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TIGHT SECURITY FOR QIYAM PRAYERS



Worshippers pray at the Grand Mosque in Kuwait City early yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (More pics on Page 9)

By Shakir Reshamwala

Thousands of worshippers thronged the Grand Mosque early yesterday to spend the night of the 27th of Ramadan in prayer and supplication. But the number of attendees was fewer than in previous years, possibly due to tightened security measures, construction works and multiple layers of checks. Worshippers had to pass through metal detectors and undergo body pat downs before entering the mosque. Streets surrounding the mosque were cordoned off, and unlike previous years, praying on the streets surrounding the mosque was banned.

As on other nights, eight rakaats of tahajjud were performed, followed by three rakaats of witr. The first four rakaats were led by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nafees, and the remaining by Sheikh Meshari Al-Afasy. In the interval, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Qattan delivered a short sermon, extolling the virtues of memorizing the Holy Quran and urging the Arab and Muslim nation to stay united.

The Grand Mosque in Kuwait is the hub of worship in Kuwait in Ramadan, and thousands pack its cavernous interiors throughout Ramadan. Many believe 'Laylatul Qadr' (Night of Power or Decree) falls on night of the 27th of Ramadan, but this is not a confirmed fact as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instructed Muslims to hunt for this night on the odd-numbered nights of the last ten days of Ramadan. Qiyam ul-layl or special nightly prayers are therefore held during these nights at the Grand Mosque and many other mosques across Kuwait.

Laylatul Qadr holds great significance for Muslims, and the last ten nights of Ramadan are spent in prayer and meditation. Ubaadah bin Saamit (RA) reports that he asked the Prophet (PBUH) about Laylatul Qadr. He replied: "It is in Ramadan, during the last ten days, on the unevenly numbered nights, either the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, 29th or the last night of Ramadan. Whosoever stands in 'ibaadah' (worship) on this night, with sincere faith and with genuine hopes of gaining reward, his previous sins will be forgiven. Among the signs of this night is that it is a serene, quiet, shining night, neither hot, nor cold but temperate as if a moon is shining clear, and no meteors are shot at the devils on that night; it lasts until the break of the dawn. Another sign is that at morn, the sun rises without any radiant beams of light, appearing rather like the moon in its fullness. On that day, Allah prohibits the devils from rising up with the sun."



Imsak	Fajr	Shorook	Duhr	Asr	Maghrib	Isha
03:04	03:14	04:49	11:50	15:24	18:51	20:23

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Local Spotlight

THE LOSS OF UNICEF



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is on the verge of freezing its program of assistance to the children of Syria. This is certainly shocking news. Money is pouring in the coffers of terrorist organizations and various armed groups in the world. Wealthy members of the Muslim Brotherhood in all parts of the world are living in comfort and are content with the privileges and money being collected for them. But the UNICEF is facing the threat of ending its work due to the lack of money and support. It is unable to achieve its humanitarian goals anymore.

UNICEF announced a week ago that the huge shortfall in funding could deprive about 9 million Syrian children of UN aid. UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa Geert Kaplari said the funding gap is \$220 million, adding that the crisis is the worst for the organization since the launch of its operations in Syria.

According to UNICEF, the humanitarian needs in Syria and neighboring areas are growing and host communities are facing the risk of being unable to meet the demands. Records show about 6 million children need help in Syria, as well as another 2.5 million who have found temporary shelter in neighboring countries. Kaplari said the huge funding gap threatens to close several aid programs, including the provision of potable water and sanitation services to 1.2 million children living in camps, settlements and host communities, and provision of healthcare and basic feeding services to 5.4 million children, including those living in besieged and inaccessible areas of Syria.

He added the risk will include financial support for families, which allows them to keep 500,000 children in schools. The distribution of clothing and blankets in winter is another factor. UNICEF said it has received only 25 percent of the \$1.4 billion needed from the donor countries for emergency operations in Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Jordan and Egypt.

According to UN statistics, one billion children live in conflict areas, including nearly 300 million children under the age of five. This is indeed a tragedy and we are responsible not only to save these children, but also to stop wars and conflicts in the Arab and Muslim world because we seem to be the only ones fighting. It is not only regrettable, but a disgrace to a world that is generous in the disbursement of money for cars and clothing, but very treacherous with childhood and humanity!

The Syrian child lives in unstable political and economic conditions, which reflects on his life and makes him go through worse situations than those in which his counterparts live in the rest of the world, including the wider Arab world. An international campaign must be launched to commit all UN organizations to provide financial support, and UNICEF needs to review child-related decisions and recruitment of children in wars.

Where are the ambassadors of UNICEF - representatives and actresses - both Arabs and foreigners? Why are they hiding their heads now? Where are the foreign ambassadors of UNICEF? Are they absent because the children of Syria are Muslims and Arabs? What they are doing?

People also need to be aware to not give money to unknown and possibly terrorist organizations or even people who could be connected with these groups - it is like giving money to kill more innocents. Clearly, awareness of the seriousness of the issue of lost childhood is absent, and everyone is to blame if we let UNICEF end its aid.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Photo of items found in the popular Souq Safafir in Sharq, Kuwait City. — Photo by Mustafa Al-Bader

In my view

DEATH BY OBESITY

By Sana Kalim

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The world is getting fatter, but malnutrition is still widespread. There is a large divide between overeating and literal starvation. If the world were 100 people, 18 would be obese and one would be starving. There is a large gap in food being distributed evenly. The world has around 2.1 billion overweight people, and in developing countries, they make up over 50 percent of the population.

Kuwait is officially the most obese country in the world - and there is no hiding it! Especially with the recent upsurge of stomach stapling surgeries, in which Kuwait ranks first as well, with 5,000 stomach staplings performed every year for a population of only 4 million.

With 42.8 percent (with an estimate 60 percent by 2020) of the population classified as obese in Kuwait, and 70 percent overweight - it is no surprise that this condition has been plaguing generations of families in the state. Worldwide, 13 percent of the population is obese, out of 7.5 billion people.

This has stemmed from the massive fast food industry in Kuwait. Some people complain “there is nothing else to do”, and during Ramadan, we have luqaimat, overly sugary teas, samosas and a plethora of other unhealthy food that we eat a lot of. Diabetes levels in Kuwait have become a growing concern in Kuwait, with type 2 diabetes ravaging our children’s lives.

Obesity is an issue affecting people of all ages and incomes everywhere, and no single country has man-

aged to stop or even slow down the rate of obesity - and this trend will continue. Overweight people are more prone to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, osteoarthritis and kidney disease, and the soaring numbers are placing a heavy burden on healthcare systems, according to a study. Worldwide, 3.4 million deaths have been linked to high body weight, and now children are starting to die earlier than their parents, a burden the elderly must bear due to their children being struck by the effects of being overweight.

Overall, from 188 countries, the rate of overweight adults has grown by 28 percent, and a horrifying 50 percent for children. In fact, 25 percent (contrasting with 8 percent in 1980) of children are now classified as overweight in developing countries, with adolescent girls being the category of concern in the Middle East.

WHO aims to stop this epidemic by 2050. Kuwait tried in 2013 to enforce a program dubbed “Kuwait National Program for Healthy Living: First 5-Year Plan (2013-2017)” with very recognizable solutions and issues as to why this is happening - such as the population’s faith, believing the Creator will lift the burden of being overweight, to improving school environments. It has also provided many goals such as reducing hip to waist ratio. It will be very interesting to see the conclusion of this program soon.

Good luck Kuwait!

The problem with MY SHORT HAIR

By Umm Sara

When I got my driving license in 1999, the first thing I did was cut my hair short. I mean short short. Pixie short. Short as a man's. The haircut seemed to shock everyone I knew. At that time in Kuwait, short hair on a woman was considered a sign of a rebellious attitude.

But my short hair has nothing to do with rebellion. Since then, every time it grows longer, I go back and cut it short again. It's been 18 years since I got my first pixie hairstyle. But I still get bullied, mocked and sometimes called a lesbian, or "boya", which is a pejorative for a tomboy in Kuwait.

Many girls and women prefer short hair for a variety of reasons. Firstly it is much easier to care for. If you are a busy, working woman, wife and mother, you may prefer to spend your free time with your family rather than hours in the salon each week.

Moreover, the connection between long hair and femininity is sexist and can be oppressive. I'm not saying that every woman with long hair is oppressed. In fact, just the opposite. What I'm saying is that women should have the choice. Their hairstyles should suit their personalities and lifestyles.

At the core of the problem is a belief that women must dress, act and comport themselves according to the standards that satisfy men's ideas of beauty. Hair is considered a 'temptation' and a beauty asset - essentially an object to attract a man.

But what if I prefer my husband to love me for my mind? Or my kind heart? Or maybe for the combination of everything that is good and right and beautiful about me? This outdated concept of what is beautiful and the narrow definition of how women should look can be oppressive.

The Kuwaiti society, like all small societies, has a common characteristic - observation of people and interference in their freedoms. People around the world judge others by their color, gender and clothing, but Arab communities dignify long hair on women, and humiliate those with short hair.

Stereotyping

The situation in Kuwait should be better than other Gulf countries because it has been a pluralistic country since the beginning. It has always been an oasis of safety for Arabs, Persians, Muslims, Christians, Jews, Asians and Africans. With this in mind, it is illogical that attempts are made to homogenize the Kuwaiti woman. I'm happily married and have beautiful children, yet, I've never seen an advertisement portraying a Kuwaiti mother with very short hair.

Fortunately, this stereotyping is almost non-existent among young people. There was once a little boy with his mother at a children's clothing department store, pointing at a woman with short hair and telling his mom, "Look, she's like a boy!" The mother did not bother to apologize to the woman or even stop her child. The short-haired woman had just recovered from cancer. She told me that judgmental words are more painful than chemotherapy. The eye of the society is chasing her as if she has committed a crime of honor.

I'm not attempting to justify my argument. But, there's a hadith in Sahih Muslim, Book 46, Hadith 6707, which is transmitted on the authority of Abu Huraira from Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him: "Verily Allah does not look to your bodies, nor to your faces, but He looks into your hearts," and he pointed towards the heart with his fingers. There is no difference between a woman or any human with long or short hair - only when it comes to the heart.



Fun things to do for Eid holiday in Kuwait

By Nawara Fattahova

For those who are not travelling for Eid Al-Fitr, here are some activities they can enjoy doing during the holidays:



Chalets

A chalet is the perfect place to spend the Eid holiday, far from the madding crowd. But bookings have to be done really early. For instance, TEC's Khairan Resort has been fully booked more than a month prior to Eid. There are other resorts in Khairan and Julaia, but most are also booked.

The Mychalet site still has some chalets available for rent for the Eid period. The price depends on the size - there are one-room apartments as well as 3- or 4-bedroom chalets. It also offers apartments at Muhanna Resort in Khairan, which is more affordable than standalone chalets. The resort has various activities for kids and three swimming pools.

The Seashell Julaia Hotel and Resort (formerly Kempinski) offers chalets and rooms of different sizes, along with various facilities. There will be a DJ, music band, dinner, entertainment program, Russian circus and other activities during Eid.

Sea and outdoor activities

Those who simply like to enjoy the beach and the sea can spend the day at any of the sea clubs,

including Shaab, Ras Al-Ardh, Messila, Egaila and others. Those who like action can rent a jet ski by the seaside, or go on a sea trip by renting a boat and visiting any of Kuwait's nine islands, snorkeling or scuba diving.

Visiting Failaka Island is a popular activity during the Eid holidays, as visitors can stay there for a day or more. The island has a hotel, zoo, museum, beaches and historical monuments. Visitors can reach the island either by the KPTC ferry from Ras Al-Ardh or by the yacht sailing from Marina.

Water parks are also a perfect escape from the heat. Aqua Park near Kuwait Towers is open from morning to welcome visitors with new additions for even more fun. Messilah Water Village also hosts special programs during Eid. Finally, Flow House Kuwait, the country's newest water park in Abu Halifa near Magic Mall, offers water surfing and many other fun activities. Visitors can rent a chalet inside Flow House during the daytime.

Youngsters can enjoy playing soap football by renting soap fields by the seaside. Another option is playing paintball near Aqua Park, where people can participate in groups.



Ice skating and theme parks

Beating the hot weather by going ice skating is fun. Besides the ice skating rink of TEC in Kuwait City, there are other smaller skating rinks too. The Promenade Mall in Hawally has an ice skating rink inside the mall. Shaab park also has an ice skating rink. The Entertainment City is still closed for renovations, but Shaab Park and Marah Land are open.

Malls, shopping and movies

Most of the local shopping districts including the malls and souks will have activities during the first two days of Eid. Al Kout mall in Fahaheel, for instance, will have a lifesized Kuwaiti board game, Enhash Yal Theeb set up and players can compete for a chance for prizes. Al Kout will also have a 'travel the world' selfie station set up with cutouts of world famous landmarks and games and activities for kids during all three days of the Eid holiday.

Strolling through Souq Al-Mubarakiya during the evening time and enjoying tea and shisha at one of the local restaurants can be a fun activity. Lots of summer movies are now playing at the cinemas - both for adults and children.

Many malls including Promenade, Discovery, Abd Al Wahab (Galleria 2000) and the Avenues have dedicated areas for children's activities that will be having Eid games and events. You can visit Artspace cafe (in Galleria 2000 mall in Salem Al-Mubarak street, Salmiya) and learn to draw or paint. While there also check out the fun new cat cafe.

Eat, eat, eat

All the restaurants, cafes and diners will return to normal hours starting from Eid so be sure to go out and enjoy a yummy breakfast, brunch or lunch at one of your favorite food hot spots.



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Nakhi and Bajella: UNCHANGED 'STREET FOOD', PEOPLE'S FAVORITE

By Ben Garcia

In nearly every area in Kuwait, commercial establishments that surround cooperative societies include a nakhi and bajella shop. This takeout outlet serves 'traditional' Iranian-Kuwaiti food that is a favorite of both citizens and residents. These eateries were opened by the Iranian community in Kuwait in the 1950s, and from then on, became staple food shops near co-ops. Kuwait Times visited the nakhi and bajella shop near Khaldiya Co-op that has been in existence since 1965.

"My boss has owned this shop since 1992," said Saiful Islam, a Bangladeshi cook and attendant who mans the eatery. He has been working with this restaurant for the last 25 years, and confirmed that the ingredients and menu are unchanged. "The menu has never changed since it started operating in 1965," he said. The shop's dishes includes nakhi, bajella, aash, harees, jareesh and adas (lentil) soups. Takeout orders are usually placed in small white plastic containers.

Bajella is broad beans cooked in the same way. Aash is made from lentils and several other ingredients like onion, garlic, pepper and salt.

Nakhi is boiled chickpeas cooked in water and salt, served with hot chilli pepper. Bajella is broad beans cooked in the same way. Aash is made from lentils and several other ingredients like onion, garlic, pepper and salt. Harees is an oat-based gruel cooked with beef and several other ingredients. The beef is boiled till every fiber separates. It is then mixed with the oats and continuously heated on a low flame. Jareesh is similar to harees but is cooked with chicken meat.

"These are all easy-to-cook items. Orders triple every Ramadan. We open our store in Ramadan at 11 am and close at 2 am. Customers also come with their own containers or pots. Maybe they serve it to their kids who are not fasting, or if they do not want to cook while fasting," Saiful Islam said. "Preparation is easy - we mostly only need beans and water and that's it," he added.

There are no tables or chairs at the nakhi and bajella shops. All you find are huge simmering stainless steel vats. Since it is only available for takeaway, some customers consider nakhi and bajella as street food. Yousef Abdulla, a Palestinian born and brought up in Kuwait, told Kuwait Times he likes most of the dishes served by the eatery. "It's very nutritious and inexpensive. I've been a fan of this food since childhood," the 36-year-old enthused.



DUO SENTENCED TO JAIL FOR BURYING 80 DOGS IN DESERT

KUWAIT: The criminal court sentenced an American and a Nepalese to three years in jail and fined them KD 20,000 each for violating the environment protection law by burying 80 dogs in the Abdullah Port desert area after poisoning them. The incident took place a year ago. The environment police had received a call from human rights activists about a sniffer dog trainer, an American, and a Nepalese nurse, who injected 80 dogs with poison after they were retired, then buried them in Mina Abdullah. Both were charged with unethical disposal of the dogs and sent to court. A source said the two left the country before a travel ban was placed on them. Interpol was asked to arrest them.

Drug addicts fight

Police received a call from a family asking for help after two brothers fought

after taking drugs. One of the brothers pulled a knife when family members attempted to break up the fight. Both were taken to the police station.

Hospital brawl

Three citizens and two bedoons were involved in a fight in Taima, then resumed the fight at Jahra Hospital. Police received a call about a bloody fight in Taima, so police and detectives rushed to the site and arrested the five, who all sustained critical injuries due to stabbings. They were taken to Jahra Hospital under guard. While being treated, they resumed the fight, so police were brought in again. All five are being questioned to find out the cause of the fight.

Drunk man caught

An Indian was very drunk that he

entered the basement of his sponsor's neighbor's home in Ardhiya. A citizen heard voices coming from the basement of his house, and found his neighbor's driver there, inebriated and unable to control himself. The citizen took the driver to the police station, where he was charged with public drunkenness and entering a house.

Drug possession

Farwaniya police arrested a bedoon ex-convict under the influence of drugs, and found a bag of 'chemical' (a verity of 'Spice' drug with added chemicals) in his car. The suspect was stuttering nervously when they asked him for his ID and was found under the influence of drugs, and wanted on theft charges. He was sent to concerned authorities.—Al-Rai

KUWAITI QABAZARD ON MOUNT EVEREST FOR SECOND TIME IN TWO YEARS

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti mountaineer Fuad Qabazard succeeded, for the second time in two years, in climbing Mount Everest. In a statement upon arriving home yesterday, Qabazard said that the purpose of his

two-month adventure was to draw world attention towards Kuwaiti traditions. Qabazard climbed up to 8,834 meters of Mount Everest, located in the Mahalangur mountain range in the Nepal and Tibet.

