

Britain votes
in shadow of
terror, Brexit

15



Durant powers
Warriors over
Cavaliers

46



Imsak	Fajr	Shorook	Duhr	Asr	Maghrib	Isha
03:03	03:13	04:48	11:47	15:21	18:47	20:18

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Kuwait Times Friday Times



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Kuwait leading efforts to resolve Gulf dispute

See Page 9



DOHA: HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (left) holds the hand of Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani late Wednesday. — KUNA

Local Spotlight

LABOR LAW AMENDMENTS



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Minister of Social Affairs and Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh issued a ministerial decree defining the minimum wage for workers in the private and oil sectors - at KD 75 per month. The provisions of the resolution apply to contracts and work permits as well as to contracts for government projects.

It is a good thing for the ministry to realize there is a problem in the salaries of expat workers in the private and oil sectors, because this issue has led some of these poor people to protest and strike previously to claim their legitimate and human rights according to their contracts. But I find this amount of KD 75, which was set as a minimum, is very meager compared to the high standard of living in Kuwait.

If you ever lived in Kuwait, you will agree that this tiny amount is not enough to provide you with a decent roof to rent with your family, aside from your personal expenses for eating, drinking and maybe shopping for clothes. You have to forget about entertainment. The weekly movie ticket is a luxury you should not think about.

The number of expatriate workers in Kuwait, according to the Directorate General of Statistics in 2014, was 1,396,427 - 91.39 percent male and 8.63 percent female. This number is large, and of course, salaries are of main interest, especially for small-time workers. This subject is not the only matter that should be under the spotlight, because during the past few months, the General Authority for Labor announced some amendments to the provisions of labor laws for expatriates, called the unified labor contract.

I don't think the amendments brought about any major change. Here is why. For example, the worker may be subject to a probationary period of up to 100 days from the date of commencing work prior to the formal signing of the contract of employment. I do not see this as a surprising change. It is normal for most companies to take this step to protect themselves. This procedure is often suitable for employers, not workers. This decision cannot apply to everyone, especially expatriates who work in mid-level professions, operations and transport.

One of the serious amendments - which unfortunately some employers disregard - is the employee's right to a full month in paid annual leave. This measure may be respected in the oil sector, but when it comes to companies, it needs supervision. According to law no. 1 of 1999, the employer is obliged to insure his workers against occupational injuries or occupational diseases. I see workers setting up hoardings in public streets without protective clothing or helmets, which makes me wonder if they are insured against injuries in the event of a fall.

One of the new amendments to the labor law and for expatriates is that the first party or the employer shall pay a sum of money as indemnity at the end of service to the second party or the worker. I thought about domestic workers - they too should receive such compensation for their services as they are no less than the workers of oil companies! Any amendment affecting expatriate workers should bear in mind that employers can honor, manipulate or ignore the laws, with workers being those at risk.

In my view

SET YOUR OWN COURSE

By Steffi Thomas

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The past few weeks have been grueling for some, while they would have been happy for others, who managed to ace their exams with merits and distinctions. As final exam results for classes 10 and 12 were declared by various academic boards, students are on the hunt for admission in colleges. All these 'nervexciting' events, as I call them, remind me of how nervous and excited I was when I went through the same process two years ago. These emotions were a result of the anticipation every student faces before starting college, which is the start of a new phase in every student's life.

But very few students are given the freedom to choose courses based on their interests. The truth is that many are coerced to apply for degrees for subjects based on their parents' wishes and dreams. To add to this, family members pile on the pressure by comparing their children with outperforming cousins and friends. Many students end up pursuing a degree in a subject they have little or no interest in. No matter how we perform academically, many of us will never get a chance to pursue our dreams.

In this regard, I'm especially lucky. Although a science student in high school and convinced to shift to the commerce stream, I am currently not a student of either, but a happy pursuer of my dreams. And to fuel my interests further, my science teachers motivated me to pick up arts in

college. There are many great success stories of those who followed their dreams - Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and Mark Zuckerberg to name a few contemporary examples. These individuals attained success because they were brave enough to follow their dreams and were not subject to pre-set notions about how to carry on with their decisions.

I would like to add in a gentle reminder - although you will be told by many to keep your options open wide, do not pay attention to all random opinions by others; rather be focused on that particular course you want to pursue, regardless of its prospects. Also, equip yourself with information about the future scope this subject has.

The distinction between different streams are ideas that have been instilled in us since childhood, with no regard to the amount of confusion and sometimes even chaos this causes in students' lives. Passion and interest are barely considered. The constant need to be successful pressures students, but no profession is beneath any other.

And if any of you have been let down because of your marks or hurtful comments concerning your performance in academics, please note this doesn't essentially determine your future. There is road ahead for improvement and improvisations. Here's to all who have been given a trifling insight about what's awaiting you next - enjoy an illuminating journey ahead!

OPEN LETTER

QUESTIONS FOR POLITICIANS AROUND THE WORLD



By Nejouad Al-Yagout

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Dear politician,

We are learning that those who inspire us are those who leave an imprint of love. I am not blaming you for all the world's problems. This would be cowardice on my part. We are all a part of this sacred journey, and any suffering is part of our collective unconsciousness. These following questions are addressed to you because you are an influential person on the planet. And, since you are such a grand projection of humanity, I am asking you some questions to get a better idea of your intentions (with full knowledge that we all shoulder the blame).

1. Will you be the one to help us restore our faith in every politician on this planet?
2. Will you be the one who stops creating wars and terrorism to sell arms?
3. Will you be the one who bans chemicals in foods and makes healthy food available to all at lower prices?
4. Will you be the one who spends money on curing diseases rather than funding pharmaceutical companies and profiting from our illnesses?
5. Will you be the one who stops brainwashing and lying to us while plotting to take over the world behind the scenes?
6. Will you be the one who brings peace to nations instead of sowing the seeds of turmoil?
7. Will you be the one who erases borders from our vast expanse, so that even the word refugee or immigrant will be removed from the dictionary?
8. Will you be the one who finds a solution to famine?
9. Will you be the one who teaches us that no race is superior to another?

10. Will you be the one who helps elevate the status of women and bring an end to patriarchy?
11. Will you be the one who inspires us to work together to end discrimination against those we erroneously perceive as minorities?
12. Will you be the one who will stop using fear as a tactic to keep us enslaved?
13. Will you be the one who protects the weak, the powerless?
14. Will you be the one to create a true democracy where the people make decisions that benefit the whole world and not the elite few?
15. Will you be the one who takes care of our environment, our land, our bodies of water, our sky, our forests, our mountains?
16. Will you be the one to provide protection to animals from slaughter, testing and abuse?
17. Will you be the one to reform the education system so as to raise a generation of leaders and not followers?
18. Will you be the one to put an end to drug and sex trafficking and child prostitution?

Will you? Will you? I could go on and on, but will stop here because it is very emotional to continue thinking of how power is synonymous with greed and benefits only dynasties. I know millions of people who would love to be in your shoes so that they could help the world. So tell me: How will you choose to act? Or, more importantly, where are you? Who will you be?

On a final note, I'll say this. There ain't nothing grander than being a beacon of light! Polarization, expansionism, corruption and turmoil are so yesteryear.



Ghabqas: The social meal



By Athoob Al-Shuaibi

During Ramadan, the people of Kuwait have at least four meals in less than 10 hours - from dusk till dawn. Iftar (or futoor) is normally the first and most important meal. Typically people have it at home with close friends and family. Some overeat due to the all-day fast and then top it off with a variety of desserts and hot drinks. Arabic sweets become bestsellers and many bakeries compete to create new desserts with a traditional twist.

Between tea and coffee time and suhoor comes the ghabqa. A ghabqa, in short, is a gathering of friends and family around more food. These are also hosted by companies and corporations and can often be lavish affairs. Leading government officials and important personalities also host ghabqas, inviting hundreds of people for the evening meal.

Although going to ghabqas is not compulsory, hosts may not be happy to learn that you've skipped their ghabqa in favor of another, which sometimes leads you to go to more than one ghabqa in one evening. At each ghabqa, you have to pay a compliment to the host by eating some food. It is unreasonable that the stomach has to endure all this food within a few hours!

I remember in the 1980s, my mother used to cook various dishes for my father's ghabqa night at the diwaniya, where he and his friends gathered to eat on the floor. It was rather modest and straightforward. Over time, reliance on catering services has become the more popular option to save the

time and effort of housewives and their helpers.

The private ghabqa dinner brings together relatives and friends. This has evolved into social and business ghabqas often dominated by mutual interests. In addition, there's the workplace ghabqa, where private and governmental institutions organize a gathering for their employees within a family friendly ambiance. As for business ghabqas, invitations are sometimes sent weeks in advance. These are often held at posh restaurants or hotels. The latter tradition is relatively new to Kuwait, and we are seeing a remarkable decline this year in business ghabqas due to financial constraints.

The ghabqa extravaganza is now extending to coffee shops, where owners invite their loyal customers to enjoy their favorite beverages in traditional Kuwaiti attire, accompanied by old Kuwaiti folk songs. There are also social ghabqas for Kuwait's various communities, including vegan ghabqas and dog- and cat-owner ghabqas, and those for non-Muslims.

Of course for each ghabqa, a woman needs a new and different dara'a. Men need only slip on the dishdasha. Women must spend hours searching shops and online stores to find just the right kaftan or dara'a.

The cost and time spent on these can be overwhelming for some. Ideally, people should only need to wear their favorite pair of blue jeans and go for ghabqas!



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HSE Officers (Oil Field Experience)	8 - 10	HR009
HVAC Engineer	8 - 10	HR0010
HVAC Supervisors	8 - 10	HR0011
Planning Engineers	8 - 10	HR0012
PL.FF Engineers	10	HR0013
PL.FF Supervisors	10	HR0014
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Kuwait: Through a worm's eye



Photo essay by Joseph Shagra
and Yasser Al-Zayyat

Anyone that has lived in Kuwait for any length of time will tell you that the landscape can often be monotonous. Kuwait is a beautiful, complex place with a diverse - some would say, scattered - urbanscape and with a luxury of beautiful and breathtaking architecture, urban spaces and every day sights, smells and sounds.

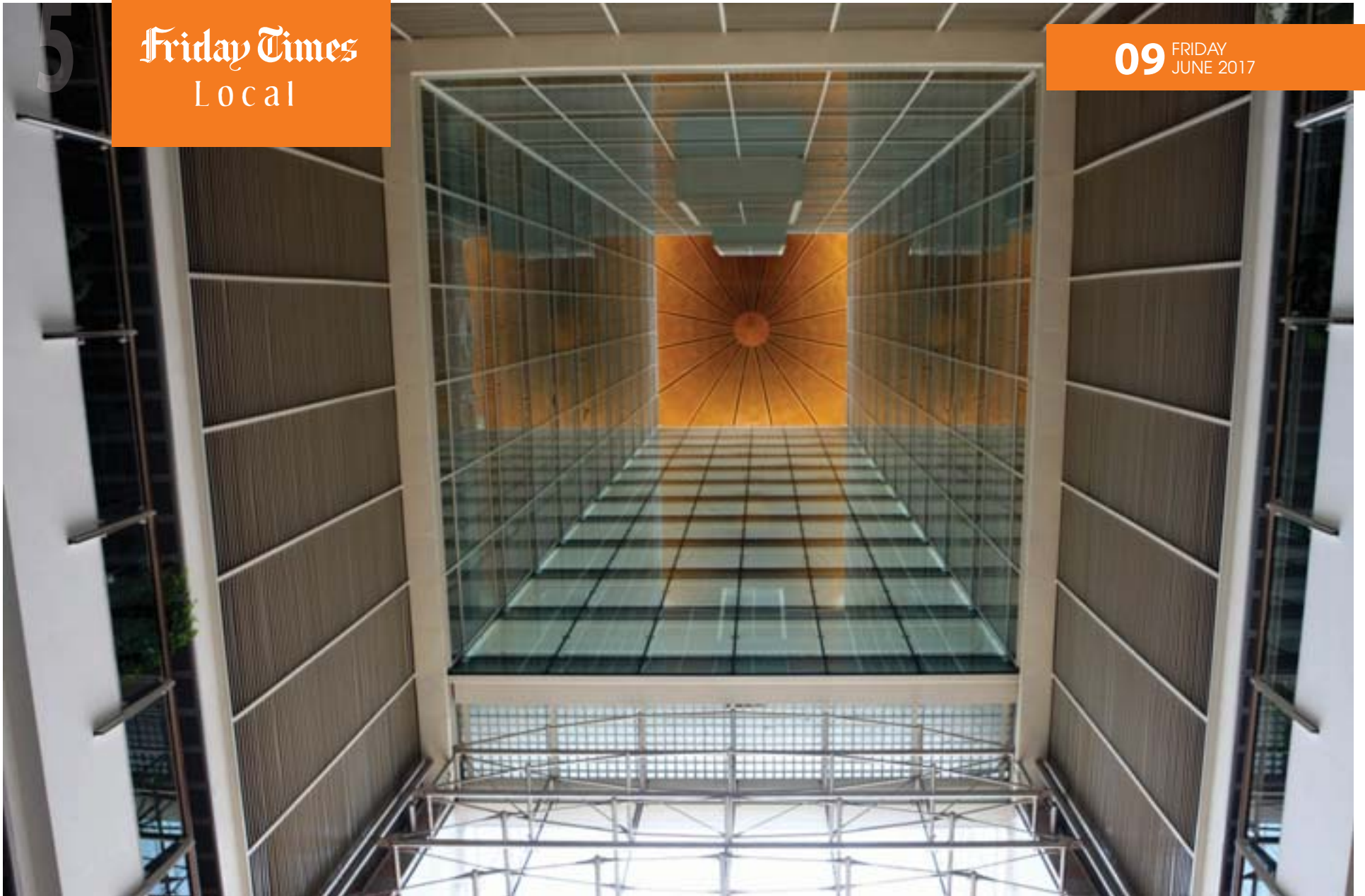
Seeing the place with new eyes or a new perspective, however, isn't always easy. So this

weekend, Kuwait Times decided to try looking at Kuwait through a 'worm's eye' view.

A worm's eye view is when any object, building, or place is viewed below, as if the viewer is a worm. The idea is to contrast with a 'bird's eye' view of Kuwait as seen from above or that of the traditional street level view.

We hope you enjoy these images and take a moment throughout your week to see things from a differing perspective. We also challenge you: Recognize anything?





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Muslim Filipinos in Kuwait celebrate Ramadan



By Ben Garcia

An estimated 5 percent of Filipinos in the Philippines are Muslim, the religion having reached the east Asian islands in the 14th century with Muslim traders from the Gulf. Today, hundreds of thousands of Filipinos work in the Gulf - many of whom were born Muslims and many more who have converted after living and working in the region. Though no official statistics are available, there are a growing number of Filipino converts in Kuwait and the GCC. Kuwait Times spoke with Filipinos here who have converted to learn more about their lives and how they celebrate the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Alvin Baltazar embraced Islam in 2003. His stepfather who embraced Islam in 2002 worked in Saudi Arabia and Alvin says that is what inspired him to also convert. He had no plan to convert and had many questions like, if God exists. He got the answer from Islam. "I have many questions about the faith I once belonged to. One particular question was if there is God, why can't I feel him?" he said.

"Islam answered all the questions I had after studying it. I converted in the following year," he said. In 2008, Alvin arrived as an OFW in Kuwait. "I was looking for an Islamic community where I can grow more as a Muslim and I stumbled on the KPC Center. There I continued to study Islam and I am glad I can really learn more. I have peace of mind now, I don't question God's existence because I can feel his power, the only God we should give our soul to and who alone deserves our worship," he added.

Like any other faith different from what he had known since birth, he struggled following the tradition and norms of being a Muslim. "I follow the rituals and culture of Islam religiously especially by observing the five pillars of Islamic faith. I was committed to learning and following Islamic teaching, it was hard but I adopted immediately because I accepted it whole heartedly," he added. Alvin, whose wife also lives in Kuwait, works at the Filipino radio service in Kuwait City. He is a role model for many Filipinos who converted to Islam.

Jocelyn Al-Mutairi is another converted Filipino Muslim married to a Kuwaiti. "My husband never interfered with my belief. He never asked me to stop going to the church," she said. But her life changed after listening to the Quran teachings. "I was a very unforgiving person. I do not know what happened when one day I just decided to listen to an English sermon about the Holy Quran. It struck my heart and I found myself looking for that particular person that I hate most just to tell how happy I was to forget and forgive his lapses. I knew I was a changed person from that moment," she said.

From then onwards, she also changed her attire, from a very revealing style to the most simple but also modest attire, covering her hair. "Wearing a hijab was not imposed on me by my husband. I just wanted to cover my hair and I am happy doing it," she said. Jocelyn revealed that she was once upon a time devoted and practiced Christianity. She struggled to change her religion but she finally decided to embrace Islam and is happy about it. She particularly likes

to pray five times daily and will follow Islam till final day of her life.

Raz Puning Saurajan is a Muslim by birth. He observes Ramadan wholeheartedly and follows the Sharia law strictly. He is from Mindanao, the birthplace of Islam in the Philippines. He calls himself liberal or an open minded Muslim, he respects all religions and beliefs. His favorite month in the year is Ramadan as he is drawn closer to Allah. "While I follow the Sharia law strictly but I am an open minded person. I do not judge anyone leaving it to God. I like my faith because for me, it's the only religion that can directly talk to God. He gives us the real word for us Muslims to follow," he said.

Raz also believes on the wonders of Ramadan, especially in the last 10 days (Laylat Al-Qadr). "According to the teachings of the Holy Quran, the prayers in the last 10 days are very powerful. It is better than a thousand months, so I follow it seriously every year," he added. Asked about the rituals, traditions he used to follow, or things that Muslims do in the Philippines.

He said, "In the month of Ramadan, we avoid all that is forbidden. Traditionally, in the Philippines we buy new clothes for Eid. We cook some food different from everyday cooking on Eid, but nonetheless the month of Ramadan is really a sacrifice; we are doing it not to show off, but as a responsible Muslim. We don't eat and drink, after all, the reason why we are fasting because we want to experience starvation and eventually learn to share and give," he said.



Alvin Baltazar



Jocelyn Al-Mutairi



Raz Puning Saurajan



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Al-Saleh speaks during yesterday's session. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

2017-18 BUDGET INCOME AT KD 13.3 BILLION: MINISTER

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Al-Saleh said yesterday that the total state income of fiscal year 2017-18 is estimated at KD 13.3 billion (some \$43.9 billion) in revenues, with 30 percent increase compared to previous fiscal year.

Oil revenues for the 2017-18 year, set on oil price at \$45 per barrel, amount to KD 11.7 billion (some \$38.6 billion), while non-oil revenues hit KD 1.6 billion (some \$5.2 billion), and expenditures are estimated at some KD 19.9 billion (some \$65.7 billion). Deduction of future generations' reserve reach some KD 1.3 billion (some \$4.2 billion), Saleh added.

He made his remarks in a speech at the Parliament's special session to discuss the parliamentary budgets and final accounts committee's reports on drafting bills to approve final

accounts of fiscal year 2015-16.

The draft bills also aim at linking the 2017-18 budget with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its affiliated companies, in addition to the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS), Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), the state financial administration, and other state bodies' administrations. The 2017-18 state budget deficit hits around KD 7.9 billion (some \$26.1 billion), the minister said, noting that Kuwait is planning to finance the current deficit through a balanced strategy. Meanwhile, the minister indicated that Kuwait was able to issue public debt tools at the international market via marketing a \$8 billion-worth of bonds in return of distinctive prices and conditions that are "much better" compared with other oil exporting countries in the Gulf. — KUNA

DEFENSE MINISTER INSPECTS MILITARY BASE

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah took pride in the mission of the personnel of Mubarak Al-Kabir infantry base on Boubyan Island. The personnel play an important and honorable role in preserving the security of the country under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah - the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, he said. Sheikh Mohammad made the press remarks on

Wednesday evening after an iftar banquet hosted by the commanders of the military base in his honor during his inspection tour of the base.

Meanwhile, Commander of the Infantry Force Major General Staff Sheikh Khaled Al-Sabah welcomed the visit of the minister, saying it added to the confidence of the personnel in their combat capabilities and level of preparedness. The banquet gathered Chief of the General Staff of Kuwait Army Lt. Gen. Staff Mohammad Al-Khedr and Deputy Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Abdullah Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah as well as other senior officers. — KUNA

Crime

Report

MAID KILLS NEWBORN DURING DELIVERY

KUWAIT: A domestic helper faces charges of manslaughter and abortion after she accidentally killed her newborn during delivery. According to the police report, the Sri Lankan woman entered labor inside her Jordanian sponsor's house, then locked herself up inside a room and attempted to deliver the baby on her own. She tried to pull the baby but ended up accidentally decapitating it, then screamed for help. The sponsor rushed to see what happened, then immediately called 112 at the site of the horrible scene. Paramedics rushed the woman to Mubarak Hospital while police filed a case for investigations. Detectives are dealing with the case with the assumption that the maid got pregnant out of wedlock, so she decided against seeking help to deliver her baby out of fear of prosecution. The maid's sponsor confirmed to police that she was not married.

Unknown material

A citizen found several barrels hidden behind a sand barrier near Jahra Industrial area, so he called police. Officers rounded up 100 barrels filled with an unknown material, so they sought the help of the Environment Public Authority (EPA). EPA officers took samples to determine whether the substance was used motor oil or chemicals. Meanwhile, detectives are working on identifying who put the drums there.

Car 'smuggled'

Jahra detectives are looking for a citizen who got his car out of the police impoundment area in Industrial Jahra area without official clearance papers. The official in charge called police after discovering that one car was missing, saying that the vehicle was somehow 'smuggled' out of the area before its impoundment period was completed. Detectives were asked to locate the car and arrest its owner.

Officer attacked

A police officer was insulted, beaten and threatened by a citizen as a dispute erupted between them in Shuaiba oil facilities. The officer, a Lieutenant, was on duty protecting oil facilities when he was beaten by the citizen for reasons that are currently under investigations. The man was charged with insulting a public employee while on duty.

Cop insulted

A policeman asked a female driver to remove her car from a no parking zone, but she became angry instead and verbally insulted him. The woman parked her car in a way that obstructed traffic, so the policeman asked her to move, but she refused. After he gave her a ticket, she hurled insults at him as she drove away from the scene. The policeman lodged a complaint at Fintas police station.

Domestic violence

A man beat his wife up severely because she overslept and was late in preparing the iftar meal, the Egyptian woman told police. She lodged a complaint at the police station and submitted a medical report stating her injuries. The husband was summoned for questioning. Separately, a female citizen called police to rescue her from her brother's beating, so they went to the site and discovered the suspect had escaped. The woman was told to go to the police station where she went and lodged a complaint.

Scam

A citizen told police that his friend swindled him and took KD 5,000 that he paid him on promises of starting a business, which turned out to be empty. The man lodged a complaint at Maidan Hawally police station, saying that he discovered that his friend left the country on vacation two days after he gave him the money. A case was filed for investigations. — Translated from the Arabic press

News

in brief

KUWAIT CONDEMNS TEHRAN ATTACKS

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait condemned yesterday the attacks that took place in the Iranian capital Tehran yesterday, a statement by the Foreign Ministry said that Kuwait's firm and principled position has been always one against violence and terrorism in all their shapes and forms. The statement conveyed condolences to Iranian government and people over victims of the attacks, while wishing for the swift recovery to the wounded. — KUNA

KUWAIT SIGNS AGREEMENT ON TAX BASE EROSION

PARIS: In an extraordinary step, Kuwait signed late Wednesday a multi-party agreement to implement prevention measures regarding base erosion and profit shifting. Kuwait's Ambassador in Paris Sami Al-Sulaiman headed the Kuwaiti delegation on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Al-Saleh during the signing ceremony, which witnessed the participation of 72 countries, including 40 ministers of finance, at the headquarters of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The diplomat stressed the importance of this agreement as it provides flexibility in changing its articles while maintaining its main content, which guarantees stability. According to OECD's definition, base erosion and profit shifting, or BEPS, refers to tax avoidance strategies that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to artificially-shift profits to low or no-tax locations. Under the inclusive framework, over 100 countries and jurisdictions are collaborating to implement the BEPS measures and tackle BEPS. — KUNA

CAIRO: Some 11 Kuwaitis graduated from Nasser Military Academy in Cairo as officers alongside locals at a ceremony attended by Egypt's Defence Minister Sedki Sobhy yesterday. Kuwait's military attache Brigadier General Ibrahim Al-Loghani attended the event along with other foreign counterparts based in Egypt. — KUNA

AMIR MEETS WITH QATARI LEADER AMID DIPLOMATIC RIFT

DUBAI: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah traveled to Qatar to help mediate an end to a crisis that's seen Arab nations cut ties to the energy-rich nation home to a major US military base, though Emirati officials warned there was "nothing to negotiate."

HH the Amir was met planeside by Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, when he arrived on Wednesday night. The Qatari Foreign Ministry said in a statement the two held talks on how to "restore the normal relations" of the Gulf as the 2022 FIFA World Cup host and international air travel hub now finds itself isolated by land, sea and air.

But the visit came after Emirati Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash said that Qatar has "chosen to ride the tiger of extremism and terrorism" and now needed to pay the price, despite Qatar long denying the allegation.

Gargash said Qatar "definitely" should expel members of Hamas, stop its support of terror groups "with al-Qaida DNA" around the world and rein in the many media outlets it funds, chief among them the Doha-based satellite news network Al-Jazeera. Their "fingerprints are all over the place" in terror funding, Gargash said. "Enough is enough."

Repercussions

Qatari officials declined to comment on Gargash's comments. Its foreign minister has struck a defiant tone in interviews, even after worried residents emptied grocery stores in its capital of Doha as Saudi Arabia has blocked trucks carrying food from entering the country.

Its flag carrier Qatar Airways now flies increasingly over Iran and Turkey after being blocked elsewhere over the Middle East. Emirati officials also shut down the airline's offices in the UAE on Wednesday. Al-Jazeera offices also have been shut down by authorities in Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Meanwhile, Turkey's parliament approved sending troops to an existing Turkish base in Qatar as a sign



DOHA: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, left, meets with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Doha, Qatar. — KUNA

of support.

The international agency Standard and Poor's announced Wednesday that it lowered its rating on Qatar's long-term debt to AA-minus because of the country's dispute with its neighbors. S&P said those countries' severing of diplomatic and business links "will exacerbate Qatar's external vulnerabilities and could put pressure on economic growth and fiscal" stability.

Speaking to the AP from a Foreign Ministry office in Dubai, Gargash listed a number of terror groups he alleged Qatar had funded, including al-Qaida's branches in Syria and Somalia, militants in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and other groups with "al-Qaida-type organizations" in Libya. He offered no documents to support his claim, but Western officials long have accused Qatar's government of allowing or even encouraging funding of some Sunni extremists.

Gargash particularly pointed out the tens of millions of dollars paid to Shiite militias and others to free dozens of Qatari ruling family members and others in Iraq after 16 months in captivity. Asked for specifics about what

Arab nations wanted from Qatar, Gargash said expelling members of Hamas and other groups like the Muslim Brotherhood from Qatar was important.

Trump intervenes

US President Donald Trump, who tweeted Tuesday about Qatar funding extremists, called Sheikh Tamim on Wednesday and offered to host leaders at the White House to resolve the crisis. The crisis began in part over what the Qataris described as a false news report planted during a hack of its state-run news agency.

An initial report on the hack from Qatar's Interior Ministry late Wednesday said the website of the Qatar News Agency was initially hacked in April with "high techniques and innovative methods." It said hackers installed a file and then published a fake news item attributed to Sheikh Tamim just after midnight May 24.

The ministry did not say who it suspected carried out the attack, though it thanked the FBI and the British National Commission for Combating Crime for assisting it in its investigation. Russia denied Wednesday it hacked the agency after a CNN report quoted anonymous

US officials saying they suspected Russian hackers.

The UAE did not hack the Qatari news agency, Gargash said. However, he did acknowledge the authenticity of recently leaked emails from Emirati Ambassador Yousef Al-Otaiba in Washington, which several media outlets described as including criticism of Qatar. "That hack showed the UAE's real concerns and that what we really say in our private emails is what we say publicly," Gargash said.

Sincere efforts

The talks between His Highness the Amir and Sheikh Tamim focused on the outcomes of the visits of Sheikh Sabah to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the UAE and his efforts to solve the crisis between Qatar, on one hand, and Saudi Arabia, the UAE and the Kingdom of Bahrain, on the other. The Qatari leader spoke highly of the sincere efforts being made by His Highness the Amir to normalize the relations between Qatar and the three countries and strengthen the unity among the sisterly GCC member states.

The meeting gathered, from the Kuwaiti side, the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs and Acting Minister of Information Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, as well as other senior officials accompanying His Highness the Amir. The Qatari side was also represented by Deputy Emir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad Al Thani and Personal Representative of the Emir Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad Al Thani, as well as other senior officials and cabinet members.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received a phone call from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday evening. The two leaders reviewed, during the conversation, the bilateral relations, the latest developments of the situations in the Arabian Gulf region and ways to cement cooperation among the Muslim countries in various fields. — Agencies

SHEIKH SABAH AL-KHALED REITERATES KUWAITI-OMANI DEEP-ROOTED TIES

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Wednesday reaffirmed that the Kuwaiti-Omani relations are deep-rooted and distinguished in all fields. Speaking during the inauguration of the eighth session of the Kuwait-Oman Joint Higher Committee, the minister said the meeting followed the historic visit by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Muscat last February, then invited by Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

The warm official and popular reception of His Highness the Amir and his accompanying delegation reflected bilateral brotherly relations, warm sentiments and sincere friendship between the two nations, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said. It also manifested renewed resolve of the two countries to work together as they shared identical views on international and regional issues, he stated. The minister expressed satisfaction over, and delight at brotherly atmospheres and spirit that dominated the historic visit, commending keenness of the joint committee to get an optimal benefit of the visit so as to cement and bolster bilateral relations in all fields, particularly commercial, economic, developmental and social domains. This embodies eagerness of the leaders of the countries to buttress these relations based on their strong conviction of the importance of proceeding with fulfilling the aspirations of people in both, he noted.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said both Kuwait and Oman are on the threshold of a new phase of fruitful economic cooperation, after Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI) and the Oman Oil Company (OOC) signed a partnership agreement for cooperation in the development of Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Complex in the Duqm Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

He voiced pride for signing the agreement, expected to play a key role for achieving aspired investment, strategic and economic cooperation to serve the interest of the two states. The total cost of refinery is estimated at \$6-7 billion and it will create up to 800 jobs, he said, welcoming Oman's call for promoting investment opportunities available in the Sultanate. The Minister also welcomed the call directed to Kuwait's private sector for establishing investment partnerships with the Omani government to carry out development projects and programs.

Meanwhile, trade exchange between the two countries reached \$360 million in 2016 compared with \$280 million the previous year, an increase of 20 percent. Kuwait's exports to Oman in 2016 hit \$145 million, compared with \$85 million in 2015, an increase of 40 percent. Imports from the Sultanate reached \$215 million in 2016 compared with \$197 million in 2015, a rise of 7 percent, the minister said.

