PM	
CARS 3	5:30 PM	
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	7:45 PM	
LONDON HEIST	9:45 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	11:45 PM	
MARINA-2		
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	11:45 AM	
DESPICABLE ME 3	2:30 PM	
DESPICABLE ME 3	4:30 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	6:30 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	9:15 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	12:05 AM	
MARINA-3		
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	12:15 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	3:00 PM	
BABY DRIVER	5:45 PM	
BABY DRIVER	8:00 PM	
BABY DRIVER	10:15 PM	
BABY DRIVER	12:30 AM	
AVENUES-1		
TUBELIGHT (Hindi)	12:00 PM	
MUNNA MICHAEL - Hindi	2:50 PM	
JAGGA JASOOS - Hindi	5:55 PM	
MUNNA MICHAEL - Hindi	9:05 PM	
TUBELIGHT (Hindi)	11:55 PM	
AVENUES-2		
DESPICABLE ME 3 -3D-4DX	11:50 AM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING -3D-4DX	1:45 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES -3D-4DX	4:30 PM	
BABY DRIVER -2D-4DX	7:15 PM	
BABY DRIVER -2D-4DX	9:45 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES -3D-4DX	12:15 AM	
AVENUES-3		
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	1:05 PM	
BABY DRIVER	1:30 PM	
FRI		
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	3:50 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	6:30 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	9:20 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	12:05 AM	
360°- 1		
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	12:35 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES -3D	3:25 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	6:20 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	9:25 PM	
WAR FOR THE PLANET OF THE APES	12:10 AM	
360°- 2		
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	2:00 PM	
FRI		
KHAMMIS & JUMMA (Horoob Ejbary)	1:15 PM	
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	4:00 PM	
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	6:05 PM	
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	8:05 PM	
TISBAH ALA KHAIR	10:05 PM	
KHAMMIS & JUMMA (Horoob Ejbary)	12:05 AM	
360°- 3		
MUNNA MICHAEL - Hindi	11:55 AM	
JAGGA JASOOS - Hindi	2:45 PM	
TUBELIGHT (Hindi)	6:10 PM	
NO FRI+SAT+MON		
VIKRAM VEDHA - Tamil	6:10 PM	
FRI+SAT+MON		
MUNNA MICHAEL - Hindi	9:15 PM	
TUBELIGHT (Hindi)	12:10 AM	
AL-KOUT.1		
DESPICABLE ME 3	1:15 PM	
DESPICABLE ME 3	3:15 PM	
BABY DRIVER	5:15 PM	
BABY DRIVER	7:30 PM	
BABY DRIVER	9:45 PM	
BABY DRIVER	12:05 AM	
AL-KOUT.2		
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	11:30 AM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	2:15 PM	
CARS 3	5:00 PM	
CARS 3	7:15 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	9:30 PM	
SPIDER-MAN: HOMECOMING	12:15 AM	

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Yasmin daughter of Asmatulla Kha holder of Indian Passport No. K8489188 and Civil ID No. 293011501371 has changed my name to Yasmin Asmatullah Khan, hereinafter in all my dealings and documents. (C 5330) 21-7-2017

ACCOMMODATION

Sharing accommodation available in Farwaniya Block 6, street 107, near Metro Center. Contact: 66625901. (C 5329)

Sharing accommodation For **Filipino ONLY** Farwaniya block 1, near gulfmart. Available on July 25, Contact 94418396 or 94033908

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr:	03:30
Shorook:	05:01
Duhr:	11:54
Asr:	15:29
Maghrib:	18:47
Isha:	20:16

SITUATION WANTED

I am an Accountant holding qualifications of ACCA, MBA Finance and B.Com, with 8 years of experience in Kuwait, looking for suitable job in reputed Audit Firms, Investment companies or Islamic banks. Contact: 55829223, email: acconline@ymail.com

EMERGENCY

112

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
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381

Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, JULY 21, 2017

FOX SAYS UK-EU TRADE DEAL 'EASIEST IN HUMAN HISTORY'

PAGE 38



BoJ slashes annual inflation forecasts

Page 40



DALLAS: In this May 19, 2017 file photo, job seeker Dalvin Jones (left) chats with Valmira Haxhimusa during the Opportunity Fair and Forum employment event in Dallas. The US Labor Department reported on the number of people who applied for unemployment benefits the week before. —AP (See Page 38)

BURGAN BANK GROUP ANNOUNCES 2017 H1 EARNINGS

GROUP'S NET INCOME UP 24% REACHING KD38.9 MILLION

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank Group announced yesterday its first half earnings of financial year 2017. The selective and prudent growth approach amid regional operating environment complexities, continues to yield good results, and reflects solid operating capabilities & efficiencies.



Burgan Bank Group Chairman Majed Essa Al-Ajeel

Reported net income grew by 24 percent reaching KD38.9 million (\$127.7 million) from KD31.4 million reported in first half last year. Underlying net income (excluding precautionary reserves & after AT1 cost) grew by 14 percent reaching KD41.4 million (\$135.9 million). During the first half of 2017, loans and advances grew by 4 percent to reach KD4.4 billion (\$14.6 billion). Customers deposits grew by 5 percent to reach KD3.9 billion (\$13.0 billion). NPA Ratio net of collateral stands at 1 percent while Coverage ratio net of collateral stands at 390 percent. Capital adequacy ratio stands at 16.3 percent as of June 30, 2017.

Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Chairman of Burgan Bank Group said: "The healthy trends almost

on all indicators continue to be demonstrated with the delivery of this good set of results. International Operations are now contributing 43 percent of the Group's operating income which grew by 8 percent year on year to reach KD122.7 million (\$403.2 million), confirming once again, that Burgan Bank Group is the most diversified commercial bank in the sector," added Al-Ajeel.

"The strength of our operating capabilities is yielding strong performance that was evident during the second quarter (Q2). In Q2'17, Burgan Bank Group recorded an underlying net income (excluding precautionary reserves & after AT1 cost) of KD23.3 million (\$76.7 million), and enabled us to accelerate comfortably the bookings of KD5 million (\$16.5 million) in precautionary reserves and KD8.5 million (\$28.1 million) investments provisions for some available for sale (AFS) securities, and still achieving a net income as reported of KD21.1 million (\$69.3 million) in the Q2'17.

Financial indicators

Majed Essa Al-Ajeel also said: "Our leading financial indicators continue to point to the right direction both in Kuwait and international operations. I remain confident and optimistic of the group's strong performance going forward."

"On behalf of the board, I take this opportunity to thank our customers and shareholders

● **Operating strength, efficiencies, and prudence remain the focus**

● **Loans and advances grew by 4% since December 31, 2016, reaching KD4.4 billion**

● **Deposits grew by 5% to reach KD3.9 billion**

for their confidence in our capabilities and our regulators; the Central Bank of Kuwait, for their support. I would also like to thank our executive management team for their leadership and the excellent execution of the corporate strategy, and to our staff for their continued support and commitment," concluded Al-Ajeel.

The consolidated financials encompass the results of the Group's operations in Kuwait, and its share from its regional subsidiaries, namely Burgan Bank - Turkey, Gulf Bank Algeria, Bank of Baghdad, Tunis International Bank. Burgan Bank Group has one of the largest regional branch networks with more than 180 branches across Kuwait, Turkey, Algeria, Iraq, Tunis, Lebanon and representative offices in Dubai-United Arab Emirates.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest commercial Bank and second

largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Burgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

The bank was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2008, making it the first bank in the GCC, and the only bank in Kuwait to receive such accreditation for the third consecutive year. The Bank also has to its credit the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twelve consecutive years.

Burgan Bank, a subsidiary of KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company), is a strongly positioned regional Bank in the MENA region.

US WEEKLY REQUESTS FOR JOBLESS AID FALL TO 233,000

WASHINGTON: Fewer Americans applied for jobless aid last week, as the number of people seeking benefits stays near historic lows pointing to a robust job market.

THE NUMBERS: Weekly unemployment applications fell by 15,000 to a seasonally-adjusted 233,000, the Labor Department said yesterday. It was the largest weekly drop since late April. The less volatile four-week average declined by 2,250 to 243,750. The number of people collecting unemployment benefits has fallen 9.7 percent over the past 12 months to 1.87 million.

THE TAKEAWAY: The job market appears solid as the US enters its ninth year of recovery from the Great Recession. Employers are holding onto workers with the expectation that business will continue to improve. Jobless claims - a close indication of layoffs - have come in below 300,000 for 124 weeks in a row. That's the longest such stretch since 1970, when the US population was much smaller.

KEY DRIVERS: After a weak start this year, the economy is expected to grow at roughly 2 per-

cent. That would be roughly in line with annual gains during the recovery. Consistent hiring has helped sustain the gradual recovery, although the expansion is starting to show its age as the pace of job gains has slowed this year. The unemployment rate has fallen to a healthy 4.4 percent. The Labor Department's report for June showed that US employers added a robust 222,000 jobs, the most in four months and a reassuring sign that businesses may be confident enough to keep hiring despite a slow-growing economy. —AP

FOX SAYS UK-EU TRADE DEAL 'EASIEST IN HUMAN HISTORY' 'IMPORTANT TO STEER US AWAY FROM PROTECTIONISM'

LONDON/GENEVA: British trade minister Liam Fox said yesterday a bespoke trade deal between Britain and the European Union should be "one of the easiest in human history" to reach - although his country could manage without one if necessary.

Sterling slipped back below \$1.30 on concern about the Brexit talks coming to an end with no deal in place, something many economists have warned could cripple business activity.

Fox, a euroskeptic who campaigned for

trast sharply with the view of finance minister Philip Hammond, who has said that no deal with the EU - the largest trading bloc in the world - would be a "very, very bad outcome." British and EU Brexit negotiators are due to say yesterday how their first round of talks has gone. Fox is later due to deliver a speech in Geneva in which he will urge new global trade liberalization.

A draft text of his speech at the Graduate Institute showed Fox will call for a new round of global trade reforms to bring

trade being shaped by the digital economy, trade promotion as the main tool of development, and trade in services.

Britain wants to see a "positive outcome" on the digital economy at the WTO's two-yearly ministerial conference in Buenos Aires in December, according to the draft.

Fox earlier told the BBC he expects Prime Minister Theresa May to remain in power for the rest of this parliament after losing her majority in last month's election.

May's control of her cabinet, which is divided over Brexit, has been severely weakened by the election result, reopening the debate about the nature of Britain's EU exit.