He raised the Kuwait flag and pictures of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.—KUNA



EXPERT PREDICTS OIL PRICE TO BE \$45-55 PB

KUWAIT: International oil prices are forecast to remain in the vicinity of \$45 and 55 until the market regains stability and equilibrium, a Kuwaiti oil expert believes. Market balance can be restored by means of increasing more global oil stock withdrawals in a way that could send oil prices into future recovery, Mohammad Al-Shatti said. Oil producers' strategy aiming at allowing market dynamics to bring the world oil market back to earlier balance has contributed to curtailing shale oil production, he said.

However, this plan has failed to notch up the ultimate goal of rebalancing the oil market mainly due to the reluctance of OPEC and non-OPEC producers to cut oil output, the oil expert

regretted. The recent agreement by OPEC and non-OPEC countries to cut production as part of a fresh blueprint to restore market equilibrium has actually led to the recovery of oil prices, Shatti added. But, slowness in market rebalance since the oil output cut deal was put in place is primarily attributed to a hike in OPEC exports to the US market, sending oil markets into a state of concern, he pointed out. During a meeting last month, OPEC officials agreed to protract the oil output accord, pushing the deadline to March of 2018. In November, OPEC along with 10 non-OPEC members, including Russia, struck a deal to limit oil output by 1.8 million bpd in an effort to restore stability in the global oil market. — KUNA



DUO ARRESTED FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING

KUWAIT: Police arrested a Bedoon man and a Syrian national for drug trafficking. Nearly four kilograms of shabu (methamphetamine) and 150 grams of heroin were found with the suspects. The two men admitted during questioning that they possessed the drugs, which have an estimated value of KD 100,000, for trafficking purposes. They were sent to the proper authorities for further action.

TILLERSON SUPPORTS KUWAIT MEDIATION

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on Wednesday that he supports Kuwait's effort to help certain Arab nations and Qatar to resolve their differences, and urged that a list of grievances be presented to Doha as soon as possible. "In regards to the continuing dispute within the GCC, we understand a list of demands has been prepared and coordinated by the Saudis, Emiratis, Egyptians, and Bahrainis," Tillerson said in a statement.

"We hope the list of demands will soon be presented to Qatar and will be reasonable and actionable, we support the Kuwaiti mediation effort and look forward to this matter moving toward a resolution," he affirmed. — KUNA

Qiyam prayers held at Grand Mosque



KUWAIT: Men and women pray at the Grand Mosque in Kuwait City early on Thursday, on the night of 'Lailat al-Qadr' which marks the revelation of the Holy Quran, Islam's holy book, to the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) through the archangel Gabriel during the fasting month of Ramadan. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



International

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MOSUL: In this file photo, residents walk past the crooked minaret called Al-Hadba, or 'hunchback', in a busy market area in Mosul, Iraq. (Inset) An image grab from a video broadcasted by Iraq's Al-Sumariya TV channel shows the base of Mosul's trademark leaning minaret, known as the 'Hadba' (Hunchback), a day after it was destroyed by jihadists from the Islamic State (IS) group. —AFP photos

IS DESTROYS ICONIC MOSUL MINARET IRAQI PM ABADI CALLS IT AN 'OFFICIAL DECLARATION OF DEFEAT'

MOSUL: Mosul's trademark leaning minaret was missing from its skyline for the first time in centuries yesterday after desperate jihadists blew it up as Iraqi forces advanced on an ancient mosque compound. Explosions on Wednesday evening leveled the Nuri mosque where Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi gave his first sermon as leader of the Islamic State group and its ancient leaning minaret, known as the "Hadba" (Hunchback).

Officials from Iraq and the US-led anti-IS coalition said the destruction of the site was a sign of the jihadist group's imminent loss of Mosul, with Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi calling it an "official declaration of defeat". The loss of the unmistakable 12th century minaret—one of the country's most recognizable monuments sometimes referred to as Iraq's Tower of Pisa—left the country in shock. But the destruction had been widely anticipated, with commanders saying IS, also known as ISIS and Daesh, would not have allowed Iraqi forces to score a hugely symbolic victory by recapturing the site.

"They blew up this place in an attempt to cover up their heavy losses in the media, but the media and the people see the victories and see the collapse of Daesh," Brigadier General Falah Fadel al-Obeidi, from the elite Counter-Terrorism Service, said in

Mosul. IS claimed on its Amaq propaganda agency that the site was hit in a US strike, but the US-led coalition said it was the jihadists who had "destroyed one of Mosul and Iraq's great treasures". Brett McGurk, the US envoy to the coalition, said it was the "clearest sign yet of desperation and defeat" from the jihadists. The destruction of the site in Mosul's Old City adds to a long list of priceless heritage and historical monuments destroyed by IS during its three-year rule over parts of Iraq and Syria. The minaret, which was completed in 1172 and has been listing for centuries, is featured on Iraq's 10,000-dinar banknote and was the main symbol of Iraq's second city—giving its name to countless restaurants, companies and even sports clubs in Mosul.

Mosul battle not over

After seizing Iraq's Sunni Arab heartland in June 2014, IS reportedly rigged the Hadba with explosives but was prevented from blowing it up by the local population. The jihadists consider the reverence of objects, including of such sites, as heresy. The minaret used to be visible from many spots in the city, especially from the east bank, across the Tigris river that divides the city. Iraqi forces had been approaching the Nuri mosque on

Wednesday, after launching an assault on Sunday to retake the Old City, the last district of Mosul still under IS control.

About 100,000 residents are believed to still be trapped in the Old City by IS, which has been using civilians as human shields to defend its last redoubt in Mosul. The area still controlled by the jihadists is small but its narrow streets and the presence of so many civilians has made the operation very perilous. Two journalists were killed on Monday and two others wounded near the Old City and reports by medics and rights groups suggest that trapped civilians are paying a heavy price.

The jihadists have been offering fierce resistance in the Old City, with barrages of mortar fire and a huge number of booby traps slowing the Iraqi advance. While Iraqi forces have made good progress to reach the Nuri mosque, Iraqi commanders have warned that the battle for the Old City is far from over. When asked about the explosions that forever changed the face of the city on Wednesday, one west Mosul resident said that human lives remained more important than any historical monument. "Although it was Mosul's symbol and icon, there are people who have been killed. They are much more precious than the minaret," 38-year-old Yasser Ali said. —AFP

TURKEY LIFTS FOREIGN TRAVEL BAN ON CHARGED NOVELIST

ISTANBUL: Turkish court yesterday lifted a foreign travel ban imposed on one of the country's leading contemporary novelists after she was put on trial on charges of supporting "terror" groups. The move by the Istanbul court will allow Asli Erdogan to travel abroad and receive prizes she had been unable to collect due to the ban. However she remains on trial on charges of "terror propaganda" for outlawed Kurdish groups, in a case denounced by freedom of expression groups. The next hearing is due on October 31, her lawyer Erdal Dogan said.

Erdogan, 50, was arrested last summer and held for 132 days on terror propaganda charges during a probe into the now-closed Ozgur Gundem newspaper, which Ankara condemned as a mouthpiece for the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). She was released in December but the charges were kept in place and the travel ban maintained until now. The travel ban of the prominent Turkish translator Necmiye Alpay, 70, who is on trial in the same case, was also lifted. Erdogan, speaking to journalists outside the Istanbul court, welcomed the travel ban lifting as a "positive step" but slammed the continuation of the case. "I have been writing for 18 years and no crime has been found in any of my writings," she said. She said anyone could face similar experiences in Turkey. "They make us understand that in this country every journalist, every lawyer, every politician could find themselves in prison before sunrise or after sunset," Erdogan said. "That's a heavy trauma we've been exposed to," she added.

'I am struggling'

The novelist's detention sparked an international outcry and amplified concern over freedom of expression after last July's failed coup, which sought to unseat President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. She was charged over three articles written for Ozgur Gundem last year on the situation in the Kurdish-majority southeast, where Turkish armed forces are battling the PKK, which is listed as a terror group by Ankara and its Western allies. If convicted, Erdogan—no relation to the president—could still face life imprisonment. "There's only one thing that I know. I am innocent. I am forced to pay a price just because I expressed my opinion in the name of freedom of thought," Erdogan said. She however admitted that her mind would not be at ease until the case was concluded. "I haven't overcome the trauma yet," she said. "I am struggling because it's the first time in my life I have been on trial." —AFP



ISTANBUL: Turkish novelist Asli Erdogan talks to media in front of Istanbul's courthouse after her trial. —AFP



MECCA: A handout photo made available by the Saudi press Agency shows Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman sitting as royal family members and other officials pledge allegiance to him, at the Royal Palace in Mecca. —AFP

TRUMP FACTOR SEEN IN NAMING OF NEW SAUDI CROWN PRINCE

RIYADH WELCOMES TRUMP'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS IRAN

RIYADH: Closer ties between Saudi Arabia and US President Donald Trump's administration helped pave the way for a succession shake-up making a 31-year-old prince the kingdom's de facto ruler, analysts say. On Wednesday King Salman, 81, named his son Mohammed bin Salman crown prince and heir to the throne after firing Mohammed bin Nayef, whose counterterrorism expertise had made him a favorite of previous American administrations.

Over the past two years Mohammed bin Salman accumulated vast powers at the expense of Mohammed bin Nayef, 57, a veteran law enforcer who served as both crown prince and interior minister. Mohammed bin Salman chipped away at his authority but Mohammed bin Nayef's popularity with the previous US administration of Barack Obama had prevented his ouster, said Stephane Lacroix, associate professor at Sciences Po university in Paris. "This all changed when Trump came to power," he said.

After assuming office in January, Trump made it clear that his Middle East partners are Mohammed bin Salman, Abu Dhabi crown prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan and Egyptian president Abdul Fattah al-Sisi, Lacroix said. Riyadh welcomed Trump's more aggressive attitude towards its rival Iran, which Saudi Arabia accuses of interference throughout the region. Mohammed bin Salman was an early visitor to Washington, where he met Trump in March before the president last month made the first overseas trip of his presidency to Saudi Arabia.

Trump received a royal welcome from

Mohammed bin Salman and others. In a speech, the president urged Muslim leaders assembled in Riyadh from around the world to "drive out" extremists and "terrorists". He singled out Iran as a culprit. Trump's approach emboldened Mohammed bin Salman and the Abu Dhabi crown prince who seized the chance this month to cut ties with their Gulf neighbor Qatar, analysts and diplomats said. They accused Doha of supporting groups, including some backed by Iran, "that aim to destabilize the region". Trump has made statements siding with Saudi Arabia on the Qatar crisis.

Deep instability

With his Trump connection established, Mohammed bin Salman "knew that the US wouldn't mind him sidelining MBN," Lacroix said, referring to the ex-crown prince by his initials. "I think the Trump factor matters tremendously," he said. On Wednesday Trump telephoned the new Saudi crown prince to congratulate him on his appointment. Frederic Wehrey, of the Middle East Programme at Washington's Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said "a lot of signaling" from Washington including a more activist regional foreign policy-influenced the appointment of Mohammed bin Salman as crown prince.

"I think that matters," Wehrey said. The Saudis were not "waiting for a nod from the (United) States" but the warming of relations played a role alongside domestic Saudi factors, he said. By making Mohammed bin Salman "de facto ruler" heading the kingdom's most important

portfolios, King Salman created "a solid foundation" for his son's policies, said Andreas Krieg of the Defence Studies Department at King's College London.

It signals to Washington that the kingdom is committed to reform "and is the most important partner for the Trump administration" against both Iran and Islamic State group jihadists, Krieg said. His appointment "is purely about demonstrating a degree of certainty in times of uncertainty," Krieg added. Mohammed bin Salman must also have "full support" from Saudi royals as pressure mounts from a series of challenges, he said.

These include the relations with Qatar, a military intervention that has continued for more than two years in Yemen, an economy adjusting to the loss of oil revenue, and attempts at social reform in a deeply conservative Islamic nation. Lacroix said that among the thousands-strong royal family there does not seem to be much opposition to Mohammed bin Salman's appointment, which has concentrated power in one man. "This is a very new thing... the Saudi regime was always built upon a balance of power between different actors, different factions," he said.

"This is the most autocratic version of the Saudi regime we've seen until now." With the Saudi royal succession "a done deal," the real issue is how to create the best possible working relationship between the White House and the Saudi royals "at a time of really deep instability and trouble" in the Middle East, said Anthony Cordesman of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.—AFP

IRAN SENDS 1,100 TONS OF FOOD TO QATAR DAILY

TEHRAN: Iran is shipping more than 1,000 tons of fruits and vegetables to Qatar every day after Gulf countries led by Saudi Arabia cut relations with Doha, Fars news agency reported yesterday. Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain are among several countries which announced on June 5 the suspension of all ties to Qatar over what they say is its support for extremist groups and its political proximity to Iran. Qatar

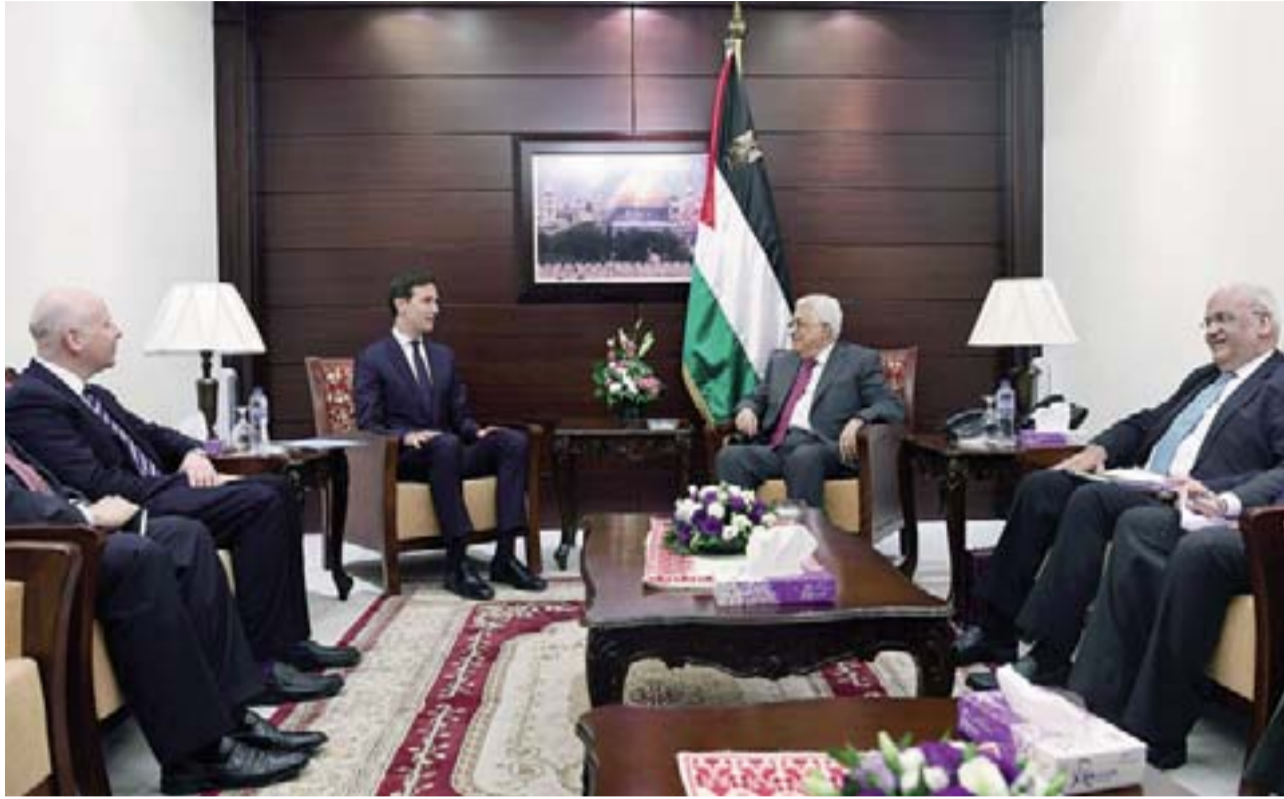
denies the allegations. Iran, an arch-rival of Saudi Arabia, began exporting food to Qatar days later as the unprecedented Gulf crisis left the isolated emirate without the land transport links it usually relies on to import food. Mohammad Mehdi Bonchari, director of ports in Iran's Boushehr province, said Tehran was shipping 1,100 tons of food each day to Qatar, Fars reported. Iran has also flown food to

the emirate. On June 11, Iran's national airline told AFP that it had sent five planes of vegetables to Qatar.

On the same day Fars quoted the head of Iran's cattle exporting association as saying 66 tons of beef had been exported to Qatar, with another 90 tons of beef expected to follow. Qatar's air lines have been forced to re-route some of their flights to go over Iran to avoid the newly banned

skies over Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Bahrain. That has increased traffic in Iranian air space by 17 percent, the official state news agency has reported.

Iran has urged Qatar and Gulf neighbors to engage in dialogue to resolve their dispute. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has called for a permanent mechanism in the Gulf to resolve crises like the blockade against Qatar.—AFP



RAMALLAH: A handout picture provided by the Palestinian Authority's press office shows Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas, center right and US President's senior advisor and son-in-law Jared Kushner, center left, in the West Bank city of Ramallah. —AFP

TRUMP AIDE KUSHNER MEETS WITH NETANYAHU, ABBAS

JERUSALEM: US President Donald Trump's senior advisor and son-in-law Jared Kushner held "productive" meetings with Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas on Wednesday, the White House said. Kushner, accompanied by Trump's Middle East envoy Jason Greenblatt, is attempting to broker a deal to restart Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, frozen since US-led talks collapsed in 2014. Washington's ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, also attended the sit-down with Netanyahu.

"The three United States officials discussed Israel's priorities and potential next steps with Prime Minister Netanyahu, acknowledging the critical

role Israel plays in the security of the region," the White House said in a statement. "The meeting was productive and the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to advancing President Trump's goal of a genuine and lasting peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians that enhances stability in the region," the statement read.