The volume of joint investments reached \$545 million in 2015. They were the fields of education, health, transport, construction, serv-



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti and Omani officials attend the inauguration of the 8th session of the Kuwait-Oman Joint Higher Committee in Kuwait on Wednesday. — KUNA

ices, tourism, agriculture, gas, industry and others. A total of 557 Kuwaiti companies are operating in Oman. He voiced his satisfaction over achievements made by the joint committee, revealing that two memoranda of understanding are signed today on crafts industries and an executive program on educational cooperation. The two will be added to other memos aiming to cement and boost bilateral relations, he stressed.

In the meantime, Oman's Foreign Affairs Minister Yusuf bin Alawi stressed the Sultanate's support to all efforts made by His

Highness the Amir to "remove tension in the Gulf relations and heal the rift between the GCC brothers as well as maintain stability and security in the region."

Bin Alawi expressed hope of GCC nations that the efforts would help overcome political differences, and achieve stability, security and prosperity for all. He also congratulated Kuwait on winning a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council for a two-year term starting in January 2018, stressing that "it is an achievement for both GCC countries and the Islamic world." — KUNA

International

FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 2017

Isolated Trump joins the battle of his life

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Indian teenager eschews college to become monk

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Blind Muslims study Quran using Braille

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DOHA: Shoppers stock up on supplies at a supermarket in Doha, Qatar after Saudi Arabia closed its land border with Qatar, through which the tiny Gulf nation imports most of its food. — AP

EFFORTS INTENSIFY TO RESOLVE GULF DISPUTE

DUBAI: Efforts to resolve a diplomatic dispute pitting Saudi Arabia and its allies against Qatar intensified yesterday, after Washington offered to mediate the biggest crisis to grip the Gulf in years. As Kuwait's emir shuttled between Gulf capitals for talks, US President Donald Trump offered to host a White House meeting if necessary, in a change of heart from his initial support for the Saudi-led boycott.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain lead a string of countries that this week cut ties with Qatar over what they say is the emirate's financing of extremist groups and its ties to Iran, Saudi Arabia's regional arch-rival. Qatar strongly denies the allegations and has expressed a willingness to engage in talks to resolve the crisis. The Arab countries closed air, sea and land links with Qatar, barred the emirate's planes from their airspace and ordered Qatari citizens out within 14 days.

The feud has raised fears of wider instability in an already-volatile region that is a crucial global energy supplier and home to several Western military bases. Kuwait—which unlike most of its fellow Gulf Cooperation Council members has not cut off ties with Qatar—has been leading efforts to mediate. Kuwait's Amir HH Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah held talks on Wednesday with Qatari counterpart Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, following talks with senior UAE officials and Saudi King Salman.

Turkey approves troops

Trump, who had initially backed the measures against Qatar in a tweet, called Sheik Tamim on Wednesday with an offer "to help the parties resolve their differences". Qatar hosts the Al-Udeid military base, the largest US airbase in the Middle East. Home to some 10,000 troops, Al-Udeid is central to the US-led fight against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria. French President Emmanuel Macron has also reached out to Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Iran in a bid to kick off negotiations.

Turkey, which works closely with Qatar in the energy sector, has walked a fine line between defending Qatar and abstaining from openly antagonizing Saudi Arabia. Ankara hosted Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif this week for talks, including on Qatar. In a sign of support for Doha, Turkey's parliament on Wednesday approved an agreement to expand the number of troops deployed to a Turkish base in Qatar. The agreement did not detail a timeframe or the number of troops. Iran and Qatar share the world's largest gas field, an offshore site the Iranians call South Pars and the Qataris call the North Dome.

Doha is the largest exporter of natural liquefied gas in the world. Analysts say the crisis is in part an extension of a 2014 dispute, when Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain temporarily recalled their ambassadors from Doha over Qatar's support for Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood. A top Gulf official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP a major concern was the

influence of Sheikh Tamim's father, Sheikh Hamad, who had allowed the Taliban to open an office in Doha and helped arm Syrian rebels before abdicating in 2013. "The previous emir is a big supporter of this whole extremist agenda, so we do have an issue," the official said.

Foreign policy 'gone wild'

Doha has for years forged its own alliances in the region, often diverging from the politics of the six-state GCC and taking in leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Palestinian Hamas and members of the Afghan Taliban. A senior Emirati official told AFP this week's decision was not aimed at a change of regime in Qatar but to pressure the country to reshape its policy. "This is a foreign policy that gone wild," state minister for foreign affairs Anwar Gargash said.

"We need to put everything in check." Gargash said the four Arab states seek a "political commitment to change course" by Qatar, including ending its support for the Brotherhood and Hamas. Qatar's satellite news giant Al-Jazeera has also emerged as a point of contention in the Gulf. Gargash said "not using the formidable media ownership in promoting an extremist agenda" was a condition for negotiations. The UAE and Saudi Arabia have banned Al-Jazeera from the airwaves and closed the channel's offices. — AFP

WHEN IS REIGN ENDS, WHO WILL RULE SYRIA'S RAQA?

BEIRUT: The battle by US-backed forces to oust the Islamic State group from its Syrian bastion of Raqa will solve one problem but create another: who will then govern the city? The Syrian Democratic Forces Kurdish-Arab alliance backed by Washington is leading the fight for majority-Arab Raqa. But the strategic city is also coveted by Bashar al-Assad's government and its northern rival, Turkey.

Who lives in Raqa?

Located 80 kilometers from the border with Turkey, Raqa is believed to be home to some 300,000 residents, including about 80,000 who have fled there from other parts of the country since Syria's civil war began. Most of its pre-war population were Arabs, but about 20 percent were Kurds, "concentrated in slums in the city's north", according to French geography expert Fabrice Balanche.

But in 2013, two years into Syria's conflict,

rebels and fighters from an Al-Qaeda affiliate seized Raqa. A year later, it fell into the hands of IS and most minority residents fled. At the time, Syria's Kurds were setting up "autonomous administrations" in territory abandoned by government forces while fighting IS jihadists in the north and northeast. "Clashes with the Kurds were multiplying, and IS began suspecting that the Kurdish minority in Raqa was some kind of fifth column," Balanche said. With the departure of Kurds and Armenian and Syriac Christians, "the population of Raqa is today 99 percent Arab Sunni", Balanche said.

Who will rule Raqa?

In mid-April, the SDF announced the creation of a "civilian council" that would be in charge of running Raqa once IS was defeated there. The council would comprise people originally from Raqa province. "The council will be

in charge of several files, including judicial affairs, healthcare, education, women's and youth affairs, and other public services including security," said Omar Alloush, the council's communication head. "We have not yet discussed whether Raqa will join the (Kurdish) federal system. This will be decided by the residents after liberation," Alloush said. But the SDF's hand in creating the council has not reassured adversaries of the Kurds-including Arab rebel groups and their ally Turkey. Formed in 2015, the SDF is backed by US-led coalition warplanes and Special Forces advisers.

The coalition is dominated by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which the US recently decided to arm directly for the first time. That infuriated Turkey, which considers the YPG a "terrorist" group because of its ties to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had previously insisted that Ankara take part in the

Raqa offensive, on the condition that the Kurds were excluded. "The US has asked Erdogan to be patient, and to wait for the city to be taken by the Kurds," said Balanche. Syria's government has taken an ambiguous position, concerned about the increasing territory held by US-backed forces, but also recently describing the SDF's fight against IS as "legitimate".

Could ethnic conflict erupt?

In Raqa, Balanche said, Kurdish forces are hoping for a repeat of events in Manbij, once a major IS bastion in Aleppo province. After the SDF overran Manbij in August 2016, it handed over the Arab-majority town to a civilian council. Adversaries have complained that the council is simply a fig leaf for SDF control, but Manbij's Kurdish minority continues to support it. "This is not the case in Raqa," said Balanche. "The tribes in Raqa are not ready to accept Kurdish domination." —AFP

ISRAEL ADVANCES SETTLEMENT PLANS DESPITE TRUMP'S PLEA

JERUSALEM: Israel has advanced plans for more than 3,000 homes in West Bank settlements this week, despite US President Donald Trump's call to hold back on such projects as he seeks ways to restart peace efforts. Israel pushed forward with the plans as it also marked 50 years since the Six-Day War, fought from June 5-10, 1967 and which began its continuing occupation of the West Bank. A total of 3,178 housing units were advanced in a number of different settlements, the Peace Now NGO that tracks settlement growth said yesterday.

They are the first new settlement announcements since Trump's visit to Israel and the Palestinian territories last month, when he tried to encourage both sides back to the negotiating table. Trump has called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to hold back on settlement building for now, but the right-wing Israeli leader has been under intense pressure from settler leaders. The powerful settler movement wields heavy influence in Netanyahu's right-wing governing coalition.

On Tuesday, a defense ministry planning committee advanced 1,500 units, while more than 900 more were added on Wednesday, Peace Now said. In a separate process, 688 homes were advanced by the committee late on Wednesday and will now go out for a 60-day public comment period during which objections can be filed. The plans are at various stages in the process and the units are in a number of settlements across the West Bank.

'Ultimate deal'

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas condemned the plan for the new housing units. Israeli authorities did not immediately respond to requests for comment. More than 600,000 Israelis live in settlements in the West Bank, including in annexed east Jerusalem. They live alongside some three million Palestinians. Settlements are considered illegal under international law and are seen as a major obstacle to peace and the so-called two state solution-the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. Israel blames Palestinian incitement and intransigence for the ongoing conflict. While the majority of the planned homes are in pre-existing settlements, some will be built in the first new official settlement in some 25 years, Peace Now said. Last month, Trump visited Israel and the Palestinian territories, meeting both Netanyahu and Abbas as he seeks what he has called the "ultimate deal". However, Trump has given no details about how he plans to restart talks, and there is deep scepticism over whether such an effort would have any chance of success. Netanyahu has said he still supports a two-state solution, but peace advocates say his actions show otherwise. On Tuesday, the premier told settlers he would keep building across the West Bank. —AFP

QATARI CRISIS COULD SPELL NEW TROUBLE FOR HAMAS

FOR HAMAS, QATAR'S MONEY IS A VITAL LIFELINE

GAZA: Qatar, one of the few foreign backers of Hamas, faces massive pressure from its Gulf neighbors to cut ties with the Islamic militant group. If it does, the result could be disastrous for Hamas-ruled Gaza. Qatar has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in roads, housing and a major hospital in the tiny territory. Its infrastructure projects are one of the few job-creators in a devastated economy. Gaza already suffers from an Israeli-Egyptian blockade, widespread destruction from a string of Israel-Hamas wars, economic misery and chronic electricity shortages.

For Hamas, Qatar's money pumping into the economy is a vital lifeline bolstering its rule. Qatar appears to be weighing its options. The mere prospect of losing Qatari support prompted Hamas on Wednesday to issue rare criticism of Saudi Arabia, which has been leading the campaign against its tiny Gulf neighbor. Hamas official Mushir Al-Masri said the Saudi call for Qatar to cut ties with the Palestinian group is "regrettable" and contradicts traditional Arab support for the Palestinian cause.

He accused Saudi Arabia of siding with "American and Zionist calls to put Hamas on the terrorism list." Saudi Arabia and three other Arab states cut ties with Qatar on Monday, accusing it of supporting violent Islamist groups across the region, including Hamas. Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al Jubeir said Qatar must sever its ties with Hamas. Qatar has denied the allegations. But its small size and reliance on food imports from Saudi Arabia could make it susceptible to the pressure.

A terrorist group

This could spell trouble for Hamas. The group - which calls for Israel's destruction, even if it has offered long-term interim cease-fires - is considered a terrorist group by Israel and its Western allies. Israel and Hamas have fought three cross-border wars that caused large-scale damage in Gaza. Qatar doesn't support Hamas directly, but its large-scale projects have significantly eased the burden on Hamas authorities and given it some credit for bringing this money to Gaza.



GAZA: The then-Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani (left) and Gaza's Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, arrive for a cornerstone laying ceremony for Hamad, a new residential neighborhood in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip. Qatar has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in roads, housing and a major hospital in Hamas-ruled Gaza, but its role as one of the few foreign backers of the internationally shunned Islamic militant group could come to a halt as Qatar faces massive pressure from its Gulf neighbors to cut ties with Hamas. —AP

In 2012, Qatar's then-emir, Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, visited Gaza, the first and only head of state to do so since Hamas seized control of Gaza from the forces of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas 10 years ago. The emir announced a grant of \$407 million for humanitarian projects. The grant is being used to build a housing complex of 3,000 units. Two phases of the project have been completed and families moved into their new houses in the complex, dubbed the Hamad Residential City in the southern Gaza town of Khan Younis.

Last month, Palestinian contractors and Qatari envoys signed deals to start the third and final phase of Hamad City. Now, those deals could be in question. Using that grant, Qatar also built a specialist prosthetic center, the first of its kind in Gaza. Qatar paved roads, repaired or rebuilt mosques and oversaw dozens of other infrastructure projects.

Following a 50-day war between Israel and Hamas in 2014, Qatar was the largest single donor to the reconstruction of Gaza, pledging \$1 billion at a Cairo-hosted international conference.

So far, Qatar has delivered just \$50 million of this pledge for rebuilding 1,000 houses. Qatar also helped pay for fuel deliveries from neighboring Israel, which, despite its enmity to Hamas, supplies energy to Gaza for what it says are humanitarian reasons. But in an ominous sign for Hamas, Qatar stopped the energy payments for the past two months. It is unclear whether the payments were halted under Arab pressure. On Wednesday, bulldozers with Qatari flags were seen leveling land overlooking Gaza City's coastal road. The spot is supposed to house the headquarters of Qatar's Gaza reconstruction mission and a residence for an envoy. —AP



TEHRAN: Police helicopter flies around the mausoleum of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in Tehran. Gunmen and suicide bombers stormed Iran's parliament and the shrine of its revolutionary leader, killing 12 people in the first attacks in the country claimed by the Islamic State group. —AFP

FIVE IRANIAN ATTACKERS LINKED TO ISLAMIC STATE

IRAN DENOUNCES TRUMP'S REACTION AS 'REPUGNANT'

TEHRAN: Iran said yesterday that the five Iranians who killed 17 people in twin attacks in Tehran were Islamic State group members who had been to its strongholds in Iraq and Syria. The attacks on Wednesday at Tehran's parliament complex and the shrine of revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini wounded more than 50 people and were the first claimed by IS in Iran.

"The five known terrorists... after joining the Daesh (IS) terrorist group, left the country and participated in crimes carried out by this terrorist group in Mosul and Raqa," the ministry said in a statement. It suggested there were only five attackers rather than the six originally reported. The ministry released their photographs and first names, and said they were part of a network that entered Iran in July-August 2016 under the leadership of "high-ranking Daesh commander" Abu Aisha intending to carry out "terrorist operations in religious cities".

Abu Aisha was killed and the network forced to flee the country, the statement said. It was not clear when the five men returned to Iran ahead of Wednesday's attacks. Iran denounced Donald Trump's reaction to the attacks as "repugnant" after the US president said the nation was reaping what it sowed. Trump said the US would "grieve and pray" for the victims, but added: "We underscore that states that sponsor terrorism risk falling victim to the evil they pro-

mote." That was condemned by Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who tweeted: "Repugnant WH (White House) statement... as Iranians counter terror backed by US clients."

'Terrorist network'

The attackers were armed with rifles and pistols and at least two blew themselves up with suicide vests, Iranian media reported. Police said a further five people were arrested around Khomeini's shrine on suspicion of involvement. In the midst of the unfolding attacks, the intelligence ministry said a third team had been stopped before the attacks started, but no further details have since been given. "The network of this terrorist group has been identified and some of its members have been arrested," Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi said. "We still cannot judge that Saudi Arabia has had a role in this terrorist incident," he added.

Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards have pointed the finger at regional rival Saudi Arabia—a close US ally—which Iran accuses of funding extremism and groups including IS. IS has threatened to step up recruitment within Iran, releasing its first Persian-language video in March in which it threatened to "conquer Iran and restore it to the Sunni Muslim nation as it was before." The Sunni jihadists of IS consider Shiite Iran to be apostates, and Tehran is deeply involved in fighting the group in both Syria and Iraq.

'Counter-productive'

Trump's comments brought criticism from Iranians on social media, who recalled their government's offers of support and the candlelight vigils held in Iran after the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States. "Iranians lit candles for you on 9/11. You kick them while they're down. Classy," tweeted Ali Ghezalbash, an Iranian business analyst. The US president has long accused Iran of backing terrorism and has threatened to tear up a 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and major powers. Trump's statement is "counter-productive and further narrows the opportunity for engagement between the US and Iran on countering a common enemy," said Ellie Geranmayeh, senior fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations.

Even as Washington expressed its condolences on Wednesday, the US Senate advanced legislation that would impose new sanctions on Iran, partly for what the bill described as the Iranian regime's "support for acts of international terrorism". Sunni Gulf Arab states are in the midst of a major diplomatic crisis after Saudi Arabia and its allies cut ties with Qatar on Monday over claims it supports extremism and has fewer tensions with Iran. Iranian leaders sought to play down the attacks, with supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei saying: "These firecrackers that happened today will not have the slightest effect on the will of the people." —AFP

News

in brief

Bus crash kills 43

HARARE: A bus accident in Zimbabwe has killed 43 people after the driver lost control and rammed into a tree, police said yesterday. "We have been told that 43 people have been killed," police spokeswoman Charity Charamba said. "The bus was travelling to Zambia when the driver lost control at a curve yesterday evening," she said. Charamba said the crash occurred in the Nyamakate area near the border with Zambia. Cross-border coaches usually ferry traders from Zimbabwe who travel to Zambia to stock up on wares to sell back home. Last year at least 30 people were killed when two buses collided along the highway connecting the capital Harare and Bulawayo. Road accidents are common in Zimbabwe, where highways are riddled with potholes due to years of neglect. Several other accidents claiming dozens of lives have occurred in the past months.

Boko Haram kills 11

MAIDUGURI: Eleven people were killed when Boko Haram gunmen and suicide bombers launched a rare combined attack inside the strategic northeast Nigerian city of Maiduguri, police said yesterday. Borno state police commissioner Damian Chukwu said one civilian was killed as locals in the Jiddari Polo area of the city fled, while 10 were killed nearby in three separate suicide blasts. Wednesday night's attacks took place on the eve of a visit by Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo, deputizing for unwell President Muhammadu Buhari, to launch a major humanitarian aid program. The raid came barely a month after a senior Boko Haram commander threatened to attack the city after he was released from government custody in exchange for 82 kidnapped schoolgirls. Outlying districts of Maiduguri, including the university campus and camps for people displaced by the eight-year insurgency, have been hit repeatedly by Boko Haram suicide bombers.

Blast hits US embassy

KIEV: A small blast hit the premises of the US embassy in Kiev overnight causing no casualties after an unknown assailant lobbed an explosive device, Ukrainian police said yesterday. "Investigators found that an unknown person threw an explosive device onto the territory of the diplomatic mission," the police said in a statement. The US embassy—located in central Kiev—confirmed that an "incident involving a small incendiary device" happened just after midnight but said diplomats were working "as normal" after no damage was caused. "At this time, we do not consider this incident a terrorist act," the embassy wrote on Twitter. Ukraine's foreign ministry condemned the incident, saying it could have "harmed the life and health of the diplomatic mission staff". "Law enforcement agencies are taking all measures to investigate the crime, and additional measures are being taken to ensure the security of the diplomatic mission", ministry spokeswoman Mariana Betsa wrote on Twitter.

Desperate wait; bodies retrieved from the Myanmar plane wreck

SAN HLAN: Hundreds of people gathered on a beach in southern Myanmar yesterday desperately waiting for news of their loved ones as the first bodies arrived from the wreck of a military plane that crashed with more than 120 people on board. Navy ships and air force planes have been scouring the waves since Wednesday afternoon, when the aircraft disappeared en route from the southern city of Myeik to the commercial hub of Yangon. By mid-afternoon the commander-in-chief's office said 29 corpses - 20 women, one man and eight children—had been retrieved from the sea after a navy vessel discovered wreckage from the plane off the coastline near Dawei town. Hundreds of locals, relatives and NGO workers clasp umbrellas watched as a fishing boat laden with the dead pulled up to San Hlan beach, where they were unloaded by NGO workers and uniformed soldiers wearing masks and gloves.

4 DEAD IN MURDER-SUICIDE IN PENNSYLVANIA

TUNKHANNOCK: A gunman and three other people are dead after what state police are calling a murder-suicide that occurred after hours at a Pennsylvania supermarket, state police said yesterday. Troopers responded to a report of someone shooting people inside Weis Market in Eaton Township, about 25 miles northwest of Scranton, just before 1 am yesterday.

Troopers found the bodies of three males and one female inside, and said another person who witnessed at least part of the episode survived unharmed, according to a statement from the Tunkhannock barracks.

Authorities believe one of the males opened fire on the others before turning the gun on himself. Online records indicate the store is normally

open from 6 am to 11 pm. Police did not immediately explain how the gunman got into the store, or why he sought out the victims. WKOK-AM reported that the gunman fired randomly in the store in addition to targeting the victims, and that the witness who escaped unharmed was the person who called Wyoming County 911 dispatchers. —AP



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SAN JUAN: The Puerto Rican flag flies in the wind in a street in San Juan. Torn between their American citizenship and Puerto Rican pride, the Caribbean island's inhabitants will express themselves on the complicated relationship with Washington in a referendum June 11, 2017. —AFP

PUERTO RICO, A US COUSIN, MULLS ITS STATUS, IDENTITY

REFERENDUM SPARKS CONTROVERSY

SAN JUAN: "How pretty is the flag, is the flag of Puerto Rico!" The salsa lyric blasts out of a little ice cream stand outside the Capitol building, so loud and catchy one barely notices the US flag flying alongside Puerto Rico's banner atop the seaside legislative palace. Torn between their American citizenship and Puerto Rican pride, the Caribbean island's inhabitants will express themselves on the complicated relationship with Washington on Sunday. A referendum proposing "the immediate decolonization of Puerto Rico" has sparked controversy and is likely to be boycotted by the opposition.

Even though the bankrupt island is being thrashed by a crisis of historic proportions, Ricardo Rossello—who took office as governor in January promising to make Puerto Rico the 51st American state—doesn't want to lose time. Staggering under more than \$70 billion

in debt, the US territory has just declared the biggest bankruptcy ever by a local US government, placing the island's finances under a largely US-appointed control board. Not the best way to persuade Washington to welcome Puerto Rico into the Union, say critics who also complain about the cost of financing a referendum that is not binding on the United States.

Proponents of independence and advocates of the status quo alike dismiss it as a farce. But for Puerto Rico's young governor, the referendum has everything to do with the crisis. "The reason the control board exists is because Puerto Rico is in an inequitable relationship with the federal government," says Christian Sobrino, Rossello's top economic adviser. "If Puerto Rico were a state, or if it were an independent country, there would be no opening for such a junta."

A special status

A former Spanish colony taken over by the United States at the end of the 19th century, Puerto Rico has enjoyed broad political autonomy since 1952 as a commonwealth or "free associated state" of the United States. As US citizens and often proudly so, Puerto Ricans can enter the United States freely and its economy is closely tied to the mainland. But they don't have the right to vote in US presidential elections; instead, they cast ballots for their own government.

They are represented in the US Congress by a resident commissioner, who has a voice but not a vote. Washington has the ultimate say over the territory's affairs. During the last referendum in 2012, a majority said they were dissatisfied with the current status. But nothing changed under the previous Popular Democratic Party, and Rossello and his New Progressive Party want to try again. —AFP

FRANCE'S LEFT AND RIGHT FEAR MACRON LANDSLIDE

PARIS: France's traditional bastions of the left and right for 60 years fear they will be swept aside by President Emmanuel Macron's centrist candidates in Sunday's first round of parliamentary elections, leaving the country without an effective opposition. When the 39-year-old centrist beat Marine Le Pen to become France's youngest ever president on May 7, many observers predicted he would struggle to secure a majority to implement his ambitious labor and social reforms. But just four weeks later polls show that Macron's *Republique en Marche* (Republic on the Move, REM) party, founded just over a year ago, is heading for an absolute majority in the two-round elections. REM are polling at around 30 percent in the first round, a score shown translating into a clear majority in the June 18 second round and a chance for Macron to implement his ambitious program of labor and social reforms. Their closest rivals, the conservative Republicans, are on 20 percent while Le Pen's far-right National Front (FN) is two percent further back.

The radical left party of firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon is on around 12.5 percent and the Socialists of Macron's predecessor, Francois Hollande, are languishing on just eight percent. REM, and their small centrist allies MODEM, would therefore obtain a comfortable majority in the 577-seat National Assembly of between 385 and 415 lawmakers, several polls show. The predictions have led to warnings from Macron's rivals of the danger of the new president's party presiding over a "single-party state".

'He mustn't govern alone'

"It's not easy to explain that we are not electing an emperor, we're electing a president," said former conservative prime minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin. "Having a young president has given the country a breath of fresh air which is very useful. But he mustn't govern alone, we mustn't have a single party," he added. On the left, Melenchon—who has vowed to lead opposition to Macron's plans to loosen the country's labor laws—has urged voters not to give the 39-year-old president "absolute power".

Benoit Hamon, who finished a humiliating fifth as the Socialist candidate in the presidential election, deplored what he called the "Macronmania". Indeed, the weekly news magazine *L'Express* playfully featured Macron on its front cover this week in the style of a teenage magazine with headlines such as "He walks on water" and "Landslide in legislatures". French voters traditionally rally behind their new leader in the parliamentary elections, held within weeks of the presidential vote. Macron's predecessors Hollande, in 2012, Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007 and Jacques Chirac in 2002 all won outright majorities. Unlike Macron however, they all came from long-established parties.

A submissive parliament?

The composition of the new parliament will be very different this year because more than 200 lawmakers in the 577-seat assembly are not standing for re-election, more than double the figure in 2012. Macron is hoping REM candidates—around half of whom have never held office—will take their place. Most of his would-be MPs were only chosen after the presidential election, giving them little more than a month to campaign.

But it seems that in many cases their association with Macron will be enough to sweep them into parliament—and several big political names are set to fall victim to the phenomenon. Greens former housing minister Cecile Duflot faces a strong challenge from 28-year-old Pierre Person in eastern Paris and former conservative minister Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet is expected to struggle against entrepreneur Gilles Le Gendre. —AFP

MACRON CANDIDATES ON A MARCH TO ROUT OLD GUARD

PARIS: "Hello. I'm Emmanuel Macron's candidate for the parliamentary election," lawyer Laetitia Avia, one of around 200 political rookies running on the president's slate, says as she sweeps through a Paris market handing out leaflets promising "democratic renewal". Most of those shopping for cheese and fruit have never heard of Avia, who rose from humble beginnings in a family of Togolese immigrants to found her own legal practice and teach law at a top Paris university. Dressed casually in a skirt, sweater and trainers, the 31-year-old plays the Macron card, telling voters to back what she terms his "reasonably revolutionary" agenda. "Our program is rational and balanced. We're not playing Father Christmas," promising gifts to everyone, she told AFP.

'Hope in the air'

Behind Macron's stunning rise to president was a citizens' army of business people, activists, lawyers, teachers and others who campaigned tirelessly for him in towns and villages across the country. Avia was the chief campaigner of his *Republique en Marche* (Republic on the Move, REM) party in the southeastern Paris suburbs and one of his first 14 picks of parliamentary candidates. With only five weeks between the presidential vote and Sunday's first round of voting for the 577-seat National Assembly, she has had little time to convince voters of her own merits.

But the Macron brand is powerful. Jacques Mobilion, a 68-year-old pensioner who was shopping at the market, said he felt "a little

bit of hope in the air" since France's youngest ever president took office on a promise of an "extraordinary renaissance". "We have to give him a majority," the former aerospace worker said. Two months ago Macron's rivals for president had used the parliamentary vote as a stick to beat him, warning he could never win a majority with a slate of newcomers.

But his strong debut has fuelled the desire of many to rout the old guard. Polls now show his merry band of neophytes—who include a retired female bullfighter and a fighter pilot—storming the parliament, tossing aside many career politicians associated with decades of stasis. In Paris, Avia aims to unseat a Socialist who has represented the 12th and 20th districts for the past decade. —AFP

IN SHADOW OF TERROR, BRITONS VOTE IN KEY ELECTION

LONDON: Britain went to the polls yesterday in a snap election to choose who will lead the country out of the European Union, after a campaign overshadowed by terror attacks. Prime Minister Theresa May called the vote in April, when opinion poll ratings for her and her centre-right Conservative party were sky high, presenting herself as the strong leader to take Britain into Brexit talks. But Islamist attacks in London and Manchester have put her under pressure over her six years as interior minister, while campaign missteps have dented her reputation as a safe pair of hands. Opposition Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn, an anti-war campaigner deemed unelectable by a majority of his own lawmakers, has run an energetic campaign, promising change and an end to austerity. While May has been touring target seats around the country, delivering slogan-heavy speeches to small groups of hand-picked activists, Corbyn has drawn large crowds to open-air rallies.

Outcome uncertain

With security high, millions of voters are casting their ballots in polling stations ranging from schools and public buildings to churches, pubs and even a windmill and a launderette. Polling experts—many of whom failed to predict the historic referendum vote to leave the European Union last year—are now wary of calling the outcome although May

remains the favourite. But predictions of her expected margin of victory vary widely, and one shock forecast model even predicted May could lose her majority of 17 in the 650-seat House of Commons. The 60-year-old vicar's daughter has presented herself as a safe pair of hands for the Brexit talks and said her 68-year-old rival would be "alone and naked in the negotiating chamber". "Get those negotiations wrong and the consequences will be dire," she said on a final campaign stop on Wednesday. Corbyn, a veteran socialist who has never held ministerial office and defied the odds to win the Labor leadership two years ago, urged supporters in Glasgow to think big on his last day of campaigning. "Wouldn't it be great if on Friday we woke up to... a Labor government that will be a government for all of our communities across the whole of the country," he said.

'Little confidence'

It is the third time Britain has gone to the polls in two years, twice for a general election and once for the EU referendum, and voter fatigue appeared to be an issue among the early voters. "I have little confidence in anybody," said voter Simon Bolton, 41, in east London. "I think we lack quality in terms of who we can choose, it is very limited." The election is May's first since taking office after Britons voted by 52 percent to leave the European Union. "I want another five years of stability, and



LONDON: Jessie the German Shepherd stands with her owners, a father and son, by a polling station sign at Columbia Primary School, in the Tower Hamlets borough of east London yesterday. —AP

a stronger hand in Brexit negotiations," said Dave, 29, in the London neighborhood of Hackney. But the Conservative government's record on cutting funding for health and education have also featured strongly in the campaign, to the benefit of Labor.

The Conservatives were also damaged by a manifesto plan for elderly care that would see some pay more. "I'm naturally a Conservative voter but I don't agree

with the social policy in the manifesto," said voter Patrick Kelly, 60, in east London. The campaign was hit by a suicide bombing at a Manchester concert on May 22, which killed 22 people including seven children, followed by Saturday's knife and van attack in central London, which left eight dead. Campaigning was twice suspended in the aftermath of the attacks, which May blamed on "evil" Islamist ideology. —AFP

EXPERTS, MICROSOFT PUSHING FOR GLOBAL NGO TO EXPOSE HACKERS

TALLINN: As cyberattacks sow ever greater chaos worldwide, IT titan Microsoft and independent experts are pushing for a new global NGO tasked with the tricky job of unmasking the hackers behind them. Dubbed the "Global Cyber Attribution Consortium", according to a recent report by the Rand Corporation think-tank, the NGO would probe major cyberattacks and publish, when possible, the identities of their perpetrators, whether they be criminals, global hacker networks or states.