There has also been speculation that she may not be able to serve out her full term in office, an idea Fox rejected. "I think that the prime minister is likely to be there for the rest of this parliament. I think she has the support of her colleagues in the House of Commons. I think she has a mandate to be the prime minister," Fox said.

Protectionism

Britain is looking at all bilateral tools for increasing trade ties with the United States, but it also wants to steer Washington from a trade policy that is too protectionist, British trade minister Liam Fox said yesterday.

"It's very important that we keep the United States oriented towards an open free trading approach because it is the world's biggest economy and what happens there will affect everybody else," Fox told an audience of diplomats and academics in Geneva.

"So I think directing the debate away from some of the protectionist noises into a free market rules-based debate is a very important discussion for us to have." —Reuters



British trade minister Liam Fox

Britain to leave the European Union, said a trade deal should be simple because the two sides already have similar regulatory rules and no tariffs. "The only reason that we wouldn't come to a free and open agreement is because politics gets in the way of economics," he told the BBC in a radio interview. But he added that Britain could "survive" without a deal, in comments that con-

World Trade Organization rules up to date with the digital economy. "While much political activity in Europe has been focused on Brexit, it is essential that we don't lose sight of the big picture, and the potential for all of us to benefit from another round of liberalization under the WTO," he says in the draft seen by Reuters. He will also say Britain sees the agenda of global

IMF CALLS FOR MOZAMBIQUE TO COME CLEAN ON DEBTS

MAPUTO: Mozambique must fill in "critical information gaps" over \$2 billion of secret government loans, the International Monetary Fund said yesterday, in a scandal that has damaged the nation's economy. At the end of a 10-day mission to Mozambique, IMF officials expressed dissatisfaction with continuing uncertainty about debts built up by state-owned companies from loans by foreign banks including Credit Suisse.

A recent audit by New York-based forensic accountants Kroll concluded that \$500 million of the \$2 billion was still unaccounted for. "Critical information gaps remain unaddressed regarding the use of loans proceeds," the IMF said.

"The team urged the government to take steps to fill the information gaps and to enhance its action plan to strengthen transparency." The government secretly borrowed \$2 billion

between 2012 and 2014 to fund a coastal protection project.

In December a commission of inquiry found that the government had broken the law when it failed to seek parliamentary clearance for the loans.

The government later explained the money was used to fund military vessels and defense equipment and said it did not disclose them as a matter of national security. The debts were taken out in anticipation of a windfall from recently discovered natural gas deposits-but that has so far failed to materialize and the government has been unable to pay the money back.

Several major donors-including the IMF and World Bank-suspended aid to the southern African nation. The IMF said it expects Mozambique's gross domestic product (GDP) to reach 4.7 percent in 2017, up from 3.8 percent in 2016. —AFP



TOKYO: Pedestrians walk in front of a stock quotation board flashing the Nikkei 225 key index of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in front of a securities company in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

US STOCKS FLAT AS ECB, BOJ KEEP INTEREST RATES LOW

NEW YORK: Wall Street stocks paused near record levels early yesterday following decisions by central banks in Europe and Japan to keep interest rates low. European Central Bank chief Mario Draghi sought to play down expectations the bank could soon announce an end to its mass bond-buying program, preaching a "patient" attitude towards meeting inflation targets. The Bank of Japan slashed its annual inflation forecast and once again delayed its timetable for hitting a two percent target. Investors have grappled with signs major central banks are starting to shift away from easy-money policies enacted since the 2008 financial crisis.

However, the decisions yesterday suggested the road to tighter monetary policy may be longer than expected, analysts said. About 15 minutes into trading, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was at 21,624.91, down 0.1 percent.

The broad-based S&P 500 added 0.1 percent to 2,475.44, while the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index rose a hair to 6,386.67. The Dow, S&P 500 and Nasdaq all closed at records Wednesday. Dow member American Express dipped 0.8 percent after reporting a 33 percent drop in second-quarter net profit to \$1.3 billion due to higher costs as it faces stiffened competition for credit card customers.

Euro slips

The euro fell to a two-day low after the European Central Bank (ECB) left its ultra-easy monetary policy stance unchanged. The euro hit \$1.14855, down 0.3 percent to a two-day low, off a high of \$1.15320 before yesterday's rate decision, but still maintaining gains of 3 percent since ECB President Mario Draghi's Sintra speech last month.

Yesterday's decision means the ECB is keeping rates at record lows and even leaving the door open to more asset buying if the economic outlook worsens. "While they may be leaning towards an exit from stimulus policies, they don't want to tip their hands yet and the strategy seems to be postponing any decision to September," said Michael Hewson, chief markets strategist at CMC Capital Markets who believes the euro should weaken more from current levels.

With the common currency up 3 percent over the last month and German bond yields firming in recent weeks, market expectations had built up prior to the decision that the ECB would tweak its policy to signal an impending policy tightening. Draghi's June 27 comments in Sintra, Portugal, hinting at the possibility of changes to the central bank's aggressive stimulus sparked a "taper tantrum" that sent the euro and bond yields sharply higher. —Agencies

GERMAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRY CONFIDENT AS GROWTH SWELLS

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: German chemicals manufacturers expressed confidence yesterday with regard to the outlook for the sector, raising their full-year forecasts for sales and output after a strong performance during the first six months. Industry federation VCI said that sector-wide output increased by 1.5 percent in the period from January to June.

And manufacturers were able to increase their selling prices as prices rose for oil, an important raw material,

and capacity utilization increased. The combination of increased output and higher prices enabled VCI members to boost sales by around 5.0 percent to 96.9 billion euros (\$111.5 billion) in the January-June period. Looking to the full year, the federation raised its forecast for output growth to 1.5 percent from 1.0 percent previously.

Revenues were also expected to grow by 5.0 percent to 194 billion euros, the VCI said. Previously, the federation had been pencilling in full-year

growth of 3.5 percent. "We are expecting good business to last at home and abroad," VCI president Kurt Bock said, pointing to stable growth forecasts for producers' most important markets.

Over the first half year, Europe, Asia and the United States saw "significant" increases in sales, Bock said, while a political and economic crisis in Brazil weighed on business in South America.

Companies have scaled up plans to invest in production plants in Germany, increasing spending by 6.7

percent to around 7.5 billion euros. With around 450,000 employees, the chemicals and pharmaceuticals industry is Germany's third-largest sector, behind car and machine tool makers.

That gives it a strong voice with politicians ahead of September elections. The VCI's top priority is to reduce energy prices, driven up by Germany's transition to renewables. Members also want tax breaks for research and development and improved transport and internet infrastructure. — AFP



LONDON: In this file photo dated Dec. 23, 2016, people pass a sale sign in a shop window off Oxford Street in London. — AP

WARM WEATHER HELPS BRITISH RETAIL SALES REBOUND IN JUNE

LONDON: Official figures show that retail sales in Britain bounced back during June, with the warm weather bolstering clothing sales in particular.

The Office for National Statistics said yesterday that retail sales grew by a monthly 0.6 percent, a solid recovery following May's 1.1 percent fall. The increase was modestly ahead of market expectations for a 0.4 percent increase. Kate Davies, the agency's senior statistician, said a particularly warm June seems to have prompted strong sales in clothing, which compensated for a decline in food and fuel sales during the month.

The monthly rise means retail sales grew by 1.5 percent in the quarter, following a 1.4 percent drop in the first, meaning the sector will have been a positive contributor to growth. Second-quarter growth figures are due next Wednesday. — AP

FRANCE'S MINISTER TELLS UK: WE WANT OUR MONEY BACK

PARIS: French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire said yesterday that Britain must pay what it owes to the European Union and it is a non-negotiable prerequisite for Brexit talks. "I will say what Margaret Thatcher used to say: We want our money back," Le Maire said, answering questions from lawmakers in the economic affairs committee of the French parliament.

"We can always debate on the amount but on the fact that the United Kingdom must pay what it owes to the budget of the European Union, it is a non-negotiable prerequisite at the start of the (Brexit) discussions," Le Maire said. The EU wants London to accept a bill to cover its share of EU spending commitments made while Britain was a member, an amount which Le Maire said could be up to 100 billion euros (\$115 billion).

"The payment by the United Kingdom of its remainder ... is a non-negotiable prerequisite for any discussion of the future of our relations," he added. — Reuters

ECB HOLDS STEADY AS MARKETS AWAIT HINTS

DRAGHI TO REASSURE INVESTORS ON BOND-BUYING

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: European Central Bank policymakers held key interest rates and mass bond-buying unchanged yesterday, sending a calming message to financial markets looking for hints the bank's easy money policy will soon end. Attention was to turn to central bank chief Mario Draghi's press conference, when he is expected to reassure investors jittery about a possible end to bond-buying.

Just three monetary policy meetings remain before December, when the bank's 60-billion-euro-per-month (\$69 billion) purchases of government and corporate bonds are presently set to expire. Most observers expect the central bank to soon announce a path out of bond-buying that will see it "taper" or wind down the "quantitative easing" (QE) program step-by-step next year.

That will make a press conference on Thursday "a balancing act that requires all of Draghi's verbal acrobatic skills," analyst Carsten Brzeski of ING Diba bank said ahead of Thursday's announcement. The ECB must prime the markets for an end to QE, but also be careful not to sow panic. Along with historic low interest rates and cheap loans to banks, the ECB's bond-buying is designed to pump cash into the economy, powering growth and pushing up prices.

While inflation is still sluggish, economic growth in the 19-nation eurozone has picked up strongly enough to dispel the fears of deflation that had prompted policymakers to launch the scheme. And the ECB could soon reach technical limits to its bond buying that will make the already controversial program even more difficult to continue much beyond the end of the year.

Tiptoeing towards exit

Such signs mean investors are on high alert for signals from the central bank, sensitive to even the tiniest changes in governors' carefully-weighted statements on "forward guidance". At a meeting in June, policymakers chose to remove a suggestion that interest rates could be lowered still further if necessary from their regular statement. That was seen by many as the first hint that the ECB would begin adjusting its policy as economic growth gathers pace.

Speculation was ratcheted up yet further when Draghi told a central banking



FRANKFURT AM MAIN: This file photo taken on December 3, 2015 shows the headquarters of the European Central Bank (ECB) on the banks of the river Main in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. —AFP

conference late last month that "as the economy continues to recover... the central bank can accompany the recovery by adjusting the parameters of its policy instruments".

This was interpreted by markets as a gesture towards "tapering", or winding down bond-buying. And the remarks pushed up bond yields—the returns investors can expect from buying government debt—and the value of the euro.