In short video released by Netanyahu's office, the prime minister told Kushner: "This is an opportunity to pursue our common goals of security, prosperity and peace." "I welcome you here in that spirit. I know of your efforts, the president's efforts, and I look forward to working with you." Greenblatt and Kushner both accompanied Trump in May on his first visit as

president to Israel and the Palestinian territories. Both men also met Abbas and his senior advisors in Ramallah, accompanied by US Consul General Donald Blome, for talks the White House also dubbed "productive."

"Kushner and Greenblatt discussed with President Abbas priorities for the Palestinians and potential next steps, acknowledging the need for economic opportunities for Palestinians and major investments in the Palestinian economy," it said. A White House official said this week Trump "strongly believes that peace is possible," and that Greenblatt and Kushner expect to visit the region multiple times in coming months in a bid to build confidence between the two sides. —AFP

TURKEY SENDS FIRST CARGO SHIP WITH AID FOR QATAR

ISTANBUL: Turkey yesterday sent its first ship loaded with aid for its embattled regional ally Qatar which has been hit by sanctions from Gulf powers led by Saudi Arabia, state media said. Turkey has already sent over 100 planes with food and other aid for Qatar but this is the first time a cargo ship has embarked on the voyage to Doha. The ship left the Aegean port of Aliaga in Izmir province with around 4,000 tons of fruit, vegetables and other foodstuffs on board, the Anadolu news agency said. It should arrive in 10 days.

Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain broke off relations with Qatar on June 5, accusing it of supporting "terrorism", leaving Doha economically and politically isolated. But Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan immediately vowed to support Qatar. Ankara vehemently rejected the accusations—already strongly denied by Doha—that Qatar supports terrorism, arguing the country had been a staunch opponent of Islamic State (IS) jihadists.

Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci said Wednesday that Turkey had already sent 105 cargo flights to Qatar loaded with aid to help the country through the crisis. The crisis has put Turkey in a delicate

position as Ankara regards Qatar as its chief ally in the Gulf but is also keen to maintain its improving relations with the key regional power Saudi Arabia. Ankara has stopped short of directly criticising Saudi Arabia's actions, merely calling on Riyadh to take a lead role in solving the crisis.

In a sign of the importance of the relations with Riyadh, Erdogan late Wednesday held phone talks with Saudi King Salman after the sudden appointment of his son Mohammed bin Salman as crown prince in place of Mohammed bin Nayef. Erdogan also spoke with Mohammed bin Salman himself and passed on his congratulations over the move, Anadolu said. Both sides expressed a commitment to further strengthen relations between Ankara and Riyadh and to "step up efforts" to end the tensions concerning Qatar, it added.

Relations between Saudi Arabia and Turkey had been damaged by Riyadh's role in the 2013 ousting of Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi, a close ally of Ankara. But ties thawed considerably after the accession of Salman to the throne in 2015, with the king warmly welcomed on visits to Turkey. —AFP

GHANAIANS TAKE AIM AT CORRUPTION

ACCRA: Ghana's government is facing growing calls to keep its promises after it won elections on a pledge to stamp out corruption. President Nana Akufo-Addo and his administration have in recent weeks seen protesters take to the streets to raise awareness about the issue. In May, hundreds marched on the Economic and Organized Crime Office in the capital Accra with a petition calling for the arrest and prosecution of offenders, and for stolen money to be recovered.

The action is similar to OccupyGhana, a citizen pressure group, which began taking corruption cases to court last year. This month, the Supreme Court ruled in its favour after it submitted a petition calling on the auditor-general to fine anyone found to have misappropriated state funds. "If you want to strengthen democracy, you have to strengthen the legal system," said OccupyGhana spokesman Nana Sarpong Agyeman-Badu. "If the judiciary is strengthened and we put in more confidence in them, I don't think people in the executive and legislature can get away with what they do." Ghana's previous government under John Dramani Mahama was hit by a succession of corruption scandals, including in the judiciary. Undercover journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas in 2015 released secretly filmed footage of magistrates, circuit and high court judges taking bribes to influence verdicts.

'Name, shame and jail'

Anas, whose motto is "name, shame and jail", said that every citizen should fight corruption and no institution should be "sacrosanct because of their names". Anas operates in a variety of disguises and has been called "the James Bond of journalism". He said in the 15 years he has worked as an investigative reporter, there had been an increasing response to his stories.



ACCRA: This file photo shows protesters reacting during a demonstration dubbed 'Fabewoso - Bring it on' to raise awareness about the high rate of corruption in the country, in Accra. —AFP

"When I look at the past and I look at today, it is clear to me the average Ghanaian is beginning to understand that fighting corruption is not the job of government only but it's everybody's job," he said. "We have moved forward as a country, we have moved forward as a people, there has been consistent education. "People are beginning to see that it is important for us to put ourselves together and fight."

Shaky start

In Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, which measures perceived levels of public sector corruption, Ghana scored 43 out of 100 last year. A score of 100 indicates corruption free. Ghana's score dropped from 47 in 2015 but a new report by the Ghana Integrity Initiative Consortium indicated that citizens are more ready to tackle the problem. Nearly two-thirds of the 18,000 people from across Ghana who responded suggested corruption had increased in the 12 months to May last year.

Just over three-quarters (76 percent) said they had to pay a bribe to tax officials and more than half (61 percent) reported having to hand over cash to the police. But 86 percent said they would get involved in fighting corruption. Akufo-Addo's government, which took office in January this year, has by some accounts not got off to a good start. In March, he was forced to defend his decision to appoint a 110-minister government against opposition charges of "jobs for the boys". —AFP

CLADDING FEARS SPREAD AFTER LONDON FIRE DISASTER

LONDON: Around 600 tower blocks in England have similar cladding to the burnt-out Grenfell Tower, Downing Street said yesterday, while combustible cladding has been found on at least three public housing blocks. Prime Minister Theresa May said the government had arranged to test cladding on "all relevant tower

blocks" following the deadly June 14 inferno, with some failing the tests. Meanwhile English local authorities estimate that 600 high-rise buildings have used similar cladding to the Grenfell Tower in west London.

The panels have been widely blamed for the rapid spread of the

fire which consumed the 24-storey public housing block, leaving 79 people presumed dead. Downing Street declined to specify whether the cladding on the tower block was combustible or not, citing an ongoing investigation. "We cannot and will not ask people to live in unsafe homes," May said in a statement to parliament. —AFP



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WYOMING: Mourners are seen arriving at Wyoming High School in Wyoming, Ohio to attend the funeral for Otto Warmbier. —AFP

FUNERAL TO BE HELD FOR US COLLEGE STUDENT IMPRISONED BY N KOREA

TRUMP SLAMS WARMBIER'S DETENTION AS 'TOTAL DISGRACE'

CHICAGO: Otto Warmbier, the US college student imprisoned for more than a year by North Korea and sent back home in a coma that proved fatal, buried yesterday in his home state of Ohio. Sentenced to hard labor for stealing a political poster from a North Korean hotel, the 22-year-old Warmbier was medically evacuated in a coma last week after nearly 18 months in captivity. Suffering from severe brain damage, he died Monday in his hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio. President Donald Trump slammed Warmbier's detention and eventual death as "a total disgrace."

Warmbier's funeral will be held at Wyoming High School-located in the city of Wyoming, a suburb of Cincinnati-from which he graduated in 2013. He will then be buried in Cincinnati's Oak Hill Cemetery. Blue and white ribbons, the colors of the high school, were still tied to trees in the city of about 8,000 to show of support for Warmbier's family after Otto's recent return. Warmbier's father Fred earlier told reporters that his son was lured to North Korea, as other US tourists have been, by tour groups run out of China.

"Otto's a young, thrill-seeking, great kid who was going to be in that part of the world for a college experience and said, 'Hey, I've heard some friends who have done this. I would like to do this.' So, we agreed to let him do that," Fred Warmbier said. "They lure Americans, and then they take them hostage and then they do things to them, and that's what happened to my son," he added. Warmbier was arrested as he was about to leave North Korea and sentenced in March 2016 to 15 years of hard labor. Soon after his family heard nothing more about his fate. Then, just before he was to be medically evacuated, the North Korean regime revealed that Warmbier had been in a coma for much of his imprisonment.

Warm, engaging, brilliant

Warmbier died Monday of severe brain damage, which doctors said was likely due to cardiopulmonary arrest. Medical tests did not show what precipitated his injuries, but also found no evidence of the botulism infection that North Korea claimed was the cause of his coma. The Hamilton County Coroner's office did not perform an

autopsy at the request of the Warmbier family. Warmbier's friends and relatives described him as a bright young man beloved in his community.

"He just lived life with such a zest and a passion that I haven't really ever experienced in somebody before," Warmbier's childhood friend Chris Colloton told the Cincinnati Inquirer newspaper. "He was the best guy I knew. I still know him - I'm just going to miss him so much," the 22-year-old said. In a statement announcing his death, Warmbier's family described him as "a warm, engaging, brilliant young man whose curiosity and enthusiasm for life knew no bounds."

"You can tell from the outpouring of emotion from the communities that he touched-Wyoming, Ohio and the University of Virginia to name just two-that the love for Otto went well beyond his immediate family," the statement said. Following Warmbier's death, the tour group that arranged his trip said it would no longer take Americans to North Korea. "Now, the assessment of risk for Americans visiting North Korea has become too high," said the China-based Young Pioneer Tours. —AFP

ILLEGAL DRUGS MARKET THRIVING: UN

VIENNA: The global narcotics market is "thriving", with production of cocaine and opium soaring and opioids wreaking havoc, the UN crime and drugs agency said yesterday in a gloomy annual assessment. "As the report... clearly shows, there is much work to be done to confront the many harms inflicted by drugs, to health, development, peace and security, in all regions of the world," said Yury Fedotov, head of the Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which is based in Vienna.

He said that while "the international community is equipped to respond swiftly... there remains an enormous need for capacity-building and technical assistance, and funding continues to fall short of political commitments." About 29.5 million people worldwide, or 0.6 percent of the adult population, suffered from drug use disorders in 2015, with at least 190,000 mostly avoidable deaths annually, mainly from opioids. In 2016, global production of opium-extracted from poppy resin and refined to make heroin-rocketed by a third, mostly because of bumper harvests in Afghanistan, the report said, helping fund Taliban insurgents. This rise, aided by better weather, came despite a decade of international efforts to stabilize the country and billions of dollars to persuade Afghan farmers to grow other crops. But the UNODC said global opium production was 20 percent lower than at its peak in 2014, and close to the average of the past five years.

Regarding cocaine, data on production, trafficking-a record volume was seized in 2015 — and use, including in Europe and North America, point to overall growth in the global market, the agency said. Quantities intercepted in Asia leapt 40 percent in 2015. It pointed to the haul of 500 kilograms in Djibouti this year, the biggest in East Africa since 2004, probably en route to Asia. Following a long-term decline, cultivation of coca, the raw material for cocaine, shot up 30 percent over 2013-15, mainly due to Colombia, the world's biggest producer.

Opioid epidemic

But opioids, which include heroin as well as prescription painkillers like fentanyl and illegal counterfeits, remain by far the "most harmful" drugs in health terms, the UNODC said. In the United States, overdose deaths, most of them from opioids, more than tripled to 52,404 in 2015 from 16,849 in 1999, the report said. The report also found a "major geographical shift" in the methamphetamine market over the last five years. The amount seized in 2015 saw East and Southeast Asia leapfrog North America into first place for the first time. "Of particular note is the large increase in methamphetamine seizures in China," it said. The agency also noted that an alternative branch of the "Balkan route" for heroin and morphine, which accounts for 40 percent of seizures, appears to be opening up through the Caucasus. This may reflect efforts to stop the flow of migrants through the Balkans, with the amount of drugs seized falling in Greece and Turkey but rising sharply in Armenia and Azerbaijan. In addition, it said that the business models of organized crime gangs are constantly changing and that they are using new technologies such as the "darknet" to sell drugs. The darknet, where anonymity software and encryption hide activities and allow transactions in crypto-currencies like Bitcoin, accounts for a "small percentage" of drug sales but it is "growing rapidly," the report said. —AFP

FBI PROBING MICHIGAN AIRPORT STABBING AS 'ACT OF TERRORISM'

CHICAGO: A knife attack on a Michigan airport police officer on Wednesday by a man yelling "Allahu Akbar" is being investigated as an act of terrorism, the FBI said. The stabbing at Bishop International Airport, in the city of Flint, comes amid a wave of jihadist-inspired attacks in Europe, most recently a foiled bomb assault at a train station in Belgium. US officials identified the suspected assailant, who is in custody and cooperating with investigators, as a 49-year-old Canadian resident from Quebec named Amor Ftouhi.

"We're investigating this incident today as an act of terrorism," FBI special agent David Gelios told a news conference, detailing Ftouhi's actions on Wednesday morning based on security camera footage. Ftouhi was seen lingering with luggage around the airport's non-secured public areas, including at a second-floor restau-

rant and a bathroom, before pulling out a 12-inch serrated-blade knife, yelling "Allahu Akbar"—"God is greatest" in Arabic — and stabbing an officer in the neck, police said.

During the attack, Ftouhi "referenced killings in Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan," according to a press release from the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan. He also expressed "hatred for the United States" during questioning in custody, Gelios said. "He was cooperative and has talked to us about what his motivations were," he added. The injured officer was identified as Jeff Neville, a 16-year airport police force veteran. Neville wrestled Ftouhi to the ground during the assault until others could arrest him, police said. He was hospitalized and is in a stable condition. —AFP



MONTREAL: Montreal Police guard the front of the four storeys building in Montreal where Amor Ftouhi, who is suspected of stabbing a Michigan airport police officer, lived before traveling to the US earlier this month. —AFP

EU'S DONALD TUSK SAYS BREXIT CAN BE REVERSED

BRUSSELS: EU president Donald Tusk yesterday said Brexit could be reversed as leaders gathered for a Brussels summit amid growing confidence in a future without Britain. Embattled Prime Minister Theresa May will make EU leaders an offer on the rights of expats after Britain's withdrawal as she tries to convince them she still has a grip after her election meltdown. But Tusk, who has repeatedly said Brexit benefits no one, especially not Britain, channeled former Beatle John Lennon as he became the latest in a series of EU leaders to suggest it was not too late to change tack. "Some of my British friends have asked me whether Brexit could be reversed, and whether I could imagine an outcome where the UK stays part of the European Union," Tusk told reporters. "I told them that in fact the European Union was built on dreams that seemed impossible to achieve, so who knows?" the former Polish premier said. "You may say I am a dreamer, but I am not the only one," he added with a broad smile, quoting Lennon's iconic song "Imagine." Newly-elected French President Emmanuel Macron and German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaueble both said last week that the "door was open" for Britain to remain in the EU.

Tusk insisted the remaining 27 members had a renewed sense of optimism about the bloc's future after years of crisis and mounting anti-EU sentiment culminating in the Brexit vote. Despite it being his 80th summit as premier or EU head, "never before have I had such a strong belief that things are going in a better direction," he said. "Our optimism should still be extremely cautious but we have good reason to talk about it," Tusk said shortly before the summit opens at 1300 GMT.

Can May deliver?

In Brussels, security has been stepped up after Tuesday's bombing at one of the city's main rail stations by an Islamic State sympathizer, following attacks in Britain and France. Macron won office as a committed European and has joined forces with German Chancellor Angela Merkel pledging to put the EU back on track to deliver prosperity and security after years of austerity and crisis. But talks on issues including post-Brexit defense plans risk being overshadowed by concerns that a disastrous election has left May so enfeebled that Brexit negotiations will be hampered. "There is an enormous insecurity among the Europeans: how long will she last? Has she got the majority to deliver?" a senior EU official said. Over dinner, May is expected to fill in some of the blanks for the other EU leaders on Brexit. It will be their first meeting since her Conservative party unexpectedly lost its majority in a June 8 election, leaving her in charge of a so-called "zombie government". Britain's shock referendum vote to leave the EU was a year ago on Friday, and the country remains in a dark national mood after a string of terror attacks and a deadly tower block blaze.

Citizens rights a key issue

"The PM will give an update to the other member states on the UK's Brexit plans following the beginning of the negotiations this week," a Downing Street spokesman said. During the dinner May will "outline some principles of the UK's paper on citizens rights which will be published at the beginning of next week," the spokesman said. —AFP



NEW ORLEANS: Sydney Schultz takes photos of waves crashing next to Rollover Pass as Tropical Storm Cindy approaches the coast on the Bolivar Peninsula. —AP

TROPICAL STORM CINDY COMES ASHORE IN SOUTHWEST LOUISIANA

NEW ORLEANS: Gulf Coast states were in for a third day of rough weather as Tropical Storm Cindy sloshed ashore early yesterday in southwestern Louisiana. Already blamed for one death in Alabama, Cindy was expected to keep churning seas and spin off bands of severe weather from eastern Texas to northwestern Florida. The storm's maximum sustained winds had decreased to near 40 mph yesterday morning with additional weakening expected, the US National Hurricane Center said.

A boy on an Alabama beach was struck and killed Wednesday by a log washed ashore by the storm. Baldwin County Sheriff's Capt. Stephen Arthur said witnesses reported the 10-year-old boy from Missouri was standing outside a condominium in Fort Morgan when the log, carried in by a large wave, struck him. Arthur said the youth was vacationing with his family from the St. Louis area and that relatives and emergency workers tried to revive him. He wasn't immediately identified.

It was the first known fatality from Cindy. Otherwise, the storm was blamed for widespread coastal highway flooding, rough seas and scattered reports of power outages and building damage caused by high winds. There were numerous reports of waterspouts and short-lived tornadoes spawned by the storm.

National Weather Service forecasters estimated the storm had dumped anywhere from 2 to 10 inches of rain on various spots along the Gulf Coast from southern Louisiana to the Florida panhandle as of Wednesday. And more rain was on the way.

Pockets of wind damage

Alek Krautmann of the National Weather Service in Slidell, Louisiana, said yesterday's pattern would likely be much like Wednesday's: Bands of intermittent, sometimes heavy rain spinning onto the coast. In Gulfport, Mississippi, Kathleen Bertucci said heavy rainfall Wednesday sent about 10 inches of water into her business, Top Shop, which sells and installs granite countertops. "It's pretty disgusting, but I don't have flood insurance because they took me out of the flood zone," said Bertucci, whose store is near a bayou. "We're just trying to clean everything up and hope it doesn't happen again."