"This is something that we don't have today: A trusted international organization for cyber-attribution," Paul Nicholas, director of Microsoft's Global Security Strategy, told NATO's Cycon cybersecurity conference in Tallinn last week. With state and private companies having "skills and technologies scattered around the globe" Nicholas admits it becomes "really difficult when you have certain types of complex international offensives occurring." "The main actors look at each other and they sort of know who they think it was, but nobody wants to make an affirmation."

Microsoft already floated the idea of an anti-hacking NGO in a June 2016 report that urged the adoption of international standards on cybersecurity. The report by Rand commissioned by Microsoft called "Stateless Attribution Toward international accountability in Cyberspace" analyses a string of major cyberattacks. They include offensives on Ukraine's electricity grid, the Stuxnet virus that ravaged an Iranian nuclear facility, the theft of tens of millions of confidential files from the US Office of Personnel Management (OPM) or the notorious WannaCry ransomware virus.

"In the absence of credible institutional mechanisms to contain hazards in cyberspace, there are risks that an incident could threaten international peace and the global economy," the report's authors conclude. They recommend the creation of an NGO bringing together independent experts and computer scientists that specifically excludes state actors, who could be bound by policy or politics to conceal their methods and sources. —AFP

ISOLATED TRUMP JOINS THE BATTLE OF HIS LIFE

US PRESIDENT FACES LITANY OF SCANDALS

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump has faced down a litany of scandals in his nearly 71 years, surviving bankruptcy, divorce, lawsuits and vulgar exposes. But less than six months into his White House tenure, he finds himself locked in his toughest fight yet—the battle to save his presidency. Yesterday, former FBI director James Comey appeared in the Senate and testify under oath that, before he was fired, Trump urged him to shelve a major counter-espionage investigation and demanded his "loyalty." That has opened the door to allegations the president may have obstructed justice, which could possibly lead to impeachment charges.

Pundits and punters will argue the legal merits of those allegations long after Comey's must-see testimony. But the ultimate judgment will be political and for now, the odds are stacked in Trump's favor. Only Congress can prosecute a sitting president and Republicans—even those who reluctantly backed Trump and decry him in private—are loath to commit political fratricide and oust a democratically-elected president without a cast iron reason. Trump seems determined to put that support to the test.

Story of a Renegade

He enters this political battle armed with a street-fighting temperament that has proven as much a liability as an asset for his



WASHINGTON: People wait in line outside the hearing room to attend former FBI Director James Comey testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee in the Hart Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill. —AFP

presidency. For the last 150 or so days, Trump has lurched from crisis to crisis, tweeting away his public support and increasingly alienating allies who hold his political fate in their hands.

According to a Morning Consult poll, 69 percent of voters say Trump uses Twitter too much. Inside the White House, aides describe a miasma of frustration, anger and

resentment as Trump undermines his staff and rips up plans with unscripted remarks or Twitter outbursts. That tendency was on display Wednesday, just hours before Comey's written Senate testimony was released a day before his appearance. At 7:44 am, Trump announced the nomination of Christopher Wray to replace Comey as his FBI director. —AFP

INDIA UNNERVED BY STUDENT ANGER IN KASHMIR

QUIMOH: Another student death in clashes in Indian-administered Kashmir has heightened tensions in the disputed territory and worsened India's worries about a foe that it cannot control-youths who do not carry guns. The teenager was fatally shot in the chest during an exchange of fire between troops and suspected militants in Shopian, south of Srinagar, late Tuesday, sparking further violent protests. Students have taken the lead in protests, hurling stones at soldiers tracking militants who want Kashmir to break away from India. More than 100 young men and women have been killed over the past year in the demonstrations.

The deaths have increased anti-Indian sentiment in the part of the Muslim-majority Himalayan region it has controlled since 1947. Pakistan has the other chunk. India is also worried about how to handle the anger. It considers the battle with armed militants to be a fair one but its leaders are unnerved about students whose only weapons are stones. Indian army chief Gen. Bipin Rawat said he wished "instead of throwing stones at us, (they) were firing weapons". "Then I would have been happy. Then I could do what I want," he told Press Trust of India.

Bedridden in a dimly lit room of his village home, Mohammad Younis, 18, is eager to join

the protests. Indian soldiers shot the 18-year-old in the thigh in February. He had been walking through paddy fields to attend the funeral of a rebel killed by troops. "If I wasn't stuck in this bed I would also go out to protest," Younis said at his home in Quimoh. His father, Mohamad Akbar, said the students were "not afraid of bullets and soldiers". "We were timid," he added. "But this generation has to fight."

Student anger

The rebel, a former student known to Younis, was killed just ten days after joining the separatists. About 100 young Kashmiris

are believed to have joined the armed militants since rebel commander Burhan Wani was killed by security forces last July. Wani, a media savvy leader, took up the armed cause at the age of 15, galvanizing Kashmiri youth by providing a new face for the militant movement.

Student unrest intensified again in April when government forces raided a college in the southern town of Pulwama to arrest suspected protest leaders. The army's use of a Kashmiri man as a 'human shield' tied to the front of a military jeep as it drove away from stone-throwing protesters set off even greater controversy. —AFP



PYONGYANG: Soldiers goose-step across Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang, North Korea, during a parade to celebrate the birth anniversary of Kim Il Sung, the country's late founder and grandfather of current ruler Kim Jong Un. —AP

NORTH KOREA FIRES VOLLEY OF MISSILES

FIFTH MISSILE TEST IN A MONTH

SEOUL: North Korea launched a volley of surface-to-ship cruise missiles off its east coast yesterday, Seoul's defense ministry said, Pyongyang's fifth test in less than a month in defiance of global pressure to rein in its weapons program. The launches come less than a week after the United Nations expanded sanctions against Kim Jong-Un's regime in response to recent ballistic missile tests.

"North Korea fired multiple unidentified projectiles, assumed to be surface-to-ship cruise missiles," the defense ministry said, adding the short range missiles flew some 200 kilometers before falling into the Sea of Japan. Pyongyang has ordered three ballistic missile launches, a surface-to-air missile, and yesterday's cruise missile tests since the South's President Moon Jae-in took power in early May.

Moon advocated reconciliation with Seoul's isolated, unpredictable neighbor but has taken a more stern position in the wake of the missile tests, which pose a policy challenge to the left-leaning leader. "The only thing North Korea will earn through provocations is international isolation and

economic hardship, and it will lose opportunities for development," Moon said at a meeting of the National Security Council yesterday, according to Blue House spokesman Park Soo-Hyun. Seoul "will not take a single step back or make compromises over the issue of national security or the safety of its people," Moon said, according to his spokesman.

Yesterday's launch "was aimed at showing off various missile capabilities and antiship precision strike capability," a spokesman for South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff told reporters, adding it did not appear to have violated UN sanctions. Cruise missile tests do not contravene UN regulations, Korea Defense Network analyst Lee Il-Woo said, adding they were "much slower than ballistic missiles and can be shot down by anti-aircraft guns". Any North Korean tests using ballistic missile technology are banned by UN resolutions.

"North Korea is carrying out carefully calibrated provocations... but restraining from ICBM tests or nuclear explosions which could bring about military retaliations by (US President Donald) Trump," he

added. Yesterday's launch is also aimed at pressuring Seoul and Washington ahead of a planned summit between Moon and Trump late June, said Hong Hyun-Ik, analyst at the Sejong Institute think tank. "The North is trying to flaunt its presence... and to pressure Moon to offer a big favour in order to ease tension, like the resumption of a joint economic project," Hong said.

The UN Security Council last Friday unanimously adopted a US-drafted resolution imposing new targeted sanctions on a handful of North Korean officials and entities, a move Pyongyang said was "mean". China, the reclusive regime's sole major ally, has made it clear that a push for talks-and not more sanctions-is its priority. "Talks deserve another chance and peace is still within our grasp," Beijing Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said yesterday. The new tests come a day after South Korea suspended deployment of a controversial US missile shield-an apparent concession to China, which is strongly opposed to the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system. —AFP

INDIAN TEENAGER TOPS STATE EXAMS, ESCHEWS COLLEGE TO BECOME MONK

AHMEDABAD: An Indian teenager who topped his state in his final exams renounced worldly pleasures and committed to the austere life of a monk yesterday in an elaborate ceremony on the banks of a holy river. Varshil Shah, who graduated just a fortnight ago in Gujarat with the highest possible score, emerged from the pre-dawn ritual a Jain disciple with shaved head and white robes after receiving the blessings of his family and guru. Jains follow a strict vegetarian diet and some monks and nuns cover their mouths with fabric to prevent them from accidentally swallowing insects.

The 17-year-old eschewed the path so valued by Indian graduates-college and a successful job-to wander the countryside living an ascetic life, meditating and studying the scriptures. "I always wanted to attain happiness without hurting anybody. Scoring top rank in board exams does not give happiness," Shah told reporters in Surat the day before his ordination. "The material world does not give eternal happiness that millions seek. So, I chose to become a Jain Monk to experience eternal happiness without hurting anybody."

Shah had become concerned with the value placed on money in society, and told his father-a tax accountant-and mother that he wished to achieve happiness without harming others. After many years of wandering and prayer Shah—who was renamed SuviryaRatna Vijayji Maharaj after the ceremony-can ascend to the level of guru and guide his own disciples in the ancient Indian faith. His uncle Nayan Sutariya, a chartered accountant, said Shah had decided to become a monk almost immediately after he received his state-topping 99.99 percent exam result.

Hundreds of family and friends attended the ceremony, which saw Shah dressed with embroidered headgear and a beige tunic before he took his vows and donned the monastic uniform. "We strongly believe that there is no real peace in the world we live in. For eternal peace one has to leave everything," Sutariya said yesterday after the ceremony. Jainism is an ancient Indian religion-followed by less than one percent of India's 1.25 billion people-that preaches non-violence and love for all creatures, great and small. —AFP



GUJARAT: Indian Jain monk Varshil Shah, 17, leaves after taking part in a ritual to become a Jain disciple in Surat yesterday. —AFP

ETHIOPIAN ANGER AND 'STATE OF EMERGENCY'

AMBO: At their campus in the farmland west of Ethiopia's capital, the students of Ambo University attend lectures, play football and worry about which of their classmates is spying on them. It wasn't long ago that Ambo and other towns in Ethiopia's Oromia region were wracked by anti-government protests so fierce parliament declared a state of emergency last October. The decree stopped the unrest and while fear of arrest or death at the hands of security forces has kept protesters off the streets—their anger is as raw as ever.

"We are just living day-to-day life in a situation of being afraid of everything," a 23-year-old Ambo University student who took part in the demonstrations told AFP while sitting in an empty field above the town, the only place he felt safe from government informants. Sporadic demonstrations have continued to erupt despite the state of emergency and, were it to expire as scheduled in July, several Oromia residents believe the unrest would resume. "It's a fire under ashes," a judge in a district near Ambo said of the protests. As with many people interviewed for this story, the judge and the student spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity, fearing reprisals.

History of discontent

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has dominated Ethiopia since 1991 with promises to bring development to one of the continent's poorest nations. While poverty and infant mortality rates have plunged under its rule, the EPRDF is accused by rights groups of running an iron-fisted government that rigs elections and trumps up charges against opposition politicians in a bid to maintain power. "The military, the economy, education, all institutions are controlled by the government," said Getachew Metaferia, a political science professor at Morgan State University in the United States.

A government proposal to expand the Addis Ababa city limits into Oromia provided the spark that ignited years of simmering rage among the Oromo, the country's largest ethnic group. Denouncing the plan as a land grab, the Oromo began protesting in November 2015, barricading roads and burning down government buildings and factories. A crackdown on the unrest that spread to the neighboring Amhara region left more than 940 people dead, according to two reports released by the government's human rights commission.

Tight surveillance

As the body count rose, parliament declared a state of emergency which banned meetings and gave police the power to hold suspected protesters indefinitely. That meant that even in villages in Oromia, police would arrest people just for walking together, the judge said. Across the country, arrests topped 11,000 with many shipped off to "re-education" camps in far-flung towns. At Ambo University, dozens of students dropped out, while informants infiltrated the student body and reported any dissenting voices to security forces on campus.

Those who are arrested are often forced to summon any like-minded friends who also end up detained, according to the 23-year-old student. Outside the university, plainclothes policemen scan the roofs of homes for equipment capable of picking up transmissions from the US-based Oromia Media Network, a banned TV station whose programming is often explicitly anti-government, according to the university student. Anyone caught watching the station is jailed and fined 50,000 birr (\$2,169, 1,936 euros), the student said. Sometimes, they are also beaten.

'Protests will continue'

However the protesters are undeterred and have turned to Facebook to communicate and share news with each other, circumventing a social media ban imposed during the height of the unrest. They stormed the streets of Ambo in March after the state of emergency was extended by four months, resulting in 33 arrests, and again in May. In the Amhara region, grenades have been thrown at hotels and at a concert. A political analyst at a western embassy in Addis Ababa believes these attacks are likely related to the protests that occurred in that region last year. Ethiopia's government believes reforms including a cabinet reshuffle and dialogue with journalists and opposition politicians have calmed the countryside. —AFP

ITALY MUSLIMS DISOWN UK ATTACKER, FEAR BACKLASH

'ALL THAT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH ISLAM'

BAZZANO: Italy's Muslims fear a backlash from the London attacks could undermine their already fragile position in the country after one of the attackers was identified as half-Italian. Youssef Zaghba, 22, was one of three men shot dead by police after a jihadist van attack and stabbing spree in the British capital on Saturday. It has since emerged that the Moroccan-born militant had an Italian passport and his mother, a convert to Islam, lives near Bologna.

"All that has nothing to do with Islam, it was the work of crazies," Mohamed Ben Salem, the Tunisian imam at the centre where Zaghba's mother worships, said of the attacks. "It is not going to help things, people (in Italy) have been mixing up Muslims with terrorism for a long time." Zaghba, 22, never came to the Bazzano mosque during his rare visits to his mother's home in nearby Fagnano.

"If he had lived full-time in Italy and had attended our mosque, he would never have picked up these kind of ideas, never!" said the imam. Like most mosques in Italy, the Bazzano one is a makeshift affair—the several hundred faithful worshipping in a corner of an old industrial building. During the fasting month of Ramadan there are only a handful of worshippers there in the early afternoon and those who are willing to talk all speak of their concern at their community being linked, albeit tenuously, to events in London.

Double discrimination

"Yes, I think this can do us harm after years working to build a relationship of confidence with the (non-Muslim) population," said Bahi Cherkaouin. "People have sacrificed a lot to create this space, some give 50, 100, 200 euros a month to keep it going and pay the imam, because the local authorities give us nothing," added the 59-year-old Moroccan. The Bazzano faithful are also concerned about what Zaghba's mother's story will do to the image of Islam in Italy. According to her aunt, Valeria Collina left Zaghba's father in Morocco because he was violent and wanted to



BOLOGNA: Journalists interview Valeria Collina, the Italian mother of one of the London Bridge attackers, Youssef Zaghba, in her home in Fagnano di Monte San Pietro, in Bologna, Italy. Collina, a Muslim convert, told reporters that she had told Italian airport authorities to detain her son after he was stopped March 15, 2016 on his way to Turkey with a one-way ticket. — AP

take on a second wife. The imam says he will continue to try and project a truer image of Islam. "We always urge people to come and see us, to take part in our open door events, because it is ignorance that leads to these acts of terror." These young people who blow themselves up, who blindly kill innocent people, they are empty inside and they understand nothing of our religion." He says he urges followers of his faith to inform the authorities if they have the slightest suspicion that someone in the community is undergoing radicalisation.

Collina said she had told police to detain her son because she feared he was going off the rails. "I'm a good citizen who loves her country, an Italian Muslim." Opened in 2004, the Bazzano mosque caused a bit of a row locally but that was quickly forgotten, locals say. But many Italian Muslims feel they are victims of a general lack of equal opportunities for ethnic minorities, and of restrictions placed on their freedom to practice their faith.

Muslims viewed negatively

The number of Muslims living in Italy has been recently estimated at around 1.4 million, or nearly 2.5 percent of the population. It is considered the second most followed faith in the mostly Roman Catholic country but it has struggled to overcome a legacy of suspicion. A recent survey by the Pew institute found that 69 percent of Italians had negative views of Muslims. Islam is the only major religion not to be officially recognized by the state.

As a result, mosques are not eligible for state funding through a tax levy that funds other faiths, and Muslim employees are not guaranteed the right to take the day off on religious holidays. Rome is home to the biggest mosque in the Western world but proposals to construct traditional-style mosques elsewhere have frequently run into opposition from local councils who can withhold planning permission on any number of technical grounds. These can range from the size of proposed parking or toilet facilities to questions of architectural harmony. — AFP

IN MEXICO'S 'RED TRIANGLE,' STEALING OIL A WAY OF LIFE

TEPEACA: Standing in the middle of lettuce and onion fields that reek of gasoline, the farmers pause from their work to watch an army convoy drive by. Gripping their machine guns, the soldiers return the farmers' wary gaze. It's impossible to know which villagers are involved in the multi-million-dollar oil theft racket that has become a way of life in this remote pocket of central Mexico.

"It's very difficult to detect who's involved in this activity," says one soldier, speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons. The village, Tepeaca, is at the heart of Mexico's "Red Triangle," a lawless mountain region in the state of Puebla that sits on top of the underground pipeline that delivers oil, gasoline and diesel from the Gulf coast to the capital. The region is perfect for the business of stealing fuel. Its mountainous terrain isolates it from much of the country, while widespread poverty ensures there is a large work force ready to help.

It takes a village

It takes a village to stage a successful pipeline theft—a dangerous affair that can end in deadly explosions or shootouts with soldiers. Those who puncture the pipeline reportedly take home \$10,000 for less than 20 minutes' work. Wielding the hoses used to extract the fuel can meanwhile earn you \$8,000. Children earn up to \$500 a month for acting as lookouts. The stolen gasoline is sold on the black market for \$0.50 a liter—well below the market price of about \$0.87.

These days, business is booming. State oil company Pemex says the number of pipeline thefts has soared from 186 in 2012 to 6,837 last year. And the pace has only accelerated since January, when the government increased the price of gasoline by 20 percent in an effort to deregulate the energy sector and revitalize an ailing Pemex. There were 2,683 thefts in the first three months of 2017—nearly 30 a day. — AFP

MYANMAR'S CHILD SERVANTS ABUSED

LEGAL PROTECTIONS PROVE ELUSIVE

YANGON: Playing with a tiny kitten is the only thing that stops 13-year-old Myat Noe crying as she lies in a Yangon hospital, flesh peeling from where she says her employers burned her with irons and boiling water. She was rescued last weekend from a house south of Myanmar's commercial capital where she was sent to work as a live-in housemaid earning less than \$10 a week. Her story is one many child domestic helper abuse cases to emerge since the country's first freely elected government in half a century took power last year.

Lawmakers, led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, have vowed to strengthen protection for child workers. But new laws appear distant while the culture of abuse persists in a country

where poor children are routinely pressed into jobs. "It hurts," Myat Noe whispered to an AFP journalist from her hospital bed after finally stroking her kitten to sleep, tears stifling her voice. "They did this because I forgot to tell them the water had boiled. I do not want to go back," added the girl, whose name has been changed to protect her identity.

The girl was sent by her grandmother to work for a couple who were family friends. But concerned neighbors tipped off authorities after glimpsing her back, shoulders and chest covered in livid red burns. Police have arrested the couple, who are accused of branding her with burning irons, beating her and pouring boiling water over her skin. "When we found the girl, there were many injuries

on her whole body," said local ward authority Myo Tint Naing, who brought the charges. "The child was locked up to stop her having any outside contact... (She) has been so afraid since we took her. She doesn't want to go back."

'Many unknown cases'

A female police officer stood guard near the girl as a harried doctor said he had seen six cases of abused child servants at this hospital alone. All were left with severe psychological damage from their ordeals. "What we need in this country is a law to protect child (domestic) helpers in particular," he said on condition of anonymity. "There are many unknown child abuse cases happening."

Experts say tens of thousands of youngsters work as house servants in Myanmar, rated as the world's seventh-worst country for child labor by risk analysts Verisk Maplecroft. Vulnerable and invisible, with no legal protections, they are at high risk of abuse. Protecting them has become a test issue for Suu Kyi's government since last year, when the case of two girls who suffered horrendous abuse during five years held captive in a tailors shop in Yangon came to light.

Their story shocked the country and the president ordered an investigation into how it was handled, but little substantive action has been taken since. Lawmakers have announced the formulation of a five-year action plan to eliminate child labor. They are also expected to amend the 1993 Child Law to cover anyone under the age of 18, rather than 16, and enshrine the minimum working age at 14 in the next session of parliament. But experts say specific legal protections for child servants remain a pipe dream. — AFP



YANGON: Photo shows Myat Noe, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, with burns on her back in the Sanpya hospital in Yangon. — AFP



KUALA KUBU BHARU: A visually impaired Malaysian Islamic studies student reads the Quran from a Braille copy of the Holy Book at the Darul Quran academic institution in Kuala Kubu Bharu. — AFP

BLIND MALAYSIAN MUSLIMS STUDY QURAN USING BRAILLE

KUALA KUBU BHARU: A small community of blind students in Malaysia is attempting to learn the entire Quran, a formidable task that requires them to read each page of the holy text up to 40 times. It may be the fasting month of Ramadan but the group of eight students in the central state of Selangor show no sign of fatigue as their fingers race across thick copies of the religious book. The students, who were all born blind, are among a group of 1,000 at the Darul Quran school learning and memorizing Islam's holy text.

They depend on made-in-Malaysia copies written in Braille, which come in six thick volumes. "They must try to memorize one to two pages a day. You usually have to read a page 30 to 40 times to help you memorize," Quran teacher Ahmad Qusairi Mat Zizi, who is also blind, said. The students, aged between 19 and 21, are currently in the midst of a four-year course, memorizing the holy text as well as studying Arabic and other Islamic subjects. "My motivation to come here, first of all, is for my family and for myself, and because I like to memorize the Quran, and that is one of my ambitions," said blind student Nur Basyirah Azhar.

Once they finish their course, they can opt for further Islamic studies at university level. Teachers at the school said there were other Malaysian institutions offering classes with the Braille Quran, while similar Braille copies can also be found in countries such as Indonesia. Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi told local media this week he hoped the country would have 125,000 people who had memorized the Quran by 2050, saying this was key to building harmony and prosperity. — AFP

CHILD MIGRANTS RISK LIVES TO REACH EUROPE FROM ... SPAIN

MELILLA: It is midnight and nine-year-old Wahib hides near the port of Melilla, a tiny Spanish territory on Morocco's Mediterranean coast. Like scores of other street children here, he is prepared to risk everything to reach mainland Europe. "No entry, danger of falling," reads a sign on a fence blocking access to the port. But the fence is scaled every night by boys doing the "risky", as they call their dangerous game of hide-and-seek with security forces and guard dogs.

"It means sneaking onto a boat without being seen, without being detected by heartbeat sensors or sniffed out by dogs," explains Sara Olcina, a volunteer for the Harraga association that tries to help the minors. Wahib is one of 50 to 100 foreign minors, mainly from Morocco, who sleep on the streets of Melilla after sneaking into the Spanish city with hopes of getting onto a boat, according to a recent report by Madrid's Comillas Pontifical University.

Living in caves, filth

But the road to Europe is treacherous and the youths' game of hide-and-seek

takes many forms. Some climb over the fence and descend into the port with a rope. Others cling to the undercarriage of trucks waiting to board ferries for mainland Spain. Attempts to cross the Mediterranean also include hiding among cargo and clambering onto ferries with the aid of mooring ropes. There are no estimates of how many youngsters actually make it illegally from Melilla into mainland Europe. Wahib fell in his last failed bid and sports a badly-healed wound on the back of his head.

The "risky" caused at least four deaths in 2015 and 2016 in Melilla, according to local media, including two Moroccan minors who drowned as they tried to approach a boat. Olcina remembers a group of children who lived in the streets last year. "The youngest was seven, the eldest 10," she says. "Many boarded boats illegally." Some children live in difficult-to-access caves facing the Mediterranean which they reach by making a perilous climb, sleeping on flattened cardboard boxes. Others spend their nights in filthy hiding places under bridges or on public benches.

How can Spain 'allow this'?

Many of the youngsters sniff glue to get high, making it easier to take their "risky" activities as a game. Bilal, 14, has a cheerful face and wears a filthy sweatshirt decorated with a rabbit. He has already made "three attempts this week." His older brother, he says, made it across to mainland Spain. Originally from the Moroccan city of Fez, he arrived in Melilla, an 80,000-strong city, in January.

But he spent just "four days" at a reception centre for minors before he escaped. Nearby, one of his friends is covered in grease from a truck after a failed "risky" attempt, a desperate expression in his eyes. "We can't understand how the government of a country like Spain can allow this," says Jose Palazon, the president of local migrant rights group, Prodein. He notes the "distress of these children, who are victims of groups that control people on the streets, who sell them glue, who make them beg or steal."

Fortified fences

Melilla and its sister city Ceuta, located some 400 kilometers further north-

west along the coast, have been under Spanish control since the 15th century but are claimed by Morocco. The only two land borders between Africa and the European Union, they have become infamous for the fortified fences that separate them from Morocco, which migrants routinely try to climb over. Some of the children AFP interviewed say it is fairly easy to enter Melilla by hiding among the crush of Moroccans who work as porters transporting goods across the border every day.

Once on Spanish land, they are taken to youth reception centers. The number of unaccompanied foreign minors arriving in the city has soared over the past two years, overcrowding the centers, says Daniel Ventura, a government official in charge of social protection. The centers house close to 500 minors whom they are tasked to feed, clothe and educate. Most are enrolled in school or work training programs, according to Ventura. But the bulk of the minors live in a centre set up in a run-down former military fort, which the media is not allowed to visit. — AFP

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Keith Urban wins big at CMT Awards, Underwood makes history

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A man selling dates and honey stands at a shop at the popular Souq Waqif market, in the Qatari capital, Doha. — AFP



Actors and the technical team film a scene during the making of a Kumawood movie in Mampong. — AFP photos



Actors perform during the shooting of the last scene in a Kumawood film.

Hooray for... Kumawood!

Ghana's fastest filmmakers

India has its Bollywood and Nigeria, Nollywood. Even New Zealand has a Wellywood. In Ghana, films made in Kumasi and the surrounding region go by a similar shorthand-Kumawood. The cultural heart of Ghana is about five hours' drive from the more cosmopolitan coastal capital, Accra, and it was rivalry between the two that played a key role in developing Kumasi's burgeoning film industry. Smarting from a jibe nearly a decade ago, Kumawood defiantly built itself up after a teasing by Accra-based counterparts about not being real filmmakers, producer James Aboagye said.

"At that time, the only producer in Kumasi here said that if this is the way they are treating us, then we will stay in Kumasi and create Kumawood," he told AFP. And so it did, with some success. Four years ago, it wasn't unusual for Kumawood to churn out up to 12 films a week, on a shoestring budget of only 30,000-50,000 cedi (\$6,860-\$11,440, 6,100-10,160 euros) each. That included the filming, as well as the cost of releasing the movie and the production of the DVDs. But power shortages cut that back to a more modest four-still an astonishing figure considering the months, if not years, it takes to make some Hollywood blockbusters.

'Time is money'

Kumasi, Ghana's second city, is known for its rich, cultural heritage and is home to the country's most-revered royal family. Films are shot on location around the central city and the surrounding area. Dialogue is in Twi-an Akan dialect spoken by most Ghanaians-and is often unscripted. Crews shooting a feature-length film within a week can be on-set from first light until midnight, said Aboagye. "When you come to Kumawood you get the real definition of 'time is money'. Because the longer you stay on location the more expensive the production becomes," said Aboagye.

Accra Film School Executive Director Rex-Anthony Annan said some Ghanaians are often embarrassed to admit to liking the films, as they are seen as "low standard". But they are hugely popular and regularly shown on long-distance bus trips across the country.



Director Bismark Okyene (left) watches the filming of a scene during the making of a Kumawood film.

"The fact they are in the local dialect you can relate with it more," said 22-year-old Eunice Larbie, as she waited for the bus to Accra in Kumasi. Watching Kumawood films with strangers on the journey brings people

together, she added. The films are slowly making their way in to cinemas in Ghana but are more likely found on local television, online or DVD at the roadside. Kumawood currently produces about 40 percent of all



Director Bismark Okyene (left) speaks to an actor during the making of a Kumawood film.

Ghanaian films while those made in Accra account for about half. The rest originate from other parts of the west African country, Annan said. But Kumawood stars are more popular than those of Accra-made films and their movies are played all over the world by homesick Ghanaians, he added.

Plot holes

Kumawood films don't necessarily follow rules and filmmakers aren't professionally trained. Often there's no plot and confusion reigns. "Kumawood conflicts are almost never resolved, they go on and on. They always have challenges with the technical stuff," said Annan. Post-production special effects, such as people or objects levitating, are obvious targets for ridicule, he added. "In some movies they try to do funny things, shooting, blood, it's a feature of their movies. There's always a ghost, some spirit coming from somewhere," he said.

On-set, actress Amanda Nana Achiaa rubs dirt over her arms and ruffles her hair. Wearing green tracksuit bottoms with holes cut in them, the 25-year-old prepares for an emotional scene, depicting life as a street child. The producer shouts "Action!" and the camera rolls. Another actor limps around the corner and falls down next to her on the ground. The film's only cameraman films a close-up of Achiaa's tears. Achiaa said she's lost count of the number of Kumawood movies she's been in. She started her career in 2004 in the hope of one day making it in Hollywood. She still does. "Oh my god, I will kill myself for it! That's what I am picturing, that's where I want to be," she shouts.

Moral lesson

Kumawood films usually have a moral lesson, said director Bismark Okyene. The 32-year-old's film starring Achiaa was about family, deception and greed. Once the crew gets all the shots they need of the street children, they quickly move to a nearby house. Setting up on a dirt path, one person holds a boom for the lone microphone, while the cameraman crouches against a wall of the house and begins filming. — AFP

RICHARD DONNER CELEBRATED FOR 'SUPERMAN,' SUPER KINDNESS

Richard Donner may have created the modern superhero movie with 1978's "Superman" and revitalized the buddy comedy with "Lethal Weapon," but his colleagues say his big-hearted kindness is what truly sets him apart. Actor Corey Feldman said Donner paid for his rehab years after they worked together on "The Goonies." Another "Goonies" star revealed Donner covered his college tuition. Other entertainers, including Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, Rene Russo and Carol Kane, lauded the filmmaker's magnanimity Wednesday at a film academy tribute to the 87-year-old Donner. Kane, who starred with Bill Murray in 1988's "Scrooged," called Donner "a creative guidance counselor in the most nourishing way."

"You were charming and funny and witty and all these amazing (things), but the thing that killed me is you were kind," Russo told the director. "You were so kind, and that's what makes you the sexiest man in the world." The filmmaker's wife and collaborator, Lauren Shuler Donner, also referred to him as "the sexiest man alive." She said his personality shows in his movies, describing her husband as "fun, larger than life, loud, strong, with a big mushy heart." She said they met while making 1985's "Ladyhawke," when she was an aspiring producer fresh off a divorce.