If those trends continue, they could sap growth in the single currency area. So, the ECB hastily sought to clarify Draghi's words. Nevertheless, the president's comments "opened the back door to announce a reduction in monthly bond purchases from next year in September or October," commented analyst Kristian Toedtman of Deka bank. ECB staff are studying different ways the bank could approach tapering, Bloomberg News reported Tuesday citing anonymous sources, although policymakers have yet to set a date for any announcement.

Governors are likely to move later this year "even if the little remaining inflation data to be published before

then does not clearly point upwards," Toedtman added.

Justifying an end to QE on inflation data alone will be difficult, as eurozone prices grew by 1.3 percent in June—well short of the ECB target of just below 2.0 percent. Central bank forecasts include inflation of 1.5 percent this year and just 1.3 percent in 2018.

Rate rise far off

Any observers looking for interest rates to rise from their historic lows likely have a long wait ahead, analysts agree. The ECB has for many months stated that rates will only start to rise "well after the horizon of net asset purchases" has come to an end.

The bond-buying program itself might not be completely wound down until far into 2018, while low inflation expectations stretching into 2019 would make it difficult to justify higher rates. Furthermore, "well-anchored expectations about future interest rates will help the ECB limit unwanted large market reactions to the impending end of QE," adding to the pressure to hold rates down, Deka's Toedtman noted. — AFP

BOJ SLASHES ANNUAL INFLATION FORECASTS

ULTRA-LOOSE MONETARY POLICY TO STAY; NO TIMETABLE YET FOR 2% GROWTH TARGET

TOKYO: The Bank of Japan yesterday slashed its annual inflation forecast and once again delayed its timetable for hitting a two percent target as the economy struggles to gain traction despite years of stimulus. Central bankers also decided to maintain the BoJ's ultra-loose monetary policy at a time when their counterparts in other major economies from the Americas to Europe consider ending the era of cheap cash.

The bank said it now expects the core consumer price index to rise 1.1 percent in the year to March, down from its April estimate of 1.4 percent, while its March 2019 prediction was cut to 1.5 percent from 1.7 percent. In a statement after the policy meeting the bank also said it now expects to achieve the two percent objective sometime in the year to March 2020.

Officials had originally set in 2013 a two-year timeline when unveiling the bank's massive monetary easing program as part of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's push to kickstart growth in the world's number-three economy. "The BoJ has already pushed out the timeline several times. Now four years have passed, and there is no sign the inflation rate is rising," Masaaki Kanno, chief economist at Sony Financial Holdings in Tokyo and a former BoJ official, told Bloomberg TV.

However, the bank did lift its economic growth outlook to 1.8 percent for the current fiscal year from its previous estimate of 1.6 percent. It also hiked its fiscal 2018 outlook by 0.1 percentage point



Haruhiko Kuroda

to 1.4 percent. Tokyo's years-long effort to kickstart growth—a blend of massive monetary easing, government spending and red-tape slashing-stoked a stock market rally, weakened the yen and fattened corporate profits. But growth in the wider economy remains fragile.

While Japan's job market is tight, individual spending—which accounts for more than a half of the country's gross domestic product—has remained in the deep freeze. Bank governor Haruhiko Kuroda called the further delay in hitting the target "unfortunate" at a news conference after the meeting, saying other central banks have also missed their intended marks. The bank will continue to do what is necessary but sees no need at present to add more stimulus, he said, stressing: "The momentum toward achieving the two-percent goal remains intact."

Yen weakens

But analysts expressed skepticism. "Even after today's downward adjustments, the bank's inflation forecasts for the current fiscal year remain too high and there is little chance of hitting the two percent target next year either,"

Marcel Thieliand, economist at Capital Economics, said in a commentary. "The upshot is that we expect the bank to leave policy settings unchanged for the foreseeable future."

The dollar was up at 112.38 yen in the afternoon from lows of around 111.80 yen touched earlier in the morning, but the Nikkei 225 ended up 0.62 percent. "Yen-selling accelerated following the announcement as the delay in (achieving) the inflation target generally means the BoJ would have to continue its easing in sharp contrast to other major central banks moving to tightening," Tomohiro Nishida, a dealer at Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Bank, told AFP. Expectations the BoJ will stick to its

loose policy path for some time has dragged the yen down against other major currencies, with the euro up more than 10 percent this year and the pound around seven percent higher.

Government and central bank officials have blamed external factors, such as falling energy prices and uncertainty related to emerging economies, for failure to achieve the target.

Falling prices can discourage spending by consumers, who might postpone purchases until prices drop more or they might save money instead. That puts pressure on businesses, creating a cycle in which firms then cut back on expanding production, hiring new workers or boosting wages. — AFP



TOKYO: A poster promoting a summer sale is seen at a shopping mall in Tokyo yesterday. The Bank of Japan yesterday slashed its annual inflation forecast and once again delayed its timetable for hitting a two percent target as the economy struggles to gain traction despite years of stimulus. —AFP

AIR FRANCE UNVEILS JOON, THE 'MILLENNIALS' AIRLINE

PARIS: Air France yesterday unveiled a new lower-cost subsidiary called Joon that will specifically target well-travelled millennials. A new medium-haul service will begin operating from Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris later this year, with long-haul flights to follow in summer 2018.

The French carrier unveiled details of its new service after resolving a lengthy dispute between the management and pilots over the establishment of the subsidiary.

Joon is "especially aimed at a young working clientele, the millennials (18 to 35 year-olds), whose lifestyles revolve around digital technology", Air France said in a statement, without elaborating on what new technology would be deployed. The name was chosen "to illustrate a positive state of mind", it added. Joon is aimed at helping Air France compete with the increasingly intense competition from budget European carriers such as Easyjet and Gulf airlines such as Emirates.

However, the airline said: "Joon will not be a low-cost airline as it will offer original products and services that reflect those of Air France." While Air France's pilots have agreed to support the new subsidiary on condition they will receive the same pay and conditions as on the main airline, the hiring of stewards, hostesses and part of the ground personnel for the new service will be outsourced. The pilots were initially hostile to the plan, fearing they would be forced to accept lower wages. In September 2014, they struck work for two weeks over the expansion of Air France's low-cost European subsidiary Transavia, grounding thousands of flights. —AP

US BUDGET PLAN FACES UNCERTAIN FATE AFTER CLEARING HOUSE PANEL

WASHINGTON: A Republican budget blueprint that would begin to clear a path for a GOP effort to overhaul the tax code this fall is headed to an uncertain fate after winning a key committee vote Wednesday night.

The Budget Committee plan faces opposition from both hard-core conservatives and more moderate Republicans even as it advanced through the GOP-controlled panel on a party-line 22-14 vote. It remains short of the votes required to pass through the House and advance to the Senate, where further complications await. The plan proposes deep cuts to safety net programs like Medicaid and food stamps and reprises a controversial Medicare plan strongly opposed by President Donald Trump - though Republicans are expected to only try to deliver on a small fraction of the cuts.

Instead, to most Republicans on Capitol Hill, the most important element of the plan is the procedural pathway it would clear to allow Republicans to pass their top priority - an overhaul of the tax code - later this year without fear of a blockade by Senate Democrats. Republicans argue that growing deficits and debt are part of the reason for slow economic growth and that big benefit plans like Medicare and Medicaid need changes now to keep them from going broke for future generations.

Simple principle

"Both parties in Washington have

failed to abide by a simple principle that all American families and small businesses do - that we must live within our means," said Budget Chairman Diane Black, R-Tenn. "Balancing the budget requires us to make tough choices, but the consequences of inaction far outweigh any political risks we may face." But like the GOP's health care repeal and replace efforts and its moribund hopes to boost infrastructure, the GOP budget outline faces opposition from both wings of the party. Republican conservatives want more of its proposed cuts to actually take effect in follow-up legislation, while moderates want to focus on tax reform instead of cuts to food stamps or federal employee pensions.

The nonbinding GOP plan promises to cut more than \$5 trillion from the budget over the coming decade, though Republicans only appear serious about enacting a relatively modest 10-year, \$203 billion deficit cut over the same period through filibuster-proof follow-up legislation.

But Democrats blasted the sweeping cuts in the plan. "This is exactly what the American people don't want or expect out of their government - that we would provide tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans and corporations and pay for it on the backs of people who are struggling to make their lives better," said top panel Democrat John Yarmuth of Kentucky. The measure also revives a provocative propos-

al to turn Medicare into a voucher-like program for future retirees. Experts say that change would likely increase costs for beneficiaries and deny them the coverage guarantees of Medicare.

Republicans easily rejected Democratic attempts to protect the Obama health law, restore Medicaid, and increase spending for domestic programs renewed by Congress each year. While exempting Social Security, veterans and defense, the plan proposes cuts across the rest of the budget to turn this year's projected \$700 billion-or-so deficit into a tiny \$9 billion surplus by 2027. It would do so by slashing \$5.4 trillion over the coming decade, including almost \$500 billion from Medicare and \$1.5 trillion from Medicaid and the Obama-era health law.

It also contains its share of gimmicks, including \$1.8 trillion in deficit cuts over the coming decade from rosy projections of economic growth averaging 2.6 percent over 10 years. Another \$700 billion in savings would come from a crackdown on "improper payments" such as tax credits and Social Security and Medicare benefits going to people who don't qualify for them. Many of its cuts are unspecified.

But in the immediate future the GOP measure is a budget buster. It would add almost \$30 billion to Trump's \$668 billion request for national defense next year and rejects most of Trump's proposed cuts to domestic agencies - only to promise deeper, nonbinding cuts in the future. —AP

FITCH: CHINA'S REGULATION PLEDGE COULD SIGNAL SHIFT

BEIJING: Fitch Ratings said yesterday China's renewed commitment to contain financial risks signals a possible shift away from high economic growth targets, though policymakers are likely to remain cautious about tightening too aggressively.

Chinese regulators and officials emphasized their commitment to tighter financial regulations at the recent National Financial Work Conference. The once-in-five-years

meeting typically sets the tone for policy for the subsequent few years. President Xi Jinping said at the conference that a new Financial Stability and Development Committee will be set up under the State Council, or cabinet, and the central bank will take on a bigger role in managing financial market risks.

But there is still uncertainty over whether the drive to address risks will continue to take priority if the economy slows, Fitch said. "This could signal

rising potential for a more decisive shift in policy focus away from hitting high growth targets, but there is still uncertainty over whether the drive to address risks will continue to take priority if the economy slows," Fitch said in a statement. The economy expanded a faster-than-expected 6.9 percent in the second quarter, setting China on course to comfortably meet its 2017 growth target of around 6.5 percent.