In nearby Biloxi, a waterspout moved ashore Wednesday morning. Harrison County Emergency Management Director Rupert Lacy said there were no injuries but fences, trees and power lines were damaged. Storms also downed trees in the Florida Panhandle. Fort Walton Beach spokeswoman Jo Soria said fall-

en trees hit houses and cars in what she called "pockets of wind damage" in two or three residential neighborhoods. The White House said President Donald Trump was briefed on the storm Wednesday by Homeland Security Adviser Tom Bossert. Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards declared a state of emergency, like his Alabama counterpart a day earlier. He was among authorities stressing that the storm's danger wasn't limited to the coast. In Knoxville, Tennessee, the power-generating Tennessee Valley Authority, said it was drawing down water levels on nine lakes it controls along the Tennessee River and its tributaries in Tennessee, Alabama and Kentucky, anticipating heavy runoff from Cindy's rains once the storm moves inland. The TVA manages 49 dams to regulate water, provide power and help control downstream flooding.

In Alabama, streets were flooded and beaches were closed on the barrier island of Dauphin Island. Some roads were covered with water in the seafood village of Bayou La Batre, but Becca Caldemeyer still managed to get to her bait shop open at the city dock. If only there were more customers, she said. "It's pretty quiet," Caldemeyer said by phone from Rough Water Bait and Tackle. "Nobody can cast a shrimp out in this kind of wind." —AP

TILLERSON URGES CHINA TO PUT MORE PRESSURE ON N KOREA

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Wednesday urged Chinese officials to apply greater diplomatic and economic pressure on North Korea to force Pyongyang to rein in its nuclear weapons program. Tillerson's remarks came after he and Pentagon chief Jim Mattis met with the Chinese visitors at the State Department, where the former general said he saw scope for a better defense relationship.

The extent to which Beijing can influence Pyongyang is key in trying to

defuse the North Korea crisis, and Tillerson's remarks came the day after President Donald Trump appeared to suggest China's President Xi Jinping had come up short in efforts to lean on Kim Jong-Un's regime. Calling North Korea the "top security threat" to the United States, Tillerson said China has a "diplomatic responsibility to exert much greater economic and diplomatic pressure on the regime if they want to prevent further escalation in the region".

For their part, the Chinese envoys

voiced their opposition to Washington's deployment of the THAAD anti-missile defense system in South Korea and demanded its withdrawal, China's foreign ministry said in a statement. China-represented by top diplomat Yang Jiechi and General Fang Fenghui also pressed for negotiations, proposing again a "dual-track approach" in which North Korea would suspend its nuclear and missile activities while the United States and South Korea would halt large-scale military exercises. —AFP



LONDON: This file photo shows a man waving both a Union flag and a European flag together on College Green outside the Houses of Parliament at an anti-Brexit protest in central London. —AFP

MYANMAR FORCES KILL THREE IN RAID ON TERRORIST CAMPS

YANGON: Myanmar security forces have killed three people in raids on "terrorist" training camps run by Rohingya Muslim militants in the north of Rakhine state, state media reported yesterday. Guns, ammunition and gunpowder were found at the camps in the Mayu Mountains, part of a remote strip of land on the northwest border that is mainly home to the persecuted Rohingya Muslim minority. More than 70,000 Rohingya have fled the area to nearby Bangladesh since October, when Myanmar security forces launched a brutal crackdown in response to militant attacks on police posts.

Rohingya escapees have told harrowing accounts of security officers slaughtering babies, burning people alive and staging gang rapes-abuses UN investigators said may amount to crimes against humanity. Myanmar denies the claims and says troops were conducting valid clearance operations to crush a Rohingya insurgency. The government has refused to allow in a UN fact-finding mission to investigate. The training camps found this week were allegedly run by the same group that carried out the October raids that killed nine policemen, according to state media.

The report said security forces killed

three "armed attackers in self-defense" during the two day clearance operation, which was launched after they received a tip off the militants were training inside a secret tunnel at night. The militants, now called the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), were subsidized by "foreign monetary aids" and spent months training recruits in martial arts and the use of light weapons, according to the government report. The report also blamed the "terrorists" for a recent spate of murders of villagers and local community leaders that has seen 34 people killed and 22 abducted.

The ARSA has denied killing any civilians, saying it is fighting for the political rights of the oppressed Rohingya. The one million strong minority live mostly in Myanmar's western Rakhine State, where they are denied citizenship, access to basic services and live in apartheid-like conditions-many in squalid displacement camps. Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, whose civilian government ended decades of military rule last year, has faced global criticism for not defending the Rohingya-who are maligned by the Buddhist majority-or condemning the army's brutal crackdown. —AFP



LASHKAR GAH: Afghan security forces inspect the site of a powerful car bomb in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province yesterday. —AFP

AT LEAST 29 KILLED, 60 INJURED CAR BOMB HITS SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN BANK

LASHKAR GAH, Afghanistan: At least 29 people were killed yesterday when a powerful car bomb struck a bank in Afghanistan's Lashkar Gah city as people were queuing to withdraw salaries, the latest bloody attack during the holy month of Ramadan. Sixty wounded people were rushed to hospital after the bombing at New Kabul Bank which upturned vehicles, left the area littered with charred debris, and sent a plume of smoke into the sky.

No group has claimed responsibility for the brazen attack, but it comes as the Taliban ramp up their nationwide spring offensive despite government calls for a ceasefire during Ramadan. The bomb tore through a queue of civilians and government employees who had lined up outside the bank to collect their salaries ahead of the Eid holidays marking the end of Ramadan. "At least 29 people were killed and 60 others wounded in today's bombing," Mullah Dad Tabidar, head of Bost government hospital, said as bloodied victims were

rushed in on makeshift stretchers. Tabidar said civilians and policemen were among the fatalities, warning that the toll could rise further. In a similar attack in February, at least six people were killed when a Taliban bomber rammed an explosives-laden car into Afghan soldiers who had queued outside a bank in Lashkar Gah to collect their salaries. For years Helmand province, of which Lashkar Gah is the capital, was the centerpiece of the Western military intervention in Afghanistan, but it has recently slipped deeper into a quagmire of instability.

The Taliban effectively control or contest 10 of the 14 districts in Helmand, blighted by a huge opium harvest that helps fund the insurgency, and have repeatedly threatened to seize Lashkar Gah. Intensified fighting last year forced thousands of people to flee to Lashkar Gah from neighboring districts. Since they launched their spring offensive in late April, the Taliban have been mounting lethal assaults on the Afghan army

and police outposts in Helmand. Washington is soon expected to announce an increase in the US military deployment to bolster Afghan forces as they struggle to contain the insurgency.

American military commanders in Afghanistan have requested thousands of extra boots on the ground. US troops in Afghanistan now number about 8,400, and there are another 5,000 from NATO allies, a far cry from the US presence of more than 100,000 six years ago. They mainly serve as trainers and advisers. Pentagon chief Jim Mattis this month acknowledged that America still is "not winning" in Afghanistan nearly 16 years after the US-led invasion toppled the Taliban regime.

Mattis said he will present a new US military strategy for Afghanistan, along with adjusted troop numbers, in the coming weeks to US President Donald Trump. The Afghan conflict is the longest in American history, with US-led forces at war since the Taliban regime was ousted in 2001. —AFP

CIVILIAN KILLED AT FUNERAL FOR SLAIN KASHMIR REBELS

SRINAGAR: A civilian was killed and several wounded yesterday in Indian-administered Kashmir when security forces opened fire on a crowd gathered for the funeral of three rebels slain overnight in clashes with soldiers, police said. Thousands of villagers poured onto the streets for the funeral, chanting slogans against Indian rule and pelting stones at soldiers who responded with bullets and pellet fire, a police officer said. S P Vaid, director general of police for the territory, confirmed a protester was killed in the exchange.

Another police officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said at least a dozen others were injured by pellets fired by government forces to disperse the angry crowd. On Wednesday night soldiers and counter-insurgency police surrounded a residential area where they suspected armed militants were hiding out, triggering a fierce exchange of fire. Scores of residents then emerged from their homes to pelt stones at the soldiers in a bid to help the militants escape, a police officer said.

"Three terrorists were killed and three weapons recovered from the site," army spokesman Colonel Rajesh Kalia said earlier yesterday. Witnesses said the army blew up the house where the militants were hiding in Kakapora, around 30 kilometers south of the main city of Srinagar. One soldier was also injured in the gun battle, police said. Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since the end of British colonial rule in 1947 and both claim the territory in its entirety.

Rebel groups have for decades fought the roughly 500,000 Indian soldiers deployed in the territory, demanding independence or a merger with Pakistan. Officials say dozens of young people have joined the rebels since last July, when the killing of a popular rebel commander by security forces sparked months of deadly anti-India protests. Rebel attacks on government forces have increased since then while the army has also intensified counter-insurgency operations. —AFP



SRINAGAR: Indian Kashmiri villagers carry the body of Kashmiri protester Tawseef Ahmed during his funeral procession at Pulwama, south of Srinagar, following clashes after a funeral for three rebels. —AFP

IN COLOMBIA, FARC NURSES WANT TO TRADE ARMS FOR WHITE COATS

COLINAS, Colombia: As a battlefield nurse for Colombia's FARC rebels, Johana Japon helped stitch up wounded fighters as bullets whizzed past her. And now that the rebel army is demobilizing under a historic accord signed last year to end more than 50 years of war, Japon wants to study medicine, don the white garb of a bona fide nurse and tend to everyday patients. Japon is among 500 rebel fighters assembled in Colinas, a town in southern Colombia, one of 26 designated spots for members of the rebel movement to gather, surrender their weapons to UN personnel and start the process of rejoining civilian life.

She is also among FARC members rushing to do the paperwork needed to apply for 500 scholarships Cuba is offering for ex-rebels to study medicine on the island. Another, Mery Quintero, who spent 20 of her 47 years in the ranks of the FARC, says people like them have a new purpose in life. "We worked as nurses, and that gives us the possibility to help rural people and people in general," said Quintero, who once studied bacteriology but had to leave school when her mother lost her job and could not afford to pay her tuition.

But like other applicants, Quintero says she may have a hard time getting one of the scholarships because she only got as far as grade school in her education. The Colombian conflict erupted in 1964 when the FARC and the ELN—a smaller rebel group that is now in peace negotiations with the government—took up arms for rural land rights. The violence drew in various rebel and paramilitary forces and drug gangs as well as state forces. The conflict left at least 260,000 people dead and displaced more than seven million, according to the authorities.

Mauricio Jaramillo, a FARC commander who schooled Japon in field medicine when she joined the guerrilla army, said the scholarships are a golden opportunity for rebels who served as doctors or nurses during the war. But it is not just them, he added. "We have a lot of supporters who have children ... young people who want to study medicine," Jaramillo added. Jaramillo—a nom de guerre, as his real name is Jaime Parra—is known as "The Doctor" because he actually is one.

He is also one of the architects of the FARC medical care network, which at its war-time peak in 2000 even boasted a 300-bed hospital in southern Colombia. "Over the years we trained around 150 people to work as nurses," said Jaramillo. They specialized in lab work, surgery, treating trauma and other areas of medicine. Japon, 35, recalls treating fighters with horrific wounds, like one who was shot in the gut and hip, which she said was practically blown away.

"Shards of bone kept piercing his small intestine. He was operated on three times. He ended up with his intestine sticking out of his body, and we had to douse it with water to keep it moist," Japon recalled. Then the army came, the rebels had to flee and two days later that soldier died, she said. These nurses have other memories haunting them, too-performing abortions on female rebels so they could keep fighting.

"Even though for everyone in Colombia we were the worst of the worst, with all that we did we are leaving a mark that is different from what people imagined we were," said Quintero. These days, as she waits to surrender her rifle as part of the peace process, Quintero is helping build a clinic in a village where some FARC fighters plan to settle and get on with their lives. —AFP



COLINAS: Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) Dr. Japon shows medical supplies at the Transitional Standardization Zone Jaime Pardo Leal in Colinas, Guaviare department, Colombia. — AFP



ETHIOPIA: A picture shows people displaced by Ethiopia's drought walking at a displaced persons camp in Werder. — AFP

STARVATION LOOMS AS FOOD RUNS OUT IN DROUGHT-HIT ETHIOPIA

WARDER, Ethiopia: The Somali people of Ethiopia's south-east have a name for the drought that has killed livestock, dried up wells and forced hundreds of thousands into camps: *sima*, which means "equalized". It's an appropriate name, they say, because this drought has left no person untouched, spared no corner of their arid region. And it has forced 7.8 million people across the whole of Ethiopia to rely on emergency food handouts to stay alive. But by next month, that food will have run out, aid agencies say.

Droughts are common in Ethiopia, and in past years the government and international community have mounted impressive efforts to curb starvation. This year though, Africa's second most-populous country is struggling to find the money for food aid, say aid agencies. "We're looking at the food pipeline actually breaking, so the food is running out in about a month's time," said John Graham, country director for Save the Children. "After that, we don't know what's going to happen."

Distracted donors

Once a global byword for starvation and poverty after a famine in 1984-85 killed hundreds of thousands, Ethiopia has seen its economy grow rapidly in the last decade. Health indicators such as infant mortality and malaria deaths have also improved. A stronger economy allowed Ethiopia to spend an impressive \$766 million fighting one of its worst droughts in decades in 2015-16. This year however, things are different.

Economic growth has slowed, due in part to protests spurred by long-simmering grievances against Ethiopia's one-party state. Donors have also been distracted by other regional crises. To the southeast, Somalia is suffering from severe drought, with warnings it could tip into famine. Ethiopia's western neighbor, South Sudan, has suffered four months of famine, and extreme hunger is at its highest levels ever after more than three years of civil war.

Ethiopia by contrast has a strong central government and is relatively free from conflict. But with the situation so desperate in the region, donors aren't responding to the country's emergency as they have in the past, said Mitiku Kassa, head of Ethiopia's National Disaster Risk Management Commission, Mitiku Kassa. "They are stressed with the needs, especially from those countries which (have) declared famine," Mitiku said. "That is why it is underfunded."

Skipping meals is common

Even though Ethiopia has contributed \$117 million of its

own money this year and the international community \$302 million, a funding gap of \$481 million remains, according to the United Nations. In the drought ravaged town of Werder, the hundreds of displaced families crowding a ramshackle camp say handouts of rice and sugar are becoming less frequent. "Skipping meals is common," said Halimo Halim, a grandmother living with her children in a shelter made of sticks and pieces of plastic. "Skipping is the order of the day."

Families of nomadic herders such as Halimo's are central to the economy of Ethiopia's southeastern Somali region. The drought has deprived goats, sheep and donkeys of water, killing them or making them so weak that by the time the rains come they perish in the cold. Around 465,000 people who have lost their livestock have migrated to an estimated 250 camps in the region.

The settlements are often located near water sources, but that presents its own problems. In Werder, workers are present around the clock at nearby wells to make sure people drawing water chlorinate it before they drink it, lest they contract "acute watery diarrhea", which has broken out in the region. Some aid workers say this is actually cholera, which Ethiopia has long been accused of covering up to protect its image.

Paying the bill

Aid agencies have turned to so-called "non-traditional" donors like the Gulf countries for funding. At the same time they are keeping a nervous eye on budget negotiations in top funder the United States, where President Donald Trump has proposed slashing the aid budget. But some humanitarians privately complain that the Ethiopian government isn't doing enough to call attention to its plight. They argue that Addis Ababa does not want to distract from its development gains or resurrect the old image of Ethiopia as a place of mass starvation.

"There is no shortage of funds to combat drought," communications minister Negeri Lencho insisted earlier this month. If the international community doesn't send more money, Mitiku said the government would be "forced" to tap its development budget for drought relief in July. But with a lead time of about four months required to procure emergency food, the UN says that may be too late. In Werder, those uprooted by drought, like Sanara Ahmed, are wondering how long they can survive on unreliable food handouts. "Some support was there, but it cannot substitute for our dependability on our livelihood," Sanara said. —AFP

N KOREA CALLS TRUMP A 'PSYCHOPATH'

SEOUL: North Korea on Thursday called US President Donald Trump a "psychopath" as tensions soar following the death of American student Otto Warmbier, who was evacuated in a coma from North Korean detention last week. Pyongyang's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper said the US president was in a "tough situation" at home and claimed he was toying with the idea of a preemptive strike on North Korea to divert attention from a domes-

tic political crisis. "South Korea must realise that following psychopath Trump...will only lead to disaster," an editorial carried by the paper said.

A series of atomic tests and missile launches since last year have ratcheted up tensions on the Korean peninsula, and Warmbier's death has further strained relations between Pyongyang and Washington. Trump slammed the "brutal regime" in Pyongyang, and said he was determined to "prevent such

tragedies from befalling innocent people at the hands of regimes that do not respect the rule of law or basic human decency." His language was echoed by South Korean President Moon Jae-In, who said in an interview ahead of a White House visit next week that North Korea bears responsibility for the student's death.

"I believe we must now have the perception that North Korea is an irrational regime," Moon told CBS televi-

sion's "This Morning." Moon, a centre-left politician who was sworn in last month after a landslide election win, favors engagement with the North, rather than the hardline stance taken by his ousted conservative predecessor Park Geun-Hye. Washington has also stepped up its muscle-flexing in the region, flying two B-1 bombers over the Korean peninsula Tuesday in a planned training mission with Japan and South Korea as its latest show of force. —AFP



BANGKOK: This photograph shows a sports car through the windows of a Bangkok dealership accused of selling stolen cars from the streets of Britain. — AFP

BRITS AND THAIS RACE TO CLOSE STOLEN SUPERCAR PIPELINE

1,000 SUPERCARS IMPLICATED IN UNDERVALUING SCAM

BANGKOK: Dozens of supercars including Lamborghinis, Porsches and BMWs have been stolen from the streets of Britain and shipped to Thailand in a complex scam that police from both countries are now rushing to dismantle. Sparked by a British request to retrieve the lifted vehicles, detectives in Bangkok have launched a series of raids against dealers in recent weeks. More than 120 top-of-the-range sports cars have since been seized, including some identified as stolen from Britain.