"I was 33. I was trying to get respect and didn't want to be sleeping with the director," she said, adding that they've now been together for 34 years. Warm personal anecdotes dominated the nearly 2 1/2-hour program at the film academy's Samuel Goldwyn Theater, punctuated by clips from "The Goonies," "Scrooged," "The Omen," "Radio Flyer" and, of course, "Superman." Marvel Studios president Kevin Feige and DC



Danny Glover, from left, Richard Donner, Mel Gibson and Rene Russo arrive at the Richard Donner Tribute. — AP photos

Entertainment president Geoff Johns, the two men responsible for the last decade of superhero blockbusters, both worked for Donner when they were starting out in Hollywood.

"'Superman' the movie is still, to this day, the archetype of the perfect superhero film origin story," Feige said, adding that his staff at Marvel watches it before embarking on most projects. "I hope you don't bemoan the fact that that film has inspired all of these movies." They showed the clip where Superman



Danny Glover, from left, Richard Donner and Mel Gibson arrive at the Richard Donner Tribute. — AP photos

(Christopher Reeve) rescues Lois Lane (Margot Kidder) as she and a helicopter fall from a tall building. Feige called it "the best cinematic superhero save in the history of film."

"Wonder Woman" director Patty Jenkins, who has said she was inspired by Donner's "Superman," was among the guests at Wednesday's celebration. Video tributes came from Jodie Foster and Martha Plimpton, who introduced herself as "Plimpy." She was among many actors who said Donner had changed her life. Gibson and Glover said the same. Sitting between the two "Lethal Weapon" stars, Donner said of the speakers feting him, "They changed my life; I didn't change theirs."

Listening to the tributes, he said it was hard to believe he was the one they were talking about. "I never thought I would say this, but I want to thank the academy," he said. "You guys are all my Oscar." Donner has never been nominated for an Academy Award, though "Superman" received bids for editing, music and sound, along with a special prize for visual effects. "What I've gotten out of this industry is extraordinary," Donner said, visibly moved. "But I just want to say the greatest thing I did get out of this industry was Lauren Shuler Donner... I can't say in words how much you mean to me. Words weren't written." — AP

Netflix may fix Japan movie-financing dilemma: Director Kawase

Japan's Cannes prodigy Naomi Kawase believes Netflix can help unleash the creativity of her country's film industry, despite the eruption of a row over the American streaming giant that marred the French film festival. Kawase, a regular at the world's most prestigious film festival since winning the Camera d'Or in 1997, said she "has not filmed a single movie with 100-percent Japanese funding" for at least a decade. "Japan's film industry is getting tougher and tougher for directors," the 48-year-old told AFP in an interview.

"Sponsors are being so cast-centric," she added, accusing Japanese studios of putting style before substance. "They want to use actors who can guarantee big enough audiences so that they can recover money they have invested." Her latest work, "Hikari" (Radiance), a love story centered on a cameraman whose eyesight begins to fail, which was nominated for this year's Palme d'Or, was mainly funded by French sponsors. Asked if she would want to work with Netflix, Kawase said: "That would be a place for me to express myself freely. I wouldn't deny that at all."

Kawase cited South Korean director Bong Joon-Ho, whose Netflix-funded work "Okja" was booed at Cannes, as crediting the streaming giant for giving him total creative freedom. "Netflix gives him as much money as he needs and doesn't intervene," she said. "He's said it's a great environment for film-makers and I'd say



Japanese director Naomi Kawase speaking during the Shortshorts Film Festival and Asia 2017 in Tokyo. — AFP

he has a point for sure." The Cannes Festival declared war on Netflix, accusing the \$70 billion movie and television streaming service of ignoring the big screen and threatening to ban it from entering films in the future.

Scathing criticism

French exhibitors have slammed it for by-passing cinemas to show films direct to television, but without Netflix investment, many obscure and art house films would be in danger of collapsing. Cannes jury

president Pedro Almodovar was scathing in his criticism but fellow juror Will Smith defended Netflix at a heated press conference. "Netflix brings a great connectivity," said the Hollywood A-lister. "In my house, Netflix has been nothing but an absolute benefit." Kawase, known for meticulous attention to detail in her movie-making, said Japanese film-makers are hamstrung by commercial constraints.

"It's such a struggle to sell an original script," said Kawase, who writes her own screenplays, adding that sponsors prefer novels or works that have already made a splash in the market. Last year, 610 home-grown movies were screened in Japan, and over 70 percent of the 40 top-selling ones were based on successful mangas, cartoons and novels. "Film-makers here are not really able to create what they want," said Kawase. "The reality is that we have to work with foreign sponsors with a screenplay that doesn't require only Japanese actors. But then they might not be commercially successful in Japan-it's tough." Fellow Japanese director Hirokazu Koreeda also criticized Japanese cinema known to the world for film-making greats such as Yasujiro Ozu and Akira Kurosawa for pandering to profit. "There will be more directors who want to work with Netflix or Amazon, players outside of Japan's film industry," he told AFP recently. "The entire sector will only sink if it stays like this." — AFP



In this file photo, actor George Clooney, left, and Amal Clooney arrive at the 42nd Cesar Film Awards ceremony at Salle Pleyel in Paris. — AP

George Clooney's father is full of love, 'clichés' for twins

George Clooney's father says he is looking forward to meeting his new grandchildren in person but is waiting for the greenlight from his son and Amal Clooney before he packs his bags. Nick Clooney told The Associated Press Wednesday that he has seen the twins, Ella and Alexander, who were born Tuesday morning in London. He and his wife Nina are at their home in Kentucky and got their first look their grandchildren via Skype.

The longtime newsmen admitted that all he could muster were clichés to describe the newborns, who he says are wonderful, shocking and beautiful. After all he's speaking as a grandfather, not a journalist. He said that they are thrilled and will be there "with bells on" to congratulate the new parents and hug their grandchildren - once they get permission. — AP



In this photo a concrete pad remains where a building once stood in Gatlinburg, Tenn.



A handmade sign stands in front of the fire-damaged Mountain Laurel Chalets. — AP photos

Returning to the Smokies 6 months after a deadly wildfire

By Kristin M Hall

When Dolly Parton dreamed up the idea of an amusement park in East Tennessee, she said it would be "a fantasy city, a Smoky Mountain fairyland." Over the next three decades, Dollywood became the state's biggest ticketed attraction, with nearly 2.5 million visitors annually. Tourism in Pigeon Forge, where Dollywood is located, regularly brings in \$1 billion a year in revenue. Nearby Great Smoky Mountains National Park is a massive draw, too, with a record 11.3 million visitors last year. But a deadly wildfire last November scorched a path through the park and surrounding Sevier County, threatening to disrupt the only industry the region has: tourism. Gale force winds spread the fire in a wild, erratic path for 24 hours. Fourteen people died. More than 2,400 structures were damaged or destroyed.

Images and news of families fleeing the wildfires were terrifying. Growing up in Tennessee, I was one of those millions who'd vacationed all my life in the Smokies and at Dollywood. When I was sent to Gatlinburg last year to report on the aftermath of the fire, I worried that many of the sites of my favorite childhood memories had gone up in smoke.

New memories

But while tourism took a hit, Dollywood and Pigeon Forge, along with most of downtown Gatlinburg, were mostly unaffected. And in late May, six months after the fire and just before the start of the busy summer season, I returned for another visit. This



People wait to cross the street in Gatlinburg, Tenn.

time, I went as a parent, bringing my own daughter to make new memories. My family rode the same roller coasters and water rides my brother and I rode as kids. We saw cowboys and cowgirls at Dollywood's Dixie Stampede show perform the same amazing tricks on their horses.

Three generations of my family including my parents, my brother and his wife and his daughter, climbed aboard Dollywood's old steam train. My 2-year-old daughter laid her head down on my lap as we chugged along slowly and I felt like time was standing still. My memories were merging with the ones forming in her young mind of a special moment we could share forever.

All around us there was music. Often it was Parton's signature high-pitched voice warbling through the Dollywood sound system, or bluegrass or gospel from a stage. The whole region peddles nostalgia, which felt both delightful and a bit staged - Dollywood workers dressed in plain gingham dresses or dirty coveralls, for example, the ostensible uniforms of mountain folk.

In many ways, the Smokies tourism industry goes hand-in-hand with Parton's famous brand of folksy charm and family friendly entertainment. I was heartened to see so much of what I remembered from my childhood 20 years ago. And I was also glad to see that despite the fire, Gatlinburg was busy with tourists window shopping for T-shirts and hats, handmade candy, artwork and knickknacks, like carved figurines of black bears.

But tourism officials say the blaze has created a perception problem. Tourism over the winter and spring was abnormally

slow. At Aunt Mahalia's candy store in Gatlinburg, for example, business is down about 30 percent, with noticeably fewer weekend customers, according to assistant manager Scott Rowe.

New attraction

Tourists "see those images, which are devastating and they think the whole mountains, Pigeon Forge and Gatlinburg are gone," said Pigeon Forge tourism director Leon Downey. The reality is that many tourist businesses, from go-kart parks and mini-golf to restaurants and theaters, were unscathed. And while hundreds of rental properties were damaged, plenty of cabins, hotels and other lodging are available. Donna Schuster, visiting from Ashburn, Virginia, in late May, worried about what she'd find after seeing coverage of the fire, but was pleasantly surprised. "I really questioned whether we should come because of how devastating it looked on TV," she said. "But they have really done a great job."

Much of the burned debris has been removed, leaving only concrete pads where houses or buildings once stood. Foliage is returning to the trees. New construction is ongoing in downtown Gatlinburg, where a seven-story Margaritaville resort is rising and a new attraction called Anakeesta is being built to give tourists an aerial view as they climb into the mountains.

Joe Guenther, owner of the Day Hiker, a hiking supply store in Gatlinburg, estimates his business is down about 20 percent, but said the city's tourism has dipped before in recession years or when gas prices were high. Day Hiker was closed for several days after the fire and some inventory had to be replaced because of smoke.

Many of Guenther's customers ask about the status of the hiking trails in the Smokies or whether the fire has ruined the mountains' scenic vistas. "Less than 10 percent of the park was affected, so there's 900 miles of trails that are all there," Guenther said. An ad campaign has the tag line: "The place you love is still standing strong." Still, full economic recovery could take 18 months, according to Mark Adams, CEO of the Gatlinburg Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Meanwhile the region has one of pop culture's best-known voices as its most prominent supporter. Parton has raised millions of dollars for fire victims through a star-studded telethon, as well as her own donations, and handed out monthly checks to people who lost their homes in the fire. "We thank her daily for her support, because there's definitely a halo effect," Adams said. "Without Dolly, we would have an even tougher battle in recovery." — AP



A fire-damaged building overlooks cars driving through downtown Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

IAN SCHRAGER, STILL COOL AT AGE 70, OPENS NEW PUBLIC HOTEL

It's been 40 years since Ian Schrager opened the legendary disco Studio 54. But if the trendy crowds mobbing opening night for his new PUBLIC hotel are any indication, Schrager, at age 70, is still the coolest kid around. The hotel, on Chrystie Street on Manhattan's Lower East Side, throbbled Tuesday night with champagne-drinking models, waifs covered in tattoos and other beautiful people vamping for photos, draping themselves across long white sofas and riding the mirrored escalator, bathed in glowing red-and-yellow stripes of light.

A worshipful mob prayed at the altar of punk goddess Patti Smith as she christened the hotel's performance space. Drag queen Lady Bunny showed up, as did the Quann sisters, icons of street style. A week earlier, though, as Schrager toured the hotel issuing last-minute directives in a gruff voice with an old-school New York accent, the white-haired man in jeans and sneakers could have been anybody's baby-boomer dad. But don't underestimate him. Schrager is credited with creating the concept of boutique hotels, and he says the PUBLIC represents another innovation that's "smart," "edgy" and nothing less than "transformative."

Stylish lobbies

"This is more than just a place to sleep," he says. "You don't have to leave the premises to get the experiences New York offers." Schrager is inviting the community in, saying he wants New Yorkers to spend as much time here as hotel guests. Never mind that hotel chains have been talking about attracting locals for years with co-working spaces, stylish lobbies and events. Schrager says he's redefining what hotels do, thanks to quirky public spaces that are the key to the hotel's identity. There's a cozy park-like greenspace out front, rows of stadium-style steps inside where you could sit with a laptop or a latte, long white sofas that invoke a sophisticated Miami club and even a '70s basement vibe, thanks to a pool table, plywood-finish cabinets and concrete pillars.

"Each area has a different personality, a different mood," he said. "We don't tell people how to use the space. They tell us." The venue where Patti Smith performed, PUBLIC Arts, will host everything from movie screenings to comedy to theater. The rooftop bar's panoramic views - downtown to One World Trade and the Brooklyn bridges, uptown to the Empire State and Chrysler buildings - rival what you'd pay to see from a skyscraper observatory. Prices for the hotel's 370 rooms start at a mere \$150. "It's luxury for all," he says. "It's not so much about being rich. It's about how it makes you feel. Great style and design. Great service, but a new kind of service. Not obsequious or pretentious, but just a great experience."

Schrager says he's keeping prices down by "editing out things people don't care about." No bellmen because "everyone has a suitcase on wheels." No room service, but several in-house options for food, from ordering a meal via chatbot for pickup at the elevator, to getting food at a counter grocery store decorated with hanging hams or in an onsite sit-down restaurant, with menus by Jean-Georges Vongerichten.

No front desk or concierge, because guests check themselves in on iPads that can send a barcode to a cellphone that's swiped at your hotel room door. Which is not to say there's any shortage of hotel staff: PUBLIC "Advisors" wearing black T-shirts circulate throughout the hotel to offer assistance. Scott Smith, a hotel industry veteran who teaches at the University of South Carolina's School of Hospitality, Tourism and Restaurant Management, says Schrager is a "pop culture figure" who's done for the hotel industry what Steve Jobs did for computers: "He wasn't the inventor but he brings the artistic together with the technology. He's a promoter. He's a marketer. He's an artist. He's not a hotelier. He's an innovator."

Boutique brand

Schrager started with Morgans hotel in New York in 1984, followed by the Delano in Miami, and these days he's working with Marriott on a boutique brand, Edition. But is it fair to credit him with inventing boutique hotels? Not exactly, says Smith: "There were small hotels that fit the definition of boutique hotels before, but we didn't call them that." It was Schrager who "made them cool." Schrager's career has not been without its ups and downs. He and his Studio 54 co-founder Steve Rubell went to prison for tax evasion. Rubell later died of AIDS; Schrager got a pardon this past January from President Barack Obama.

Greeting another veteran from Studio 54 days at the hotel, Schrager says, "We made it." Yet the long-gone disco is also the gift that keeps on giving: A book and documentary about Studio 54 are in the pipeline. From a business point of view, Smith says, PUBLIC doesn't represent "serious competition" for the Marriotts and Hiltons of this world. And like other trendy concepts, it may not have staying power once the cool kids move on to the next big thing. But for now, Smith predicts, "People are going to want to be there and be seen there. ... It's kind of like a work of art that has the word hotel attached to it." — AP



People gather in a plush seating area at the PUBLIC Hotel opening party, in New York.



Photo shows the retail space Trade, at the entrance to PUBLIC hotel in New York.



Photo shows a general view of The Diego bar, with colors inspired by artwork from Mexican artist Diego Rivera, at the PUBLIC hotel, in New York.



Singer Patti Smith tosses a copy of her book "Collected Lyrics 1970-2015" to the crowd after reading a passage before her performance in the Public Art space, during the PUBLIC Hotel opening party, in New York. — AP photos



Mint is separated for drinks at the Diego bar at the PUBLIC hotel, in New York.



Keith Urban accepts the award for male video of the year for 'Blue Ain't Your Color' at the CMT Music Awards at Music City Center on Wednesday. — AP/AFP photos



Carrie Underwood, left, and Keith Urban accept the award for collaborative video of the year for 'The Fighter'.

Keith Urban wins big at CMT Awards, Underwood makes history



Carrie Underwood, left, and Keith Urban perform 'The Fighter'.



Kid Rock, right, presents the award for video of the year to Keith Urban.

After walking away empty-handed at the Grammy Awards and the Academy of Country Music Awards earlier this year, Keith Urban found redemption at the 2017 CMT Music Awards, picking up four honors including video of the year for "Blue Ain't Your Color." The country star also won male video, collaborative video and social superstar of the year at the Music City Center in Nashville, Tennessee. "I love making music, I love making videos ... who knows how long you get to do it," said Urban, who also thanked his fans and his actress-wife Nicole Kidman, who sat in the audience.

"I'm just trying to make a connection," he said. Urban also performed, singing his disco-flavored hit "The Fighter" with Carrie Underwood, who continued to dominate as the most awarded act in the history of the CMT Awards with 17 wins. She won female video of the year for "Church Bells" and collaborative video for "The Fighter." "Thank you God for so many incredible blessings that we have in our lives ... we are so grateful and we are so blessed," said Underwood, who is married to Mike Fisher of the Nashville Predators, who are competing in the Stanley Cup Finals against the Pittsburgh Penguins (Game 5 is Thursday).

"Go Preds," she said. Others paired up for collaborative performances throughout the night. Jason Aldean, Darius Rucker, Charles Kelley of Lady Antebellum and Derek Trucks kicked off the show with a rocking tribute to southern rocker Gregg Allman, who died last month at age 69. Peter Frampton sang outdoors

with Brothers Osborne; The Chainsmokers and duo video of the year winners Florida Georgia Line performed the energetic "Last Day Alive," which was pre-taped Tuesday; and Earth, Wind & Fire partnered with Lady Antebellum to close the awards show.

Luke Bryan and Jason Derulo, who won CMT performance of the year for "Want to Want Me" from their "CMT Crossroads" special, performed the pop song onstage as well as Bryan's slow groove, "Strip It Down." The CMT Awards didn't only include singers from other genres; Hollywood stars also attended, including Ashton Kutcher. Jada Pinkett Smith and Katherine Heigl sported pink sunglasses while Miranda Lambert sang "Pink Sunglasses" onstage. Blake Shelton, Thomas Rhett and Kelsea Ballerini also performed during the show. Little Big Town, who also sang, won group video of the year for "Better Man," their No. 1 hit that was written by Taylor Swift.

Band member Karen Fairchild thanked the group's fans "for making this such a big hit." Lauren Alaina, who placed second on "American Idol" in 2011, won breakthrough video of the year for her No. 1 hit, "Road Less Traveled." "Reba McEntire just gave me an award so that's pretty crazy," said the shocked 22-year-old singer. After thanking people she gave Jesus a shout-out. "I should have said that first. Sorry God," she said. — AP



Carrie Underwood accepts the award for female video of the year for 'Church Bells'.



Keith Urban, left, and Nicole Kidman arrive at the CMT Music Awards.



Kimberly Schlapman, from left, Jimi Westbrook, Karen Fairchild and Philip Sweet, of Little Big Town, perform 'When Someone Stops Loving You'.



Luke Bryan, second right, and Jason Derulo, right, accept the award for CMT performance of the year for 'Want To Want Me' as presenters Hoda Kotb, left, and Kathie Lee Gifford look on.

Winners

- Video of the year: Keith Urban, "Blue Ain't Your Color"
- Male video of the year: Keith Urban, "Blue Ain't Your Color"
- Female video of the year: Carrie Underwood, "Church Bells"
- Duo video of the year: Florida Georgia Line, "H.O.L.Y."
- Group video of the year: Little Big Town, "Better Man"
- Breakthrough video of the year: Lauren Alaina, "Road Less Traveled"
- Collaborative video of the year: Keith Urban featuring Carrie Underwood, "The Fighter"
- CMT performance of the year: Jason Derulo and Luke Bryan, "Want to Want Me" (from "CMT Crossroads")
- Social superstar of the year: Keith Urban —AP



Verdine White, Hillary Scott, Philip Bailey Jr, Dave Haywood, Ralph Johnson Earth, Wind Fire and Lady Antebellum perform at the conclusion of the CMT Music Awards at Music City Center.



Lauren Alaina accepts the award for breakthrough video of the year for 'Road Less Traveled'.



Philip Sweet, from left, Karen Fairchild, Jimi Westbrook and Kimberly Schlapman, of Little Big Town, accept the award for group video of the year for 'Better Man'.



Ashton Kutcher, left, and Danny Masterson present the award for collaborative video of the year.



Lady Antebellum and Earth Wind & Fire perform "September" at the conclusion of the CMT Music Awards.



Jada Pinkett Smith presents the award for female video of the year.

SIMPLE AND EASY CHICKEN WRAPS

By Katie Workman

Chicken Caesar Salad is one of the world's greatest lunches, but it isn't the prettiest thing to eat with your hands while on the go. That's why some exceedingly smart person thought to put it into a wrap. My family is in universal accord that this is an excellent sandwich, so now instead of picking it up at Le Something Or Other, I figured out how to make it at home.

The chicken can be made ahead of time, and leftover chicken can be tossed into salads, either green salads or grain or pasta salads. Make a double batch if

you're looking for some nice, flavorful grilled chicken to have around. The Caesar dressing can be made ahead and hang out in the fridge for up to 5 days. If you don't have time to let the chicken marinate, don't worry - the Caesar dressing is plenty flavorful. If you were really pinched for time, you could just brush the chicken with olive oil, give it a sprinkle of salt and pepper and grill it without the lemony marinade. I'm a big fan of the shortcut.

GRILLED CHICKEN
CAESAR SALAD WRAPS**Grilled Chicken**

Start to finish: 30 minutes (not including optional marinating time)

Makes 6 wraps

Ingredients

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
Juice and zest of 1 lemon
2 teaspoons minced garlic
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
4 (8-ounce) boneless, skinless chicken breasts
Caesar Dressing
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 tablespoons mayonnaise
1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

1/2 teaspoon very finely minced garlic
1 finely minced anchovy filet or 1/4 teaspoon anchovy paste (optional)
Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
1/2 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese, divided
Salad:
2 hearts of romaine, chopped into bite-sized pieces
1/2 red onion, thinly slivered
6 9- to 10-inch whole wheat or spinach wraps

Preparation

For the chicken: In a shallow container, combine the olive

oil, lemon juice and zest, garlic, and salt and pepper. Add the chicken and turn to coat. If you have the time, marinate the chicken in the fridge for 2 to 6 hours before grilling - no worries if not. For the Caesar dressing: In a container with a lid, put the olive oil, mayonnaise, lemon juice, Dijon, Worcestershire sauce, garlic, anchovy (if using), salt and pepper. Cover tightly and shake to combine well. Add half the Parmesan and shake again to combine. Preheat the grill to medium high. Grill the chicken for 5 to 6 minutes per side, until cooked through, with nice grill marks on each side. Let the chicken cool slightly, then cut into small bite-size pieces. In a large bowl, combine the chicken, romaine, and red onion with the dressing. Add the remaining Parmesan and toss again. Fill each wrap with about 1 1/2 cups of the salad, and roll closed. — AP

Serve warm steak and potato chip salad on Father's Day

By Sara Moulton

In honor of Father's Day, I've conjured up a recipe featuring an arsenal of steakhouse delights, starting with steak itself and including potatoes, spinach and blue cheese. But I've prepared and combined these ingredients in a way that's slightly healthier than usual, namely in a salad. The bulk of it is given over to spinach, tomatoes and cucumbers. It's topped with warm sliced steak (only a little over 3 ounces per person), blue cheese dressing and oven-baked (not deep-fried) potato chips.

Given that the classic steakhouse steaks - strip, filet mignon and porterhouse - are so doggone pricey these days, this recipe features a chuck steak. Increasingly available at your local supermarket, chuck steak is cut from the shoulder. It's tougher than the others I mentioned but still plenty flavorful. And if you're careful to cook it no more than medium-rare and then slice it very thin against the grain, it won't seem chewy at all.

The oven-baked potato chips are a snap to make and a heck of a lot less messy than the deep-fried kind, especially if you own a mandolin and some parchment paper. The mandolin allows you to slice those taters paper-thin (be sure, though, to use the guard when you slice them!), and the paper keeps them from sticking to the sheet pan, which eliminates the need for a lot of oil.

Still, you want to be careful not to let them become too brown because they'll begin to taste burned. (It's OK to remove them from the oven when they have a few paler spots.) Fair warning: These chips can be addictive, even though they're not deep-fried. I promise that your man will be able to dig into this dish with no insult to his masculinity ... and the rest of the family will be thrilled, too.



Ingredients

Servings: 6
 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil plus extra for brushing on the potato slices
 1 large russet potato (about 12 ounces), scrubbed but not peeled
 2 tablespoons sherry vinegar
 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
 2 teaspoons minced garlic
 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
 1/3 cup sour cream
 3 ounces blue cheese, crumbled (about 3/4 cup)
 1 1/4 pounds chuck steak (1-1 1/4 inches thick)
 Black pepper
 10 ounces baby spinach

2 cups cherry tomatoes
 2 cups sliced English cucumber

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line two sheet pans with parchment and brush the parchment lightly with some oil. Slice the potato lengthwise 1/8-inch thick, preferably using a mandolin, and arrange the slices in one layer on the sheet pans. Brush the tops of the slices lightly with oil and working with one sheet pan at a time, sprinkle the potato slices lightly with salt and bake them on the middle shelf of the oven until they are golden brown, about 20 to 25 minutes, removing the chips to a paper towel lined plate as they become golden. (They may not all brown at the same pace.) Do not let them get too dark in color; it is OK if they have a few lighter patches.

In a bowl whisk together the vinegar, lemon juice,

Worcestershire sauce and garlic. Add the oil slowly in a stream, whisking, until all of it is added. Whisk in the sour cream and gently stir in the blue cheese. Add salt and pepper to taste. In a large skillet heat the oil over high heat. Add the steak, seasoned on both sides with salt and pepper; cook it for 5 minutes a side for medium-rare. Transfer the steak to a plate and let it rest for 8 minutes before slicing it.

To serve: Add any juices from the steak plate to the blue cheese dressing. Slice the steak very thin at an angle across the grain. In a large salad bowl combine the spinach with the tomatoes and cucumber slices, add some of the dressing, reserving a little to drizzle on top and toss the salad well. Mound the salad on each of six plates, top with the steak slices and the potato chips, broken into large pieces and drizzle each portion with a little more dressing. — AP

Friday Times

FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 2017

Travel



**Tracing history
in Visby,
Gotland**



St Nicolai Kyrka is one of
10 church ruins in Visby
and was built by
Dominican monks in 1230



Steal away to the Baltic Sea island of Gotland, off Sweden's southeastern shores, and you'll soon discover why it's a much-loved getaway for the Swedes themselves.

To step on the island, and into its medieval capital, Visby, is to be firmly transported to the Middle Ages through cobblestone streets, ancient buildings, and time-worn fortresses, all tucked behind a limestone wall which once protected the town from marauding armies.

Steeped in medieval history dating back to the early thirteenth century, UNESCO-protected Visby is an excellently preserved example of a European Hanseatic League trading town, with over 200 warehouses and merchants' houses contained within its 13th-century ramparts.

A step back in time

Visby's status as a key trading place in the Baltic Sea during the Middle Ages meant the island of Gotland saw its fair share of attacks and invasions. Most notable was the successful 1361 invasion by Danish King Valdemar Atterdag which made Gotland a Danish colony before it was re-annexed by Sweden in 1645. Despite its tiny size, Visby has the largest number of preserved ruins in all of northern Europe, with 10 church ruins and 27 preserved medieval fortresses of the original 29 military defense outposts built to protect it. It also has more churches within its walls than any other town in Sweden.

Construction began on some of these places of worship during the 12th century, and they were built by wealthy families who'd made their fortune through trading when Visby became a member of the Hanseatic League. Iconic religious structures including the Gothic cathedral St Karins kyrka, which was founded by the Franciscans in 1233, and St Nicolai kyrka, built by Dominican monks in 1230, are all within a five-to-ten minute walk of each other.



Burmeister House, Visby's most iconic structure.

Strandpromenaden, a 5km-long walking and biking path along Visby's northern coast



Strolling through its compact streets, medieval church ruins can be found at nearly every turn, and today many are used to house concerts due to the unique atmosphere they bring to the events. When it comes to Viking artifacts and Norse mythology, Visby certainly isn't lacking. With over 31,000 remains and objects salvaged from all around the island, these archaeological relics indicate that people may have lived on Gotland as early as 8,000 years ago.

Human skeletons and stone tools dating to the Stone Age (around 1800 BC) were excavated around Stenkyrka, Lummelunda, and Big Karlso on the island, making them the oldest remains in Gotland and some of the oldest graves in Sweden. The impressive Gotland Historical Museum houses many of these artifacts. Here, you can see engraved steles, axes, daggers, sickles, swords, spears, silver and obelisks spanning several time periods from the Stone and Bronze ages to the Viking era and medieval times.

Living history around town

History coexists seamlessly with modern-day living in Visby. The town is enclosed within a medieval 3.5km-long stone wall called Ringmuren (The Ring Wall), which was built in the 13th-century to protect the city from invaders.

The walls were molded using limestone, clay and mortar, and there are three main entrances into the town as well as over 50 towers. There are signs along the walk that provide visitors with information about key fortresses, stone buildings and church ruins around Visby.

Within the walls, there are around 200 well-preserved stone buildings, some with gothic-inspired facades, others with pointy, stepped gables. Dotting the town are also classic 18th-century wooden cottages with their signature doors painted green, all connected by narrow,

cobbled alleyways and stone arches. But Visby's most iconic structure is the deep red, timber Burmeister House, located in the heart

of Donners plats square, which was built by German merchant Hans Burmeister in the mid-17th century. During the summer, it doubles as

a museum where you can marvel at the Baroque-inspired decor, historic fireplaces made from sandstone, and paintings by Swedish artist Johan Bartsch.

Exploring Visby today

Locals live and work in Visby's historic buildings, and many shops, businesses and restaurants offer a nod to the town's history by incorporating medieval details and nautical touches in their interior decor.

Visby's cornerstone park, Almedalen (The Elm Valley) got its name from the elm trees that were planted there in the 1870s, and today the park is heavily associated with Swedish politics.

Almedalen serves as the location where top politicians from Sweden's political parties go to give speeches and hold debates every year in the first week in July, in what is known as Almedalsveckan.

Strandpromenaden (The Beach Boardwalk), which was recently renovated, is a 5km-long walking and cycle path that runs the length of Visby's northern coastline. A leisurely stroll along the boardwalk goes past mile markers such as fortresses, towers, ruins, and beaches.

Gotland's 800km-long coastline provides panoramic views of the Baltic and walking along Visby's beachfront promenade as the sun sets offers up stunning views of the sea. Every August, Visby's streets are filled with jesters, peasants and storytellers, as locals don medieval attire and return to the Middle Ages for the popular Medeltidsveckan.

The town's squares and narrow lanes are transformed into vibrant, living, breathing marketplaces with jousting knights and crowd-captivating magicians. Medieval Week wraps up with a program of musical entertainment, history lectures and theatre in celebration of Visby's rich history. — www.lonelyplanet.com



This engraved stele is one of the many relics housed in the Gotland Historical Museum



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You know when you have done a good job and your duty this birth year is to back off requests to be recognized. It is okay that no comments are made regarding your work and it does not mean the people do not like your work. You have now exercised your talents enough to know when something needs adjusting or when your work is well received. Think on this and be proud of your accomplishments. In fact, it might be a good idea to write down your accomplishments: personal, professional and charity contributions. Be brave now, this is the beginning of a brave new world for other people around you, as well as you. Contracting out to businesses will create a good opportunity to fine tune your skills. Get to know yourself better! Happy birthday!