Tightening is likely to become more

targeted as authorities try to limit the impact on economic growth, Fitch said. China will be wary of triggering a liquidity crunch through regulatory tightening, making an abrupt clampdown on shadow banking activities unlikely, the ratings agency said.

Last week, Fitch maintained its A+ rating on China with a stable outlook, citing the strength of the country's external finances and macroeconomic record. —Reuters

EASYJET WINS AOC IN AUSTRIA, UPGRADES OUTLOOK

LONDON: EasyJet has secured an air operator's certificate in Austria that will enable it to keep flying across the EU after Brexit, the low-cost carrier said yesterday, and lifted earnings guidance. The news, which comes one week after the British low-cost airline revealed it had applied to Austrian authorities to establish a new Vienna-based EasyJet Europe division, was contained in a trading update.

"Our European AOC (air operator's certificate) has now been awarded and the first flight by an EasyJet Europe aircraft takes place today," said the company's outgoing chief executive Carolyn McCall. "That means our flying rights in Europe will be secure after the UK leaves the EU."

The Luton-based airline also lifted its profits outlook for the year on rising third-quarter revenues and passenger numbers, and "strong" cost controls. Profit before taxation is forecast to stand between £380 million and £420 million (\$495-\$550 million, 430-474 million euros).

The airline's previous consensus guidance, given in May, stood at £367 million. "Following a rigorous and comprehensive year-long process, EasyJet is today announcing that it has been awarded an AOC by Austro Control and an airline operating licence by Austria's Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology," the carrier said.

"These allow EasyJet to establish a new airline, EasyJet Europe, headquartered in Vienna and will enable EasyJet to continue to operate flights both across Europe and domestically within European countries after the UK has left the EU." The airline will continue to operate those flights "regardless of the outcome of talks on a future UK-EU aviation agreement".

The announcement came at the end of a year-long "rigorous and comprehensive" process, it added. EasyJet Europe will become the group's third airline division after EasyJet in Luton, north of London, and EasyJet Switzerland in Geneva. Earlier this week, the company announced Monday that McCall will step down at the end of the year to become head of British commercial broadcaster ITV. A search for her successor has already begun.

Britain will leave the EU in March 2019 after voting in a referendum last year in favour of its departure. —AFP



LARNACA: This file photo taken on November 8, 2015 shows an aircraft from carrier easyJet at Larnaca airport in the Mediterranean Island of Cyprus. EasyJet, Europe's second biggest carrier by passenger numbers, set up a new Vienna-based division yesterday, that will allow it to fly across the EU regardless of the final outcome of Brexit talks.— AFP



JAKARTA: A vendor rests next to his stall selling fish while waiting for customers in Jakarta yesterday. —AFP

ADB: ASIA GROWTH OUTLOOK BRIGHTENS ON SOLID EXPORTS

CHINA 2017, 2018 GROWTH REVISED UPWARDS

MANILA: The Asian Development Bank raised its 2017 and 2018 growth forecasts for the region, reflecting rising exports as manufacturers of smartphones to cars to other consumer goods benefited from improving global demand. Developing Asia - made up of 45 countries in the Asia-Pacific region - is expected to grow 5.9 percent and 5.8 percent this year and next, the Manila-based ADB said in the update of its Asian Development Outlook yesterday. They are a step up from April forecasts of 5.7 percent for both years. An upturn in global demand since late last year has given trade-dependent Asian economies much needed momentum, with the United States and Europe also showing improving growth.

Developing Asia grew by 5.8 percent last year. The update of the Development Outlook raised China's 2017 and 2018 growth forecasts to 6.7 percent and 6.4 percent, respectively, from 6.5 percent and 6.2 percent, driven by strong consumption and improving shipments. China's economy beat expectations with 6.9 percent growth in the second quarter, in part driven by firmer exports and production, which could

heighten trade tensions as the United States and Beijing begin economic talks on Wednesday. "Despite lingering uncertainties surrounding the strength of the global recovery, we feel that the region's economies are well-placed to face potential shocks to the outlook," Yasuyuki Sawada, ADB's chief economist, said in a statement. Inflation across the region is expected to remain under control, helped by well-behaved food and fuel prices, the ADB said. It cut this year's inflation projection to 2.6 percent from 3.0 percent, and next year's forecast to 3.0 percent from 3.2 percent.

The region should now grow by 5.9 percent this year and 5.8 percent in 2018, the Manila-based lender said in the report. The bank updated its earlier forecasts, released in April, that predicted 5.7 percent growth for the region this year and next. "Unanticipated external demand has improved growth prospects for developing Asia," ADB said. "The resulting boost to net exports all but suspends growth moderation" in China, the region's largest economy, it added.

The growth outlook for the manufac-

turing dynamo of East Asia is brighter, with South Korea energised by receding political uncertainty with the election of a new president, it said. The bank maintained its 7.4 percent growth forecast for India this year and 7.6 percent for 2018, primarily from strong consumption, and the rest of South Asia's prospects also remained robust.

Southeast Asia is also on track to meet forecasts of 4.8 percent growth this year and 5.0 percent next year, helped by high first quarter growth in Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, the ADB said.

ADB upgraded its forecast growth for the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, with Armenia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan uplifted by manufacturing and mining. The bank maintained its earlier projections for Pacific island economies. It revised its inflation outlook for developing Asia by 0.4 percentage points this year to 2.6 percent, and by 0.2 percentage points next year to 3.0 percent. "Ample supply has held world oil prices low despite rising demand, while favorable weather has kept food prices stable." —Agencies

ARENADO POWERS ROCKIES PAST PADRES 18-4

DENVER: Nolan Arenado lined three homers as part of his five-hit afternoon and tied a career-high with seven RBIs, helping the Colorado Rockies complete a three-game sweep of the San Diego Padres with an 18-4 victory Wednesday. Trevor Story and Charlie Blackmon also homered on a scorching day when the Rockies had a season-high 21 hits. Gerardo Parra ran his streak of reaching base to 10 straight plate appearances over three games before flying out in the fifth. He finished with four singles. Arenado had a pair of RBI singles to start the game, followed by solo shots in the fourth and fifth innings, and a three-run homer in the sixth. He had a chance at a fourth homer in the eighth and lined out to left. Jon Gray (3-1) kept the Padres in check until running out of steam. The right-hander allowed all four of his runs in the sixth - his last inning of work. Padres starter Clayton Richard (5-10) lasted just 3 2/3 innings and gave up 11 runs, 10 earned, inflating his ERA from 4.75 to 5.35. He also matched a team record by allowing 14 hits.

DODGERS 9, WHITE SOX 1

Kike Hernandez had two home runs to lead surging Los Angeles in a rain-shortened game, spoiling the Chicago debut of top prospect Yoan Moncada. Hernandez broke out of a 1-for-23 slump with home runs in his first two at-bats, lifting the Dodgers to their 11th straight win and 31st victory in 35 games. The game was called in the top of the eighth inning after a 37-minute delay. Hernandez had solo home runs in the second and fourth innings, his second career multihomer game. Chicago starter Carlos Rodon (1-3) allowed home runs to his first batter, as Chris Taylor led the game off with one, and his last, as Corey Seager's two-run homer in the fourth chased him. Seager's blast was his 44th as a shortstop, passing Rafael Furcal for most career homers from the position in franchise history. Kenta Maeda (8-4) allowed one run and five hits in five innings.

ANGELS 7, NATIONALS 0

Alex Meyer allowed only one hit in seven innings, and Mike Trout and C.J. Cron hit two-run homers to lead Los Angeles to a victory that snapped the Washington Nationals' six-game winning streak. The 6-foot-9 Meyer (4-5) had a perfect game until he walked Anthony Rendon with two outs in the fifth. He lost his no-hitter with two outs in the sixth when Brian Goodwin doubled down the right-field line. Meyer, Rendon and Goodwin were all first-round draft picks by the Nationals in 2011. Meyer had been plagued by walks this season (41 in 60 1/3 innings) but walked only one in his career-high seven innings Wednesday, while striking out seven.

CUBS 8, BRAVES 2

Mike Montgomery hit his first home run and allowed two hits and one run in six innings to lead streaking Chicago over Atlanta. Javier Baez hit a three-run homer in the eighth for Chicago, which stretched its season-best winning streak to six games since the All-Star break. The Cubs completed a three-game sweep of the Braves. Kris Bryant, the Cubs' 2016 NL MVP, left the game with a sprained left little finger in the first inning. The team said X-rays were negative and his status is day to day. Tommy La Stella, who replaced Bryant, also homered and Addison Russell drove in two runs with four hits, including two doubles. The Braves loaded the bases with three singles off Koji Uehara in the eighth. After Pedro Strop replaced Uehara, Matt Kemp grounded into a double play to end the inning. Montgomery (2-6) earned his first win since June 20. The only run he allowed came on a sixth-inning leadoff homer by Ender Inciarte. RA Dickey (6-6) allowed four runs and seven hits in seven innings.

PIRATES 3, BREWERS 2

Max Moroff got his first career game-ending hit with a single in the 10th inning, lifting Pittsburgh over Milwaukee. Moroff raised his right arm and ran

to first base while his seventh big league hit scored Josh Harrison. Teammate Gregory Polanco hoisted the rookie into the air as the Pirates celebrated in the infield. Harrison reached on a double against former Pirates reliever Jared Hughes (3-2), who got his first loss since April 18. Pittsburgh blew a lead in the eighth before tying it in the ninth against closer Corey Knebel. Francisco Cervelli singled home Moroff, who was pinch-running for David Freese. The rally began with Freese's walk and Polanco's single. It was the fifth blown save this year for Knebel. Tony Watson (5-2) pitched a scoreless 10th for the win.

RED SOX 5, BLUE JAYS 1

Dustin Pedroia drove in three, Drew Pomeranz pitched three-hit ball into the seventh inning and Boston beat Toronto.

Pomeranz (10-4) allowed an unearned run over 6 2/3 innings to win his fourth straight decision. Pedroia and Deven Marrero each had two-run singles with two outs in the second inning to provide

the Yankees to 0-8-2 in their past 10 series. Zack Granite sparked a six-run surge by the Twins in the second inning against Yankees starter Jordan Montgomery (6-5) with a two-run single, his first major league RBIs. Eduardo Escobar tacked on an RBI single before Sano crushed an 0-2 curveball into the bullpen for a 6-0 lead. The All-Star has 23 homers this year.