Thai investigators say they have also uncovered an array of scams and loopholes that dealers and corrupt customs officials exploit to circumvent eye-watering taxes the Southeast Asian kingdom places on supercars—usually around 328 percent. "More than 1,000 supercars are implicated in the undervaluing scam," Lieutenant Colonel Korawat Panprapakorn, the officer leading the investigation said. "This practice has been going on for a long time." Britain is the most popular source for luxury car imports to Thailand because both countries drive on the left hand side of the road. While Thailand's economy has been slumping in recent years, its billionaire class is doing just fine and gleaming supercars remain a common sight on the streets of Bangkok—even if they spend much of their time crawling along the city's gridlocked streets.

Name change

Lamborghinis appear to have been a top choice, making up 32 of the 122 seized vehicles, according to Thailand's Department for Special Investigations (DSI). The tax evasion scams ranged from impressively creative to bizarrely simple. At least two vehicles were allegedly shipped over from the UK in parts and then assembled in Thailand to avoid the triple tax rate. Eight Lamborghinis were simply declared as being the

cheaper Gallardo model when they were in fact the much more expensive Aventador.

Customs officers either did not notice or deliberately turned a blind eye to the easy-to-spot error. But in the vast majority of cases dealers under-declared the true value of the cars, often by \$10,000s, to pay less tax, the DSI said, adding some 30 businesses were now being investigated. The outright stolen vehicles were whisked abroad through a different scam. Sources with knowledge of the investigation in Britain say most of the cars were bought on finance and shipped to Thailand. When the vehicles were at sea, the owners reported them stolen and stopped paying the monthly repayments.

Grand theft auto

Britain's National Vehicle Crime Intelligence Service confirmed it was working with Thai police to track the vehicles. "To date 38 (stolen) UK vehicles, identified by their engine and chassis numbers and valued at over £2.3 million have been imported into Thailand," the agency said. "Seven of the thirty-eight vehicles identified were seized by the DSI from a used car dealership in Bangkok." Those seven were found during a police raid on STT Auto in Bangkok's Ekkamai district, a suburb known for its glitzy nightclubs, restaurants and luxury condos. The dealership's owner Indharasak Techaterasiri—who goes by the nickname "Boy Unity" and is well-known on the luxury car circuit—told AFP he was baffled that the seven cars were reported stolen. He said he imports 500-600 luxury vehicles a year from Britain and that his shipping agent always checks the UK's vehicle registry databases to ensure the cars are not stolen. None of the seven—two Lamborghinis, two BMW M4s, two Porsche Boxsters and a Nissan GTR—came up as stolen, which would make sense if they were only reported after they left port. —AFP

JAPAN POLITICIAN RETRACTS STARVE NORTH KOREANS CALL

TOKYO: A Japanese governor has retracted his call for North Koreans to be "starved to death" if Pyongyang were to target his region with atomic weapons, a local official said yesterday. Masanori Tanimoto, the head of Ishikawa prefecture, walked back on a suggestion that food supplies to the nuclear-armed North should be cut off if it were to lob a missile at a civilian atomic power plant in his region in central Japan. Tanimoto made the comment during a town hall meeting Wednesday.

"The governor retracted his remark today," an Ishikawa government spokesman said. "He told reporters that we should respect human lives," he added, referring to Tanimoto. Chronic food shortages and malnutrition are widespread in North Korea, according to the UN. The country has also periodically been hit by famine, and hundreds of thousands of people died—estimates range into the millions—in the mid-1990s. Tanimoto insisted however that efforts to bring about regime change in North Korea must be "effective".

"We need to help create a situation where the regime would collapse from within even though such a situation may impact the people of North Korea," he said yesterday, according to Kyodo News agency. Municipalities across Japan have been conducting evacuation drills in response to a possible North Korean attack. Despite international condemnation and sanctions, North Korea has a small nuclear arsenal and is developing nuclear-capable ballistic missiles that threaten Japan and South Korea—and one day could even hit some US cities. —AFP



TOKYO: The picture shows Japan's governor of Ishikawa prefecture Masanori Tanimoto. —AFP

AUSTRALIA'S MILITARY RESUMES AIR OPERATIONS OVER SYRIA

SYDNEY: Australia yesterday lifted a suspension on military air missions over Syria imposed after the shooting down of a Syrian jet by US forces. Canberra temporarily halted flights on Tuesday after a spike in tensions between the US and Russia, which warned it, would track coalition aircraft in Syria as potential "targets". Moscow also halted a military hotline with Washington over the incident, intended to prevent confrontations in Syria's crowded air space.

Australia defense ministry said in a statement the suspension was "a precautionary measure to allow the coalition to assess the operational risk". "The suspension has since been lifted," it added. The United States moved quickly to contain an escalation of the situation after the jet was downed on Sunday evening when regime forces targeted the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces, an alliance of Arab and Kurdish fighters battling IS. A top US general said the country would work to relaunch the "deconfliction" hotline established in 2015, after Russia said Washington had failed to use the line—a vital incident-prevention tool—before targeting the plane near Raqqa. Australia is part of the coalition fighting the Islamic State group in Iraq and in late 2015 extended air operations into Syria, with a total of 780 defense personnel based in the Middle East. —AFP

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Friday Times

Lifestyle

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A Moroccan man sits in the doorway of a house in Chefchouen, in the northern Moroccan Rif region, during the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan. — AFP

Syrian refugee finds independence in Lebanon with hairdryer in hand



A file photo shows actor Russell Crowe on the red carpet during the world premiere of 'The Water Diviner' in Sydney. — AFP

RUSSELL CROWE TO LEAD NEW ASIAN FILM JURY IN AUSTRALIA

Hollywood star Russell Crowe will chair a jury to decide the best Asian production at Australia's annual film awards this year, which will recognize excellence in Asian movie-making for the first time. The new award for top Asian feature will be handed out at the prestigious Sydney bash in December, as appetite for regional films surges Down Under. It is part of a plan by the Australian Academy for Film and Television Arts (AACTA) to boost the relationship between the nation's respected film industry and its closest neighbors.

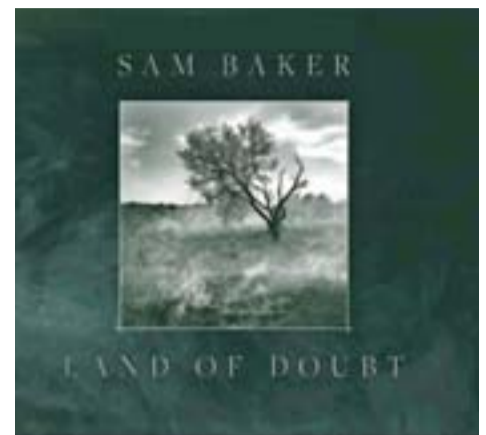
Sitting on the jury alongside Crowe will be Chinese director Lu Chuan, prolific Indian actor Anupam Kher, Oscar-nominated producer Gary Kurtz, and acclaimed South Korean writer, director and producer Kim Ki-Duk, among others. "As the Asian screen industry continues to grow and the traditional borders to content distribution are breaking down, audiences across the world are discovering what other regions have to offer," said AACTA chief Damian Trehwella. "There is strong audience demand for Asian cinema in Australia and an increase in co-productions between Western and Asian filmmakers."

Sam Baker makes art with a style all his own

If Bob Dylan's Nobel Prize re-ignited the debate on what separates popular music from poetry, Sam Baker is here to complicate things further. Baker makes elegant, original music. Nothing he does could be mistaken for anyone else's work. Baker's career emerged from a remarkable life story. In 1986 he was on a train in Peru when a bomb set by terrorists exploded. Baker suffered brain damage, hearing loss and a hand injury that forced him to teach himself to play guitar left-handed.

The simple grace of his craft, on full display in his fifth release, "Land of Doubt," emerged from that tragedy. With a sound both soaring and sad, the Texas-based Baker sings in a raspy talk-whisper that makes you stop what you're doing,

sit down and listen. The words emerge in sharp relief from a soundscape of restrained guitar, piano, strings and muted trumpet. Baker has mostly veered away from the story-portraits of earlier albums and toward songs about heart-break and loss. There are hints of bitterness, and if there is hope to be found, it lies in the majesty of the music. A song called "The Feast of Saint Valentine," for example, dwells on a "wish you well" card that hints at a recent breakup. Impossibly sad, it's delivered against an ascending backdrop that could be the soundtrack of mountains. Somehow, it lifts the spirit. The effect, utterly evocative, may or may not qualify as poetry. But it is certainly poetic. — AP



Philippine star Charice announces new transgender name

US television star and music sensation Charice Pempengco of the Philippines has announced a new transgender identity, revealing his new name on Twitter: Jake Zyrus. "My first tweet as Jake. Overwhelmed. Saw all your love comments and I'm so happy. Finally. I love you, everyone and see you soon," the 25-year-old wrote this week on his revamped Twitter account, which has nearly a million followers. "I won't let anyone ruin this moment. I won't let anyone ruin my happiness. Thank you to all the beautiful write ups about me."

The artist born as Charmaine Clarice Pempengco inspired millions of Filipinos with her journey from poverty to sharing the stage with Celine Dion, Andrea Bocelli and Josh Groban, even singing at Barack Obama's pre-US presidential inauguration galas. Her self-titled debut album in 2010 landed at number eight on the US Billboard 200 Albums chart, the same year she starred in the American hit television series: "Glee", playing exchange student character Sunshine Corazon.

Pempengco also appeared as herself in the 2009 film "Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel". In 2013, Pempengco came out as a lesbian, which caused controversy in the Philippines, where most Filipinos are Catholic and homosexuality is tolerated but not totally accepted. The following year Pempengco opened up on Oprah Winfrey's television show, saying: "Basically, my soul is male."

A report released by Human Rights Watch Thursday said lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-



This file photo shows Filipina singer Charice Pempengco performing during the launching of her first album in Makati, financial district of Manila. — AFP

gender (LGBT) students across the Philippines suffered bullying and discrimination in school due to their sexual orientation and gender identity. "LGBT students in the Philippines are often targets of ridicule and even violence," Ryan Thoreson, LGBT rights program fellow at the US-based monitor said in a statement, adding teachers and schools took part in the mistreatment. The Philippine edition of Esquire magazine apologized on Wednesday for an article on Zyrus's announcement that made fun of the singer's choice of name.

"We thought we were being a crass-but-supportive friend in the way we wanted to show our support while poking a little fun at Jake, but we totally drunk-uncled our way through it," the magazine wrote on its website. Zyrus expressed his appreciation on Twitter. "Apology accepted, all love to you @EsquirePH," he wrote. "Respect for everyone." — AFP

After over 25 years, Ice Cube's still got something to say

It's been more than 25 years, and Ice Cube's still got something to say. The 48-year-old entertainer has come a long way from his start as part of the West Coast rap group N.W.A. and later a solo artist, branching into movies and now founding a soon-to-be-launched half-court basketball league. But some things haven't changed, like his willingness to call out law enforcement on the way he sees policing done and to speak his mind on race issues, like he did recently when he took late-night host Bill Maher to task for his use of the N-word during a show.

He brought that attitude to the 25th anniversary re-release this month of his 1991 solo album, "Death Certificate," with its newly added-on lead single, "Good Cop, Bad Cop." Asked for his thoughts about where the country is with policing, especially in the wake of several high-profile shootings of minorities by officers, he was blunt: "Same as we always been."

"Police have a philosophy, they have a theory, they have a way of doing stuff, it's win at all



In this photo rapper and actor Ice Cube poses for a portrait in New York to promote the 25th anniversary re-release of his 1991 solo album, 'Death Certificate.' — AP

costs," Cube, born O'Shea Jackson, said Tuesday in an interview with The Associated Press. "Win now, apologize later, that's the model. By having that way of thinking and that philosophy, it's all about 'Us against Them,' that's the mentality." "Good Cop, Bad Cop" calls on good cops to speak and act against corrupt police officers, a far cry from the attitude in N.W.A.'s infamous

song, "F--- the Police," but Cube said he's "always really hoped good police would take care of bad cops," that while the 1988 song was a "revenge fantasy" type of thing against police abuse, the new song is a plea for honorable cops to step up and speak out.

"They're our last line of defense against this onslaught of abuse," he said. He has seen changes he thinks are positive, he said, pointing to officers in fatal shootings at least getting to the stage of undergoing trials, even if convictions are still extremely rare. In the days of his youth, "police could do no wrong ... now you fast forward 25 years later, at least the cops are being put on trial for their actions."

And it's not just the police that Cube is willing to, well, police. His appearance on "Real Time With Bill Maher" was noted for his strong criticism of Maher, who had jokingly referred to himself by using the N-word during the previous week's episode. — AP

Appeals court reinstates Howard's divorce judgment

A California appeals court on Wednesday reinstated Terrence Howard's divorce judgment involving his second wife after finding the actor was not coerced into signing it. The ruling could allow Michelle Ghent to claim some of Howard's lucrative earnings from the hit Fox television series "Empire." The three-justice panel of the 2nd District Court of Appeal in Los Angeles ruled unanimously to reinstate the judgment that was tossed out by a lower court in 2015. That ruling found the "Empire" star was under duress when he agreed to pay Ghent generous spousal support because he feared she would leak embarrassing information about him.

Howard claimed Ghent made the threat in a 2011 phone call. A year later, the couple agreed to a divorce settlement that paid her significant spousal support. Wednesday's ruling says the passage of time negates Howard's claim that he was forced to sign the agreement. The ruling also noted Howard's repeated attempts to reconcile with his ex-wife as showing he was not coerced into the agreement. A phone message left for Howard's attorney Thomas Dunlap was not immediately returned.

The 2012 agreement called for Howard to pay Ghent monthly support of \$5,800 and as much as \$4 million a year, depending on his earnings, including potential income from his role as Lucious Lyon on the Fox series "Empire," which had not yet premiered. In a deposition, Ghent denied extorting the actor and argued that he didn't prove she had made threats in 2011 to force him to sign the agreement, her lawyers said. — AP



In this file photo, Terrence Howard arrives at the 68th Primetime Emmy Awards in Los Angeles. — AP

Syrian refugee finds independence in Lebanon with hairdryer in hand

On a hot summer day in her small living room a fan blows in Aya's direction as she carefully parts each section of her 9-year-old client's hair, blow-drying it with proper technique, confidence and newly found pride. Aya is one of more than 1,200 female refugees from Syria that have been trained through an informal beauty school in Lebanon, learning blow-drying techniques, basic cutting, hair dyeing, make-up and eyebrow threading skills. "I hold my head high that I know this," said Aya, who did not want to give her real name for security reasons.

Lebanon hosts more than 1 million registered Syrian refugees, a quarter of its population. Many have no legal right to work, and families are forced to find other ways to pay for food and shelter. Aya counts herself lucky, having escaped the Syrian war and finding a new home and - eventually - informal work after moving in 2013 to Tyre, a coastal city in southern Lebanon, a region that hosts more than 117,000 Syrian refugees.

Half way to her dream

Aya has been running a beauty salon out of her home for the past six months after completing a course at the beauty school, set up by aid agency the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). It is a dream come true for the 27-year-old mother of four. "I feel (that) hair is like a painting you are drawing ... You have to determine what looks best on her, what works for her face," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. After moving to Lebanon Aya wanted to prove herself and show women are not just there for cooking and taking care of children. She longed to learn how to do hair.

"I feel like I am living my dream, but half of my dream. My bigger dream is that I open a salon," said Aya with a smile on her face. Her beauty salon is a modest set-up, with just a plastic chair that she places in the middle of her living room armed with her tools by her side - hair clips, a round brush, comb, and her trusted

hairdryer. She usually gets two to three customers a week from the neighborhood, including some family and friends.

Even though she does not get much money from her customers, she is confident her skills will support her. "I am okay with the little I get ... what's important to me is it's what I love to do," said Aya, who used to work as a seamstress near the Syrian capital Damascus, a job she did not enjoy, but the work helped her family. The training also has given her a sense of independence. "If God forbid my husband dies, who will take care of me? No, I will have a job to benefit myself and my kids, and I wouldn't rely on anyone," said Aya.

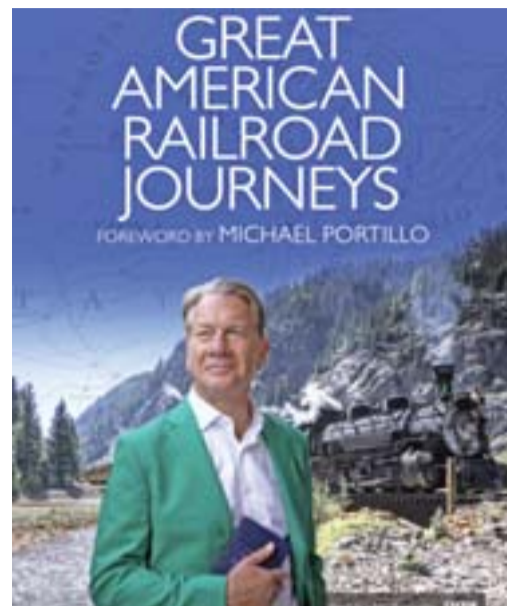
Skills for life

The beauty school is part of the NRC's Youth Education Pack, (YEP), a program set up currently in 11 centres across Lebanon to help Syrian and Palestinian refugees.

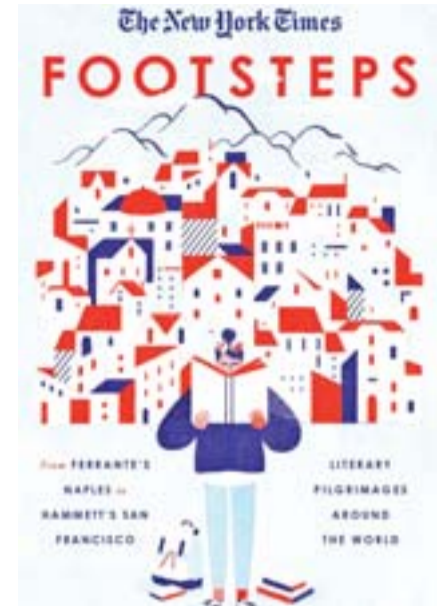
"The objective of this program is to provide (them) with the skills they need to use them in the future ... whether in Lebanon or when they come back to Syria, or maybe if they want to travel outside the Middle East," said Aline Sfeir, education project manager at the NRC.