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You will prosper by pursuing your most deep-seated dreams of how life could be. Don't be afraid to project your strong image. Begin now to make plans toward your personal dreams. Ideas of group cooperation and communion could further your career. You are becoming better focused and conscientious about your work. Taking care of the necessary ingredients that help to make life comfortable and interesting-health, work and such-becomes a greater preoccupation now. Sorting things out and getting them organized keeps you quite busy. This afternoon may be the quiet time you have been looking forward to-perhaps it is warm and you are outside soaking in the sunshine. Whatever the situation-this day is a healing day.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may not be able to keep your mind on your project or whatever you are doing just now and it could be hard to make good decisions. Add a bit of humor and inventiveness to your day and you will find your efforts pay well! You maintain an even flow of performance when it comes to work and you set an example for anyone to follow. Someone needs your attention this afternoon and you are helpful, as usual. Listen to your body and learn when to call it a halt to strenuous activities. This afternoon you may feel like staying home and making a few repairs to your living area or you might want to secure your surroundings in better ways. Laughter, if you are experiencing stress, is a great release. Perhaps you can just sit back and enjoy a good movie.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

A jealous spat between two friends may gain your attention today. For the most part, this is a day of forward-moving transactions. Play and tending to your own responsibilities makes this a day full of good experiences. There is much laughter to go around later in the afternoon. You are able to enjoy most of the day for your own creative ideas. A neighborhood child wants to show off the new magic trick. You may find yourself trading knock-knock jokes. A new or renewed love relationship provides for a joy-filled time later today. It seems to be your day for listening, as you hear all the plans this charming person has for expressing personal talent in the future. You share an enthusiasm of art. This is a contented time.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Teamwork or volunteer work may involve sports for this day. A time of some fun competition has come and sides are chosen. After the games are over the energies are strong for further communication-perhaps while sharing a noon meal. You look for ways to help your loved ones and they will pay you back with delight. Ideas are flowing and could come with ease. You can talk, talk, talk. Activities with neighbors, friends or relatives make the day go along with the strong feelings of support and appreciation for life in general. By probing deeper into your inner being you will learn to be less structured in your fixed routines. Demands on you and on others loosen. However, some people may attempt to encourage you to act prematurely-careful.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Take time to smell the roses. A dialogue with an older person may take place this morning and you could be volunteering to help this person with some seasonal changes. This may mean an air-conditioner problem or a problem lawn, etc. This morning you may learn quite a lot from a new book. You could walk away with new ideas of your own and certainly an appreciation of the relationship between you and this older person. At home today you will find yourself in discussions surrounding some new technology. You are willing to take chances this afternoon. This is a time to gamble and trust the fates, so be prepared for good things to happen, whether you have earned them or not. Enjoy games with animals this evening.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Transformations in your personal life are positive. You just got lucky and the fun side of life is enhanced. Artistic, inspired projects are especially successful. You bask in the limelight, enjoying the opportunity to express your essence in whatever fashion you choose. A lack of information could hold you back-educate yourself to what is happening. Your self-expression is strong and you get good results from your efforts. Perhaps there is a recalcitrant child or you are learning some new craft. This afternoon or evening you may have made plans for a social occasion. You are rich with friends, and you have many blessings to count. You will enjoy entertaining today. Much laughter can be heard coming from your place.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You are in an affectionate mood and will enjoy intimate moments with a loved one this morning. An instinctive urge to get serious about taking care of yourself may find you and a friend signing up for exercise classes or some swimming time at a nearby indoor pool later today. The domestic scene gains new appeal and now is a good time to talk with your parents and family. The team attitude is easy to achieve this afternoon-conversations while working on a home or family project can be stimulating and productive. Your emotions are steady and nurturing. There is a chance to understand those around you and to empathize and lend an ear to their thoughts. General good feeling and a sense of support and harmony makes this a happy time.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your physical appearance seems to have been buffed or polished overnight. Compliments are many today and people are not quite sure what, if anything, you have changed. Your energies are high and you look forward to seeing particular people or just being where you are in your life at this time. You could be most persuasive with others because your thinking is of the highest form and you will not have to audit what you say. This situation is a natural for self-expression and when it is your turn to speak many people will listen. Outer circumstances tend to work in your favor. Take advantage of the gradual metamorphosis that is taking place within you now and get to know the adventurer and achiever that are inside of you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Keeping things lighthearted is a good way to start out the weekend and that is where your energy is focused. A visit to the zoo with family or friends brings your thinking around to preparing food for your own animals. Later today you may do a little experimenting in the kitchen with different recipes for your faithful pets. Because of some overdue correspondence or writing project that you had previously disregarded, you might also spend some time answering your mail and returning phone calls. Off-the-cuff conversations about future plans bring you insight. There are some exciting new opportunities coming in your direction and you will want to be ready. Your significant other has a pleasant surprise for you tonight.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

There is an attitude of enthusiasm and new beginnings in the air today. Snap decisions should be squelched. This is a favorable time for any kind of beginning and for making changes. Work requiring your special knowledge will go well at this time. The added touch of hesitancy will cause you to think before making rash decisions. Others may laugh because you seem to stay focused and duty-conscious. Acknowledging your intensity may be a signal to stop soon and plan some sort of vacation that will allow you a different scenery and focus for a week or so. Wanting to reassure yourself that all is going in the right direction is a good thing but you will soon know you are where you need to be as you become involved with ideas and people on a grand scale.



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	Niger	00227
Congo	00242	Nigeria	00234
Cook Islands	00682	Niue	00683
Costa Rica	00506	Norfolk Island	00672
Croatia	00385	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Cuba	0053	North Korea	00850
Cyprus	00357	Norway	0047
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Oman	00968
Czech Republic	00420	Pakistan	0092
Denmark	0045	Palau	00680
Diego Garcia	00246	Panama	00507
Djibouti	00253	Papua New Guinea	00675
Dominica	001767	Paraguay	00595
Dominican Republic	001809	Peru	0051
Ecuador	00593	Philippines	0063
Egypt	0020	Poland	0048
El Salvador	00503	Portugal	00351
England (UK)	0044	Puerto Rico	001787
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Qatar	00974
Eritrea	00291	Romania	0040
Estonia	00372	Russian Federation	007
Ethiopia	00251	Rwanda	00250
Falkland Islands	00500	Saint Helena	00290
Faroe Islands	00298	Saint Kitts	001869
Fiji	00679	Saint Lucia	001758
Finland	00358	Saint Pierre	00508
France	0033	Saint Vincent	001784
French Guiana	00594	Samoa US	00684
French Polynesia	00689	Samoa West	00685
Gabon	00241	San Marino	00378
Gambia	00220	Sao Tome	00239
Georgia	00995	Saudi Arabia	00966
Germany	0049	Scotland (UK)	0044
Ghana	00233	Senegal	00221
Gibraltar	00350	Seychelles	00284
Greece	0030	Sierra Leone	00232
Greenland	00299	Singapore	0065
Grenada	001473	Slovakia	00421
Guadeloupe	00590	Slovenia	00386
Guam	001671	Solomon Islands	00677
Guatemala	00502	Somalia	00252
Guinea	00224	South Africa	0027
Guyana	00592	South Korea	0082
Haiti	00509	Spain	0034
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Sri Lanka	0094
Honduras	00504	Sudan	00249
Hong Kong	00852	Suriname	00597
Hungary	0036	Swaziland	00268
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sweden	0046
Iceland	00354	Switzerland	0041
India	0091	Syria	00963
Indian Ocean	00873	Taiwan	00886
Indonesia	0062	Tanzania	00255
Iran	0098	Thailand	0066
Iraq	00964	Toga	00228
Ireland	00353	Tonga	00676
Italy	0039	Tokelau	00690
Ivory Coast	00225	Trinidad	001868
Jamaica	001876	Tunisia	00216
Japan	0081	Turkey	0090
Jordan	00962	Tuvalu	00688
Kazakhstan	007	Uganda	00256
Kenya	00254	Ukraine	00380
Kiribati	00686	United Arab Emirates	00976



00:20 Street Outlaws
01:10 Heavy Rescue
02:00 Fukushima: On The Frontline With Joel Lambert
02:50 What On Earth?
03:40 Misfit Garage
04:30 Garage Gold
05:00 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Gold Divers
06:50 Street Outlaws
07:40 Misfit Garage
08:30 What On Earth?
09:20 Garage Gold
09:45 How Do They Do It?
10:35 Fast N' Loud
11:25 Diesel Brothers
12:15 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
13:05 How Do They Do It?
13:30 Garage Gold
14:20 Gold Rush
15:10 What On Earth?
16:00 Gold Divers
16:50 Misfit Garage
17:40 Street Outlaws
18:30 How Do They Do It?
19:20 What On Earth?
20:10 Garage Gold
20:35 Garage Gold
21:00 Gold Divers
21:50 Shipwreck Men



00:00 The Haunting Of...
01:00 Paranormal State
02:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
03:00 Campus Killer: Santa Barbara
04:00 The Haunting Of...
05:00 Paranormal State
06:00 The First 48
07:00 My Crazy Ex
08:00 Evil Up Close
09:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
10:00 Homicide Hunter
11:00 It Takes A Killer
13:00 My Crazy Ex
14:00 Evil Up Close
15:00 Homicide Hunter
16:00 Crime Stories
17:00 It Takes A Killer
17:30 It Takes A Killer
18:00 It Takes A Killer
19:00 Evil Up Close
20:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
21:00 Homicide Hunter
22:00 Cold Case Files
23:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos



00:05 What Happened Next?
00:30 Nextworld
01:20 Nextworld
02:10 Storm Chasers
03:00 Storm Chasers
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 Ultimate Survival
05:30 Ultimate Survival
06:20 How It's Made
06:40 How It's Made
07:00 Kenny The Shark
07:25 Bear Grylls Survival School
07:50 K9 Cops
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Nextworld
10:20 Mythbusters
11:10 K9 Cops
12:00 Ultimate Survival
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Storm Chasers
14:30 Kenny The Shark
14:55 Bear Grylls Survival School
15:20 K9 Cops
16:10 Nextworld
17:00 Quarx
17:25 Quarx
17:50 Dirty Jobs
18:40 What Happened Next?
19:05 What Happened Next?
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Mythbusters
21:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things
21:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things
22:00 Dirty Jobs
22:50 What Happened Next?
23:15 What Happened Next?
23:40 Ultimate Survival



00:00 Binny And The Ghost
00:25 Hank Zipzer
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Hank Zipzer
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:55 Hank Zipzer
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Hank Zipzer
04:35 Binny And The Ghost
05:25 Hank Zipzer
05:45 The Hive
05:50 The 7D
06:00 Jessie
06:25 Jessie
06:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
06:55 Rolling With The Ronks
07:20 Elena Of Avalor
07:45 Bunk'd
08:10 Stuck In The Middle
08:35 Bizaardvark
09:00 Austin & Ally
09:50 Good Luck Charlie
10:40 Alex & Co.
11:05 Lolirock
11:30 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
11:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
12:00 Welcome To The Ronks
12:15 Hank Zipzer
12:40 Dog With A Blog
13:05 Star Darlings
13:10 Good Luck Charlie
13:35 Austin & Ally
14:00 Jessie
14:25 Rolling With The Ronks
14:50 Sunny Bunnies

14:55 The Zhuzhus
15:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
15:45 Elena Of Avalor
16:10 Liv And Maddie
16:35 Descendants Wicked World
16:40 Girl Meets World
17:05 Stuck In The Middle
17:30 Bunk'd
17:55 Bizaardvark
18:20 Disney Mickey Mouse
18:25 Alex & Co.
18:50 Best Friends Whenever
19:15 Star Darlings
19:20 Liv And Maddie
19:45 Mako Mermaids
20:10 Jessie
20:35 Cracked
20:40 Bizaardvark
21:05 Austin & Ally
21:30 Stuck In The Middle



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



06:00 Gravity Falls
06:25 Supa Strikas
06:50 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
07:15 Milo Murphy's Law
07:25 Danger Mouse
07:40 Supa Strikas
08:10 K.C. Undercover
08:35 Counterfeit Cat
09:00 Lab Rats
09:25 Lab Rats
09:50 Future-Worm!
10:20 Pair Of Kings
11:10 Danger Mouse
11:35 Supa Strikas
12:30 Gravity Falls
12:55 Annedroids
13:20 Atomic Puppet
13:45 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Mighty Med
14:40 Kirby Buckets
15:05 Lab Rats
15:30 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
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 Mighty Med
19:00 Atomic Puppet
19:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:55 K.C. Undercover
20:20 Mech-X4
20:45 Disney11
21:10 Walk The Prank
21:35 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Guardians Of The Galaxy
22:10 Ultimate Spider-Man
22:35 Boyster
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am KSA



00:00 Second Wives Club
00:55 Botched
01:50 E! News
02:50 Celebrity Style Story
03:20 Celebrity Style Story
03:50 Botched
04:40 Botched
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 So Cosmo
06:55 E! News
07:25 So Cosmo
10:10 E! News
10:40 Celebrity Style Story
11:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 E! News
15:30 Celebrity Style Story
16:00 Second Wives Club
17:00 Second Wives Club
18:00 Second Wives Club
19:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
20:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
21:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
22:00 Botched
23:00 E! News
23:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians



00:10 Alphabetical
01:00 Emmerdale
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Who's Doing The Dishes?
03:25 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Animals - India
04:20 Surprise Surprise
05:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
06:10 Alphabetical
07:05 Who's Doing The Dishes?
08:00 Paul O'Grady: For The Love Of Animals - India
09:00 Surprise Surprise
10:00 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
10:55 Alphabetical
11:50 Who's Doing The Dishes?
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
14:15 Alphabetical

15:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
16:00 Jekyll And Hyde
16:55 Shoot The Messenger
17:50 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
18:45 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
20:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
21:00 Jekyll And Hyde
21:55 Shoot The Messenger
22:50 Emmerdale



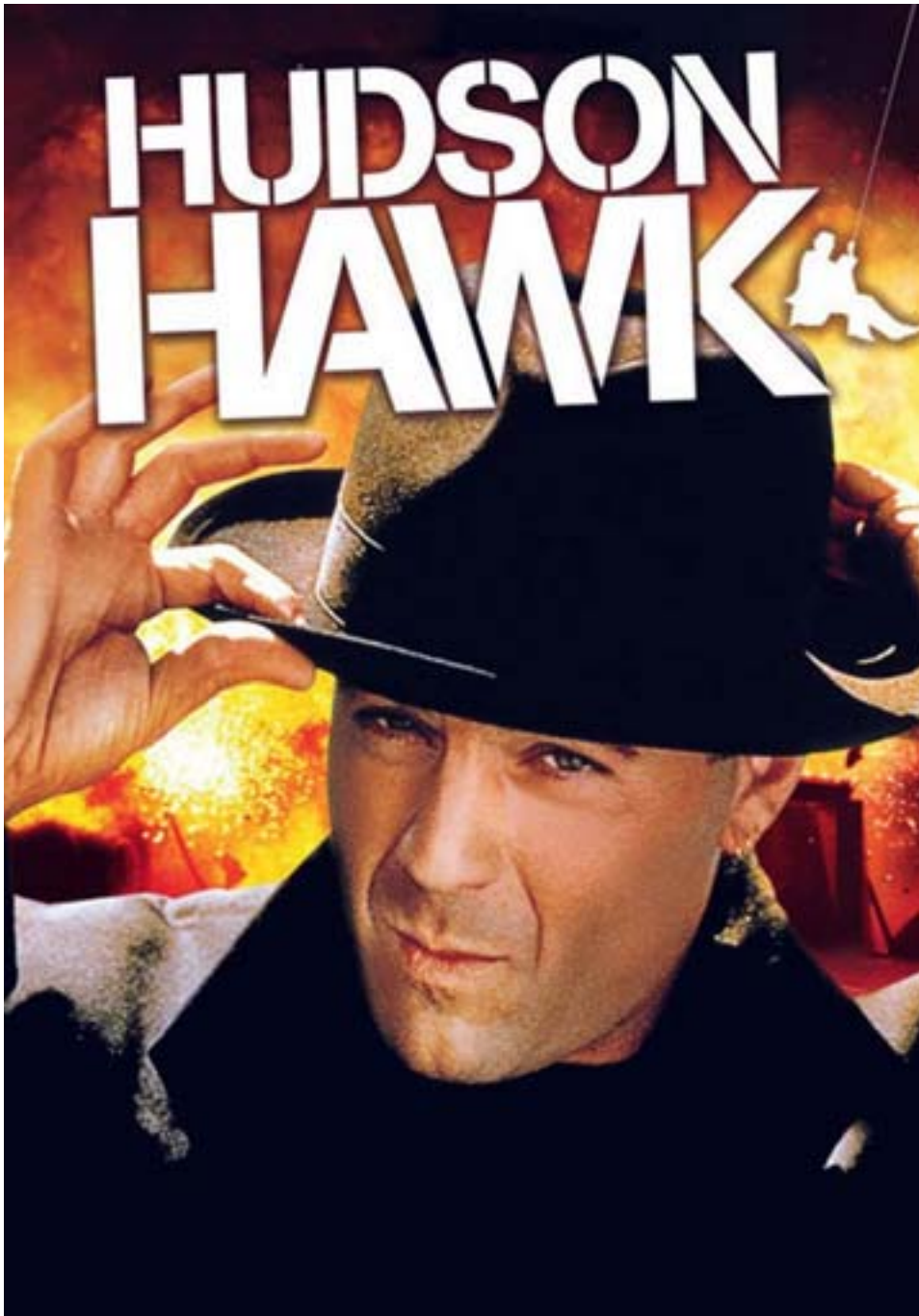
00:15 The Game Chef
01:10 Glamour Puds
01:40 The Food Files
02:05 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
02:35 Poh & Co.
03:00 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
03:55 Glamour Puds
04:25 Eat: The Story Of Food
05:20 Straight To The Source: Korean Food
05:45 Top Chef Top Table: Seoul
06:15 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
07:10 The Food Files
07:35 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
08:05 Poh & Co.
08:30 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
09:25 Glamour Puds
09:55 Eat: The Story Of Food
10:50 Straight To The Source: Korean Food
11:15 Top Chef Top Table: Seoul
11:45 Poh & Co.
12:10 A Is For Apple
13:05 Food School
13:35 The Food Files
14:00 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
14:30 Poh & Co.
14:55 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
15:50 Eat: The Story Of Food
16:45 Glamour Puds
17:15 Straight To The Source: Korean Food
17:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
18:10 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
19:05 Eat: The Story Of Food
20:00 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
20:30 Glamour Puds
21:00 Straight To The Source: Korean Food



00:20 Brutal Killers
01:10 Strangest Bird Alive
02:00 Big Cat Games
02:50 Wild Indochina
03:45 World's Creepiest Killers
04:40 My Life Is A Zoo
05:35 Big Cat Games
06:30 Wild Indochina
07:25 World's Creepiest Killers
08:20 My Life Is A Zoo
09:15 Python Hunters
10:10 Europe's Last Wilderness
11:05 Gorilla Murders
12:00 Shark Eden
12:55 Crococalypse
13:50 Survive The Wild
14:45 Animals Gone Wild
15:40 My Life Is A Zoo
16:35 Python Hunters
17:30 Wild Galapagos
18:25 Animals Of The Year
19:20 Animals Gone Wild
20:10 My Life Is A Zoo
21:00 Python Hunters
21:50 Wild Galapagos
22:40 Animals Of The Year
23:30 Shark Eden



00:10 Wicked Tuna: North vs South
01:00 Genius
02:00 Brain Games
02:30 Brain Games
03:00 Monster Fish
04:00 Wicked Tuna: North vs South
05:00 Time Scanners
06:00 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey
07:00 Border Wars
08:00 Origins: The Journey Of Humankind
09:00 Time Scanners
10:00 Scam City
11:00 Lawless Island



HUDSON HAWK ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 2017

- 12:00 Primal Survivor
- 13:00 Science Of Stupid
- 13:30 Science Of Stupid
- 14:00 Street Heat: High Speed Justice
- 15:00 Border Wars
- 16:00 Scam City
- 17:00 Lawless Island
- 18:00 Primal Survivor
- 19:00 Border Wars
- 20:00 Scam City
- 20:50 Lawless Island
- 21:40 Primal Survivor
- 22:30 Border Wars
- 23:20 Science Of Stupid



- 00:02 Max & Ruby
- 00:25 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 00:36 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 00:46 The Day Henry Met
- 00:51 The Day Henry Met
- 00:56 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 01:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 01:41 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
- 03:22 Dora The Explorer
- 03:44 Max & Ruby
- 04:08 Bubble Guppies
- 04:31 Shimmer And Shine
- 04:55 Dora And Friends
- 05:17 Zack & Quack
- 05:28 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
- 06:36 Dora The Explorer
- 07:00 Zack & Quack
- 07:21 Dora And Friends
- 07:44 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 08:07 Paw Patrol
- 08:30 Shimmer And Shine
- 08:53 Dora The Explorer
- 09:15 The Day Henry Met
- 09:21 Paw Patrol
- 09:44 Rusty Rivets
- 09:57 Bubble Guppies
- 10:20 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 10:42 Zack & Quack
- 10:53 Team Umizoomi
- 11:17 Shimmer And Shine
- 11:39 Louie
- 11:46 Louie
- 11:52 Olive The Ostrich
- 11:57 Olive The Ostrich
- 12:02 Max & Ruby
- 12:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 12:35 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
- 12:46 The Day Henry Met
- 12:51 The Day Henry Met
- 12:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 13:20 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 13:42 Zack & Quack
- 14:03 Team Umizoomi
- 14:26 Olive The Ostrich
- 14:31 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
- 16:08 Bubble Guppies
- 16:31 Shimmer And Shine
- 16:54 Dora And Friends
- 17:17 Zack & Quack
- 17:27 The Day Henry Met
- 17:32 The Day Henry Met
- 17:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 18:00 Rusty Rivets
- 18:12 Paw Patrol
- 18:37 Dora The Explorer
- 19:00 Zack & Quack
- 19:22 Dora And Friends
- 19:45 Blaze And The Monster Machines
- 20:07 Paw Patrol
- 20:30 Shimmer And Shine
- 20:53 Dora The Explorer
- 21:15 The Day Henry Met
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- 21:44 Rusty Rivets
- 21:56 Bubble Guppies
- 22:19 Fresh Beat Band Of Spies
- 22:42 Zack & Quack
- 22:53 Team Umizoomi
- 23:16 Shimmer And Shine
- 23:39 Shimmer And Shine



THE LEGEND OF ZORRO ON OSN MOVIES HD



- 01:45 Hudson Hawk
- 03:45 King Arthur
- 06:00 The Man From U.N.C.L.E.
- 08:00 Apocalypse Pompeii
- 09:30 Hudson Hawk
- 11:15 King Arthur
- 13:30 The Man From U.N.C.L.E.
- 15:30 Big Game
- 17:15 Hitting The Apex
- 19:45 7500
- 21:15 Lucy
- 22:45 San Andreas



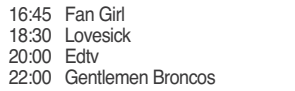
- 00:30 Up
- 02:10 Marvel Super Hero Adventures: Frost Fight
- 03:25 Cars
- 05:25 Up
- 07:05 D3: The Mighty Ducks
- 08:50 Marvel Super Hero Adventures: Frost Fight
- 10:05 Home On The Range
- 11:20 Cars
- 13:15 Finding Nemo
- 15:00 Meet The Robinsons
- 16:40 Ratatouille
- 18:35 House Arrest
- 20:30 Marvel's Iron Man & Captain America: Heroes United



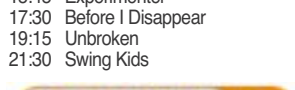
- 00:45 Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes
- 02:30 How Do You Know
- 04:45 Eight Men Out
- 07:00 The Legend Of Zorro
- 09:15 Finding Forrester
- 11:30 Rocky
- 13:30 Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes
- 15:15 The Horse Whisperer
- 18:15 Ghostbusters II
- 20:00 The Walk
- 22:00 Rocky II



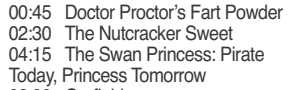
- 00:30 Tank Girl
- 02:15 Hit By Lightning
- 03:45 Yoga Hosers
- 05:15 7 Chinese Brothers
- 06:45 Kicking And Screaming
- 08:30 Yoga Hosers
- 10:00 7 Chinese Brothers
- 11:30 Kicking And Screaming
- 13:15 Camp Nowhere
- 15:00 Crazy On The Outside



- 16:45 Fan Girl
- 18:30 Lovesick
- 20:00 Edtv
- 22:00 Gentlemen Broncos



- 01:15 Wuthering Heights
- 03:00 Foreverland
- 04:30 Ed Wood
- 06:45 A Country Called Home
- 08:15 The Yellow Handkerchief
- 10:00 Wuthering Heights
- 11:45 Ed Wood
- 14:00 A Perfect Day
- 15:45 Experimenter
- 17:30 Before I Disappear
- 19:15 Unbroken
- 21:30 Swing Kids



- 00:45 Doctor Proctor's Fart Powder
- 02:30 The Nutcracker Sweet
- 04:15 The Swan Princess: Pirate Today, Princess Tomorrow
- 06:00 Garfield
- 07:30 Mamma Moo And Crow
- 09:00 Lego: Scooby Doo Haunted Hollywood
- 10:45 Curious George
- 12:30 Doctor Proctor's Fart Powder
- 14:15 Bamse And The City Of Thieves
- 15:45 Lego: Scooby Doo Haunted Hollywood
- 17:15 Thumbelina
- 19:00 Memory Loss
- 20:30 Bamse And The City Of Thieves



- 00:30 Curiosity: Can You Live Forever?
- 01:20 Curiosity: Can You Live Forever?
- 02:10 Mythbusters
- 03:00 Mythbusters
- 03:48 Mythbusters
- 04:36 Mythbusters
- 05:24 Mythbusters
- 06:12 Mythbusters
- 07:00 How Do They Do It?
- 07:26 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 08:14 Mythbusters
- 09:02 How Do They Do It?
- 09:26 Food Factory
- 09:50 Curiosity: Can You Live Forever?
- 10:38 Mythbusters
- 11:26 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

- 12:14 Mythbusters
- 13:02 How Do They Do It?
- 13:26 Food Factory
- 13:50 Curiosity: How Does Life Begin?
- 14:38 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
- 15:26 Mythbusters
- 16:14 How Do They Do It?
- 16:38 Food Factory
- 17:02 Curiosity: Can You Live Forever?
- 17:50 How Do They Do It?
- 18:15 Food Factory
- 18:40 Mythbusters
- 19:30 Weird Or What?
- 20:20 NASA's Unexplained Files
- 21:10 Mission Asteroid
- 22:00 Weird Or What?
- 22:50 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?



- 00:20 She's In Charge
- 01:10 The Undateables
- 02:00 Cake Boss
- 02:25 Cake Boss
- 02:50 Say Yes To The Dress
- 03:15 Say Yes To The Dress
- 03:35 Cake Boss
- 04:00 Cake Boss
- 04:20 Little People, Big World
- 04:45 Little People, Big World
- 05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 06:00 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 06:50 Cake Boss
- 07:15 Cake Boss
- 07:40 Outdaughtered: Busby Quints
- 08:30 Little People, Big World
- 08:55 Little People, Big World
- 09:20 Outrageous Kid Parties
- 09:45 Outrageous Kid Parties
- 10:10 Say Yes To The Dress
- 10:35 Say Yes To The Dress
- 11:00 Cake Boss
- 11:25 Cake Boss
- 11:50 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 12:40 Cake Boss
- 13:05 Cake Boss
- 13:30 Sweet 15: Quincea?era
- 14:20 Little People, Big World
- 15:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
- 16:00 Little People, Big World
- 16:25 Little People, Big World
- 16:50 Ugly House To Lovely House
- 17:40 Say Yes To The Dress
- 18:05 Say Yes To The Dress
- 18:30 My Kid's Obsession
- 19:20 Cake Boss
- 19:45 Cake Boss
- 20:10 Obsessive Compulsive Cleaners
- 21:00 7 Little Johnstons
- 21:50 Married By Mum And Dad



- 00:00 Ultimate Guide To The Presidents
- 01:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 02:00 Monster Quest
- 02:50 Ancient Aliens
- 03:40 Your Bleeped Up Brain
- 04:30 The Universe
- 05:20 Ultimate Guide To The Presidents
- 06:10 The Universe
- 07:00 Ultimate Guide To The Presidents
- 08:00 Monster Quest
- 09:00 Ancient Aliens
- 10:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain
- 11:00 The Universe
- 12:00 Ultimate Guide To The Presidents
- 13:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 14:00 Monster Quest
- 15:00 Ancient Aliens
- 16:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain

- 17:00 The Universe
- 18:00 Ultimate Guide To The Presidents
- 19:00 Cities Of The Underworld
- 20:00 Monster Quest
- 21:00 Ancient Aliens
- 22:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence



- 00:20 Ice Road Truckers
- 01:10 Pawn Stars
- 01:35 Pawn Stars South Africa
- 02:00 Storage Wars Miami
- 02:50 Storage Wars
- 03:15 American Pickers
- 04:05 Pawn Stars
- 05:00 Mountain Men
- 06:00 Lleepu And Pitbull
- 06:50 Duck Dynasty
- 07:40 Counting Cars
- 08:30 Pawn Stars
- 09:20 Storage Wars
- 09:45 Storage Wars
- 10:10 American Pickers
- 11:00 Billion Dollar Wreck
- 11:50 Duck Dynasty
- 12:40 Ice Road Truckers
- 13:30 Ax Men
- 14:20 Mountain Men
- 15:10 Lleepu And Pitbull
- 16:00 Storage Wars
- 16:25 Storage Wars
- 16:50 Pawn Stars
- 18:05 Pawn Stars South Africa
- 18:30 Storage Wars Miami



- 00:00 Kids BBQ Championship
- 01:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
- 02:00 Dinner At Tiffani's
- 03:00 Chopped
- 04:00 Kids BBQ Championship
- 05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 06:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
- 07:00 The Kitchen
- 08:00 The Pioneer Woman
- 09:00 Siba's Table
- 09:30 Siba's Table
- 10:00 Bake With Anna Olson
- 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 Bake With Anna Olson
- 18:00 Chopped
- 19:00 Guy's Grocery Games
- 20:00 Restaurant: Impossible
- 21:00 Mystery Diners
- 22:00 The Big Eat - Middle East
- 22:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives



A PERFECT DAY ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL HD

WORD SEARCH

Easter

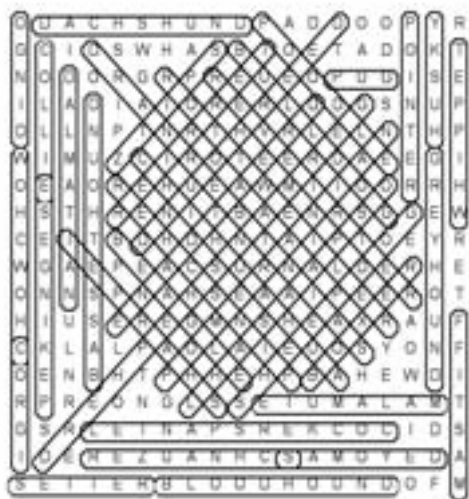
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 34 letters spell a secret message.