PHILLIES 10, MARLINS 3

Daniel Nava tied a career high with four hits and Philadelphia had a season-best 20 hits to beat Miami and win a road series for only the third time this season. Nava singled in each of his first four at-bats, drove in two runs and increased his average to .300. The Phillies completed a 3-3 trip but still have the worst record in the majors. Miami's Giancarlo Stanton hit his 30th homer to forge a tie with the Yankees' Aaron Judge for the major league lead in homers. Christian Yelich hit his ninth homer for the Marlins. Both homers came against Nick Pivetta (3-

Houston and rookie Ben Gamel powered the offense with a two-run homer to give Seattle a win over the Astros. Paxton (9-3) allowed six hits and one run in seven innings, after not allowing a run in his previous two starts against Houston this season. It's the fourth straight win for Paxton, who struck out seven. Houston starter Charlie Morton (7-4) retired the first nine batters and the Astros led 1-0 before Jean Segura led off the fourth with a single. Gamel's first homer since June 23 came next to put Seattle up 2-1. Segura had two hits and Robinson Cano and Mike Zunino drove in a run apiece for the Mariners, who won for the sixth time in seven games. Edwin Diaz pitched a scoreless ninth for his 18th save.

ORIOLES 10, RANGERS 2

Kevin Gausman pitched six innings of four-hit ball, Adam Gonsman homered and scored three runs and Baltimore beat faltering Texas. Trey Mancini contributed two hits in a seven-run seventh inning,



DENVER: Colorado Rockies' Charlie Blackmon follows the flight of his two-run home run off San Diego Padres relief pitcher Kevin Quackenbush in the fourth inning. —AP

all the offense the Red Sox needed. Pedroia has six RBIs in the series, which concludes Thursday. Aaron Sanchez (1-3) gave up five runs, six hits and five walks in four innings.

GIANTS 5, INDIANS 4

Buster Posey pinch hit a two-out, two-run double in the bottom of the eighth inning and San Francisco defeated Cleveland. Posey, on a scheduled rest day, doubled off the wall on a 3-2 slider on the seventh offering from Indians reliever Bryan Shaw (2-4). The Indians lost for the sixth time in seven games as they concluded a 1-5 West Coast trip. The American League Central front-runners fell to 4-13 in interleague and are winless in six interleague series. Cory Gearrin (4-3) faced just one batter in the top of the eighth for the win.

TWINS 6, YANKEES 1

Miguel Sano hit a three-run home run, Jose Berrios went strong into the seventh inning and Minnesota beat New York to win its first home series against the Yankees in nine years. Berrios (9-3) allowed only one run, his fewest in 11 starts, on a two-out single by Brett Gardner in the seventh before being removed. Berrios improved to 6-0 in seven afternoon turns this season and helped drop

5), who has allowed 16 homers in 69 1/3 innings this season. Dan Straily (7-5) lost for the first time since June 5. He allowed four runs in five innings.

REDS 4, DIAMONDBACKS 3

JD Martinez bruised his left hand, forcing him out of his debut with Arizona, and Cincinnati ended its five-game losing streak with a victory by Adam Duvall's bases-loaded single in the 11th inning. The Reds had lost all five games since the All-Star break, including Arizona's 11-2 victory on Tuesday night that featured nine extra-base hits by the Diamondbacks. The Reds broke their slump by rallying off TJ McFarland (4-2) to snap a 3-3 tie. Billy Hamilton singled - his third hit of the game - with one out. Zack Cozart hit a ground-rule double, and Joey Votto was walked intentionally ahead of Duvall's single to right. Michael Lorenzen (5 -2) pitched two innings for the win. Arizona was buoyed by getting Martinez from the Tigers for three prospects, adding a run producer to the middle of the lineup. Manager Torey Lovullo said pregame on Wednesday that "it was an exciting moment" to write his name on the lineup card.

MARINERS 4, ASTROS 1

James Paxton had another strong start against

including a bases-loaded triple, and Jonathan Schoop finished with three hits and three RBIs. Having thus far outscored Texas 25-4 in the series, the Orioles will attempt to complete a four-game sweep on Thursday. Gausman (6-7) gave up one run, struck out eight and walked two. The right-hander came in with a 6.39 ERA and had allowed a total of 14 runs in his past two starts. Martin Perez (5-7) allowed five runs, four earned, and seven hits in six innings.

ATHLETICS 7, RAYS 2

Sonny Gray struck out six pitching into the seventh in what might have been his final home start in Oakland if the club tries to deal him before the trade deadline, and the Athletics rallied in the fifth inning to beat Tampa Bay. Matt Joyce hit a towering homer to the right-field seats in the eighth for Oakland. Gray (6-4) won his third straight start and fourth in five. When speculation arose from the White Sox side before his Friday outing that the right-hander had been scratched because of a possible deal, the A's quickly announced that he was indeed taking the mound for his scheduled outing. Oakland got to Tampa Bay right-hander Jake Faria (4-1) in the fifth. With seven straight quality starts to begin his career, Faria took his first big league loss. —AP

PIETERSEN EYES S AFRICA INTERNATIONAL RETURN

LONDON: Kevin Pietersen said yesterday he has not ruled out resurrecting his international career with his native South Africa even though he'll be pushing 40 when he requalifies. The 37-year-old batsman will become eligible to play for the Proteas in 2019 having not been selected for England after being sacked in the aftermath of the 2013-14 Ashes defeat in Australia.

"You are talking about in two years' time. Would I? Who knows? We'll have to wait and see where I am," said Pietersen after smashing a

thrilling half-century to lead Surrey to a 10-run win over Essex in front of almost 24,000 fans at the Oval in the Twenty20 Blast in an explosive return to English cricket. "I'm going to be playing a lot of cricket in South Africa over the next two years, so we'll see. "I love batting: I will bat for as long as I love the art of batting. I do at the moment, but I'm an old man now, I've just hurt my calf, I didn't field. "Who knows where I'll be in two years' time? If I enjoy batting, we'll see where I get to. I'm in a very happy place."

Pietersen hit four sixes in an over on his way to 52 off 35 balls in a Surrey total of 150 for nine on Wednesday. In reply, Essex were restricted to 140 for seven. Pietersen, who suffered a calf injury which prevented him from fielding, was playing his first English domestic match for nearly two years. He had a lucky escape in the 10th over when he was dropped by Dan Lawrence off Ashar Zaidi and added 43 with Dominic Sibley. Pietersen was eventually out in the 16th over, three balls after reaching his 40th half-century in T20 cricket. —AFP

WESTLEY SET FOR ENGLAND DEBUT AGAINST S AFRICA

LONDON: Essex batsman Tom Westley is in line to make his England debut at number three in next week's third Test against South Africa at The Oval, the England and Wales Cricket Board announced yesterday. He could be joined in the side by another newcomer to Test cricket in Middlesex batsman Dawid Malan, also included in a 13-man squad for what will be the 100th Test at The Oval, which starts on Thursday, July 27.

Gary Ballance, England's number three in their crushing 346-run defeat in the second Test at Trent Bridge last week that saw South Africa level the four-match series at 1-1, was ruled out on Tuesday with a broken finger. "Essex's Tom Westley is set to earn his first cap, with selectors confirming he will bat at number three in the 100th Test at the Oval," said an ECB statement issued as the selectors took the unusual setp of confirming the newcomer's place in the side long in advance of the match.

"Middlesex batsman Dawid Malan is also included in the squad for the first time and could feature if England decide on selecting an extra batsman when they confirm their starting line-up next week. "England will report to the Kia Oval on Tuesday, where they will train in the afternoon."

England born but South Africa raised Malan looks as if he will go head-to-head with spin-bowling all-rounder Liam Dawson for a place in the side. But struggling opener Keaton Jennings is set to retain his place alongside Alastair Cook, with in-form Surrey batsman Mark Stoneman missing out on a call-up on his home ground. Meanwhile Malan's county colleague Toby Roland-Jones, also uncapped, will vvy for a place among England's pace attack with Mark Wood. Durham quick Wood has struggled for form this series but has been passed fit following a heel problem.

Ballance struggles

Yorkshire left-hander Ballance would, however, have been under pressure to retain his position even if fully fit. He has averaged a meagre 21.25 in four innings so far this series, with a top score of 34, in what is the Zimbabwe-born batsman's third crack at Test cricket. England were bowled out for just 133 on the fourth day at Trent Bridge, with Ballance dismissed for four. Their top-order batting has long been a concern, hence the call-ups for both Westley, 28, and Malan, 29.

Westley has been in good form for County Championship leaders Essex so far this season, scoring 478 First Division runs, including two centuries, at an average of 53.11. Significantly, he also made 106 not out against a strong South Africa attack for the second-string England Lions at Worcester last month.

Malan, who made a match-winning debut in England's deciding Twenty20 victory against South Africa in Cardiff last month, with 78 off 44 balls in Cardiff, has been a consistent performer in red-ball cricket with Middlesex. He averages 42.50 in the County Championship so far this season, with a top score of 115. —AFP



SOUTHPORT: England's Ian Poulter hits from the 12th tee during the first round of the British Open Golf Championship, at Royal Birkdale. —AP

GOLF

NO SLEEP, JITTERY NERVES AND AN OPENING 68 FOR MANLEY

SOUTHPORT: Stuart Manley was up part of the night tending to his 6-month-old son, and so nervous when he stood on the first tee that he thought he wouldn't be able to hit the ball. By the time he had finished his first round in the British Open the journeyman from Wales had the equally hard task of explaining how he somehow managed to get on the leaderboard yesterday at Royal Birkdale.

"I didn't dream of it. I didn't think about it," Manley said. "I just thought, post a decent score, give myself tomorrow for making the cut and have a good weekend. I didn't really dream I'd be sitting here and being the leader after round one, so far anyway." Manley had his reasons for being surprised. At the age of 38 - after 13 years struggling as a pro - he was playing in his first British Open and just hoping for a respectable outing.

Bad night's sleep

What he ended up with was an eagle-birdie finish that gave him a 68 to put him atop the early leaderboard at the Open - a lead that lasted about an hour before Ian Poulter came in with a 67. "It happened so quick," Manley said, seemingly still in a daze. "I eagled 17, birdied 18. Didn't have much time to look at the leaderboards. So it hasn't really sunk in, I don't think yet."

It wasn't as if Manley was in good form coming in to the

Open. After qualifying with a tie for second at the Johannesburg Open in February he has made the cut in only one of his last 10 tournaments. He had a bad night's sleep. And then an even worse warmup on the driving range. "I thought the warmup would have gone better this morning, but it didn't," he said. "So I thought, OK, this is the game I've got. I'm just going to have to plot my way around, and it seemed to work."

What Manley did was what more seasoned players are trying to do at Royal Birkdale. He wanted to avoid the fairway bunkers and aim for the front edge of the green on every hole. Par was his friend, and he made enough of them - 13 to be exact - that he was in position to take advantage of the final two holes. It was a score he might have dreamed about had he slept better overnight.