The free program includes communication skills, problem-solving skills and English training as well as beauty skills, barbering for men, basic mobile phone maintenance and sewing and tailoring. Local experts teach the refugees for around two to three months. When they complete their training they get a certificate and a blow-dryer or hair straightener.

"When they learn these skills they don't need a big investment in money to start working in it," said Sfeir. Aya is also proud that as refugee she pushed herself to learn new skills even though her circumstances are difficult. "I want to show that here in Lebanon yes we migrated, but we are making our dreams real although it's little," said Aya. — AP



This undated image provided by Simon & Schuster shows the cover of 'Great American Railroad Journeys.'



This undated image provided by Crown Publishing shows the cover of 'Footsteps.' — AP photos

Travel books, from literary pilgrimages to railroads journey

Whether you're an armchair traveler, a road tripper or a frequent flier, books about travel can inspire and inform. Here are a few out this season on a variety of travel themes.

- "Great American Railroad Journeys." This book is a tie-in to a BBC series of the same name that airs on public TV this summer, hosted by Michael Portillo, who wrote the forward to the book. In the show, Portillo travels by train across America from New York and Boston to Atlanta and New Orleans, then on to Chicago, Colorado, New Mexico and San Francisco. The book (Simon & Schuster, \$25) consists of essays about the development and expansion of rail routes across 19th century North America, with maps, photos, illustrations and lots of history.
- "Footsteps." This collection of essays is subtitled, "From Ferrante's Naples to Hammett's San

Francisco, Literary Pilgrimages Around the World." It walks readers in the footsteps of famous writers, looking at the destinations and landscapes that inspired them, whether the familiar locales of their childhood or a trip they took to a faraway land. Ernest Hemingway's Madrid, Jamaica Kincaid's Antigua and Mark Twain's Hawaii are among the places featured in "Footsteps" (Three Rivers Press, \$16).

"Madrid After Dark." This guidebook is subtitled "A Nocturnal Exploration" (Interlink Books, \$15) and it takes readers on a tour of the Spanish capital many visitors may never see. Though the city is known for nightlife and late dinners, author Ben Stubbs reveals the hidden side of Madrid's nighttime world, from all-night taxi drivers and partygoers to stories of religious observances and the lives of the poor. — AP

Anti-fur protesters disrupt Kors event in New York

Anti-fur protesters stormed on stage with Michael Kors in New York on Wednesday, briefly disrupting a ticketed event at which the US fashion mogul discussed his career, dressing Melania Trump and shutting stores. "Michael Kors has blood on his hands," chanted the more than dozen protesters who marched through a darkened auditorium at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, shortly before security ushered Kors out. An audio recording of an animal squealing, seemingly in pain signaled the start of the four-minute protest about 13 minutes into the conversation with Kors, which was being streamed on Facebook

"Animal fur is not in fashion," "animal fur is not compassion," chanted the protesters, at least two of whom jumped on stage. "Shame on all of you for supporting this industry," yelled one man as the stunned audience sat looking bemused and museum staff did what they could to escort protesters out as quickly as possible. "Stay in your seats. We're going to try and resolve this," came the announcement over the loudspeaker, greeted by cheers and applause.

Once the protest was over, Kors was treated to a standing ovation after returning to the stage with former CNN journalist Alina Cho, who was conducting the interview. "You know what, the show goes on," said Kors. Known for his laid-back, luxurious, wearable and quintessentially American silhouette, Kors started his label in 1981 and has dressed Hollywood actresses, music superstars and first ladies. Among them is Melania Trump, who wore a tailored Michael Kors dress to greet Panama's president and first lady on Monday.

While some prominent designers have refused to dress her in opposition to her husband's politics, Kors said the Slovenian-born former model had attended his runway shows in the past. "I don't think it's a political thing," he said. "She's been a client for so long," he said. "She looks great," he said simply as a picture of Trump



Anti-fur protesters rush on the stage while fashion designer Michael Kors (seated) speaks during 'The Atelier with Alina Cho: series' event at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. — AFP photos



Fashion designer Michael Kors (left) speaks with journalist Alina Cho during 'The Atelier with Alina Cho: series' event.

flashed up on the screen. But while Kors sits atop a global handbag and apparel empire, the company has said it will close 100 to 125 stores, joining a growing list of retailers who are shutting brick-and-mortar outlets as e-commerce grabs more market share.

On May 31, the company released fourth quarter results showing that total revenue had slumped 11.2 percent to \$1.06 billion. Asked about retail headwinds, Kors said "nothing" could ever compete with the excitement of buying and seeing clothes in person, no mat-

ter how often a modern buyer had seen them online. "The reality now is sometimes it's really thinking about how all of this works together, how do you shop online, on your phone, at your laptop, in the store, how does that all connect?" A household name in the United States, Kors said he learned about "extravagance" and "indulgence" from French women in Paris while working as creative director for Celine from 1998-2004. — AFP



Nguyen Huy Tho organizes chicken feathers at his home on the outskirts of Hanoi.

—AFP photos



A Vietnamese woman helps organize chicken feathers before they are put together to make feather dusters at a home on the outskirts of Hanoi.

Done and dusted? Vietnam's chicken feather cleaners face stiff competition



A Vietnamese worker bunches chicken feathers together to make a feather duster.



Nguyen Huy Luan hangs chicken feather dusters to dry after pasting them onto sticks at a house on the outskirts of Hanoi.



A Vietnamese street vendor pushes his bicycle filled with merchandise including chicken feather dusters along a street in Hanoi.

Fluffy, soft and easy to buy off the back of a bike: Vietnam's chicken feather dusters have ruled the roost for generations. But artisans fear for their future as buyers turn to cheaper alternatives. The dusters, ubiquitous across the country's leafy capital, have long been a staple in Vietnamese homes to clear cobwebs from ancestral altars or hard-to-reach corners of the house. But today, cheap synthetic dusters have flooded the market—the latest influx of mass-produced goods to chip away at traditional artisans' profits.

"We don't earn as much money as we could in other jobs, but I do this job to keep my family tradition alive," Nguyen Huy Tho, 36, told AFP near his stuffy garage, filled with hanging lines of feather plumes. His family has been making the dusters for more than a century, and unlike his five sisters who all work in office jobs or as teachers, he decided to follow in his father's footsteps after graduating from college. It was once a soaring trade. Tho used to earn about \$350 per month selling the dusters, but today profits are down by a third. His 85-year-old grandfather, who still helps out on occasion, says many young people are now looking for better-paying jobs. "Most people now think about earning good money, but this job is tedious, like making a toothpick," Nguyen Huy De told AFP. Each duster takes about two hours to make, and they sell on the streets of Hanoi for about \$7.

Traditionally, families sold feathers to door-to-door collectors after a chicken feast, with sales spiking around traditional holidays. But today Tho's family buys feathers from chicken wholesalers, as the duty of killing chickens has mostly moved out of the home. Even though the feathers are

easier to find, there's only about 10 families still making the dusters in Tho's Trieu Khuc village on the outskirts of Hanoi, once a renowned hub for the trade. It's not just families like Tho's feeling the squeeze. Vendor Nguyen Minh Quang says sales have dipped in recent years, but he still cycles 50 kilometers (30 miles) into Hanoi daily to peddle the dusters. "Now that there are plastic dusters in the market, fewer traditional feather dusters are sold. I don't get much money selling them, and I get really tired cycling to Hanoi every day." — AFP



(Above & below) Nguyen Huy Luan puts chicken feather dusters together at a house on the outskirts of Hanoi.



A Vietnamese woman organizes chicken feathers by color at a house on the outskirts of Hanoi.



Summer vacation: Never mind the hike. Where's the hammock?

A new poll about summer travel finds that the No. 1 thing Americans want to do on vacation is ... nothing. Almost three-fourths of Americans say resting and relaxing is very or extremely important to them when they go on vacation, according to the survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Among those dreaming about kicking back is Yari Blanco of Brooklyn, New York, who recently tweeted, "Your girl needs a vacation. The kind where you lay by a crystal blue beach and nap in a hammock." Blanco, who's been busy working on a website she recently launched called TheGirlMob, hopes to squeeze in some relaxation time in July and maybe a trip later this year to Portugal.

Staycations and unplugging

Interestingly, most Americans say staying home and doing nothing isn't ideal. Instead, they want a change of scenery. Of those who plan a summer vacation, 92 percent are going away and only 8 percent are making it a staycation. More than half of those polled said relaxing at home doesn't count as a real vacation.

How about unplugging?

Only 22 percent "completely disconnect" while on vacation. A third don't even try to get away from the internet and social media. Some of those surveyed - 42 percent - say they dial back their time online a little. Americans under 30 are the most plugged in. Just 13 percent say they're likely to completely disconnect on vacation.



But most Americans do avoid working on vacation. Sixty percent of workers say they don't check in with work at all when they're on vacation, while 32 percent say they work or check in with work a little. Eight percent may fall into the workaholic category: They work or check in with the office "a lot." The term "bleisure" has been a buzzword recently in the travel industry, describing a combination of business and leisure travel. But most Americans (69 percent) don't consider extending a business trip to be a real vacation.

Top vacation activities

Sightseeing was ranked important by 55 percent of those surveyed, followed by experiencing local culture and cuisine (51 percent), visiting family (46 percent) and spending time in nature (45 percent).

But there's a gender gap. Shopping is more popular with women than men (22 percent versus 9 percent), and women also prioritize sightseeing (60 percent versus 49 percent) and visiting family (52 percent versus 40 percent) more than men.

Airline regulations

Many Americans support more government regulations on airlines - perhaps a logical response to recent headlines over passengers being hauled off flights in disputes with airline staff. Six in 10 respondents want the government to regulate airline policies for bumping passengers and handling overbooked flights. Nearly half would like to see more regulation regarding flight delays and cancellations.

Shiva Rajagopal of Fort Lee, New Jersey, is among those supporting regulations to bar airlines from forcing people off flights. "I've had a couple of bad experiences being bumped out of flights," he said. Airlines shouldn't be able to do it "no matter what the compensation is," he said, because sometimes "you have to be in a particular place at a particular time."

Traveling companions

The stereotypical image of families piling into a car for a summer trip isn't too far from reality. Among married couples, 87 percent vacation with their spouses. Among parents, 87 percent vacation with their kids. Three-fourths of vacationing parents will drive rather than fly.

Most vacationers, married or not, travel with others. Overall, 68 percent will travel with a spouse or significant other and 49 percent will travel with other relatives or friends. Just 14 percent of vacationers will travel solo, including about a quarter of unmarried travelers. Sixty-one percent of vacationers say they'll drive, 31 percent will fly and 4 percent will cruise. Another 1 percent will go by train, 2 percent by bus.

Time versus money

Half of the public expects to spend less than \$1,000 for their summer holiday and half anticipate laying out more. Time is the luxury most people desire. Nearly two-thirds of Americans would prefer a less extravagant vacation over a longer one.

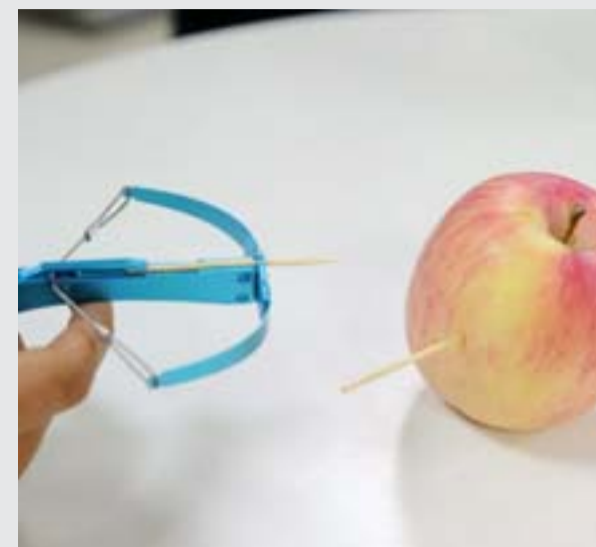
Lodging

For accommodations, hotels and motels are most popular, used by 45 percent of summer vacationers. Another 22 percent will stay with friends or relatives. Rentals of homes, condos or apartments were the choice of 17 percent, while 9 percent will sleep in a tent, cabin or RV.

Non-vacationers

The poll also found, in results released previously, that 43 percent of Americans won't take a summer vacation, with 49 percent of non-vacationers saying they can't afford it. Another 11 percent said they can't take time off from work, while 3 percent said they don't like to be away from work. The survey also found that 41 percent of working Americans do not get paid vacation time from their employers. — AP

File photo shows Kristiina Nurk, 34, enjoys a good book underneath the blue summer-like skies and weather as she vacations in Miami for a second day while on holiday.



(Above & below) This photo shows a man demonstrating a toothpick crossbow in Changchun, in China's northeast Jilin province. — AFP



TOOTHPICK CROSSBOW CRAZE HAS CHINA QUIVERING

Handheld crossbows that can fire out needles and nails are the latest must-have toy in China but anxious parents want them banned before a young child gets blinded or worse. Selling online and in shops for as little as seven yuan (\$1), so-called toothpick crossbows were originally designed to shoot out just that—toothpicks. But if swapped out for needles they are potent enough to crack glass, said the Shanghai Daily newspaper, quoting shop owners as saying they were selling out of the "toys" fast and struggling to meet demand. Other Chinese state media said the mini crossbows can fire at a distance of more than 20 meters (65 feet) and shoot iron nails in place of toothpicks.

"The 'Toothpick Crossbow' toy has spread across China like wildfire among the nation's primary and middle school children," said the Shanghai Daily. "The unusual shooting toy may be very small but it is powerful enough to puncture a balloon and pierce cardboard. And when the toothpick is swapped for a metal needle it becomes a dangerous weapon." Police in Chengdu, a major city in China's southwest, have reportedly stopped sales of the product and concerned parents across the country want the government to issue a nationwide ban. "Hurry up (and ban them), pupils do not understand and are just shooting people for fun. It will cause accidents sooner or later," one parent wrote on Weibo, China's Twitter-like website. Another worried onlooker wrote: "Our primary school began to investigate this from Monday and they're very dangerous." — AFP



Models present creations by Valentino, during the Men's Fashion Week for the Spring and Summer 2018 collection in Paris. — AFP photos



VALENTINO HEADLINES FIRST DAY OF PARIS FASHION WEEK MENSWEAR

Heat was in the air on the first day of Paris Fashion Week menswear collections that showcased next year's spring-summer designs. With the French capital baking in high temperatures, Wednesday kicked off 52 catwalk shows that will run over five runway-stomping days. Here are some of the highlights.

Valentino's ethnic sportswear

There were almost enough professional basketball stars to form a Valentino team at the house's menswear spectacle. Serge Ibaka of the Toronto Raptors, the Chicago Bulls' Dwayne Wade, Carmelo Anthony of the New York Knicks and the Houston Rockets' James Harden all were on hand. Perhaps the Rome-based house had sports in mind when compiling the guest list for the thoughtful collection by designer Pierpaolo Piccioli that put ethnic twists on sportswear.

Sneakers with thick North African-style threading were imagined in a multicolored palette below a silken green tracksuit with thick white Balkan-style seams. It was a study in contrasts. Voluminous sport coats that riffed on biker styles had subtly contradictory embroidery across the shoulders and, in a highly stylish touch, embroidered belts dangled from the waist. Layered white shirts were given a twist with round collars and khaki-style baggy pants were tapered in the Arab style. Valentino's designs have become more focused since Piccioli started designing solo a few seasons ago. Wednesday's collection was one of his best yet.

Battle of the invitations

Another Paris season, another unspoken contest to produce the most eye-catching, and perhaps wasteful, show invitation. Travel-minded Louis Vuitton evoked its signature monogram-laden travel case with its invite: a luggage label adorned with metal eyelets and decorated colored straps. US-born designer Rick Owens needed a special courier to deliver his huge catwalk ticket as it wouldn't fit inside a standard mailbox. It was made of sheets of white rectangular foam glued together and featured a small figurative metal head of a warrior stuffed between the layers.

But the most inventive - and topical - invitation so far this scorching summer season was produced by British

designer Paul Smith: a silvery pink plastic fish. The message was perhaps that as temperatures reached 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 Fahrenheit), fashion-watchers could use a dip in the sea.

Lemaire's elegant color blocking

There was a light crispness and elegance to the clothes of lauded French designer Christophe Lemaire. Never veering to the extremes, color blocking was handled with subtlety - bright red with gray, black with white or dark red and burnt orange. Loose, boxy blousons in cotton poplin sometimes sported interesting Russian-style high necks.

Sumptuous baggy pants in wool gabardine had a touch of masculine class with two pleats structuring the material, capped with stylish sandals in calf leather. The designs exuded a quiet confidence. And there's good reason for the 52-year-old designer to feel confident. Since leaving the design helm of Hermes after a highly successful four-year stint, he has concentrated on his eponymous label, Lemaire, and gone from strength to strength. Revenues are reported to have tripled in just a few years.



Facetasm seeks and finds

In a collection entitled "Seek and Find," Tokyo-founded house Facetasm presented a visual and written manifesto for how fashion can transcend social and cultural barriers. Highly quirky - and often contrasting - styles were thrown together in a celebration of non-conformity on models of different genders, ages and ethnic backgrounds. The program notes declared that fashion can unite people who speak different languages and come from different cultures and tribes.

"Fashion... can connect people who share the same aesthetic and value, transcending those traditional classifications," the program read. Thus, brightly colored school rugby socks, red velvet pajamas, blue punk hair, a pale plastic raincoat, a loose black tuxedo, and voluminous layers of printed cotton shirts tied at the midriff all filed past. Facetasm has won plaudits for its conceptual styles and Wednesday's show was quite the fashion statement.