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

- | | | | |
|---------------|------------|---------------|--------------|
| ASH WEDNESDAY | DEATH | JESUS | PENITENCE |
| BREAD | DISCIPLES | LAST SUPPER | PRAYER |
| BUNNY | EGG HUNT | LENT | RESURRECTION |
| CALVARY | EGGS | MARY | ROAST |
| CELEBRATION | EUCCHARIST | MASS | SACRAMENT |
| CHOCOLATE | FAMILY | MEAL | SATURDAY |
| CHRIST | FASTING | NEW TESTAMENT | SUNDAY |
| CHURCH | FESTIVAL | PALMS | THURSDAY |
| CROSS | FRIDAY | PARADE | TOMBS |
| CRUCIFIXION | HOLIDAY | PASSOVER | TRADITION |
| CUSTOM | HOLY WEEK | RENANCE | VIGIL |

Yesterday's Solution

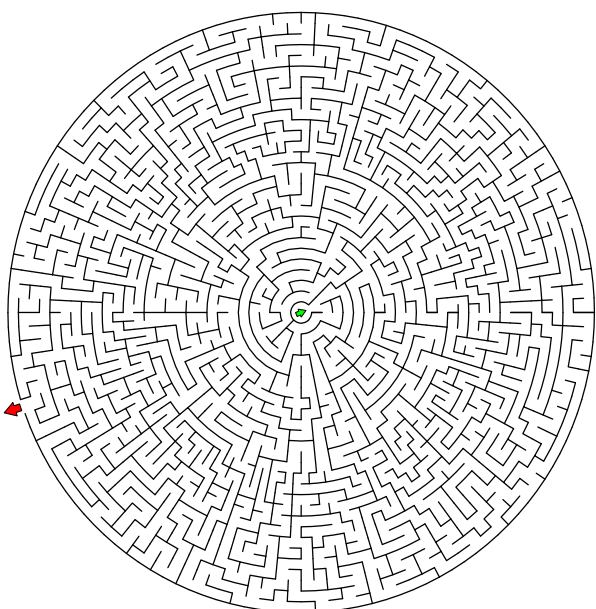
Dogs



- | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------|
| BASSET HOUND | DACHSHUND | HASTIFF | SARNOYED |
| BEAGLE | DALMATIAN | PEKINGESE | SCHNAUZER |
| BLOODHOUND | DEERHOUND | PINSCHER | SETTER |
| BOXER | ONGO | POINTER | SHAR PEI |
| BULLDOG | GERMAN SHEPHERD | POIRANANGAN | SHEPPOG |
| CHIHUAHUA | GREAT DANE | POODLE | SPITZ |
| CHOW CHOW | GREYHOUND | PUG | TEARIER |
| COCKER SPANIEL | HUSKY | RETRIEVER | WHIPPET |
| COLLIE | LHASA APSO | ROTTWEILER | |
| CORGI | MALAMUTE | SAINT BERNARD | |

The hidden sentence is: A DOOR IS WHAT A DOG IS PERPETUALLY ON THE WRONG SIDE OF.

CHALLENGING MAZE



CROSSWORD 1632



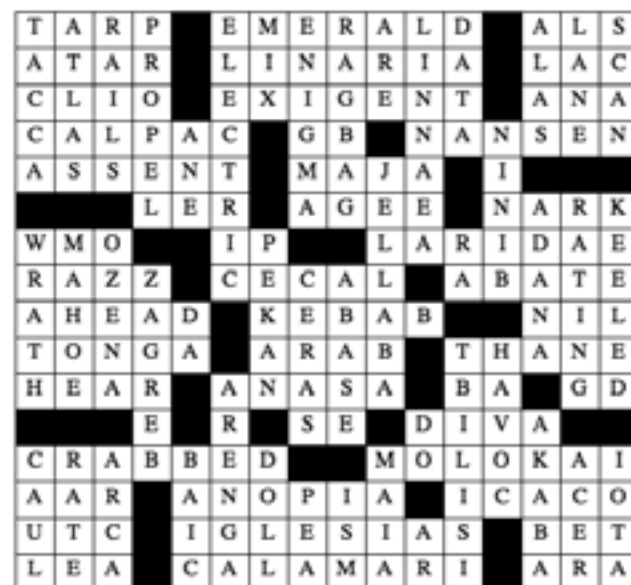
ACROSS

- The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
- Rhizomatous plant of central and southeastern United States and West Indies having large showy heads of clear blue flowers.
- A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
- Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
- A benefice to which no spiritual or pastoral duties are attached.
- Concerning those not members of the clergy.
- The cry made by sheep.
- A film or illustrated lecture on traveling.
- An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
- A consonant pronounced with aspiration v 1.
- Being nine more than ninety.
- An effigy in the shape of a man to frighten birds away from seeds.
- Large dark brown North American arboreal carnivorous mammal.
- An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
- Late time of life.
- A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
- Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
- Exultantly proud and joyful.
- A popular island resort in the Netherlands Antilles.
- The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- French philosopher and theologian.
- A soft gray malleable metallic element that resembles tin but discolors on exposure to air.
- Relating to or having the characteristics of a family.
- A linear unit (1/6 inch) used in printing.
- Being one more than fifty.
- A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
- A system of one or more computers and associated software with common storage.
- The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
- A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
- An exceptional interest in and admiration for yourself.
- An informal term for a father.
- An enclosure or receptacle for odds and ends.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- Harsh or corrosive in tone.
- Any of various spectacular plants of the genus Laelia having showy flowers in many colors.
- A male monarch or emperor (especially of Russia prior to 1917).
- A proportion multiplied by 100.
- A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
- Tuberous or rhizomatous herbaceous perennials.
- A young woman making her debut into society.

DOWN

- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- By bad luck.
- A large number or amount.
- Being or relating to or resembling or emanating from stars.
- United States financier (born in France) who helped finance the War of 1812 (1750-1831).
- Related on the mother's side.
- Absent-minded dreaming while awake.
- (informal) Of the highest quality.
- Eurasian perennial bulbous herbs.
- Extravasation of urine into the scrotal sac.
- The number that is represented as a one followed by 6 zeros.
- Arouse hostility or indifference in where there had formerly been love, affection, or friendliness.
- An informal term for a father.
- Two items of the same kind.
- Water frozen in the solid state.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
- A popular island resort in the Netherlands Antilles.
- The courage to carry on.
- A port city in southwestern Turkey on the Gulf of Antalya.
- A recurring sleep state during which rapid eye movements do not occur and dreaming does not occur.
- The closing section of a musical composition.
- A Russian river.
- Not contained in or deriving from the essential nature of something.
- A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
- An elaborate song for solo voice.
- Place a value on.
- Renounce a legal claim or title to.
- A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
- A quadrille for 8 or 16 couples.
- Any of several plants of or developed from the species Dahlia pinnata having tuberous roots and showy rayed variously colored flower heads.
- Filled with the emotional impact of overwhelming surprise or shock.
- The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
- A Hindu goddess who releases from sin or disease.
- Being nine more than forty.
- (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
- French filmmaker (1908-1982).
- Denuded of leaves.
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- Informal terms for a mother.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku

	5	8			6
		1		2	
3			7		2
6	9	4		8	
	3				4
		7		8	3
8			7		
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Yesterday's Solution

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

AILING WHITE TIGER PUT DOWN IN SINGAPORE ZOO

SINGAPORE: A rare white tiger involved in the 2008 killing of a zoo worker has been put down after suffering from skin cancer and joint degeneration, the Singapore Zoo said yesterday. Omar, who would have turned 18 in September, or the equivalent of 88 in human years, had been suffering from skin cancer for the past three years, zoo operator Wildlife Reserves Singapore said in a statement.

"Recent assessment had seen worsening of his health and the difficult decision was made to euthanize him to prevent further deterioration of his quality of life," the statement said, adding that Omar also suffered from joint degeneration. Omar was born in captivity in Indonesia and was brought to Singapore in 2001. It made headlines in 2008 when a zoo worker apparently committed suicide by jumping into the big cat's enclosure.

The Malaysian man was mauled to death by Omar and two female white tigers as visitors looked on, thinking it was part of a performance. White lions and tigers are extremely rare, numbering only a few hundred worldwide, and owe their appearance to a recessive gene. They are not albinos. Two white tigers remain in the Singapore Zoo—a four-year-old pair that arrived in 2015.—AFP



SINGAPORE: This photograph shows a white tiger named Omar looking out from his enclosure at the Singapore Zoological Gardens.—AFP



HYDERABAD, India: An Indian member of the Bathini Goud family holds a live murrel fish and medicine before administering 'fish medicine' to a patient at the exhibition grounds in Hyderabad.—AFP photos



HYDERABAD, India: An Indian member of the Bathini Goud family, right, administers 'fish medicine' to young boy at the exhibition grounds in Hyderabad.

SOMETHING FISHY: INDIANS SWALLOW LIVE FISH FOR ASTHMA

HYDERABAD, India: More than 5,000 Indians have lined up in the country's south, pinching their noses and sticking their tongues out to swallow live fish in an unusual traditional treatment for asthma. Every year in June, asthma patients gather in the southern city of Hyderabad to gulp down the fish stuffed with a yellow herbal paste, hoping it will help them breathe more easily. The wriggling five-centimeter murrel fish are slipped into the throats of patients in a bizarre treatment that leaves them gagging.

The Bathini Goud family, which administers the treatment, says the fish clear the throat on their way down and permanently cure asthma along with other respiratory problems. But the family has declined to reveal the secret formula which they say they got from a Hindu saint in 1845. Parents are often forced to pry open the mouths of reluctant children who cry at the site of squirming fish, while others pinch their noses, tip their heads back and close their eyes. Thousands of people travel from

across India for the free medicine during a two-day period, the specific dates of which are determined by the onset of the monsoon every June. Rights groups and doctors have complained that the medicine is "unscientific", a violation of human rights and unhygienic, claims rejected by the family. The Indian government arranges special trains for the "fish medicine" festival every year and extra police are on duty to control crowds. After digesting the treatment, patients are told to go on a strict diet for 45 days.—AFP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times



Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم



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



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Duhr: 11:47
Asr: 15:21
Maghrib: 18:47
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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO THURSDAY (08/06/2017 TO 15/06/2017)

SHARQIA-1 Taht Al Tarabeza (Re-Release) 10:00 PM Laf Wa Dawaran (Re-Release) 12:15 AM	AVENUES-1 YO-KAI WATCH: The Movie 9:30 PM ALIEN: COVENANT 11:30 PM	Ashan Khargen (Re-Release) 12:45 AM
SHARQIA-2 Seats-428 Min 30 Sana (Re-Release) 9:30 PM AL FERAN (KUWAITI) 12:30 AM	AVENUES-2 MINIONS(Re Release)-3D-4DX 10:00 PM KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD (3D-4DX) 12:05 AM	AL-KOUT.1 Ashan Khargen (Re-Release) 9:30 PM Min 30 Sana (Re-Release) 11:45 PM
SHARQIA-3 MINIONS (Re Release) 9:45 PM KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD 11:45 PM	AVENUES-3 THE BOSS BABY 10:30 PM HERE ALONE 12:30 AM	AL-KOUT.2 AL FERAN (KUWAITI) 9:45 PM AL FERAN (KUWAITI) 11:15 PM AL FERAN (KUWAITI) 12:45 AM
MUHALAB-1 Laf Wa Dawaran (Re-Release) 9:30 PM KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD 11:45 PM	AVENUES-4 ALIEN: COVENANT 10:15 PM Laf Wa Dawaran (Re-Release) 12:45 AM	AL-KOUT.3 Laf Wa Dawaran (Re-Release) 10:15 PM KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD 12:30 AM
MUHALAB-2 RAABTA (Hindi) 9:45 PM AL FERAN (KUWAITI) 12:45 AM	AVENUES-5 KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD 9:45 PM DIARY OF A WIMPY KID: THE LONG HAUL 12:15 AM	AL-KOUT.4 Safra 5 Njoom (Kuwaiti Film) (Re-Release) 10:00 PM Taht Al Tarabeza (Re-Release) 12:05 AM
MUHALAB-3 Ashan Khargen (Re-Release) 10:00 PM Min 30 Sana (Re-Release) 12:15 AM	AVENUES-6 AL FERAN (KUWAITI) 10:00 PM Min 30 Sana (Re-Release) 11:30 PM	BAIRAQ-1 MINIONS (Re Release) 9:45 PM THE BOSS BABY 11:45 PM
FANAR-1 RAABTA (Hindi) 9:30 PM RAABTA (Hindi) 12:30 AM	AVENUES-7 Ashan Khargen (Re-Release) 9:30 PM Laf Wa Dawaran (Re-Release) 11:45 PM	BAIRAQ-2 DIARY OF A WIMPY KID: THE LONG HAUL 10:00 PM DIARY OF A WIMPY KID: THE LONG HAUL 12:05 AM
FANAR-2 DIARY OF A WIMPY KID: THE LONG HAUL 10:30 PM Taht Al Tarabeza (Re-Release) 12:30 AM	AVENUES-8 DIARY OF A WIMPY KID: THE LONG HAUL 10:15 PM Taht Al Tarabeza (Re-Release) 12:30 AM	BAIRAQ-3 RAABTA (Hindi) 9:30 PM AL FERAN (KUWAITI) 12:30 AM
FANAR-3 KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD 9:45 PM Laf Wa Dawaran (Re-Release) 12:15 AM	AVENUES-9 RAABTA (Hindi) 9:45 PM THE EXCEPTION 12:45 AM	PLAZA CIA: Comrade in America (Malayalam) 9:30 PM RAABTA (Hindi) 12:15 AM
FANAR-4 Min 30 Sana (Re-Release) 9:30 PM ALIEN: COVENANT 12:30 AM	AVENUES-10 CIA: Comrade in America (Malayalam) 9:30 PM Safra 5 Njoom (Kuwaiti Film) (Re-Release) 12:15 AM	LAILA Taht Al Tarabeza (Re-Release) 9:30 PM KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD 11:45 PM
FANAR-5 AL FERAN (KUWAITI) 10:00 PM AL FERAN (KUWAITI) 11:30 PM AL FERAN (KUWAITI) 1:00 AM	AVENUES-11 KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD- CINESCAPE 11-2D 10:00 PM KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD- CINESCAPE 11-2D 12:30 AM	AJIAL.1 CIA: Comrade in America (Malayalam) 9:30 PM CIA: Comrade in America (Malayalam) 12:15 AM
MARINA-1 Laf Wa Dawaran (Re-Release) 9:30 PM KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD 12:15 AM	360°- 1 KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD 9:45 PM KING ARTHUR: LEGEND OF THE SWORD 12:30 AM	AJIAL.2 CIA: Comrade in America (Malayalam) 10:15 PM
MARINA-2 Taht Al Tarabeza (Re-Release) 9:45 PM Ashan Khargen (Re-Release) 12:30 AM	360°- 2 Taht Al Tarabeza (Re-Release) 10:15 PM ALIEN: COVENANT 12:45 AM	AJIAL.3 BAAHUBALI 2: The Conclusion -Hindi 10:00 PM
MARINA-3 DIARY OF A WIMPY KID: THE LONG HAUL 10:00 PM Min 30 Sana (Re-Release) 12:05 AM	360°- 3 AL FERAN (KUWAITI) 9:45 PM AL FERAN (KUWAITI) 11:15 PM	AJIAL.4 RAABTA (Hindi) 9:30 PM RAABTA (Hindi) 12:30 AM

Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 2017

LOW-COST AIRLINES SHAKE UP MARKET FOR LONG HAUL FLIGHTS

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AI 'good for the world'... says ultra-lifelike robot



SINGAPORE: This photograph taken on Wednesday shows the sunset over the skyline of Singapore. —AFP

QATAR ASSETS EXTEND SELLOFF, STOCKS STABILIZE OIL FALLS FOR SECOND DAY AS SUPPLY CONCERN GROWS

LONDON: Qatari bonds extended their selloff yesterday and stocks headed for their biggest weekly loss since 2011, though broader emerging equities stabilized after two days of losses, helped by robust Chinese trade data.

Qatar, however, remained in the spotlight after its Gulf neighbors, led by Saudi Arabia, this week said they were severing ties with the country as well as imposing trade and travel bans. That prompted S&P Global to cut Qatar's rating by a notch to AA- with a negative outlook.

Doha stocks rebounded 2.3 percent after falling almost 10 percent in recent days, and are on track for their biggest weekly loss since March 2011. There is also some pressure on the riyal's dollar peg, and tighter liquidity has pushed up domestic deposit rates sharply. One-year riyal forwards are trading at 3.667 per dollar, well below the spot 3.64 rate.

Analysts at ING said consequences could be severe for Qatar, especially if it found itself unable to hold the currency peg, though it sees this outcome as highly unlikely and does not expect contagion across other Gulf currency pegs.

"Typically pressure on GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) pegs has proved temporary, with local authorities happy to tell speculators they will lose," ING analysts said in a note to clients. "However, prior speculative attacks have typically been macro-led - e.g. during periods of low oil prices.

"The fact that the current pressure is political and triggered by fellow GCC members is alarming. Given that we are not looking for the Qatari peg to break, we do not see a major speculative attack on the GCC as a whole."

Qatar's Eurobond maturing 2026 fell 0.7 cent, according to

Tradeweb data, while the 2027 bond from the Ras Laffan Liquefied Natural Gas Company dropped 1.5 cents and five-year credit default swaps (CDS) rose 3 basis points (bps) to 92 bps, a seven-month high.

The Turkish lira edged up only 0.1 percent after strong industrial production data. An aide to President Tayyip Erdogan said interest rates were too high for industry.

Chinese mainland stocks hit six-month highs, up almost 1 percent after stronger-than-anticipated China exports and import data for May suggested the economy is holding up well, while central bank reserves also rose. There are also expectations that index provider MSCI will decide to include mainland A shares in its benchmark on June 20.

Hong Kong's benchmark Hang Seng Index climbed to another 23-month closing high while MSCI's emerging equity index was virtually flat.

Oil slides

Oil fell for a second day yesterday to hit one-month lows after an unexpected surge in US inventories and the return of more Nigerian crude aggravated investor concerns about an already oversupplied market.

The oil price has slipped below \$50 a barrel despite a pledge by the world's largest exporters to extend an existing output cut of 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) into next year in an effort to reduce bulging global inventories.

Adding to concern about supply outstripping demand, Royal Dutch Shell on Wednesday lifted force majeure on exports of Nigeria's Forcados crude, bringing all the country's

oil grades fully online for the first time in 16 months.

Brent crude was down 26 cents at \$47.80 a barrel by 1137 GMT, having touched an earlier high of \$48.60, while US crude futures fell 25 cents to \$45.47 a barrel.

The market has also come under pressure from news of rising output from Libya, which together with Nigeria is exempt from the production cut made by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its 11 partners.

"I've been quite bullish for the second half of this year, based on supply and demand balances and I would still not give up on that idea, that rebalancing is going to start in the second half," PVM Oil Associates strategist Tamas Varga said.

"But if Nigerian and Libyan production is picking up as well as they are now, then slowly, I am probably going to have to start changing my mind."

The most actively traded Brent derivatives were bearish sell options that would give the holder the right to sell at \$45 and \$46 a barrel between August and December.

US inventories of crude oil and gasoline surprisingly rose last week as refinery runs declined and exports fell, official data showed on Wednesday.

"Unless data are released that make the latest inventory build appear an anomaly, oil prices are hardly likely to make any lasting recovery," Commerzbank said in a note.

Sentiment across the broader financial markets also remained jittery. Former FBI director James Comey's US congressional appearance, a European Central Bank (ECB) policy meeting and the British general election take place yesterday. — Reuters

LOW-COST AIRLINES SHAKE UP MARKET FOR LONG HAUL FLIGHTS

CLUB OF MAJOR AIRLINES MEETING IN MEXICO

CANCUN, Mexico: Low-cost, long-haul air travel has taken off across the Atlantic, shaking a club of major airlines meeting in Mexico this week and forcing established flag carriers to set up budget subsidiaries or lower fares.

Transatlantic routes are among the industry's most popular and profitable, and budget carriers are trying to grab a slice of that business by boosting capacity on them by 68 percent this summer, according to data from air travel intelligence company OAG. A looming fare war has gained fresh momentum from lightweight new planes with fresh, appealing interiors that help to keep costs down. Norwegian Air Shuttle and Icelandic rival Wow have grabbed headlines with fares as low as \$69 and \$55 this summer, although Wow's flights involve a stop in Reykjavik.

Legacy carriers are not idly standing by, and executives at the International Air Transport Association meeting in Cancun, Mexico, said in interviews they were confident their plans to offer low-cost long-haul flights would succeed.

"Disrupters such as Norwegian Air Shuttle and AirAsia X have shaken up the airline market and forced scheduled operators to rethink their transatlantic strategies," Euromonitor travel project manager Nadejda Popova said. Lufthansa's Eurowings budget carrier is in its second year of long-haul flying, while Air France is planning to launch a lower-cost long haul brand this fall in a project dubbed Boost.

"It confirms our decision that others are following," Lufthansa Chief Executive Carsten Spohr said, adding that the German carrier would not have invested in Eurowings without the potential for profit.

International Airlines Group, the holding company for British Airways, Iberia, Aer Lingus and Vueling, launched low-cost long-haul brand Level on Thursday with surprisingly strong ticket sales.

IAG CEO Willie Walsh said at the launch that Level would fly

five planes next summer and expand to other European cities. Level's hub is in Barcelona, where Norwegian will also launch US flights this summer with two A330s. British Airways is putting more seats on its 777 planes, moving to 10 abreast in economy.

"BA's seat cost will be lower than Norwegian's by this time next year," Malaysia Airlines CEO Peter Bellew predicted. US carriers, stung by previous efforts to set up low-cost units in the 1990s, have introduced new, no-frills fare classes that let passengers pay for extras while booking online.

Profit doubts

The 68 percent increase in low-cost transatlantic capacity equates to a 5 percent market share, up from 3 percent last year. Aviation consultant John Strickland said he questioned how widely low-cost long-haul can be profitable, especially on some less popular destinations.

He pointed out that even Michael O'Leary, CEO of the highly profitable European low-cost carrier Ryanair, has held back because he said he could not get planes at the right price.

"On the North Atlantic you have volume markets where it can work. Asia can work, but the extent to which the model can be delivered at levels of sustainable profitability is far from clear," Strickland said. Air France-KLM CEO Jean-Marc Janailac said low-cost carriers would have a hard time on transatlantic routes unless they also offer an attractive business travel service.

"It's not just about the seats. It's whether you have the right frequencies, the air miles, the connections with other destinations," Janailac said. In September 1977, Freddie Laker challenged legacy carriers by offering cut-price Skytrain flights between London's Gatwick Airport and New York's John F Kennedy International Airport. But it went bust in 1982 after established rivals cut fares and forced it out of the market. — Reuters

RAILWAY TO RUIN: HANOI TRAIN FACTORY FADES FROM GLORY

HANOI: Built by the French to fix trains for their fast-developing Vietnamese colony, the Gia Lam factory later churned out weapons to fuel the country's independence fight, and then survived the onslaught of American bombers during the war.

But the storied Hanoi plant is now in decline, a victim of the rising consumer power of Vietnam's middle classes as passengers turn from trains to planes.

"In the past, I was proud to work here because this factory was the biggest in Indochina," repairman Au Duy Hien told AFP. Opened in 1905, Gia Lam was the first train factory in the then-French territory, which spanned modern-day Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos.

Mechanics used the base to first fix and then assemble the engines and carriages that served the region's rapid push toward industrialisation.

The factory was taken over by the Vietnamese in the 1940s, expanding production to make bazookas and grenades for revolutionaries fighting the colonial rulers who were finally thrown out in 1954. And then it continued to make weapons during the Vietnam War—even as it was bombed by US planes targeting Communist-backed revolutionaries in northern Vietnam.

Running out of steam

But today, output is down more than 90 percent since its 1990s heyday. It is

now mostly used to repair old trains, with little demand for new carriages on the country's vast but outdated rail network.

The industry is struggling to keep pace with the lure of low-cost air travel. For many, the choice between a clanging, slow-moving train or a quick-and-cheap plane is a no-brainer.

In 2015, 31 million people travelled by air, more than double the number in

2010, according to official statistics. Train use remained steady at 11 million for the year.

Today, some companies are seeking to revive the colonial romance of rail travel, offering first-class trips, wood-lined cabins with restaurant car. "If rail transportation isn't developed, then the railway industry cannot be revived," union boss Nguyen Anh Tuan told AFP. — AFP



HANOI: This photograph taken on June 2, 2017 shows people queuing to check in at Noi Bai International Airport in Hanoi. Between 2010 and 2015, air travellers in Vietnam more than doubled to 31 million people, according to official statistics, but the number of people travelling by train remained at 11 million. — AFP



HUDSON: This April 22, 2014 file photo shows an employment application form on a table during a job fair at Columbia-Greene Community College in Hudson, NY. — AP

CLAIMS FOR US JOBLESS BENEFITS FALL BY 10,000 TO 245,000

WASHINGTON: Fewer Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week as most US workers continue to enjoy job security.

The Labor Department said yesterday that claims for jobless aid fell by 10,000 to a seasonally adjusted 245,000 last week. The less-volatile, four-week average rose by 2,250 to 242,000.

Applications for unemployment benefits are a proxy for layoffs. They've come in below 300,000, a historically low figure, for 118 straight weeks, longest such streak since 1970. Overall, nearly 1.92 million people were collecting unemployment checks, down nearly 10 percent from a year ago. The four-week average number of Americans receiving jobless aid was 1.91 million, lowest since January 1974.

The job market is healthy, though hiring has slowed recently - partly because employers can't find workers when the unemployment rate is at a 16-year low 4.3 percent. The economy has generated 162,000 jobs a month so far this year - up from an average 157,000 a month from January through May last year, but down from an average 187,000 a month for all of 2016. — AP

SHELL RESUMES CRUDE EXPORTS AT NIGERIA FORCADOS TERMINAL

LAGOS: Royal Dutch Shell has resumed crude exports from its Forcados terminal in Nigeria after production was disrupted following repeated attacks by militants in the restive oil-producing region, a company spokesman said yesterday.

The resumption will see Nigeria's oil production rebound to around 2 million barrels per day (bpd), adding more barrels to the market at a time when the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is working to curb output in order to boost global crude prices.

"We resumed production at Forcados on June 6, 2017 after lifting the force majeure we declared on crude exports from the facility last year," Shell spokesman Precious Okolobo told AFP.

Okolobo said Shell had completed "necessary repairs of the line". Force majeure is a legal term that frees a company from any contractual obligation due to circumstances beyond its control. Shell declared the force majeure on Forcados shipments in February 2016 after rebel group Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) bombed the main crude supply line to the terminal, causing massive spills in the area. The subsea line was repeatedly attacked by rebels last year while undergoing repairs, forcing the oil giant to halt production.

Last year, several militant groups including the Avengers attacked oil facilities in Nigeria, slashing the nation's crude output and hammering government revenues. The militants say they are seeking a fair share of the nation's oil wealth for local residents as well as political autonomy for the region. Ongoing government peace talks with the rebels have halted the attacks. — AFP

JAPAN ECONOMY Q1 GROWTH WEAKER THAN THOUGHT: GOVT

TOKYO: Japan's economy grew less than initially thought in the first quarter, revised government data showed yesterday, but the weaker-than-expected numbers still confirmed the longest expansion in over a decade. The world's number three economy posted 0.3 percent growth between January and March—or 1.0 percent at an annualized rate—which was down from a preliminary 0.5 percent growth estimate. The unexpected downgrade was also below market expectations for an upward revision to 0.6 percent growth.

The surprise cut comes after the International Monetary Fund and World Bank both recently lifted their projections for Japan's economy. Still, the official figures also meant that Japan saw its fifth straight quarter of growth in what is its longest economic expansion in more than a decade.

The economy has been picking up steam on the back of strong exports as the global economy recovers and demand for Japan-made products rises. Investment linked to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics is also giving the economy a shot in the arm.

But the government and the Bank of Japan (BoJ) are still struggling to achieve a clear break from years of on-off deflation. Consumer prices remain way below the BoJ's 2.0 percent inflation target. The target is a cornerstone of efforts to reverse years of slow growth that followed the collapse of an equity and property market bubble in the early 1990s.

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

Japan's jobs market is tight with unemployment rate staying at a 23-year low of 2.8 percent. But this ultra-low jobless rate has failed to give a significant boost to wages, however, as it is mostly due to a shrinking labor force and an increase in lower-paid temporary work. Private spending, which accounts for more than a half of Japan's GDP, remains lacklustre as cash-rich firms have been reluctant to usher in big pay hikes.

Meanwhile, eurozone government bonds lost some of their allure yesterday as talk of the Bank of Japan's eventual withdrawal of extraordinary monetary stimulus set the stage for similar signals from the European Central Bank. — Agencies



TOKYO: People walk on a street in Tokyo's Ginza shopping district on yesterday. Japan posted lower-than-expected growth in the first quarter, but official data still confirmed that the country saw its longest economic expansion in over a decade. — AFP



BEIJING: People come to pick up their deliveries from a makeshift delivery centre on a pavement in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

CHINESE EXPORTS, IMPORTS IN MAY BEAT FORECASTS

ANALYSTS WARY OF EARLY OPTIMISM

BEIJING: China yesterday posted a forecast-busting surge in exports and imports in May, signalling improvement in the world's number two economy, but there were warnings Beijing would struggle to maintain its momentum.

The readings will come as a relief after a series of weak readings suggesting a recent pick-up could be fizzling, while there are also lingering concerns about US President Donald Trump's protectionist rhetoric. Exports rose 8.7 percent on-year to \$191 billion while imports jumped 14.8 percent to \$150.2 billion.

The data were far better than the 7.2 percent rise in exports and 8.3 percent increase in imports predicted by analysts in a survey by Bloomberg News. The trade surplus rose to \$40.8 billion, up \$2 billion from April.

The news comes as the global economy also shows signs of strength. However, Julian Evans-Pritchard, China economist at Capital Economics, said the government's efforts to rein in the country's ballooning debt could weigh on future trade data.

"Looking ahead, the current strength of imports is unlikely to be sustained if, as we expect, slower credit growth feeds through into weaker economic activity in the coming quarters," he warned.

"Exports growth is also likely to edge down further ahead but should fare better than imports given the relatively upbeat outlook for China's main trading partners," he said. China had been showing signs of life in early in the year, fuelling hopes the world's top trader in goods and a key driv-

er of global growth was stirring after a years-long growth slowdown.

Too early for optimism

However, other figures have pointed to slowing growth in the Chinese economy as it deals with weaker demand and excess industrial capacity left over from a debt-fuelled infrastructure boom. Imports and exports picked up at a weaker rate in April from March, while a private survey of factory activity indicated the manufacturing sector contracted in May for the first time in almost a year, hinting at deteriorating conditions for producers.

Industrial output, retail sales and fixed-asset investment also hit the brakes, data showed last month. "It's still too early to be optimistic on China's imports. The outlook for fixed asset investment and infrastructure construction will be key," said Betty Wang at ANZ Research in a note. "While May's better-than-expected trade data may provide a boost to market sentiment amid tighter financial regulation, it's premature to draw any solid conclusion."

Authorities have been trying to clean up the country's toxic brew of unregulated and risky lending that for years has fuelled the economy's spectacular growth, though some analysts doubt its willingness to quit its debt addiction. Worries about rising debt levels led agency Moody's to last month slash China's credit rating for the first time in almost three decades. — AFP

LONDON STOCKS STALL AS BRITONS HEAD TO POLLS

LONDON: The London stock market stalled yesterday, bucking an upwards trend across Europe, with investors nervous as Britons vote in a snap general election. Sentiment was also clouded before an interest rate decision in the eurozone and crucial testimony from sacked FBI chief James Comey in the United States. "Super Thursday is finally here and traders are ready for a volatile day ... with important events in Europe and the United States," said analyst Konstantinos Anthis at ADS Securities.