"I think I'll sleep a lot better tonight," he said. "I'm really pretty tired." Manley, who once considered playing soccer professionally before deciding on a career in golf, has bounced between the European Tour and minor tours and came into the Open ranked No 520 in the world. But he said he feels like he is still improving and hasn't thought about quitting the game. He likes the travel, and likes to bring along his dog, Griff, to tournaments when he can. "I'm gutted I didn't bring him this week, to be fair," he said. "He's on holiday, down in west Wales at the moment." —AP

AHL ALLOWS PLAYERS TO GO TO OLYMPICS

NEW YORK: Players on American Hockey League contracts will be eligible to play in the 2018 Winter Olympics. President and CEO David Andrews confirmed through a league spokesman Wednesday that teams were informed they could loan players on AHL contracts to national teams for the purposes of participating in the Pyeongchang Olympics.

The AHL sent a memo to its 30 clubs saying players could only be loaned for Olympic participation from Feb 5-26. The Olympic men's hockey tournament runs from Feb 9-25. Like the NHL, which is not having its players participate for the first time since 1994, the AHL does

not have an Olympic break in its schedule. The AHL's decision does not affect players assigned to that league on NHL one- or two-way contracts. No final decision has been made about those players.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly denied a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation report that the league had told its 31 teams that AHL players could be loaned to play in the Olympics. It was an AHL memo sent at the direction of that league's board of governors. When the NHL announced in April that it wouldn't be sending players to South Korea after participating in five consecutive Olympics, Andrews said the AHL

was prepared for Canada, the United States and other national federations to request players.

"I would guess we're going to lose a fair number of players," Andrews said in April. "Not just to Canada and the US, but we're going to lose some players to other teams, as well. But we're used to that. Every team in our league has usually got two or three guys who are on recalls to the NHL, so it's not going to really change our competitive integrity or anything else." The US and Canada are expected to rely heavily on players in European professional leagues and college and major junior hockey to fill out Olympic rosters without NHL players. —AP

FROM SPORTS STAR TO INMATE: SIMPSON TO PLEAD FOR PAROLE

LOVELOCK: OJ Simpson once thrilled crowds as he ran for touchdowns and hurdled airport seats in car rental ads to achieve Hollywood celebrity before he was acquitted of murder in the 1995 "trial of the century" in Los Angeles.

Now, an aging Simpson will appear as inmate No 1027820 in a starkly plain hearing room in a remote Nevada prison Thursday to plead for his freedom. He's spent more than eight years behind bars for armed robbery and assault with a weapon after trying to take back sports memorabilia in a budget hotel room in Las Vegas.

Simpson, 70, will ask four parole board members who sided with him once before to release him in October, a likely possibility with his clean prison record. It will be a stunning scene for a charismatic star once known as "The Juice" who won the Heisman Trophy as the best US college football player in 1968 and was enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 1985.

He appeared to have it all. He went on to star in Hertz commercials and movies like the "Naked Gun" comedies and serve as a commentator for "Monday Night Football" before his former wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend Ronald Goldman were slain in 1994. Simpson is expected to reiterate that he has kept a promise to stay out of trouble, coaches in the prison gym where he works and counsels other inmates.

"I guess, my age, guys come to me," Simpson told parole officials four years ago. The same commissioners granted him parole on some of his 12 charges in 2013, leaving him with four years to serve before reaching his minimum term. At Simpson's side in his bid for freedom will be lawyer Malcolm LaVergne, close friend Tom Scotto, sister Shirley Baker and daughter Arnelle Simpson.

OJ Simpson is expected to explain what he would do and where he would live if he is granted parole after reaching the nine-year minimum of his 33-year sentence. He was



LOS ANGELES: In this June 15, 1995 file photo, OJ Simpson, left, grimaces as he tries on one of the leather gloves prosecutors say he wore the night his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman were murdered in a Los Angeles courtroom. —AP

convicted in 2008 after enlisting some men he barely knew, including two with guns, to retrieve from two sports collectibles sellers some items that Simpson said were stolen from him a decade earlier.

'I would give it all back'

"My crime was trying to retrieve for my family my own property," Simpson told the parole officials in 2013 before apologizing. "Make no mistake, I would give it all back," he said, "to get these last five years back." The items disappeared after Simpson was found not guilty in the 1994 killings of his ex-wife and her friend and before he was found liable in 1997 in civil court for the deaths.

He was ordered to pay \$33.5 million to survivors including his children and the Goldman family. A Goldman family spokesman said Ron Goldman's father and sister, Fred and Kim, won't be part of Simpson's parole hearing but that they felt apprehensive about "how this will change their lives again should

Simpson be released." "They will remain patient and optimistic that the system will do what is necessary to ensure the public's safety remains a priority and that proper justice will be served," spokesman Michael Wright said this week. The Goldmans believe Simpson got away with murder in Los Angeles, and many people felt the stiff sentence handed down in 2008 in Las Vegas wasn't just about the robbery.

Now, even the retired district attorney who prosecuted Simpson for the heist acknowledges that Simpson has a good chance to go free. But David Roger denied Simpson's sentence was "payback" for his acquittal in the Los Angeles slayings. The former prosecutor said Simpson took a gamble when he rejected an offer to avoid trial by pleading guilty to a felony that could have gotten him 21/2 years in prison. "He thought he was invincible, and he rolled the dice," Roger said. This story has been corrected to show that Nicole Brown Simpson was OJ Simpson's ex-wife at the time of her death. —AP

LEBRON LOSES 'BEST TEAMMATE' JONES TO PHOENIX EXEC POST

LOS ANGELES: Former Cleveland Cavaliers reserve James Jones, who alongside LeBron James has reached the past seven NBA Finals, was named vice president of basketball operations for the Phoenix Suns on Wednesday. The move was announced by Suns owner Robert Sarver, who also revealed a contract extension, reportedly through the 2019-20 season, for 36-year-old general manager Ryan McDonough.

Jones, also 36, was a forward for the Suns from 2005-2007, helping the team to the 2006 Western Conference finals. He will report to McDonough and with him oversee all basketball-related matters, including trades, free agent deals and the NBA Draft.

His departure removes another familiar face around James on the Cavaliers roster as James ponders the coming season and what his team can do to overcome the Golden State Warriors, who beat Cleveland in the NBA Finals for the second time in three consecutive meetings for the title. James, who has called Jones "the best teammate I've ever had," led the Cavaliers in the greatest comeback in NBA Finals history from 3-1 down to win the best-of-seven series in 2016. The Warriors won a rematch in five games last month.

James has reportedly been unsatisfied with the moves made by Cleveland to obtain off-season talent to better compete with the Kevin Durant-powered Warriors, notably missing out on deals for Jimmy Butler and Chris Paul after general manager David Griffin parted ways with the Cavs. Jones, a former secretary-treasurer for the NBA players union, played alongside James for four seasons in Miami, resulting in two titles and four finals appearances, and the past three seasons in Cleveland. He also played as a backup forward for Indiana, Portland and Phoenix in his 14 NBA campaigns.

"We are thrilled to add James Jones to our staff," said McDonough. "James has a wealth of experiences that will greatly benefit our organization. He is a three-time NBA champion and has been one of the top executives with the National Basketball Players Association over the past few years." Jones averaged 7.8 points and 2.8 rebounds in 151 games with the Suns. He played in 48 regular-season games and eight playoff contests for the Cavaliers last season and has career averages of 5.2 points and 1.8 rebounds.

McDonough came to Phoenix after 10 seasons in basketball operations with the Boston Celtics, serving as assistant general manager for the final three and helping the team take the 2008 NBA title. The Suns went 24-58 last season, the NBA's second-worst record and worst in the Western Conference. Phoenix has not been to the NBA Playoffs since reaching the Western Conference finals in 2010. They haven't reached the NBA Finals since 1993. "We have laid the foundation for what we hope will become the next championship caliber Suns team," McDonough said. "There is still a lot of work to be done to reach our ultimate goal of bringing a championship to Phoenix." —Agencies

Chalmers back with Grizzlies

Elsewhere, the Memphis Grizzlies inked Mario Chalmers to a contract on Wednesday, a day after the guard indicated he was headed back to his old NBA team. The Grizzlies did not reveal terms of the deal, but multiple media reports said Chalmers agreed to a one-year contract. Chalmers used Instagram on Tuesday to post a picture of himself in a Grizzlies uniform with a caption that read "GNG... enough said." —Agencies

HENDRICK TABS BOWMAN AS EARNHARDT REPLACEMENT

INDIANAPOLIS: Dale Earnhardt Jr got the replacement he wanted. Alex Bowman got his dream job. Hendrick Motorsports announced yesterday that the 24-year-old Bowman will replace one of the series' biggest stars in the No. 88 car next season after Earnhardt retires. Bowman has big shoes to fill. Earnhardt was named NASCAR's most popular driver each of the last 14 seasons and fans of his late father often tracked Junior's results following Dale Earnhardt's fatal crash in the 2001 season opener at Daytona.

"Ever since I was a kid, racing is all I've wanted to do," Bowman said. "I've had so many people believe in me along the way. My family has sacrificed a lot and always been behind me. I would never have this

chance without the support of Dale and everyone involved with the No. 88 team. To be part of Hendrick Motorsports and for Mr Hendrick to have this confidence in me, it's just amazing."

Bowman already has some experience in this job. When the 42-year-old Earnhardt missed 18 races because of a concussion last season, Bowman started 10 of them in the No. 88, winning the first Cup pole of his career and finishing in the top 10 three times. That was enough to get Earnhardt's attention and eventually an endorsement in May.

"Alex Bowman to the 88 next year - is that what you guys want?" Junior asked during a livestream on Periscope following the series' All-Star race. "That

would be pretty awesome to see Alex in that car. That's the plan, I hope. . Yeah, Alex in the 88. That sounds good to me. That kid earned it last year. He ran good."

The 24-year-old Bowman performed well enough to get several full-time offers to drive in the Cup series this year. Instead, he stayed patient. Bowman said he turned down each offer as he continued searching for the right situation. The Tucson, Arizona, native wound up with no full-time ride in 2017. But with Earnhardt's concussion history, Bowman likely knew it wouldn't be long until he stepped away. Rick Hendrick's team contemplated its options for months before finally deciding bring back Bowman. —AP

RUGBY

LEALI'IFANO'S RETURN LIGHTS UP SUPER RUGBY PLAYOFFS

WELLINGTON: Christian Leali'ifano's return to Super Rugby after a courageous battle with cancer is inspiring players on both sides of Friday's quarterfinal between his Brumbies and the defending champion Hurricanes.