Houses continue to show men in women wear week

Saint Laurent dominated day one of Paris menswear shows in the past, but is now noticeably absent from the calendar. The reason is that the storied Paris maison is opting to show its men's designs in September along with its women wear collection. Another major house, Givenchy, is doing the same. Although this choice has been criticized by many, some believe it makes sense to group the seasons together as the Paris calendar is out of synch chronologically.

This June's menswear week kicks off the 2018 spring-summer season, only to be followed next week by Couture - which goes back to the season before and showcases designs for fall-winter 2017. Women wear in the fall showcases designs for spring-summer 2018. Confused? You're not the only one. — AP



Models present creations by Rick Owens during the Men's Fashion Week for the Spring/Summer 2018 collection.

Models present creations by Christophe Lemaire during the Men's Fashion Week for the Spring and Summer 2018 collection in Paris.

THERE WILL BE BLOOD

A cinematic powerhouse 10 years on

By Aakash Bakaya

What recent film will be deemed a classic in the future? This is a question frequently asked on movie forums. There are a ton of candidates, all of which vary from age group to country to relevance. But what factors makes a film be declared a classic in the first place. Is it an ideal portrayal of the time period it's depicting and a perfect representation of the era it was shot it? Does it push the boundaries of the film-making process while simultaneously adhering and even improving on its roots? Is it simply just a great story told in a way that only film could capture?

These are only some of the points that deem a certain film a 'classic' but they also happen to describe what makes Paul

This might be sacrilegious for some but the performance equals Al Pacino's Michael Corleone in 'The Godfather'. It is easy to compare the two due to their many similarities. Both movies are about the rise and care-taking of a business. One deals with oil while the other deals with the influence of powerful figures (among other things) but by the end - both deal with the universal currency of blood. Anderson's film is far less violent on the surface but that only tends to make the premise all the more chilling. The Corleone family only used their legit business as a front for their crimes while Daniel Plainview used his crimes as a front for his legit business. Our protagonists become so embroiled and so obsessed with their work they become lost to their loved ones and to themselves. Their businesses only end up prospering



Thomas Anderson's 'There Will Be Blood' such an acclaimed masterpiece. I watched it when it came out and only recently re-watched it for a second time. 10 years ago, I shrugged at the end credits and taught 'that was pretty good' but after my re-watch - I just stared at the screen in shock and awe.

'Shock and awe' was the military doctrine used by the US army in Iraq a few years before the film was released. The policy is described plainly as the use of overwhelming power and spectacular displays of force. I bring it up because it so accurately describes the unforgettable performance by Daniel Day Lewis as Daniel Plainview. His depiction of the stern, ruthless and at times utterly terrifying oil prospector will remain up there in the echelons of the greatest displays of acting ever put on film. Except for one, he is in every single scene of the movie and to say he carries it over the finish line of greatness would be an understatement of the highest magnitude.

for this loss and by the end both films ask a simple question - is the price of success the loss of one's soul? It is a realization that takes days, sometimes weeks to come to light but it's one of the many reasons that make these films so great.

Daniel Plainview is not a bad person, not at first at least. The opening 15 minutes is dialogue-free and only captures Plainview's almost inhuman determination to reach his goals. His work ethic is evident but his complete disregard for human life is a characteristic hidden deep beneath the surface.

Ambition is a word that speaks to all of us differently. What drives us comes down to not only the purpose but the costs as well. Plainview is obsessively ambitious and the only thing that grounds him is his child. It is his enigma, his lone light in the blackness that is his work. The oil boom of the early 20th century was one of USA's most prosperous time periods but for the men behind the rigs - a single misstep could mean the end. Plainview knew this

There Will Be Blood

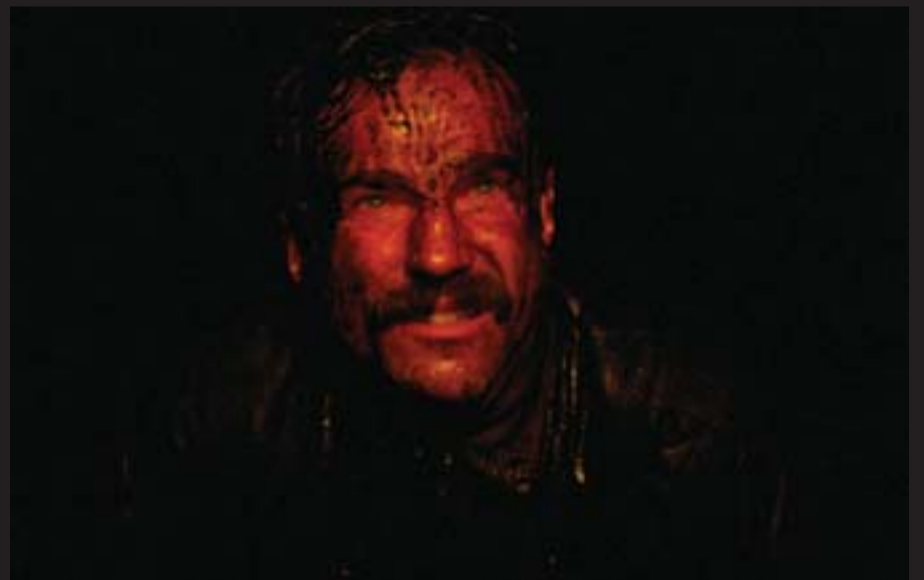


of course but he also knew that he had the skills to excel at this job. Nevertheless, in a cutthroat capitalist industry, your skills can only take you so far. So when Plainview ploughed on determined, some parts of me applauded the tenacity and drive of the human spirit. While the other parts silently protested at the lives being thrown away at the expense of one man's bank account. Like all great art, it doesn't judge or preach to you its creator's opinions - it leaves them up to the audience.

Both films ask a simple question - is the price of success the loss of one's soul?

Let's get back to comparisons to 'The Godfather'. One of the reasons both films are so highly regarded is because both are much larger than the sum of their parts. Not only are they pristine capsules of their time periods, they also embody the cornerstone of drama - the loss of one's humanity. Michael Corleone and Daniel Plainview begin their stories in a manner the characters in the story and the audience alike can relate and respect. Yet it takes a series of events to push them to their breaking points and all those traits we've come to admire have morphed and twisted itself into something different but eerily recognizable.

Michael's breaking point comes when his new wife in Sicily is blown up in her car. After that incident, Michael knows that there is no coming back from this and that if he is to survive in this world he has put himself in, he must become as ruthless as his enemies. For Plainview, it was the accident at the rig that permanently disabled his son. His attempts and subsequent failures to restore his child slowly break him and ultimately led him not the destruction of his business but of his own humanity.



It is here that Daniel Day Lewis truly begins to shine. Mere words cannot aptly do it justice. Lewis manages to convey sermons of inner dialogue with nothing but a stare and he leaves you questioning his motives until the very end. Here was a man whose love for his child was his one redeeming quality but the moment that love was tested - he abandons it. This regret eats at Plainview from the inside but to what extent? If he truly wished to see him well then why did he reveal to him the truth of his upbringing at the end? None of these answers are very clear. They are masked under an acting performance so morally ambiguous, so deeply ingrained in the human psyche that revealing them my thoughts on them would be revealing too much of myself.

The film may revolve around Plainview but is not only about him. It

speaks volumes about the expansion of US capitalism and the similarities that still ring true till this day. Religious overtones are another major aspect of the movie but on this re-watch, I felt it only provided a background dressing for the perplexity that is its main character. The film is also a sort of Western but without the cowboy heroics or overreaching tones while the cinematography and soundtrack are so Kubrick in nature I wasn't the least surprised to see PT Anderson state him as a major influence on the film. The recipe for a genuine film 'classic' may not all share the same ingredients but you can just tell when you have the right dose. 'There Will Be Blood' will not only stand the test of time but I'm confident it will grow even higher in stature when it is revisited on its 20th anniversary.





Next time on the grill, consider going dinosaur big

By Elizabeth Karmel

Beef ribs are all the rage in the barbecue world these days. I first saw beef ribs 20 years ago in Nassau, Bahamas. Looking for the best local food, I asked a taxi driver to take me to his favorite restaurant. He took me to a barbecue shack way off the tourist path and introduced me to the finest plate of beef ribs that - up to that time - I had ever eaten. Not only were they the tastiest, but they were the biggest ribs that I had ever seen. He aptly called them "Brontosaurus Bones" because of their dinosaur size, and it stuck with me. The Bahamas' road-side barbecue shack served the meaty-style, sometimes called "Hollywood," beef back ribs.

Today, the meatier short rib is the "Texas" beef rib of choice. This rib was made popular by Wayne Mueller of Taylor, Texas, and perfected in New York by Billy Durney of Hometown Bar-B-Que in Red Hook, a Brooklyn neighborhood in New York, who learned from Mueller.

Durney took the ethnic foods of his Brooklyn upbringing and re-made them using southern barbecue techniques. Think pastrami-cured pork belly, jerk ribs, and a smoked lamb belly Vietnamese banh mi sandwich. The beef rib that he is famous for is his interpretation of what he ate during his first visit to Mueller's restaurant.

In a recent conversation, Durney told me that when Mueller started smoking short ribs, they weren't used in restaurants for any other preparation than braising, and they were relatively cheap. These days, they have become so popular that they are very expensive and barbecue restaurants often lose money serving them. Durney buys 123-A beef-plate short ribs in three-bone racks from his butcher. If you have a good butcher,

you can request that cut. Each bone-in short rib can be cut into 6-8 pieces, which will serve 2-3 people, and will weigh around 1.3 pounds once it is cooked.

No. 1, you have to "feel" the ribs to know that they are done. They are ready to come off the heat once the bones have receded from the meat. "The center is soft and tender to the touch and the top of the meat should also be wet and glistening because the fat and collagen from the beef has rendered," explained Durney. "If the beef ribs are dry and crusty, you have overcooked them."

And, they have to rest a good long while - 40-60 minutes on a rack set into a sheet pan so the air can circulate around the meat. "If you set the ribs on the surface of the pan, they will steam and continue cooking," he warned. After the initial rest, "wrap them tightly with a layer of plastic wrap and a layer of butcher paper," continued Durney. Since you will be making these at home, you can finish the resting process in a preheated 145 F oven for 30 more minutes before serving. When ready to serve, unwrap and slice the meat vertically off the bone in equal chunks and re-assemble on the bone for presentation

BRONTOSAURUS BONES

Ingredients

Serves: 6

Start to finish: 2 1/2 hours

6-7 meaty-style beef baby back ribs

Olive oil

4 cloves garlic, peeled and cut in half

2 rosemary sprigs

Beef Rub:

2 tablespoons butcher-grind black pepper

1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper

5 tablespoons kosher salt

Preparations

Mix rub ingredients in a small bowl, making sure it is well combined. Meanwhile, build charcoal fire or preheat gas grill, setting it up for indirect heat. Take beef ribs out of refrigerator and rub all over with cut side of the garlic cloves and brush with a thin coating of oil. Set aside for 20 minutes to come to room temperature. Rub ribs liberally with spice rub. Place ribs (bone side down) in the center of the cooking grate making sure they are not over a direct flame. Grill covered (at about 325 F, if your grill has a thermometer) for 1 to 1 1/2 hours or until the meat has pulled back from the ends of the rib bones and the ribs are well browned and slightly crusty on the ends. Individual beef ribs will be done before the full rack (connected rib bones) is done.

If grilling individual bones and the edges start to burn, stack them on top of one another in the very center of the grill and lower your fire slightly. About 30 minutes before the ribs are done, brush lightly with the rosemary sprig dipped in olive oil. Remove ribs from grill and let rest 15 minutes before serving or cutting into individual rib portions (if starting with a full rack). I recommend serving these ribs sauce-less with a sprinkling of the beef rub, if desired. But, if you love barbecue sauce, feel free to serve some warm on the side. —AP



COOKING ON DEADLINE: Halibut Fried Fish Sandwich

By Katie Workman

I love a deep-fried, puffy-battered fish sandwich, with a tempura-like coating, but I'm not doing that at home. That's for an indulgent summer seafood shack lunch, or if you're lucky enough to find yourself in a British pub. But a great, pan-fried piece of fish can be yours with much less work, and significantly less oil. One time to do it, and stat, is when you have Alaskan halibut. It's worth seeking out - sweet and delicate, with white, firm, flaky flesh. It keeps its shape nicely even as you flip it in the pan. One-quarter inch of oil will get you a great crust, and when that crispy fish is nestled in a roll with lettuce, tomato and tartar sauce, you will feel like summer has really arrived. You could certainly just go out and buy some prepared tartar sauce if you're in a hurry, but a homemade tartar sauce is a bit of a revelation, and very simple to make. If you don't have cornichons, you can substitute jarred relish.

HALIBUT FRIED FISH SANDWICH WITH LEMON BASIL TARTAR SAUCE

Makes 4 sandwiches
Start to finish: 25 minutes

Lemon Basil Tartar Sauce:
1/2 cup mayonnaise

Juice of 1/2 lemon
2 tablespoons minced cornichons (baby pickles)
2 tablespoons minced scallions
1 tablespoon capers, drained and rinsed, then minced
2 teaspoons coarse Dijon or Creole mustard
1 tablespoon minced basil
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

Halibut Fried Fish Sandwiches:

3/4 cup all-purpose flour
1 large egg
1/2 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon hot sauce
1 cup panko bread crumbs
4 (6-ounce) pieces halibut
Vegetable oil for pan frying (about 1/2 cup)
4 potato rolls
Several pieces of leaf or romaine lettuce, torn to fit the rolls
1 ripe tomato, sliced
Lemon wedges for serving

Preparation

Preheat the oven to broil. Make the Tartar Sauce. In a small bowl, mix together the mayonnaise, lemon juice, cornichons, scallions, capers, mustard, basil, parsley, and 1/2 teaspoon salt

and 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper. Have all of the sandwich rolls and toppings ready to go so that when the fish is cooked, you can assemble the sandwiches right away.

In a shallow wide bowl, mix the flour with 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper. In another shallow wide bowl, beat the egg with the milk and the hot sauce. Place the panko bread crumbs in a third shallow wide bowl.

Heat enough oil to come up 1/4-inch high in a large skillet over medium high heat. While the oil is heating, dredge each piece of fish first in the flour, shaking off any excess, then in the milk mixture, allowing any excess to drip back into the bowl, and then finally dredge the fish in the bread crumbs. Fry the fish in the oil for about 4 minutes on each side until the fish is golden brown and cooked through. Remove it with a slotted spatula and place on a paper towel-lined plate or surface to drain for a minute.

While the fish is cooking, broil the buns cut side up for just a minute until lightly browned. Place a piece of cooked fish on the bottom half of each roll, and top with a spoonful of the tartar sauce. Top with the lettuce and tomato, and then with the second half of the roll. Serve immediately, with the lemon wedges. — AP



Garlic butter and parsley brings spring to oysters

By Elizabeth Karmel

My grilled oysters with green garlic butter dish looks as green and springy as your backyard at this time of year. You may be familiar with the flavors in this butter from the classic French escargots a la bourguignonne. And, if I was a betting woman, I'd be willing to bet that 90 percent of folks who love snails love this dish because of the rich green garlicky butter. That's definitely my fascination with it. But this butter isn't just for escargots - it makes amazing grilled oysters and the ultimate garlic bread.

If you are digging your own oysters, you may still want to heed the no "R" months advice of not eating oysters during the months of May through August, those months without an "R" in the name. But if you are buying oysters from a fish store or the grocery store, you can feel free to eat oysters all year long as they are more than likely being commercially raised and they are safe. In fact, my favorite time of year to eat grilled oysters is spring and early summer.

I like to grill oysters on the half shell which makes for both a pretty presentation and failsafe cooking. The tough shell protects the delicate oysters from the hot fire, tempering the heat and transferring it through the shell. The oyster simmers in its own juices mixed with the cooking liquid from a marinade, sauce or compound butter. This is just the right temperature, and will not result in overcooked, rubbery oysters unless you leave them on the grill too long.

GRILLED OYSTERS WITH GREEN GARLIC BUTTER

Ingredients

Servings: 4 appetizer-sized portions
Start to finish: 15 minutes
1 dozen shucked oysters
Green Garlicky Butter (see recipe below)
Hot Sauce for serving
Lemon wedges for serving

Preparation

Prepare a gas or charcoal grill for medium direct heat. Line a sheet pan with the bottom oyster shells from the shucked oysters. Top each oyster with a generous spoonful of the oyster liquor (liquid that the oysters are packed in) and the green garlic butter.

Place oysters directly on the cooking grates. Cover the grill and cook until butter is melted and liquid is bubbling, about 2-3 minutes. You can tell if the oysters are cooked if they are opaque and puffed up. The edges will also stand out slightly. Transfer to a serving platter lined with kosher salt and serve immediately with lemon wedges and favorite hot sauce, if desired.

GREEN GARLIC BUTTER (a.k.a. ESCARGOT BUTTER) INGREDIENTS

1 stick unsalted butter, softened at room temperature
2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
3 cloves of garlic, peeled and grated

1 small shallot, grated
1/2 teaspoon granulated or dehydrated garlic
2-4 teaspoons dry white wine, such as a French Burgundy or French-style Chardonnay, depending on taste
1/2 teaspoon sea salt (or more to taste)

Preparation

Mash or stir butter until it is smooth and slightly fluffy. Add parsley, garlic, shallot and dehydrated garlic. Mix together, mashing with the back of a fork to make sure all the ingredients are incorporated. Add wine and salt. Mix until smooth and fully incorporated. Taste for seasoning. Add more salt if needed. On a piece of parchment or plastic wrap, drop butter in spoonfuls to form a log. Roll butter in plastic wrap and smooth out to form a round log about 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Refrigerate until firm and easy to cut into pieces. Can be made in advance and stored tightly covered in the refrigerator for up to a week and in the freezer for up to 3 months.