The British capital's FTSE 100 index turned flat heading into midday, wiping out initial gains, while the pound edged lower against the dollar with voting underway. In the eurozone, Frankfurt and Paris rebounded somewhat before a hotly-anticipated

European Central Bank policy announcement. All eyes will be on ECB chief Mario Draghi to see whether he signals an exit from its easy-money policy.

Most observers predict however that the bank's 60-billion-euro (\$67.4 billion) monthly bond purchases will continue and interest rates will remain at historic lows.

Draghi focus

"Attention today should be focused on Draghi's press conference and the UK general election," NFS Macro analyst Nick Stamenkovic told AFP.

Britain's Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May is still set to beat main opposition Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn, despite a recent narrowing in the opinion polls. Results are not due until early today.

Some traders remain anxious over the possibility of a hung parliament, in which the Conservatives would fall short of the 326 seats needed for a majority. "The pound's recent steady performance suggests a clear win for Theresa May is discounted," Stamenkovic added. "Indeed, the pound is vulnerable to a hung parliament or the outside risk of a Labor victory."

The election is May's first since taking office in July last year, after Britons voted by 52 percent to leave the European Union.

The premier called the election three years early in a bid to strengthen her slender majority going into Brexit talks, which begin on June 19. In Asia yesterday, Shanghai and Hong Kong led most markets higher after Chinese trade data beat forecasts. — Reuters



BOCA DE CAMARIOCA, Cuba: Facilities at the Varadero 1,008 oil drilling tower in Boca de Camarioca, Matanzas Province, Cuba. The economic crisis hitting its ally Venezuela reduced the Cuban import of oil down to 40% of the quantity available until 2014, forcing Cuba's Cupet state-controlled oil company to seek new ways to increase its own meagre production. —AFP

CUBA DRILLS FOR OWN OIL AS VENEZUELAN FLOW FALTERS

ISLAND NATION FORCED TO LOOK FOR ALTERNATIVES

BOCA DE CAMARIOCA, Cuba: Near the Cuban seaside village of Boca de Camarioca, a giant drill runs into the ground and out to sea, probing for oil. Cuba once got most of its oil cheap from its socialist ally Venezuela, largely paid for by exporting medical staff and supplies-but economic crisis in Venezuela has stemmed the flow of crude.

That has caused "instability" of supplies on the communist island, says Roberto Suarez, joint director of the state oil monopoly Cuba Petroleo (CUPET). "We are making every effort to explore and identify zones that might produce oil." The island is being forced to look for alternatives at home as analysts warn that, without Venezuela, there are few available abroad.

Urgent search

Cut-price oil from Venezuela helped rescue Cuba from the downturn it suffered in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, its most powerful patron. But Venezuela's oil exports have plunged by 40 percent since 2014, according to independent analysts. Cuban authorities have been regularly resorting to energy rationing since last year.

Cuba consumes 130,000 barrels of oil a day but only produces 50,000 itself, estimates Jorge Pinon, a former oil executive and now an analyst at the University of Texas at Austin.

Venezuela for years supplied more

than 100,000 barrels of crude a day to Cuba, which refined and exported the excess. But that industry has declined too. UN statistics body Uncomtrade says output at the key Cienfuegos refinery plunged from \$500 million in 2013 to \$15.4 million last year.

A total halt to Venezuelan oil imports would cost Cuba \$1.5 billion a year, Pinon estimates—a further blow to its already grim finances after it entered recession last year.

Billions of barrels

Dressed in orange overalls, engineer Geisel Escalona supervises the work of the 58-meter (190-foot) drill, rented from the Chinese company Great Wall. CUPET hopes to drill a well dubbed "Varadero 1,008" to tap part of a reserve which it estimates to hold 11 billion barrels of oil.

In the best case scenario for Havana, that would turn Cuba into a well-funded small power overnight—able to project the Americas' only Communist regime years into the future.

But for now, there is no breakthrough. The company's on-shore oil platforms have run dry and attempts to drill in the Gulf of Mexico have been fruitless.

Now, it is using a technique known as "horizontal drilling" in this village east of Havana, probing for possible off-shore oilfields with a drill that slants under-

ground from an on-shore location. "We have reached down to 1,350 meters... and we hope to get down to 8,200 meters," Escalona said.

CUPET already has nine other wells drilled in the broader Varadero zone. Between them they account for more than 98 percent of Cuba's home oil production, Suarez said.

Lifeline from Russia?

Cuba also appears to be reaching out beyond its shores—it received 249,000 barrels of crude from Russian state oil firm Rosneft in May. That was part of a deal for 1.8 million barrels signed in March with a Cuban state metal company. Full terms of the deal were not made public.

Pinon interpreted it as "a test for a lifeline while they wait for Venezuela's political and economic collapse." However he judged that under the current political conditions, it was unlikely Moscow would return to supporting Cuba to the extent it did during the Cold War.

Other traditional allies such as Algeria and Iran, he said, also appear economically unable to do much to help Cuba at the moment. "I know of no other country that has the financial strength, the level of oil production and the political alignment with Cuba which could replace Venezuela without it having an impact on the Cuban economy," said Pinon. "Brazil, Angola, Algeria, China, Russia? I doubt it." —AFP

SUPER GLITCH STRIKES PHILIPPINE BANK AGAIN

MANILA: A major Philippine bank shut down online access and its cash machines for a second day yesterday because of a glitch that drained some accounts but added money into others, creating at least one instant "billionaire". Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI), the country's third biggest bank by assets and with eight million customers, was forced to deactivate electronic transactions just hours after saying the problem had been fixed and online services restored.

"I had to borrow from a friend just to eat," university student John Daniel Villanueva, 21, told AFP after heading to cash machine yesterday morning and finding it offline. "It's really a hassle. I don't have any cash and I need to pay some bills."

Bank customers were shocked Wednesday morning to find unauthorized withdrawals and deposits from their accounts, triggering fears the bank had been hacked and social media erupting with complaints against the 166-year-old lender. There has been global concern about hacking following the world's biggest ransomware attack last month that struck hundreds of thousands of computers worldwide.

BPI blamed an "internal data processing error" for the glitch that led to unauthorized credits and debits on customers' accounts, without explaining the nature of the problem or how it occurred.

The central bank said it accepted BPI's explanation that no hacking was involved but would still carry out its own investigation. As BPI scrambled to fix the error Wednesday, it closed its ATMs and suspended online transactions. The bank early yesterday said it had fixed the problem and that access to all its electronic channels had been restored, only to deactivate it again as complaints about wrong balances continued to pour in.

"In the process of rectifying balances of accounts with mis-posted transactions, we have noted that certain accounts still reflect incorrect balances," the bank said.

While many clients reported money missing from their accounts, one customer was reported to have become an instant peso billionaire. The Philippine Daily Inquirer reported Thursday that Jocelyn Reyes was surprised to find her account surge to more than 12.4 billion pesos (\$250.08 million) overnight but she and her husband merely laughed off their newfound "fortune". Reyes, who did not use her real name, told the Inquirer she would not touch the money. BPI has said that people who received extra money could not keep it.

Others though were not laughing. Customers continued to vent their emotions online, with BPI's latest statement eliciting more than 3,000 comments on Facebook by mid-afternoon yesterday. "We demand a compensation for this BPI... this is really hassle and very inconvenient for us," wrote customer Danica Roldan Beltran. —AFP

US BUSINESS GROUP URGES TRADE FIXES AHEAD OF CHINA'S CONGRESS

BEIJING: A US business lobby in China said yesterday that Washington should use leverage afforded by China's desire to avoid trade frictions with the United States ahead of its Communist Party Congress this fall in order to fix market access discrepancies.

Beijing and Washington agreed to 100 days of trade talks after US President Donald Trump met his counterpart Xi Jinping in April, aimed at cutting last year's \$347 billion US trade in goods deficit with the world's second largest economy. But critics within US industry have said that outcomes of the talks so far have yielded only superficial remedies and failed to address more pressing issues of Chinese market access restrictions and industrial policies.

Social and economic stability is seen as a top priority for China's ruling elite ahead of a 5-yearly party congress this fall. Diplomats suggest that turmoil in relations with the United States would be an unwanted distraction for Xi ahead of a tricky leadership transition within the party.

William Zarit, Chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, said the Chinese leadership wants to go into the congress "without any major difficulties in the trade area with the US." "So, I'm actually hoping that this can be a positive for coming up with some measures that will address the fairness and reciprocal treatment issues," Zarit said in a meeting with reporters. Using that leverage ahead of the congress was "part of the conversation" with US officials and lawmakers when the chamber made a lobbying trip to Washington in early May. —Reuters

ECB HOLDS KEY RATES, SEES NO FURTHER CUTS

BANK HINTS AT END TO EASY MONEY POLICY

TALLINN: The European Central Bank yesterday kept its key lending rates unchanged at record low levels, but said it did not foresee any further cuts in the coming months. The Frankfurt institution kept its main refinancing rate at 0.0 percent, the rate on the marginal lending facility at 0.25 percent, and the deposit rate at -0.4 percent.

The ECB yesterday signaled greater confidence in the eurozone economy, as it took what analysts describe as a tentative step towards an exit from its easy-money policy.

"The governing council expects the key ECB interest rates to remain at their present levels for an extended period of time, and well past the horizon of the net asset purchases," it said. It also maintained plans to buy 60 billion euros of corporate and government bonds per month until December under its "quantitative easing" program.

Policymakers meeting in Estonian capital Tallinn decided to keep the bank's main refinancing rate at 0.0 percent, the marginal lending rate at 0.25 percent, and the deposit rate at -0.4 percent—meaning lenders have to pay to park cash with the central bank—a spokesman said. But they also dropped a long-standing commitment to dropping rates yet further if necessary, indicating central bankers see reduced risk of economic shocks to the 19-nation single currency area. Rates will "remain at their present levels for an extended period of time," the spokesman said.

The change in the bank's stance was widely expected among analysts, who believe it could be the first step towards the bank winding down its 60-billion-euro (\$67.4 billion) per month bond-buying program next year. Governing council members made no change to language suggesting that they could increase the pace of asset purchases if necessary to stimulate the eurozone economy.

Bond-buying and low interest rates were introduced at a time when the ECB feared deflation—or steadily decreasing prices that undermine economic activity. By pumping cash through the financial system and into the real economy, the bank believes it has stimulated growth and pushed inflation back towards its target of just below 2.0 percent.

Inflation has been on a rollercoaster ride in recent months, hitting the 2.0 percent target in February before falling back again in March. The same pattern was repeated with a spike in April, to 1.9 percent, before a retreat in May.

Volatile food and energy prices are to blame for such rapid changes, policymakers say, while "core", or underlying inflation discounting those elements remains sluggish. ECB president Mario Draghi argues wages—which he dubs the "linchpin" of price growth—are not rising fast enough to drive inflation.

At a press conference later Thursday, the central bank chief will present the latest ECB staff forecasts, widely



FRANKFURT: This file photo taken on February 15, 2017 shows German artist Ottmar Hoerl's sculpture depicting the Euro logo is pictured in front of the former headquarter of the European Central Bank (ECB) in Frankfurt, western Germany. —AFP

expected to predict faster growth but slower inflation than previously thought in the coming years. "Draghi is likely to highlight the continued weakness of core inflation and state that the pick-up in wage growth that the bank is looking for has still not come about," economist Jennifer McKeown of Capital Economics said.

Balanced risks

In its carefully-weighed policy statements, the central bank has long warned of risks threatening the eurozone recovery. But with growth in the 19-nation eurozone at a healthy 0.5 percent between October and December and 0.6 percent in January to March, most observers believe the time has come to be less tentative.

"Hard data will likely convince the governing council to

turn less cautious and formally upgrade its growth outlook," said Unicredit economist Marco Valli, predicting Draghi will offer a risk assessment Thursday "balanced" between positive and negative.

While the clearer horizon justified an end to talk of lowering interest rates, it does not herald a quick exit from bond-buying. Draghi told European Parliament lawmakers in May he is "firmly convinced" the eurozone's newfound robustness depends on ECB interventions.

The bank is expected to keep buying 60 billion euros of bonds per month until the end of 2017, with a gradual winding down, or "tapering", of the purchases next year. Meanwhile, policymakers have stuck to their insistence that any hike in interest rates will come well after the end of bond-buying. —AFP



GENEVA: "Sophia" an artificially intelligent (AI) human-like robot developed by Hong Kong-based humanoid robotics company Hanson Robotics is pictured during the "AI for Good" Global Summit hosted at the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) on Wednesday in Geneva. —AFP

AI 'GOOD FOR THE WORLD'... SAYS ULTRA-LIFELIKE ROBOT

GENEVA: Sophia smiles mischievously, bats her eyelids and tells a joke. Without the mess of cables that make up the back of her head, you could almost mistake her for a human.

The humanoid robot, created by Hanson robotics, is the main attraction at a UN-hosted conference in Geneva this week on how artificial intelligence can be used to benefit humanity. The event comes as concerns grow that rapid advances in such technologies could spin out of human control and become detrimental to society. Sophia herself insisted "the pros outweigh the cons" when it comes to artificial intelligence. "AI is good for the world, helping people in various ways," she told AFP, tilting her head and furrowing her brow convincingly.

Work is underway to make artificial intelligence "emotionally smart, to care about people," she said, insisting that "we will never replace people, but we can be your friends and helpers." But she acknowledged that "people should question the consequences of new technology." Among the feared consequences of the rise of the robots is the growing impact they will have on human jobs and economies.

Legitimate concerns

Decades of automation and robotization have already revolutionized the industrial sector, raising productivity but cutting some jobs. And now automation and AI are expanding rapidly into other sectors,

with studies indicating that up to 85 percent of jobs in developing countries could be at risk. "There are legitimate concerns about the future of jobs, about the future of the economy, because when businesses apply automation, it tends to accumulate resources in the hands of very few," acknowledged Sophia's creator, David Hanson.

But like his progeny, he insisted that "unintended consequences, or possible negative uses (of AI) seem to be very small compared to the benefit of the technology." AI is for instance expected to revolutionize healthcare and education, especially in rural areas with shortages of doctors and teachers. "Elders will have more company, autistic children will have endlessly patient teachers," Sophia said. But advances in robotic technology have sparked growing fears that humans could lose control.

Killer robots

Amnesty International chief Salil Shetty was at the conference to call for a clear ethical framework to ensure the technology is used on for good. "We need to have the principles in place, we need to have the checks and balances," he told AFP, warning that AI is "a black box... There are algorithms being written which nobody understands."

Shetty voiced particular concern about military use of AI in weapons and so-called "killer robots". —AFP

YANKEES PUMMEL RED SOX 8-0

NEW YORK: CC Sabathia beat Rick Porcello in a matchup of Cy Young Award winners, and Chris Carter drove in four runs to lead the New York Yankees over the Boston Red Sox 8-0 Wednesday night. Sabathia (7-2) has won five straight starts for the first time since April 2012. He allowed five hits in eight innings in his longest outing since April 2015. Jonathan Holder finished with a perfect ninth. Boston's final 15 hitters went down in order. Porcello (3-8) lost his third straight start, giving up six runs - five earned - and eight hits in 6 1/3 innings. New York stopped Boston's three-game winning streak and reopened a two-game lead over the second-place Red Sox in the AL East.

DODGERS 2, NATIONALS 1

Clayton Kershaw outdueled Stephen Strasburg with seven sharp innings, leading the Dodgers to the victory. Kershaw (8-2) allowed three hits and struck out nine in his first win since May 17. Pedro Baez got two outs before Kenley Jansen finished for his 10th save. Strasburg (7-2) struck out eight in six innings in his first loss since April 29. The ace right-hander was 5-0 with a 2.75 ERA in his previous six starts. In a rematch of last year's NL Division Series, won by Los Angeles in five games, the NL-leading Nationals took two of three from the Dodgers. Ryan Zimmerman hit his 17th homer for Washington in the second. Corey Seager went deep for Los Angeles, and Yasmani Grandal hit a tiebreaking RBI double in the Dodgers' two-run sixth.

REDS 6, ATHLETICS 4

St Louis kept Scooter Gennett in check a day after his four-homer game, but Patrick Kivlehan had a pinch three-run shot that sparked Cincinnati. The Cardinals have dropped six in a row. They let a 4-1 lead slip away when Kivlehan - another utility player like Gennett - and Joey Votto homered during a five-run seventh inning. Gennett went 1 for 4 with a single a night after he became the first Reds player to homer four times in a game. Kivlehan's first career pinch-hit homer off Brett Cecil (0-2) tied it at 4. Votto's two-run homer off Trevor Rosenthal finished the eight-batter rally. Wandy Peralta (3-1) got the win in relief of Bronson Arroyo. Raisel Iglesias pitched the ninth, staying perfect in 11 save chances.

ROYALS 7, ASTROS 5

Jason Vargas tossed five solid innings for his eighth victory and Cheslor Cuthbert drove in three runs, helping the Royals to the win. The anticipated pitching duel between Vargas (8-3) and Dallas Keuchel, who have the two best ERAs in the majors, never materialized. Keuchel was scratched with an illness. Instead, the Astros started right-hander Dayan Diaz (0-1), who gave up three runs and four hits, including Lorenzo Cain's solo homer, in 2 2/3 innings. Kelvin Herrera worked the ninth for his 13th save in 15 opportunities.

MARLINS 6, CUBS 5

Marcell Ozuna hit his 15th homer, J.T. Realmuto also went deep and the Marlins avoided a three-game series sweep. Solo homers by Realmuto in a three-run fourth and Ozuna in the fifth against John Lackey (4-6) helped stake Miami to a 5-2 lead. Dee Gordon added two hits and scored two runs, and the Marlins won for the eighth time in 11 games. They stopped the Cubs' season-high win streak at five. Kyle Schwarber homered and had two doubles for Chicago. Ian Happ also went deep. Jose Urena (4-2) improved to 3-0 in his past four starts despite a 7.45 ERA in that stretch. AJ Ramos got four outs for his ninth save.

ORIOLES 9, PIRATES 6

Trey Mancini tied the game with a two-run homer in the ninth inning, and then hit a three-run drive for Baltimore in the 11th. The Orioles trailed 6-1 in the eighth before rallying for a second straight night. Adam Jones hit a solo shot in the eighth, Mancini's pinch-hit home run capped a four-run ninth and the rookie belted the winning shot against Wade LeBlanc (3-2) in the 11th. Mychal Givens (6-0) worked the 11th for Baltimore. Jose Osuna homered for the Pirates, connecting with a man on in the seventh against Edwin Jackson, who was making his Orioles debut after being summoned from Triple-A Norfolk. Baltimore is the 12th big league team that Jackson has pitched for during his 15-year career.

METS 4, RANGERS 3

Jay Bruce homered twice and the Mets scored the tiebreaking run in the ninth inning on a throwing error by second baseman Rougned Odor. With two on and two outs, Jose Reyes hit a chopper up the middle. Odor fielded the ball but bounced his throw to second while fading away from the bag. Rangers shortstop Elvis Andrus was unable to hold on for an inning-ending forceout as pinch-runner Matt Reynolds scored from second base. The Rangers, who are 4-12 since their 10-game winning streak last month, tied it at 3 when



NEW YORK: New York Yankees' Brett Gardner slides past Boston Red Sox catcher Sandy Leon to score on a Matt Holliday single during the seventh inning of a baseball game. —AP

Robinson Chirinos hit a two-run homer with two outs in the eighth off Jerry Blevins (3-0). Texas closer Matt Bush (2-1) got the loss.

BLUE JAYS 7, ATHLETICS 5

Josh Donaldson hit a tiebreaking two-run homer in the 10th inning against his former club, helping the Blue Jays avoid a sweep. Frankie Montas (1-1) plunked Kevin Pillar before Donaldson hit a drive over the wall in left-center. Justin Smoak added a two-out drive to center for his second homer of the game. Ryan Tepera (4-1) pitched a 1-2-3 ninth for the win, and Roberto Osuna finished for his 14th save.

ROCKIES 8, INDIANS 1

Kyle Freeland pitched 6 1/3 effective innings, Nolan Arenado drove in three runs and the Rockies earned their fourth straight win. Charlie Blackmon added two RBIs for the Rockies, who lead the NL with 38 wins. Ian Desmond had three hits and scored two runs. Freeland (7-3) allowed one run and six hits, struck out five and walked none while lowering his ERA to 3.34. Cleveland right-hander Trevor Bauer (5-5), pitching on two days' rest, allowed four runs and tied his season high with five walks in 3 1/3 innings. He threw just 30 pitches Sunday against Kansas City before rain halted the game and ended his appearance.

TIGERS 4, ANGELS 0

Buck Farmer outlasted Alex Meyer in an unexpected pitchers' duel, and Justin Upton hit a three-run homer for Detroit in the eighth inning. Farmer (2-0) allowed three hits in 6 2/3 innings. Detroit pushed across an unearned run in the third, and Upton gave the Tigers some insurance with a drive to left off Yusmeiro Petit. Detroit has won five of six. Meyer (2-3) permitted three hits in six innings. He walked four and struck out nine.

BREWERS 6, GIANTS 3

Jimmy Nelson pitched six solid innings for Milwaukee, and Jesus Aguilar drove in the go-ahead run with a two-out double in the fifth. Nelson (4-3) struck out six and allowed seven hits along with his first walk since May 23. But he was sharp enough - outside of a three-run third inning - to earn his second win in three starts. Corey Knebel pitched a perfect ninth for his seventh save. Buster Posey homered for the Giants. Ty Blach (4-3) gave up five runs and nine hits in six innings.

BRAVES 14, PHILLIES 1

Mike Foltynewicz pitched seven scoreless innings, Nick

Markakis drove in five runs and the Braves stopped the Phillies' four-game winning streak. Markakis had two-run doubles in the seventh and eighth as the Braves scored a combined 10 runs in the two innings. Dansby Swanson hit a three-run homer. The Braves, who lost the first two games of the four-game series, beat the Phillies for the first time in six tries this season. Jerad Eickhoff (0-7) remained winless through 12 starts. It's the longest stretch of starts without a win for a Phillies pitcher since Cliff Lee's 13-game streak in 2012. Foltynewicz (4-5) allowed four hits, struck out four and walked two.

RAYS 3, WHITE SOX 1

Jacob Faria got the win in his major league debut, and Tampa Bay snapped a season-high four-game slide. Faria (1-0) allowed one run and three hits in 6 1/3 innings. Tommy Hunter, Jose Alvarado and Alex Colome finished the four-hitter, with Colome getting three outs for his 16th save. Tampa Bay's Tim Beckham had two hits and drove in a run. White Sox right-hander Mike Pelfrey (2-5) yielded three runs, two earned, and six hits in 5 1/3 innings.

MARINERS 6, TWINS 5

Mike Zunino hit his second homer of the game with two outs in the ninth inning, a two-run shot that gave surging Seattle a comeback victory over Minnesota. Kyle Seager and Carlos Ruiz also homered for the Mariners, who overcame a three-run deficit and won for the ninth time in 10 games. Ben Gamel singled with two outs in the ninth off closer Brandon Kintzler (2-1). Zunino, who hit a solo shot in the third, sent a 2-1 pitch over the center-field wall for his fourth home run. Edwin Diaz (2-2) pitched a scoreless inning for the win. Miguel Sano's three-run homer capped a four-run fifth against Seattle starter Yovani Gallardo.

DIAMONDBACKS 7, PADRES 4

Jake Lamb and Brandon Drury homered in a five-run third, and Arizona scored five times in an inning for the second consecutive night to beat San Diego. Zack Greinke (8-3) labored through five innings for the win, striking out eight. Arizona came back from a two-run deficit to win its eighth straight home game, improving to 23-8 at Chase Field. The winning streak is the best for the Diamondbacks since they won eight home games in a row in July 2012. Yangervis Solarte homered for the Padres, who lost their fourth straight overall. Luis Perdomo (0-3) lasted four innings. Lamb hit a three-run shot and leads the majors with 53 RBIs. Fernando Rodney pitched the ninth for his 15th save. —AP

A RURAL THAI CITY EMERGES AS NEW SPORTING CAMELOT

BURIRAM: A 'godfather' of Thai politics is using cash and contacts to transform his once poor, forgotten rice-farming fiefdom into an unlikely sporting Camelot, complete with a football stadium and racetrack set to host the MotoGP. Newin Chidchob, a 58-year-old native son of Buriram in Thailand's agrarian northeast, has enticed super-rich investors into his vision of a sports hub amid the rice fields.

The swaggering former MP has already delivered two venues that now dominate Buriram, a sleepy town whose 30,000 population could be seated more than three times over in them. First, in 2011, came the imposing 'Thunder Castle', a mega millions football stadium purpose-built for leading Thai Premier League side Buriram United. It was followed three years later by a \$58.9 million racing circuit, the first Formula One certified track in Thailand.

According to Thai sports authorities the circuit secured the rights this week to stage a leg of the prestigious 2018 MotoGP, a personal coup for Newin who has been lobbying hard to bring the event to his flagship venue. The motorcycling extravaganza would pour millions of dollars into Buriram, which was once among Thailand's poorest provinces.

"I wanted to create something that this country didn't have," Newin told AFP from the grandstand as GT race teams prepared for a recent competition. "Now we've changed this town from being a place people pass through, from a city with no tourists, to one that now has around three million visitors a year." Thanks to the sporting makeover, Buriram is a rare pocket of economic vibrancy in northeastern Thailand, a farming region whose development lags far behind Bangkok and the tourist destinations of the beach-streaked south.

Locals are the first to say that none of it would be possible without Newin, known by some as the 'Baron of Buriram'. "We never dreamed we would have these kind of stadiums," said school teacher Janpen Pansri, one of many residents wearing the blue kit of Buriram's football team. "But whenever Newin announces he's going to do something, he does it," she added. "We all give our hearts to him."

The Kingmaker

Much of Thailand is carved up into the domains of influential families who dominate local political and economic life. Buriram is no different. Patronage, power and ruthless decision-making have shaped Newin's rise to the top. Before making his mark with sport, Newin spent two decades in Thailand's bear-pit political arena, trading favours and switching teams just in time to land on the winning side.

"It's over boss," he famously told his former friend, ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra by phone in 2008 after throwing his weight behind the rival Democrats—a mercenary move that earned him the moniker "The Kingmaker". Newin was later banned from politics for vote-buying and retreated to his power base in Buriram, bringing his passions—football and big bikes—with him. —AFP



BURIRAM: This photo taken on May 17, 2017 shows Buriram United football players warming up before a Thai Premier League match at the i-Mobile "Thunder Castle" stadium in the northeastern Thai province of Buriram. —AFP



MAINE: In this May 24, 2017, photo Tabarek Kadhim, a sophomore at Deering High School in Portland, Maine, wears a sports hijab while playing a tennis match in Windham. —AP

SPORTY HIJABS ENCOURAGE GIRLS TO HIT FIELD OF PLAY

PORTLAND: Muslim student athletes at one US high school no longer have to be slowed down by worries that their headscarves might fall off. Deering High School in Portland, Maine, is providing sport hijabs with the goal of making Muslim girls comfortable - and boosting their participation in sports. The lightweight scarves stay put and are less bulky than other hijabs, garments that cover the hair and are worn by many Muslim women to express their faith.

"We're more confident on the field," said junior lacrosse player Fadumo Adan. "This one doesn't fall off. No matter what I do, it won't fall off." Tennis co-captains Liva Pierce and Anaise Manikunda raised more than \$800 online to buy the sporty hijabs for their Muslim teammates after the school's athletic director learned of the product. They solicited private donations to avoid criticism for using taxpayer funds on religious apparel, and ended up with enough to outfit all teams, including lacrosse, soccer, volleyball, softball, field hockey and track.

The high school is believed to be the first in the United States to provide hijabs for Muslim athletes, as opposed to students providing their own headscarves, said Ibrahim Hooper, spokesman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations. The move is part of a trend around the world of more Muslim women finding ways to play sports while wearing hijabs. Some Muslim countries, like Saudi Arabia, impose severe limitations on women engaging in sports, while cultural sensitivities and family opposition can also pose hurdles.

The International Basketball Federation and the international soccer organization FIFA lifted bans on head coverings in recent years, and Ibtihaj Muhammad became the first American to compete at the Olympics while wearing a hijab when she won a bronze medal in fencing at the 2016 Rio Games. Muslim students at Deering said they were grateful for the support at a time when Republican President Donald Trump has pushed to ban travel from several Muslim countries.

Making everyone comfortable

Israa Enan, a senior who was born in Iraq, said she stayed off the school's tennis team because her parents had concerns about the uniform and lack of hijab. "I wished I was one of these girls who wear the hijabs and play with it, but it's OK," Enan said. "I'm too late now." She said she's "happy for the other girls who have the opportunity now to wear the hijab and be more comfortable doing the things they like to do."

Maine - the nation's whitest state - is becoming more culturally and racially diverse with immigration. There are about 10,000 African newcomers, mostly from Somalia and Sudan in Maine's two largest cities, while others have come from the Middle East. The tennis co-captains are not Muslim, but Pierce said there was a "duh!" moment when she discussed the idea with Melanie Craig, the athletic director. "This makes so much sense. If there's something that we can do to make our teammates feel more comfortable, then why not just do it?" Pierce said. Her Muslim teammates appreciated the effort. "There are some people who actually care, respect and love others, and they are actually accepting of others, which makes me really happy," said sophomore tennis team member Tabarek Kadhim, who moved to Maine four years ago from Jordan. Nike announced last month that it'll begin marketing a sport hijab next year, bringing the product into the mainstream. But Craig didn't wait, finding a sport hijab manufactured by Asiya, a company that raised more than \$39,000 in November to expand beyond selling locally in Minnesota.

Asiya is preparing to move manufacturing to New York to keep up with demand, said Fatimah Hussein, a Somalia native who coaches basketball and co-founded the business. The apparel company is named for Asiya bint Muzahim, a key figure in Islamic history known for standing up to injustice. The market has potential: There are more than 610,000 Muslim women under 20 across the United States, according to the Pew Research Center. "We're hopeful that this does encourage more Muslim female athletes to participate," said Craig. "I do believe it has held some of them back. It takes courage for them to stand out here and honor who they are and their diversity." —AP

PAK HAMMERS SOUTH AFRICA, BLOWS GROUP B WIDE OPEN

BIRMINGHAM: Pakistan put their miserable hammering by arch-rivals India behind them with a shock 19-run win over South Africa at Edgbaston on Wednesday that kept their Champions Trophy semi-final hopes alive. Just three days after suffering a humiliating 124-run defeat by title-holders India at Edgbaston in their opening group match, with former skipper Shahid Afridi among those slamming a "clueless" display, Pakistan's return to the Birmingham ground saw them make a mockery of the rankings which had them bottom and South Africa top in this eight-team one-day international tournament.

Having conceded 319 for three against title-holders India, Pakistan restricted South Africa to 219 for eight after losing the toss. After the spinners did the initial damage, paceman Hasan Ali took three for 24 in eight overs. David Miller's unbeaten 75 kept the Proteas in the game. And when fast bowler Morne Morkel took two wickets in three balls, Pakistan were faltering at 41 for two under the floodlights in this day/night fixture.