Leali'ifano will take his place on the bench for the Brumbies' home playoff at Canberra, 11 months after being diagnosed with leukemia. He underwent a life-saving bone marrow transplant in late 2016 and was told in February that his cancer is in remission. The Wallabies utility back made his return to rugby in a festival match in Singapore in June and later in a fourth-grade club match, but a hamstring injury delayed his Super Rugby comeback.

Brumbies captain Sam Carter said Leali'ifano's return for the playoffs was "an awesome moment for the team, for Brumbies Rugby and for himself." "I don't think people have seen how hard he's worked to get in the position he's in now," Carter said, "so it's very exciting news." Brumbies coach Stephen Larkham shed light on Leali'ifano's struggle to return to top-level rugby. "I've seen him go through some really difficult times," Larkham said. "I've seen him push himself beyond breaking at times to get right for this."

Hurricanes players Nehe Milner-Skudder and Brad Shields said they were moved and inspired by Leali'ifano's his recovery and return to rugby. "It was pretty sad to hear what he went through, but to see him come out the other end and back playing footy ... I'm inspired by his story and I've been a big fan for a long time," All Blacks winger Milner-Skudder said.

Good news story

Leali'ifano's comeback also ushers in the first round of playoffs with a good news story which will help submerge widespread doubts about the fairness of the playoffs format. The Brumbies earned the right to host the defending champions by winning the Australian conference, though they won only six of 15 games in the regular season. Their 34 championship points would only have been good enough for ninth place on a combined Super Rugby standings.

At the same time, the Wellington-based Hurricanes won 12 of 15 regular season matches, scoring a competition record 596 points at an average of just under 40 per game and accumulating 58 championship points. That would have placed them third behind the Lions and Crusaders on a combined table but, instead, was only good enough for fifth behind the four conference winners.

The Lions, having qualified in first place, will host the Durban-based Sharks in Johannesburg in a quarterfinal on Saturday. The Seven-time champion Crusaders topped the New Zealand conference but finished two points behind the Lions in second place overall and will host the Dunedin-based Highlanders in Christchurch.

The Cape Town-based Stormers, who finished atop the South Africa One conference but with 20 points fewer than the Crusaders, earned a home quarterfinal against the Hamilton-based Chiefs. They faced the same opponent in the same match at the same venue last season and lost 60-21. The Lions beat the Sharks 27-10 last week and were propelled into first place when the Crusaders had their first loss of the season - at the hands of the Hurricanes - after 14 wins. That left the Lions and Crusaders to face quarterfinal derbies of which the Crusaders is likely the most difficult.

The Crusaders won both of their regular season games against the Highlanders by three-point margins: 30-27 in round two and 25-22 in round 15. "If the last two games are anything to go by there will be a bit of drama and a cliff hanger," Crusaders assistant coach Leon MacDonald said. The Lions have also beaten the Sharks twice this season: 34-29 in round six and again last weekend. —AP



BRISBANE: In this Oct 18, 2014 file photo, Australia's Christian Leali'ifano, center, runs away from New Zealand's Richie McCaw, left, during the Bledisloe cup rugby match against New Zealand. —AP

HURRICANES WEIGH UP BRUMBIES

SYDNEY: All Blacks star fly-half Beauden Barrett's return boosts defending champions Wellington Hurricanes against the ACT Brumbies as New Zealand look to underline their dominance over Australian sides in Friday's Super Rugby quarter-final. Four Kiwi teams are in this weekend's playoffs with the Canterbury Crusaders hosting the Otago Highlanders in an all-New Zealand quarter-final and the Brumbies qualifying as the Australian conference winner despite a losing 6-9 season record.

It has been a miserable season for Aussie sides, losing all 25 encounters against New Zealand opposition, and the Brumbies face a tough examination to stay in the title race against the Hurricanes in chilly Canberra. Barrett, the 2016 world player of the year, missed last week's final match of the regular season against the Crusaders with a sinus infection, while All Blacks hooker Dane Coles will play his first match in four months off the reserve bench following concussion issues.

The Brumbies were smashed 56-21 by the Hurricanes in Napier this season but overall the two-time winners hold an 8-4 advantage over them in Canberra, including a 33-20 play-

off win in 1997. "The Brumbies are a quality side and we're not reading anything into their results this season," Hurricanes head coach Chris Boyd said. "They have a proven record in Super Rugby over a long period and will be hard to beat at home."

Cancer survivor Christian Lealiifano will make his long-awaited return for the Brumbies off the bench, with the Wallaby fly-half out of action since his diagnosis with leukaemia last August. The seven-time champion Crusaders have made five changes and three positional tweaks to their starting 15 for the South Island showdown with the Highlanders tomorrow.

Epic encounter

There is a fresh front row of Joe Moody, Codie Taylor and Owen Franks, while All Black lock Sam Whitelock returns to the starting line-up to captain the team and Ryan Crotty is named at inside-centre. The Highlanders are boosted by the return to the back line of Ben and Aaron Smith, along with Richard Buckman on the left wing and Rob Thompson in midfield. —AFP

TAYLOR TREBLE SPARKS ROUT OF SCOTLAND

DOETINCHEM: Jodie Taylor scored a hat-trick as England demolished newcomers Scotland 6-0 at the women's European Championship while Spain cruised past Portugal in their opening Group D match in the Netherlands on Wednesday. In Utrecht, Arsenal striker Taylor struck an 11th-minute opener, capitalising on a run by Lucy Bronze, before firing home again in the 27th minute following a goal-mouth scramble.

Ellen White made it 3-0 five minutes later from a rebound after Jill Scott's long-range blast hit the crossbar, and Taylor completed her hat-trick on 53 minutes, chipping the ball over Gemma Fay in the Scottish goal following a flick-on header

from White. Jordan Nobbs scored a fifth goal three minutes from the end with a volley and substitute Toni Duggan rounded off the rout with a header in stoppage time as England recorded the biggest margin of victory in tournament history.

Losing streak

"I'm happy to get three goals but I wouldn't be able to score without the service of the team," said Taylor. "The last two years have been tough. It's a huge achievement for myself to be here." Scotland had a decent chance in each half but were outclassed on their first appearance at a major competition and extended their losing streak against

England in competitive matches to seven.

"It was a tough debut for us, but I think we played against a very, very good side, a contender in this tournament," said Scotland coach Anna Signeul. "We're disappointed to lose by so many goals. We will learn from this, we'll work on our resilience and we'll come back. It's not over." In Doetinchem, first-half goals from Vicky Losada and Amanda Sampedro handed Spain a convincing 2-0 win against Euro debutants Portugal.

Barcelona midfielder Losada opened the score on 23 minutes after a long pass from Andrea Pereira, slamming the ball past the helpless keeper Patricia Morais. Atletico's Sampedro made it 2-0 three

minutes before half-time, heading in a cross from Mariona Caldentey. "I'm happy with the result, our first half was almost perfect," said Spain coach Jorge Vilda. "They are really strong defensively, but we were better."

Spain, who won twice against Portugal in the Euro 2017 qualifying campaign, started with seven players from Champions League semi-finalists Barcelona. They showed their dominance from the beginning, with Jennifer Hermoso firing over the bar early in the game while Silvia Meseguer was denied by Morais after a fine exchange in the box. The second half was very much in the same vein. — AFP



DETROIT: Marco Tumminello #93 (R) of AS Roma pushes off on Maxwell #17 of Paris Saint-Germain while going after the ball during the second half at Comerica Park. — AFP

MOURINHO TREATING DERBY AS TRAINING

HOUSTON: Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho said he plans to treat the exhibition match against Manchester City as a training session as the two Premier League rivals prepare to clash in Houston. The two teams meet at the NRG Stadium-home of the Houston Texans NFL team in the first ever edition of the Manchester derby to be staged overseas.

Mourinho, who will lock horns with City boss Pep Guardiola once more, insisted however he was not concerned with the result of the game. "It's nice for the US and US fans, it's very good for the event. I think it's very good for both clubs and there is always a little bit of rivalry, a bit of an extra ingredient but for me it's a friendly," Mourinho said. "I'm not going to jump to celebrate a goal, or cry if we concede, it's preparation for me. The European Super Cup is a match, West Ham is a match," the

Portuguese manager added. Mourinho is likely to field two separate line-ups during the game, with one XI playing 60 minutes and a second XI 30 minutes. In United's two previous tour games-wins over the Los Angeles Galaxy and Real Salt Lake-he changed the entire line-up at half-time. "It's a competitive training session, a training session that you try to win but it's not the most important thing," he said.

"I know what I want and it's to give minutes to my players, to improve, to make mistakes to repeat in training exercises to stop those mistakes and to make the new players try to understand their teammates." Mourinho meanwhile brushed off questions about former club Chelsea's capture of Alvaro Morata from Real Madrid earlier Wednesday, insisting he was happy with United's high-profile signing of Romelu Lukaku last week.

"I'm not interested in what Chelsea

FC does, really," Mourinho said. "We got a big player, a player that I can compare with what he was a few years ago, because he worked with me for a few months and his development was very good. "We have a player who is now a top player. You have to prove it at the highest level, he has to do it for United, in Champions League matches but he has amazing qualities."

Mourinho meanwhile reiterated that United had not finished their transfer business, but conceded the market made doing business difficult, and he may scrap initial plans to sign four players during the window. "Everybody knows I would like four players and I'm ready to go from four to three because the market is difficult, some clubs think the market is different from others," he said. "We are not a club that is ready to pay what the clubs want us to pay so I'm ready to go from four to three." — AFP

PSG EDGES ROMA ON PENALTIES IN FRIENDLY

LOS ANGELES: Paris Saint-Germain edged Roma 5-3 on penalties on Wednesday after they played to a 1-1 draw in a friendly international football match in Detroit, Michigan. Brazilian defender Marquinhos gave the Ligue 1 giants the lead in the 36th minute, but Roma responded with a strong second-half performance that saw Sadiq Umar nab the equalizer in the 60th minute. Under the rules of the International Champions Cup friendly tournament the match was then settled by a shootout.

Only Roma's Gerson failed to convert, and Marquinhos capped his night with the decisive penalty. Brazil international Dani Alves made his debut for PSG, starting at right back a week after he signed with the French club in a deal worth a reported 14 million euros (\$16 million). Alves played 69 minutes and was perhaps lucky not to concede a penalty in the 57th, when his slide tackle caught Diego Perotti in the area.

PSG's Spanish coach Unai Emery was satisfied with what he saw from Alves, who won three Champions Leagues and six La Liga titles at Barcelona and who many had expected to end up with former manager Pep Guardiola at Manchester City. "He played with his experience," Emery said. "He talks a lot on the pitch, he also brings a lot in attack." The match drew more than 36,000 to Comerica Park, home of Major League Baseball's Detroit Tigers.

Paris had seized the lead nine minutes before halftime. A neat combination between Thiago Motta and Jese saw the ball fall to Marquinhos, who fired home a right-footed shot from the center of the area. The French club continued to push, with Lucas Moura firing straight at Roma keeper Alisson, but the lead remained at 1-0 at halftime. With six changes for Roma and two for PSG, both clubs struggled to find a rhythm to open the second half. But Roma gradually increased the pressure and were rewarded on the hour mark a pass from Gerson saw the speedy Sadiq put in behind and the 20-year-old Nigerian put the ball through Alphonse Areola's legs. Blaise Matuidi had three late chances for PSG, including blazing over from close range in the 85th minute and an injury-time effort. In the shoot-out, the first five penalties were converted before Gerson, the third penalty-taker for Roma, missed. — AFP



UTRECHT: England's forward Toni Duggan (L) controls the ball ahead of Scotland's defender Chloe Arthur during the UEFA Women's Euro 2017 football tournament match between England and Scotland at Stadium Galgenwaard. — AP

CELTIC ENJOY TROUBLE FREE EUROPEAN CRUISE

GLASGOW: Scott Sinclair bagged a double as Celtic eased to a 4-0 win over Linfield in the second leg of their Champions League second round qualifier to seal a 6-0 aggregate victory. The Hoops, who triumphed 2-0 in a fiery clash in Belfast last week where the match was overshadowed by sectarian fears, got off to the perfect start when Sinclair fired them into a fourth-minute lead. A lack of clinical finishing meant it took until the 47th minute for Australian international Tom Rogic to double Celtic's advantage over the Northern Ireland champions.

Sinclair added a third in the 55th minute before substitute Stuart Armstrong wrapped up the scoring in stoppage time to book their place in their third qualifying round where they will face Rosenborg. Celtic will host the Norwegian champions, who needed extra time to see off Dundalk, in Glasgow next Wednesday.

"Some of the football at this stage of the season was very good," said Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers. "We were a bit wasteful in the first half but our intensity wore them down in the end." After nasty scenes marred the first leg in Belfast, the travelling Linfield fans were escorted into the ground under a heavy police escort, but their presence failed to inspire David Healy's side, who had no answers to the dominance of their hosts.

Ominous signs

Like the first leg, Sinclair opened the scoring. Olivier Ntcham, making his competitive debut following his summer switch from Manchester City, fired in a shot from outside the box which deflected perfectly into the path of the English winger who gleefully swept the ball into the net. The signs looked ominous for Linfield as the Hoops pinned them in their own half with Moussa Dembele somehow slicing a half-volley wide from close range.

Former Man United 'keeper Roy Carroll, so impressive in the first leg, then had to look sharp to keep out Dembele's diving header before the Frenchman pulled a shot wide of the post when Rogic had sent him clean through on goal. Rogic was then presented with a golden chance in first-half stoppage time but the Australian somehow clipped his effort wide from eight yards. The Socceroo star didn't have to wait long to make amends as he made it 2-0 just over a minute into the second half as he collected the ball with his back to goal before spinning round and drilling a low left-foot shot past Carroll and into the bottom corner.

Celtic shook off the rustiness they showed in front of goal in the first-half as Sinclair soon made it 3-0. Ntcham's wayward pass took a kindly deflection off a Linfield defender into the path of the winger, who lifted his shot into the roof of the net. Substitute Armstrong then applied the finishing touch after the ball broke to him off a tired defender following a mazy run from Rogic to seal the win. Linfield boss Healy had no complaints. "Celtic are a good side with quality players and they came on and had a right go at us," the former Rangers player said. "I think they played with five or six forward players at times and 4-0 was probably about right." —AFP



GLASGOW: Lyon's Dutch defender Kenny Tete (L) vies with Celtic's Scottish midfielder Liam Henderson during the pre-season friendly football match between Glasgow Celtic and Olympique Lyonnais at Celtic Park. — AFP



PHILADELPHIA: Bryan Tamacas #21 of El Salvador is consoled by teammate Oscar Arroyo after losing to the United States, 2-0, during the 2017 CONCACAF Gold Cup Quarterfinal at Lincoln Financial Field. — AFP

US BATTLE INTO GOLD CUP SEMI-FINALS

PHILADELPHIA: The United States overcame a battling display from El Salvador to advance to a CONCACAF Gold Cup semi-final showdown with Costa Rica here Wednesday. First-half goals from defenders Omar Gonzalez and Eric Lichaj secured a hard-fought quarter-final win for the hosts, who are chasing their first Gold Cup title since 2013. However Bruce Arena's side were made to work all the way by El Salvador, and only some superb saves from Tim Howard kept the Central American side at bay at Philadelphia's Lincoln Financial Field.

"They pressed us well and we weren't good enough with the ball to break their press," Howard said afterwards. "We got the two goals before half-time and that was obviously good for us. But we knew they were going to cause us problems. "It's good to get the win. We can work on a few things, but that's what this tournament's about." An unconvincing start saw the hosts given a let-off early on when Lichaj under-hit a back pass to Howard.

Rodolfo Zelaya latched onto the loose ball and darted clear only to be

denied by a desperate late block from Howard, who had spotted the danger and advanced swiftly to snuff out the chance. The remainder of the first half was dominated by a series of niggly fouls as El Salvador frustrated American efforts to impose themselves on the contest. The Americans were unlucky to be denied an opening goal midway through the half when Clint Dempsey released Gyasi Zardes who lifted his finish above Derby Carrillo, only to be flagged for offside.

Grudge match

Replays later showed the Los Angeles Galaxy forward was onside. As tempers flared Lichaj was lucky to escape a caution when he flattened Dennis Pineda near the halfway line. Four minutes before halftime however, the US broke the deadlock when Gonzalez leaped to glance in Michael Bradley's teasing free-kick to make it 1-0. Deep into first half stoppage time, Lichaj made it 2-0 with a goal that owed everything to the guile of Bradley. The veteran striker left Henry Romero for dead with a brilliant turn and

then slipped a pass into the feet of Lichaj, who controlled to shoot beneath Carrillo for his maiden international goal.

The Americans now face 2014 World Cup quarter-finalists Costa Rica in Saturday's semi-finals. The match represents an opportunity for the US to avenge their humiliating 4-0 loss to Costa Rica during 2018 World Cup qualifiers last year. Howard however insisted score-settling would not be on the agenda. "It's not about what happened in the past," he said. "It's about winning on Saturday night and getting to a final."

Los Ticos advanced to the last four after Panama defender Anibal Godoy headed agonizingly into his own net to give Costa Rica a 1-0 victory in Wednesday's earlier quarter-final. The Central American rivals were deadlocked in the second half when Costa Rica's David Guzman swung a long free kick toward the Panamanian goal. Panama's Godoy leapt to try to head the ball away but instead it spun back into the Panamanian net in the 77th minute. — AFP

DANILO SET FOR MAN CITY MOVE

LONDON: Manchester City is close to signing Real Madrid full-back Danilo, according to widespread media reports yesterday. Pep Guardiola made full-backs his top transfer priority in the close season having released Pablo Zabaleta, Gael Clichy and Bacary Sagna, and Brazilian international Danilo is on the verge of joining Kyle Walker as City's latest recruit in that position.

The deal for the 26-year-old is expected to cost the Premier League side around £26 million (\$33.7 million, 29.3 million euros), and with Walker signed in a transfer which could rise to £54 million, that would take City's spending on full-backs alone past the £80 million mark. Danilo, who joined European champions Real in 2015 from Porto, started just 17 Spanish league games last season with Dani Carvajal often preferred in the right-back role. The Spanish international started ahead of Danilo in the Champions League final in Cardiff as Real Madrid beat Juventus 4-1 to lift their

12th European Cup. Chelsea are also believed to be keen on securing the Brazilian's signature, but City—who are also chasing Monaco full-back Benjamin Mendy — remain favorites to complete a deal.

Stadiums late for Atletico and Villarreal

Meanwhile, Atletico Madrid and Villarreal will play their first two Spanish Liga games away from home to give them more time to finish building work on their stadiums, the Spanish league said on Thursday. "The first two games they shall play away from home whilst conversely the 20th and 21st games they will play at home," La Liga officials said explaining that minor stadium delivery glitches were the cause. Atletico are moving into their brand new 70,000 capacity Wanda Metropolitano after quitting their creaking and much smaller home since 1966, the Vicente Calderón. Villarreal are finishing off the refurbishment of their main stand. —Agencies

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PSG NEED A NEYMAR, SAYS COACH

NEW YORK: Paris Saint Germain need to sign a player of the calibre of Neymar or Kylian Mbappe in their quest to win the Champions League, according to their coach Unai Emery. In an interview published in French sports daily L'Equipe yesterday Emery named Neymar as a world top-five player, just the class PSG needed to become a top European power. He was speaking amid reports in Brazil and Spain that PSG were on the way to clinching a sensational deal to prise Neymar away from Barcelona.

"If we want to rival Bayern Munich, Barcelon and Real Madrid and win the Champions League we need to buy one of the top five players in the world today," Emery said after watching his side edge Roma on penalties in a friendly in the United States. "Neymar has advanced his game massively and today he is one of the five best in the world," he said of the 25-year-old Brazilian who has a buy out clause at Barcelona of over 200 million euros.

"Our president is working hard to attract top players and our fans would be content to count on a new top player to go along with the talent we already have," said the Spaniard. Earlier this week Neymar attempted to quell the rising speculation about his future by telling Goal.com that he was happy at Barcelona and was looking forward to a new season.

But PSG's quest for top players goes beyond the Brazilian striker and includes the likes of Monaco teenager Mbappe and Alexis Sanchez, Arsenal's Chilean striker. "(Alexis) Sanchez and Mbappe are huge players and what's more Mbappe is French - I want Frenchmen in this French club," he said. The Parisian club are keen to strengthen their squad after the club failed to live up to expectations last season. In the Champions League round of 16 they suffered a humiliating 6-1 defeat at Barcelona, blowing a 4-0 first-leg advantage that left the club stunned. — AFP



SANT JOAN DESPI: Barcelona's Brazilian forward Neymar arrives for a training session at the Sports Center FC Barcelona Joan Gamper. — AFP



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