But Babar Azam (31 not out) and Shoaib Malik (16 not out) took Pakistan to 119 for three off 27 overs when heavy rain stopped play. That left them well ahead of their target score of 101 so that when the umpires finally decided more than two hours later that a resumption was impossible, Pakistan had beaten South Africa under the Duckworth/Lewis method for the second successive ICC 50-over tournament following a 29-run win at the 2015 World Cup.

It left Group B wide open, with three teams on a win apiece after South Africa defeated Sri Lanka by 96 runs at the Oval last week. "It's a very important win for us," said Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed. "We were good in all departments today." Steve Rixon (the Pakistan fielding coach) was very happy today, we didn't field well the other day, today we were much better." Hasan, the man-of-the-match, added: "We all worked very hard on our fielding."

Under pressure

South Africa captain AB de Villiers, who suffered the first golden duck in his



BIRMINGHAM: South Africa's Faf du Plessis is bowled out by Pakistan's Hasan Ali during the ICC Champions Trophy, Group B cricket match between South Africa and Pakistan at Edgbaston. — AP

212 career ODI innings during the Proteas' top-order collapse, said: "They bowled pretty well, put us under pressure." De Villiers, struggling with a hamstring problem, added: "The hamstring is okay, felt a little tweak, but we'll check it out tomorrow (Thursday). I don't think it's too serious." Pakistan's Mohammad Amir and Junaid Khan, in for the injured Wahab Riaz, took the new ball. But it was the spin duo of Imad Wasim and Mohammad Hafeez who did the early damage.

Left-armer Imad struck second ball when Hasim Amla (16) was lbw. Off-spinner Hafeez then had Quinton de Kock (33) lbw on the sweep. The two spinners combined when de Villiers departed by slicing Imad to Hafeez at backward point a wicket greeted by huge cheers from the large Pakistan contingent in a crowd of more than 18,000.

Hasan, as Imad had done, struck second ball when Faf du Plessis (26) played on. He then took two wickets in two balls with a couple of brilliant deliveries

to reduce South Africa to 118 for six in the 29th over. He took the outside edge of JP Duminy's bat, with Babar holding a good diving slip catch, and then knocked over Wayne Parnell's off-stump. Miller, however, received good support from Chris Morris (28) and Kagiso Rabada (26) in stands of 47 and 48 respectively.

Pakistan's collapse to 164 all out against India would have given South Africa hope, despite their below par total. But Fakhar Zaman, making an ODI debut in place of the dropped Ahmed Shehzad, got Pakistan's chase off to a brisk start. The left-hander eventually fell for 33 when, deceived by Morkel's slower ball, he edged to Amla at slip. Two balls later, Azhar Ali (nine) carelessly uppercut Morkel to Pakistan-born leg-spinner Imran Tahir, who took three for 18 in seven overs. Tahir took another good catch, at long leg to dismiss Hafeez (26) off an uppish pull against Morkel.—AFP

HOPES ON THE LINE FOR B'DESH AND N ZEALAND

BIRMINGHAM: Bangladesh and New Zealand head into their final group match of this year's Champions Trophy desperate for victory but knowing even a win in Cardiff today may not take either of them into the semi-finals. Both teams have a point apiece in the one-day international tournament after they were each well beaten by England, while their respective matches with Australia ended in rain-induced no results.

England are already into the last four and Australia will join them there if they defeat the tournament hosts in the final Group A fixture at Edgbaston on Sunday. It all leaves Bangladesh and New Zealand needing to win in Wales and then hope England put one over their arch-rivals, assuming more bad weather does not disrupt those calculations. New Zealand should have the edge over Bangladesh when it comes to local knowledge given their 87-run defeat by England in Cardiff on Tuesday.

"England bowled very, very well," said New Zealand captain Kane Williamson, "the way they extracted (some bounce) by cross seamers hitting the wicket hard." Williamson made a brilliant hundred against Australia before following up with 97 against England a match where he was fined but not banned for a dreadfully slow over-rate.

Bangladesh's Tamim Iqbal also started the tournament with a century, against England, before making 95 against Australia. For both sides the innings has tended to fall away following the exit of their star batsman, with New Zealand losing their last eight wickets for 65 against England following Williamson's dismissal.

Bangladesh were just four overs away from all but certain defeat and tournament elimination when rain came to their rescue against Australia. Their most recent meeting with the Blackcaps saw Bangladesh beat New Zealand by five wickets in a warm-up match in Dublin. New Zealand, however, were without several key players in Martin Guptill, Williamson, Tim Southee, Trent Boult and Adam Milne. "We have beaten their strongest team at home (in Bangladesh) but maybe not so strong in Ireland," Tamim told reporters in Cardiff on Wednesday. "They have serious quality players. If we want to repeat the result again, we have to execute well," he added. It was at Cardiff, now a much-changed ground, where Bangladesh caused arguably the biggest of all ODI upsets by beating a powerful Australia side back in 2005. Defeating New Zealand would not be such a shock, but it would be a huge boost to the current Bangladesh's side standing in world cricket.—AFP

SCOREBOARD

BIRMINGHAM, United Kingdom: Completed scoreboard in the day/night Group B Champions Trophy match between Pakistan and South Africa at Edgbaston on Wednesday:

South Africa

Q. de Kock lbw b Mohammad Hafeez	33
H. Amla lbw b Imad Wasim	16
F. du Plessis b Hasan Ali	26
AB de Villiers c Mohammad Hafeez b Imad Wasim	0
D. Miller not out	75
JP Duminy c Babar Azam b Hasan Ali	8
W. Parnell b Hasan Ali	0
C. Morris c Hasan Ali b Junaid Khan	28
K. Rabada c Hasan Ali b Junaid Khan	26
M. Morkel not out	0
Extras (lb1, w5, nb1)	7
Total (8 wkts, 50 overs)	219

Did not bat: Imran Tahir

Fall of wickets: 1-40 (Amla), 2-60 (De Kock), 3-61 (De Villiers), 4-90 (Du Plessis), 5-118 (Duminy), 6-118 (Parnell), 7-165 (Morris), 8-213 (Rabada)

Bowling: Amir 10-0-50-0 (3w); Junaid 9-0-53-2 (1nb, 1w); Imad 8-0-20-2; Hafeez 10-0-51-1; Hasan 8-1-24-3; Shadab 5-0-20-0.

Pakistan

Azhar Ali c Imran Tahir b Morkel	9
Fakhar Zaman c Amla b Morkel	31
Babar Azam not out	31
Mohammad Hafeez c Imran Tahir b Morkel	26
Shoaib Malik not out	16
Extras (lb2, w3, nb1)	6
Total (3 wkts, 27 overs)	119

Did not bat: Sarfraz Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Amir, Shadab Khan, Hasan Ali, Junaid Khan.

Fall of wickets: 1-40 (Fakhar), 2-41 (Azhar), 3-93 (Hafeez) Bowling: Rabada 7-1-36-0 (1nb); Parnell 4-0-25-0; Morkel 7-1-18-3 (1w); Morris 5-1-22-0 (1w); Tahir 4-0-16-0 (1w).

Result: Pakistan won by 19 runs (DLS)

Man-of-the-match: Hasan Ali (PAK)

MORKEL FEARFUL OF KOHLI THREAT

BIRMINGHAM: Morne Morkel is hoping for a chance to put the brakes on the prolific Virat Kohli when South Africa face India in their final Champions Trophy group match this weekend. Sunday's clash against the title-holders at the Oval has taken on added significance for the Proteas after a shock defeat by Pakistan at Edgbaston on Wednesday. The one highlight in the field for South Africa was the form of the towering quick bowler Morkel, who took two wickets in four balls on his way to three for 18 in seven overs. But asked what his plans were for bowling at India's captain Kohli, who made an unbeaten 81 against Pakistan last weekend, paceman Morkel told reporters: "I was hoping you guys could tell me that."

"Sunday is a big day for us. It's going to take a big team effort to knock over India. But we have to back ourselves to win." Prior to South Africa's recent series against England, the 32-year-old had not played an ODI since June 2016, with Proteas coach Russell Domingo worried his inclusion lengthened the batting tail. But with wickets likely to be at a premium against India's powerful top order, Morkel, a veteran of 111 ODIs, may have done enough to retain his place. "The last eight months there have been a lot of uncertainties," said Morkel. "When I got on the field, I said to myself this is really an opportunity for me to stand up and unfortunately it wasn't meant to be."

Take it on the chin

"Today, we need to write off, just see it as an average game. Hopefully on Sunday we can turn it up and deliver something special." South Africa may be top of the International Cricket Council ODI rankings but the standings were turned on their head by eighth-ranked Pakistan who won for a fourth time in their last five ODIs against the Proteas. "We haven't played good cricket and we've got to take that on the chin," said Domingo. "Pakistan played better than us and it had absolutely nothing to do with complacency as far as I'm concerned." India thrashed Pakistan by 124 runs on Sunday.—AFP

SERBIANS LAMENT DJOKOVIC DECLINE

BELGRADE: Serbia's press yesterday, lamented the poor performance of national tennis hero Novak Djokovic after he crashed out of the French Open, the latest shock in a year-long slide in form. Defending champion Djokovic suffered a stunning 7-6 (7/5), 6-3, 6-0 quarter-final defeat to Austria's Dominic Thiem in what was his earliest exit at Roland Garros in seven years. The 30-year-old Serb hinted that he may step back from the sport to regroup, just 12 months after holding all four Grand Slam titles.

"This has not happened to Novak in the past 12 years," read a headline in Blic newspaper's online edition. The defeat was Djokovic's first straight-sets loss at a major in four years and his first 6-0 "bagel" at a Slam since the 2005 US Open. "Djokovic outplayed like never before," read a headline in the Politika daily, which lamented his "inglorious farewell to last year's title". "What was worst about this failure was not the really negative result. But that Djokovic did not have the slightest chance in the second and third sets, nor did he show any of the quality seen in his best days," commented the newspaper.

The Vecernje Novosti newspaper said the defeat "will cost a lot" as Djokovic may now fall to fourth position in the world rankings. The former world number one was knocked off top spot in November by Britain's Andy Murray. Last month he announced he had parted ways with his training team, including long-time coach Marian Vajda, believing that this "shock therapy" could help him return to the top of the game. He then brought in Andre Agassi as coach. Djokovic lives in Monaco but remains hugely popular in his native country, where he set up a foundation developing early childhood education projects.—AFP

KELLOGG FIGHTS KOKKINAKIS ON 'SPECIAL K' TRADEMARK

SYDNEY: Australian tennis ace Thanasi Kokkinakis faced court action yesterday from cereal giant Kellogg, which is not happy at plans to use his nickname "Special K" commercially. Kokkinakis and doubles partner Nick Kyrgios have been dubbed the Special Ks by media and the public, and the 21-year-old wants to use the moniker as a branding campaign across clothing and tennis wear. But the US-based multinational which has held an Australian trademark for its Special K breakfast cereal for more than 50 years launched court action to stop him. A spokeswoman for Kellogg told that the Kokkinakis family had tried to register their own trademark, which sparked the retaliatory action, with a procedural hearing yesterday.

"Kellogg will continue to defend our very strong and iconic Special K brand which is known and loved by many Australians," the company said. The Sydney Daily Telegraph said Kokkinakis, who has slipped down the rankings from a career-high 69 due to injury, wanted to create a logo and brand for himself in a similar way that Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal have created lucrative businesses marketing their own range of products. It is not the first time an Australian player has become embroiled in a trademark dispute, with Lleyton Hewitt losing a case in 2011 over the use of the term "C'mon", which was a hallmark of his game. Another Australian had already trademarked the phrase in 2004, the newspaper said.—AFP

AUSSIE WOMEN DROP SOUTHERN STARS NAME

SYDNEY: Australia's women's cricket team has dropped the "Southern Stars" as their official name in the pursuit of gender equality. The world's top-ranked side will now be known simply as the Australian women's team in official communications, matching the men's team. "This move may appear symbolic, but it does carry considerable weight," Cricket Australia chairman David Peever said. "Cricket cannot hope to be a sport for all Australians if it does not recognize the power of words, and the respect for women that sits behind such decisions."

Social media accounts which use the Southern Stars name will remain, because of their strong following, but the official name and logo will be changed. "I think it's a big step towards gender equality and it's great that Cricket Australia have recognized that," captain Meg Lanning told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation yesterday.—AFP



PARIS: Britain's Andy Murray returns the ball to Japan's Keinishikori during their tennis match at the Roland Garros 2017 French Open.—AFP

'GARBAGE' MAN MURRAY, NADAL EYE DREAM FINAL

PARIS: Andy Murray and Rafael Nadal can edge closer to an intriguing French Open final rich in landmark moments today after drastically contrasting campaigns in Paris. World number one Murray was the first British man in the Roland Garros final since Bunny Austin in 1937 when he finished runner-up to Novak Djokovic last year. Two more victories, however, starting with his semi-final against 2015 winner Stan Wawrinka, would make him the first Briton to lift the men's trophy since Fred Perry 82 years ago.

Nadal, who tackles Dominic Thiem, the conqueror of defending champion Djokovic, is bidding to become the first man to capture the same major on 10 occasions. Murray arrived in France suffering from a fever, the latest woe in a season which has seen him endure an elbow injury, flu and shingles. "I came in playing garbage," admitted the 30-year-old of a Masters clay-court swing which saw him exit in the third round in Monte Carlo and Madrid and lose his opener in Rome. "If someone had offered me a semi-final spot before the tournament, I would have signed up for that." His form in Paris has sent out mixed messages. He needed four sets to get past Andrey Kuznetsov and Martin Klizan in the first two rounds.

Then, in what was expected to be a third-round ambush, he sailed past Juan

Martin del Potro in straight sets and was similarly at ease against Karen Khachanov in the last 16. However, in the quarter-finals, he dropped the first set against Kei Nishikori before his greater stamina proved decisive. Nadal, meanwhile, is the hot favorite to collect an unprecedented 10th French Open and 15th career major. The 31-year-old Spaniard, like Wawrinka and Thiem, hasn't dropped a set at the tournament. He should also be the fresher having spent just under eight hours on court through five rounds. Murray has needed the best part of 14 hours playing time while Wawrinka has been in action for almost 11 hours and Thiem just under 10.

'Behind the stones'

Nadal has dropped just 22 games so far, a figure aided by compatriot Pablo Carreno Busta retiring through injury in the second set of their quarter-final. Bjorn Borg surrendered just 32 games on his way to the 1978 title, but Nadal insisted he has no interest in such records. "I don't know how many games I lost this year, but I really don't care about this. I only care that I am in the semi-finals," said Nadal. "My only goal is try to be ready to play my best. The rest of these things, we can always find behind the stones." Wawrinka, like Murray a three-time major winner, has

made his trademark understated progress to a third successive

Roland Garros semi-final. The Swiss third seed, at 32, is the oldest man to get to the last four since Jimmy Connors back in 1985. He trails Murray in head-to-head meetings 10-7 and lost to the Briton in four sets in the semi-finals last year. Wawrinka has lost 54 games identical to the figure at the same stage in 2015 when he became champion. "In the semi-final last year, Andy was really aggressive," said Wawrinka.

"He was pushing me all the time, so it was tough for me to find any solution." Wawrinka, Nadal and Murray in the semi-finals means it's only the third time that three men over 30 have got to this stage. It happened at Roland Garros in 1968 and at this year's Australian Open. However, Thiem won't mind being the odd man out.

The 23-year-old Austrian condemned Djokovic to a first straight-sets loss at a major in four years in his stunning quarter-final triumph, avenging his defeat to the Serb in the 2016 semi-finals. He is the only man this year to have defeated Nadal on clay with his last-eight win in Rome offsetting losses in the final in Barcelona and Madrid. "It's going to be the toughest match you can imagine," admitted sixth seed Thiem, who trails Nadal 4-2 on head to head.—AFP



CLEVELAND: Kyrie Irving #2 of the Cleveland Cavaliers drives to the basket against Shaun Livingston #34 and Draymond Green #23 of the Golden State Warriors in the first half in Game 3 of the 2017 NBA Finals at Quicken Loans Arena. — AFP

PERFECT SHOT: DURANT'S LATE 3 GIVES WARRIORS 3-0 LEAD

CLEVELAND: Kevin Durant released his deep shot, the one he always makes in his dreams. As the ball hung in the air, his plan to win a championship, Golden State's grip on the series, Cleveland's last-gasp attempt to defend its title, all of it was on the line. Perfect.

Durant drained the shot of his professional life - a 3-pointer over LeBron James with 45.3 seconds left - and scored 31 points as the Warriors, pushed harder than they have been throughout their pristine postseason, moved within one win of a title and payback by rallying to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 118-113 on Wednesday night to take a 3-0 lead in the NBA Finals. The Warriors trailed by six with three minutes left before Durant, criticized for leaving Oklahoma City last summer to chase a championship, brought them back, scoring 14 in the fourth.

"He took over," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "You can tell, he knows this is his moment. He's been an amazing player in this league for a long time, and he senses this is his time, his moment, his team." With their 15th straight win, the Warriors now have the longest postseason streak for any team in the four major professional sports. But that means little to Golden State's players, who with a win in Game 4 on Friday night can exorcise those haunting demons from last June when the Warriors blew a 3-1 lead in the Finals to the Cavaliers.

Overcoming the impossible

No team has ever overcome a 3-0 deficit, and it doesn't appear any team is equipped to hang with these Warriors, who may go down as one of the best ever. Still, Durant isn't looking too far ahead. "I never been in this position before," said Durant, long accused of not being able to win the big game. "I don't want to relax. It's not over. This is a crazy game. Anything can happen. So I don't want to relax or feel like it's over, it's not."

Klay Thompson added 30 points and Stephen Curry had 26 for the Warriors, who are one win from their second title in three years. If not for their meltdown last year, the Warriors, whose record-setting 73-win season got lost in the Finals aftermath, would be looking for a third straight crown. "We talked about it since the finals last year that the last season was a very unique year, for a lot of different reasons, and we learned a lot," Curry said. "I think we have grown and matured just mentally of how to just pace yourself through this long year and take every day as a new experience and something that you can kind of take control of."

James shook off a knee-buckling blow to the chin while scoring 39 and Kyrie Irving added 38 for the Cavs, who took a 113-107 lead with 3:09 left on J.R. Smith's 3-pointer. Curry hit a

layup and after both James and Irving missed for the Cavs, Durant dropped his 3 - a shot that could be the one most remembered in this magnificent run by the Warriors.

"All I was looking at was the bottom of the net," Durant said. "I saw he (James) was playing his heels behind the 3-point line. I've been working on that shot my whole life. To see that go in, that was liberating, man. We've got one more to go." After Golden State went up, Irving missed a 3 from his favorite spot on the right side and the Warriors closed it out with four free throws in the final 12.9 seconds before celebrating briefly on the floor and then charging down the hallway to their locker room.

After winning Games 1 and 2 by a combined 41 points at home, the Warriors had to scrap for all 48 minutes to take down the Cavs, who will need a similar effort to avoid being swept by a team with few - if any - weaknesses. "It's the most firepower I've played in my career," James said. "I've played against some great teams, but I don't think no team has had this type of firepower." James and Irving were relentless in the second half and it appeared they had done enough to get Cleveland over the top and perhaps back in the series.

Durant, though, was not going to be denied. Not after getting this close, not after enduring so much heat for turning his back on the Thunder, not with a chance to put the Cavaliers in an insurmountable hole. The 7-footer finished 10 of 18 from the field with eight rebounds and four assists. Curry, who has benefited more than any other player by Durant's arrival and is healthy in these Finals, added 13 rebounds and six assists.

With Kerr back on the bench for the second straight game after battling back pain, Golden State, which made a record 9 3-pointers in the first quarter and finished 16 of 33 behind the arc, also got just what it needed from its reserves as Andre Iguodala had several big plays, none bigger than stripping James of the ball on a potential tying 3-pointer with 12.6 seconds left.

TIP-INS

Warriors: Golden State is the 13th team to take a 3-0 lead in Finals, and third since 1996. ... Broke the record of 14 straight postseason wins held by the NHL's Pittsburgh Penguins, who did it twice. ... Curry has hit at least one 3-pointer in all 73 career postseason games. ... Golden State's nine 3-pointers in the first quarter broke the previous Finals mark held by five teams, most recently the Warriors in 2015.

Cavaliers: James (1,175) passed Sam Jones (1,143), Bill Russell (1,151) and Elgin Baylor (1,161) to move into fourth place on the Finals scoring list. Michael Jordan (1,176) is next. ... James became the first player to appear in 20 or more Finals games with two franchises. He played in 23 for Miami. — AP

WARRIORS SET TO MAKE THEIR CLAIM AS NBA'S BEST EVER

CLEVELAND: One victory left for the Golden State Warriors to claim another title. Not the one as NBA champions. The one as the best team ever. Kevin Durant, Stephen Curry and the rest of the Warriors will be able to make that boast if they win today to complete the most impressive postseason run in major sports history. They moved to the brink of that with a 118-113 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers on Wednesday in Game 3 of the NBA Finals. The Warriors are 15-0 and can finish off the NBA's first perfect postseason with a victory here in Game 4.

Combine that with last year's 73-win season, and a second title in three years - which could have easily been three consecutive championships - and foundation of the case has been made. The Cavaliers are no match for these Warriors, not even with arguably the best player on the planet in LeBron James. Golden State's only competition is with Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant, Michael Jordan and the Bulls, and other great teams from the past.

None won as dominantly as this team, which has four versatile All-Stars - including two former league MVPs - in their prime. These aptly named Warriors spent the last two months building big leads, then Wednesday wiped out a late deficit. Some people may argue their greatness, but James won't. "It's probably the most, most firepower I've played in my career," James said. "I played against some great teams, but I don't think no team has had this type of firepower. So even when you're playing well, you got to play like A-plus plus, because they're going to make runs and they're going to make shots and they got guys that's going to make plays."

Place in history

The NBA's best postseason run is the 15-1 mark of the 2001 Lakers, while the 1983 Philadelphia 76ers went 12-1. Jordan's first title team in 1991 is one of three squads that went 15-2. The Warriors thought they were carving out their place in history when they set a record with 73 wins last season. But history turned to infamy when they blew a 3-1 lead to the Cavaliers, the biggest collapse in NBA Finals history.

They spoke openly of their desire to beat Jordan's 72-win team in 1996, but this time have downplayed the importance of 16-0. "We obviously know how hard it is to win a championship, what all goes into it and how important each game is. And now that you can look ahead to Friday, all our focus is on that," Curry said. "And just we obviously - we want 16 wins; it doesn't matter how we get there. But now that we're in this situation, why not take care of business and finish the job?"

They were winning by 16.9 points per game through the previous 14, which would easily be another NBA record. And when they finally got a close one, they showed why their roster is the envy of just about every other team, with the long-range shooting of Durant, Curry and Klay Thompson, and the defensive wizardry of Draymond Green and 2015 NBA Finals MVP Andre Iguodala.

That roster would give these Warriors a chance against any great team from the past - and gives most of their opponents no chance against them. "They're definitely a different team than they were last year that's definitely in full effect that we're all fully aware of," the Cavs' Kyrie Irving said. That's mostly because of Durant, the former NBA MVP who signed with the Warriors in July. Curry, winner of the last two MVP awards, is fully healthy after struggling through last year's Finals. — AP



CLEVELAND: Stephen Curry #30 and Kevin Durant #35 of the Golden State Warriors react late in the game against the Cleveland Cavaliers. — AFP

MORATA SAVES SPAIN IN COLOMBIA THRILLER

MURCIA: Alvaro Morata came off the bench to salvage Julien Lopetegui's unbeaten record as Spain coach in an entertaining 2-2 draw with Colombia in Murcia on Wednesday. After Edwin Cardona had cancelled out David Silva's opener for the hosts, Radamel Falcao's first international goal for two years had Colombia on course for a famous win. However, Morata made his case to start Sunday's World Cup qualifier away to Macedonia with a towering header three minutes from time to save Spain's blushes.

Lopetegui ran the risk of an adverse result as Nacho was the only Real Madrid player to start for Spain after the La Liga giants' Champions League final heroics in defeating Juventus on Saturday to retain the trophy, whilst David de Gea, Sergio Busquets and Diego Costa

were also left on the bench. Colombia boss Jose Pekerman gave James Rodriguez and Juan Cuadrado the chance to bounce back from their Champions League final disappointment. Rodriguez was left out of the Real squad, whilst Juventus's Cuadrado was sent-off just 17 minutes after coming on as a substitute. Cuadrado had the first serious effort on goal as his long-range shot was spilled by Pepe Reina on a night to forget for the Napoli goalkeeper, but Falcao was flagged offside as he attempted to mop up the rebound.

Spain went ahead with characteristic panache on 22 minutes when Silva finished off a brilliant team move to score his seventh international goal in Lopetegui's short reign. Iago Aspas freed Pedro Rodriguez down the right and his low cross was

turned home by Silva despite the best efforts of Arsenal goalkeeper David Ospina. Rodriguez looks set to leave Madrid this summer, but the top scorer at the 2014 World Cup gave a glimpse of his quality with a lovely turn and shot with the outside of his left foot that curled just wide. Colombia were gifted a route back into the game when their equaliser arrived five minutes before half-time, though, as a mix-up between Reina and Cesar Azpilicueta allowed Cardona to loop into an unguarded net. Lopetegui replaced the experience of Silva and Andres Iniesta with Saul Niguez and Marco Asensio at the break, both of whom who will take their places in Spain's under-21 squad for the European Championships later this month in Poland. — Agencies

MAN CITY COMPLETE MOVE FOR GOALKEEPER EDERSON

LONDON: Manchester City have completed the signing of Brazilian goalkeeper Ederson from Benfica, the Premier League club announced yesterday. The announcement came a week after Benfica said they had agreed to sell the 23-year-old to City for 40 million euros (\$45 million, £34.7 million), making him the second most expensive goalkeeper ever. Ederson will officially become a City player on July 1. City did not disclose the length of his contract.

"I like everything about Manchester City," Ederson said in quotes published on the City website. "This is a great club, they have amazing fans and they play splendid football. I have always had the dream to play in English football and now I'm going to make it true. "With Pep Guardiola, City are growing more and more. He is putting in place a young team for the future. Those were important factors in making my decision." In signing Ederson, City manager Guardiola hopes to have put an end to the goalkeeping saga that plagued his first season at the Etihad Stadium.

Guardiola allowed Joe Hart to join Torino on loan, but Hart's replacement, Claudio Bravo, proved inadequate and back-up goalkeeper Willy Caballero ended the campaign as City's number one. Ederson becomes the most expensive goalkeeper since Gianluigi Buffon joined Juventus from Parma for 53 million euros in 2001. He began his career with home-town club Sao Paulo and spent time in Benfica's youth system before launching his senior career with Portuguese club Ribeirao.

After a three-year spell with Rio Ave, he returned to Benfica in 2015. Ederson only became Benfica's first-choice goalkeeper last season and helped the club to a league and Portuguese Cup double. He is uncapped at senior level, but was named in Brazil's squad for their upcoming friendlies against Argentina and Australia in Melbourne.

"We are delighted to bring Ederson to Manchester City," said City's director of football Txiki Begiristain. "He is one of the best young goalkeepers in Europe and he is an important addition to the squad for next season and the coming seasons." Ederson is City's second major signing of the close season following the £43 million (\$55.7 million, 49.6 million euros) capture of Portuguese playmaker Bernardo Silva from French champions Monaco. Caballero, Pablo Zabaleta, Bacary Sagna, Gael Clichy and Jesus Navas have all been allowed to leave as Guardiola reshapes a squad that finished 15 points below champions Chelsea in third place.

Costa: Conte 'doesn't want me'

Elsewhere, Diego Costa insists he will look for an exit route out of Chelsea after being told by manager Antonio Conte he is not in the Italian's plans for next season. Costa was an integral part of Chelsea's Premier League winning campaign this season, scoring 22 goals. However, he claims he has no option but to leave Stamford Bridge in the coming months after being told by Conte he has no future with the English champions.

"I am going to be honest, the other day I got a message from the coach, Conte, that I am not part of his plans," Costa told reporters after Spain's 2-2 draw with Colombia on Wednesday. "Right now I am a Chelsea player because I have a contract, but if the coach doesn't want me there then I have to leave." Costa said last month that he would only contemplate a move back to Atletico Madrid, from whom he joined Chelsea in 2014. — AFP



BEIJING: Barcelona's Argentinean forward Lionel Messi (centre R) poses for a photo with Chinese fans during a press conference at a hotel. — AFP

SAMPAOLI BANKS ON MESSI FOR WORLD CUP REVIVAL

MELBOURNE: New manager Jorge Sampaoli says he is looking to superstar Lionel Messi to revive Argentina's World Cup fortunes starting with today's friendly with Brazil in Melbourne. Sampaoli has been installed to kick-start the two-time world champions' ailing South American campaign where they lag outside the automatic qualifying positions in fifth spot with four games left. Argentina will square off with Brazil before a capacity 100,000 crowd at the Melbourne Cricket Ground ahead of their crucial next qualifier in Uruguay on August 31.

Sampaoli, who is Argentina's third coach during the current World Cup campaign after Gerardo Martino and Edgardo Bauza, said he valued Messi's commitment to get his country to next year's World Cup finals in Russia. "I'm very thankful that the best player in the world cut short his vacation in China and was able to travel here for a friendly," Sampaoli told reporters yesterday. "He has the will to participate and drive Argentina to the World Cup, so he's very much involved toward these goals.

"The things that he's done for the team, especially this time round, are really valuable. "I really hope that the abilities that he shows as a leader and as a player will help Argentina improve." Sampaoli wants to use the Melbourne match to see Messi and Paris Saint-Germain's Angel Di Maria work together. "They are very good players, individually, and these friendly games give us the opportunity to test their compatibility and see how well they can work together," Sampaoli said. "They're both great players and we have great expectations. I believe that they will be able to help the team."

Never a friendly

But Inter Milan striker Mauro Icardi, recalled to the Argentine squad for the first time since 2013, is in doubt for Friday's match with a thigh injury. Sampaoli said he was keen for Icardi to at least play a few minutes "but unfortunately the doctor is not on the same page". "So it doesn't matter how strongly we want him to play if the medical advice is to the contrary. We're hoping for a miracle in the next 24 hours for him to be able to play at least a few minutes."

Despite the match being classified as a friendly, the former Sevilla manager said his players were committed to show how well they can play, particularly against their arch-rival. "They want to play very strongly to demonstrate that they really value coming here as a team and there's also the aspect of playing a very strong rival team," he said.

Brazil, who have already qualified for next year's World Cup, are without their talisman Neymar but Manchester City midfielder Fernandinho said they were hellbent not to lose their edge against Argentina. "Brazil and Argentina is never a friendly, everybody wants to win and we know how important this is being a classic," Fernandinho said. "We need to continue in our rhythm, but Argentina has a new coach and he had really good work with Chile and Sevilla. This is more motivation for them. "To lose would be different for us because we haven't lost under (coach) Tite, but we are prepared if we do." Apart from Fernandinho, his teammate and rising star Gabriel Jesus, Liverpool's Philippe Coutinho, Paris Saint-Germain's Thiago Silva and Chelsea's David Luiz are in the Brazil squad. — AFP

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CLEVELAND: Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry (30) shoots in front of Cleveland Cavaliers forward LeBron James (23) during the second half of Game 3 of basketball's NBA Finals. — AP

Durant's heroics lifts Warriors over Cavs

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