Chef's note: When I make this for the grilled oyster recipe above, I drop generous and equal spoonfuls of the soft butter on a piece of parchment paper and place it in the freezer to harden. This way, the butter is already portioned out for each oyster. You can do this in advance and place the individual butter patties in a re-sealable plastic bag in the freezer for up to 2 weeks. — AP



Aries (March 21-April 19)

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



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

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



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

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



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

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



Leo (July 23-August 22)

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



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

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



Libra (September 23-October 22)

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



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

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



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

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



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

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



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

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



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Someone may criticize you today and find you somewhat preoccupied and lacking in the social graces. This is only a temporary glitch in your day. You have an innate love of the law and working things through, and you are not put off by any difficulties. On the contrary, you may look forward to hunting problems down so that you can solve them. You have the ability to work with others, particularly regarding vocation or career guidance. You can advise and guide others in all sorts of subjects, and you may find yourself doing so today. This could be a particularly lucky day. Study the options carefully before making any investment decisions. Tonight is a good night for you to take your turn at cooking.

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

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

00:00 REC 4: Apocalypse
01:45 Beverly Hills Cop 3
03:30 The World Is Not Enough
05:45 Real Steel
08:00 Kingsglave: Final Fantasy XV
10:00 Beverly Hills Cop 3
12:00 The World Is Not Enough
14:15 Real Steel
16:30 Road Wars
18:15 Tracers
20:00 Die Another Day
22:15 Insurgent

05:30 Oliver & Company
06:50 Turner & Hooch
08:30 Pirates Of The Caribbean: On Stranger Tides
10:45 The Emperor's New Groove
12:05 Kronk's New Groove
13:20 Meet The Robinsons
15:00 Pan
16:50 The Boxtrolls
18:25 Zootropolis
20:15 Eight Below
22:15 Pan

OSN MOVIES HD FIRST

00:00 Roadside
01:30 Final Girl
03:00 The Blackcoat's Daughter
04:45 Transcendence
06:45 The Haunting
09:00 Roadside
10:30 Final Girl
12:00 Dangerous Lessons
13:30 The Insider
16:15 The Last Survivors
18:00 The Darkness
19:45 Instinct
22:00 The Boy

00:15 Zoolander 2
02:00 In A Valley Of Violence
03:45 Barbershop: The Next Cut
05:45 Tumbledown
07:45 Kubo And The Two Strings
09:30 Kung Fu Panda 3
11:15 Big Stone Gap
13:00 Justice League: Monsters
14:30 Chloe And Theo
16:00 The Secret Life Of Pets
17:30 Kung Fu Panda 3
19:15 The Jungle Book
21:00 Queen Of Katwe
23:15 Mr. Right

OSN MOVIES HD FAMILY

00:15 Oliver & Company
01:35 Turner & Hooch
03:15 Pirates Of The Caribbean: On Stranger Tides

01:15 Awful Nice
03:00 Baby's Day Out
04:45 Taxi
06:30 Mr. Deeds
08:15 Baby's Day Out
10:00 Taxi

11:45 Mr. Deeds
13:30 Big Ass Spider!
15:00 Ride Along
16:45 Other Plans
18:15 Norbit
20:00 Spy
22:00 Burying The Ex
23:30 The To Do List

OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

00:15 Chariots Of Fire
02:15 Love & Mercy
04:15 Wildlike
06:00 Healing
08:00 From Rocky To Creed The Legacy Continues
09:00 Before I Disappear
10:45 Chariots Of Fire
12:45 Love & Mercy
14:45 Foreverland
16:30 Manny
18:00 Young Ones
19:45 The Inevitable Defeat Of Mister & Pete
21:30 12 Angry Men

OSN MOVIES KIDS

01:15 The Heart Of The Oak
02:45 Pirates Who Don't Do Anything
04:15 When Marnie Was There
06:00 Marco Macaco
07:30 The Tale Of Despereaux
09:15 The Adventures Of Rocky And Bullwinkle
11:00 Get Squirrely
12:30 The Heart Of The Oak
13:45 The Swan Princess: Pirate

Today, Princess Tomorrow
15:15 The Adventures Of Rocky And Bullwinkle
17:00 Egon And Donci
18:30 Blue Elephant 2
20:15 The Swan Princess: Pirate
Today, Princess Tomorrow
21:45 The Tale Of Despereaux
23:30 Egon And Donci

OSN MOVIES HD

00:30 While You Were Sleeping
02:15 Up Close And Personal
04:30 Twister
06:30 The Bad News Bears
08:30 War Horse
11:00 Up Close And Personal
13:15 Twister
15:15 Air Force One
17:30 Everest
19:30 Reign Over Me
21:45 Enemy Of The State

STAR MOVIES HD

01:00 Cassandra's Dream
03:00 Code 46
04:30 Brighton Rock
06:15 One Day
08:00 The Alamo
10:15 Dorfman In Love
11:45 Code 46
13:15 Fifteen And Pregnant
15:00 Closed Circuit
16:45 Cassandra's Dream
18:30 Meskada
20:00 Reclaim
21:45 Little Fish

BBC FIRST

00:15 Doctors
00:45 EastEnders
01:15 Holby City
02:15 Agatha Raisin
03:10 Agatha Raisin
04:00 Him & Her
04:35 EastEnders
05:05 The Musketeers
06:00 Holby City
06:55 Doctors
07:25 Doctors
07:55 EastEnders
08:30 EastEnders
09:00 Casualty
09:50 New Tricks
10:45 New Tricks
11:40 New Tricks
12:35 Casualty
13:30 Holby City
14:25 EastEnders
14:55 New Tricks
15:55 Doctors
16:25 Doctors
16:55 Doctors
17:25 Doctors
17:55 Doctors
18:30 Doctors
19:00 Kat & Alfie: Redwater
20:00 Rillington Place
21:00 Orphan Black
21:50 Doctor Who
22:40 Agatha Raisin
23:30 Agatha Raisin

COMEDY CENTRAL

00:05 The Jim Gaffigan Show
00:30 The Jim Gaffigan Show
00:55 Disaster Date
01:20 Disaster Date
01:45 Lip Sync Battle
02:10 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Life Or Debt
04:15 Disaster Date
04:40 Disaster Date
05:05 Disorderly Conduct:

Video On Patrol
05:55 Bondi Ink.
06:50 Catch A Contractor
07:40 Lip Sync Battle
08:05 Lip Sync Battle
08:30 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
09:20 Sweat Inc.
10:10 Hungry Investors
11:00 Life Or Debt
11:50 Bondi Ink.
12:40 Disaster Date
13:05 Disaster Date
13:30 Lip Sync Battle
13:55 Lip Sync Battle
14:20 Hungry Investors
15:10 Catch A Contractor
16:00 Gym Rescue
16:55 Frankenfood
17:25 Frankenfood
17:50 Lip Sync Battle
18:15 Lip Sync Battle
18:39 Disaster Date
19:03 Disaster Date
19:27 Catch A Contractor
20:13 Frankenfood
20:37 Frankenfood
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 The President Show
22:00 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
22:25 Impractical Jokers
22:50 Impractical Jokers
23:15 Lip Sync Battle
23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah



00:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
00:30 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers

01:00 Private Chef
02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
03:00 Man Fire Food
03:30 Man Fire Food
04:00 Chopped
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
06:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
07:00 The Kitchen
08:00 The Pioneer Woman
08:30 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
13:30 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 Paul Hollywood - City Bakes
21:00 Reza Spice Prince Of Vietnam
21:30 Reza Spice Prince Of Vietnam
22:00 The Big Eat - Middle East
22:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
23:00 Chopped

Show
04:50 Til Death
05:15 Bette!
05:40 American Housewife
06:05 The Mick
06:30 The Bernie Mac Show
06:55 2 Broke Girls
07:20 Late Night With Seth Meyers
08:10 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
09:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
09:50 Til Death
10:15 Bette!
10:40 The Bernie Mac Show
11:05 10 Items Or Less
11:30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
12:20 Seinfeld
12:45 Seinfeld
13:10 The Middle
13:35 The Middle
14:00 Til Death
14:25 Bette!
14:50 The Bernie Mac Show
15:15 American Housewife
15:40 The Mick
16:05 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
17:00 Seinfeld
17:30 Seinfeld
18:00 The Middle
18:30 The Middle
19:00 Last Man Standing
19:30 Baby Daddy
20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
21:00 Seinfeld
21:30 Seinfeld
22:00 Kevin Can Wait
22:30 Kevin Can Wait
23:00 2 Broke Girls
23:25 Late Night With Seth Meyers

OSN SERIES HD FIRST

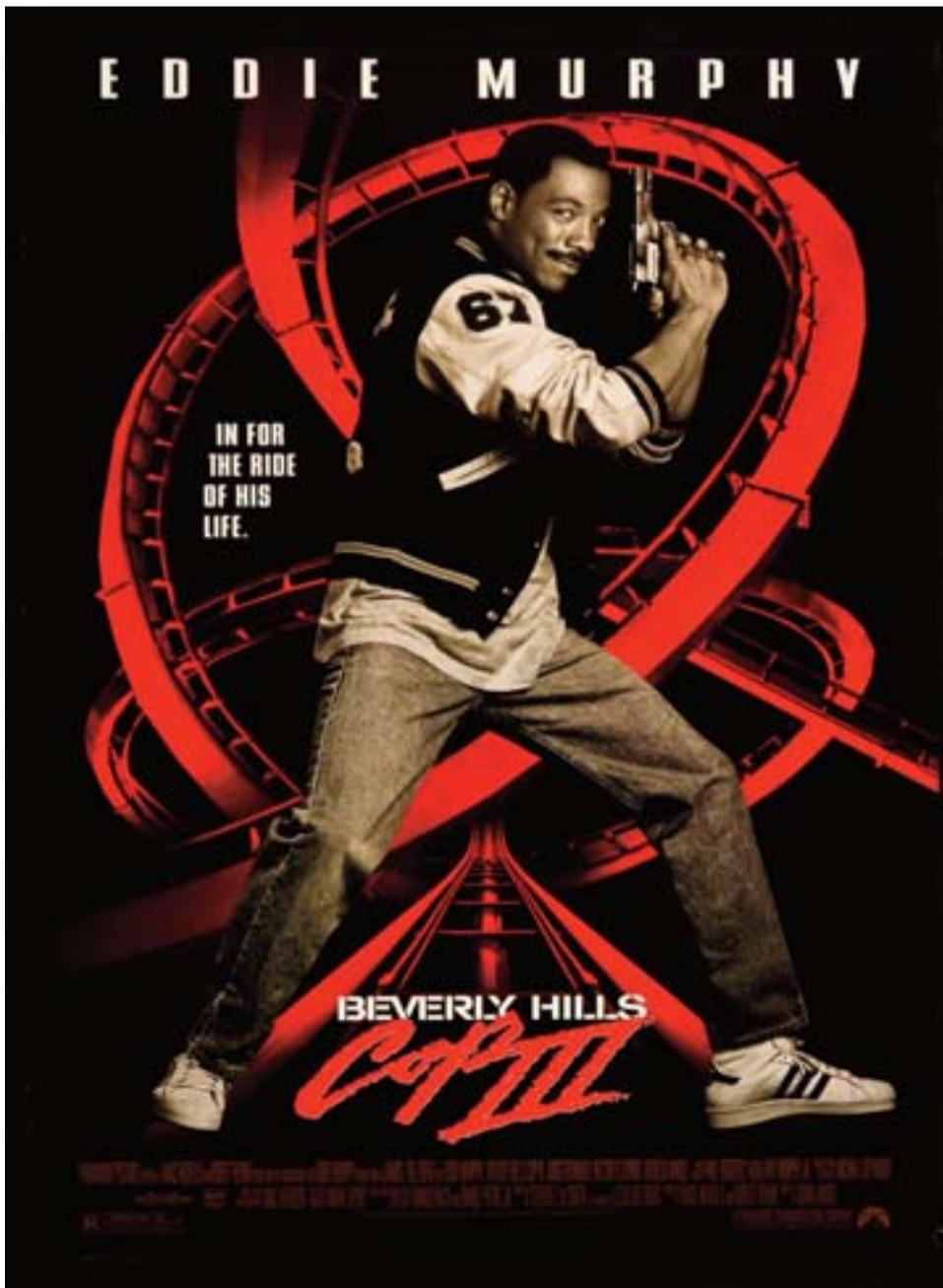
00:40 Riverdale
01:30 Beyond
02:20 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
03:20 C.S.I. Cyber
04:10 Drop Dead Diva
05:00 Good Morning America
07:00 The View
07:45 The Chew
08:30 Riverdale
09:20 C.S.I. Cyber
10:10 Drop Dead Diva
11:00 The Blacklist
11:45 Suits
12:30 The View
13:15 The Chew
14:00 Live Good Morning America
16:00 C.S.I. Cyber
17:00 The Amazing Race
18:00 The Blacklist
19:00 Once Upon A Time
20:00 Suits
21:00 Emerald City
22:00 The Amazing Race
23:00 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
23:50 The Blacklist

OSN FIRST HD Home of HBO

00:00 In Treatment
00:30 Queen Sugar
01:15 The Leftovers
02:15 No Contract, No Cookies: The Stella D'oro Strike
03:00 Veep
03:35 Silicon Valley
04:10 LifeStories: Families In Crisis
04:45 Sugartime
06:40 Cinema Verite
08:10 Jockey
09:40 First Time Felon
11:25 The Immortal Life Of Henrietta Lacks
13:00 Conspiracy
14:35 Ethel

OSN SERIES HD COMEDY

00:15 The Middle
00:40 The Middle
01:05 Black-ish
01:30 Black-ish
01:55 2 Broke Girls
02:20 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
03:10 Late Night With Seth Meyers
04:00 The Ellen DeGeneres



BEVERLY HILLS COP 3 ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 2017

16:10 Taking Chance
 17:30 The Immortal Life Of Henrietta Lacks
 19:05 Five Days
 20:10 Chance
 21:00 The Leftovers
 22:00 Mildred Pierce
 23:00 LifeStories: Families In Crisis
 23:30 Five Days



00:00 Beyond
 01:00 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
 01:50 The Blacklist
 02:40 Riverdale
 03:30 Beyond
 04:20 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
 05:20 C.S.I. Cyber
 06:10 Drop Dead Diva
 07:00 Good Morning America
 09:00 The View
 09:45 The Chew
 10:30 Riverdale
 11:20 C.S.I. Cyber
 12:10 Drop Dead Diva
 13:00 The Blacklist
 13:45 Suits
 14:30 The View
 15:15 The Chew
 16:00 Live Good Morning America
 18:00 C.S.I. Cyber
 19:00 The Amazing Race
 20:00 The Blacklist
 21:00 Once Upon A Time
 22:00 Suits
 23:00 Emerald City



00:15 Face Off
 06:05 Rewind
 07:30 Sanctuary
 13:55 Halo: The Fall Of Reach
 15:10 Face Off
 21:00 Looper
 23:00 Rewind



00:00 Married At First Sight
 01:00 Castle
 02:00 Cougar Town
 05:00 Project Accessory
 06:00 Desperate Housewives
 07:00 Desperate Housewives
 08:00 Married At First Sight
 09:00 Castle
 10:00 Cougar Town
 13:00 Project Accessory
 14:00 Desperate Housewives
 18:00 American Idol
 21:00 Desperate Housewives



00:20 Oprah's Lifeclass
 01:10 Promzillas
 02:00 Cake Boss
 02:50 Say Yes To The Dress
 03:35 Oprah's Lifeclass
 04:20 Little People, Big World
 04:45 Little People, Big World
 05:10 Toddlers & Tiaras
 06:00 Cake Boss
 21:00 Outdaughters: Busby Quints
 21:50 Separated At Birth
 22:40 Cake Boss



00:45 America's Cutest Pets
 01:40 Wild Ones
 02:05 Wild Ones
 02:35 Tanked
 03:25 Blood Lions - Bred For The Bullet



DIE ANOTHER DAY ON OSN ACTION MOVIES HD

04:15 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
 05:02 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
 05:49 Wild Ones
 06:14 Wild Ones
 06:36 Gorilla School
 07:00 Gorilla School
 07:25 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
 08:15 Wild Ones
 08:40 Wild Ones
 09:10 Predators Up Close With Joel Lambert
 10:05 Tanked
 11:00 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
 11:55 America's Cutest Pets
 12:50 Wild Ones
 13:15 Wild Ones
 13:45 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
 14:40 Predators Up Close With Joel Lambert
 15:35 Tanked
 16:30 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
 17:25 Deadly Islands
 18:20 Wildest Africa
 19:15 Tanked
 20:10 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
 21:05 Deadly Islands
 22:00 Wildest Africa
 22:55 The Lion Queen
 23:50 Untamed China With Nigel Marven

13:00 My Crazy Ex
 14:00 Evil Up Close
 15:00 Homicide Hunter
 16:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
 17:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
 18:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
 19:00 Evil Up Close
 20:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
 21:00 Homicide Hunter
 22:00 They Took Our Child, We Got Her Back
 23:00 Deadly Wives



00:30 Six Degrees Of Murder
 01:20 Murder Chose Me
 02:10 Murder Book
 03:00 Betrayed
 03:48 I Almost Got Away With It
 04:36 California Investigator
 05:01 California Investigator
 05:24 Deadly Affairs
 06:12 Southern Fried Homicide
 07:00 The Locator
 07:25 The Locator
 07:50 I Almost Got Away With It
 08:40 California Investigator
 09:05 California Investigator
 09:30 Deadly Affairs
 10:20 Southern Fried Homicide
 11:10 Vanity Fair Confidential
 12:00 The Locator
 12:25 The Locator
 12:50 I Almost Got Away With It
 13:40 California Investigator
 14:05 California Investigator
 14:30 Deadly Affairs
 15:20 Southern Fried Homicide
 16:10 I Am Homicide
 17:00 The Locator
 17:25 The Locator
 17:50 I Almost Got Away With It
 18:40 California Investigator
 19:05 California Investigator
 19:30 Deadly Affairs
 20:20 Southern Fried Homicide
 21:10 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
 22:00 Who Killed Jane Doe?
 22:50 The Vanishing Women
 23:40 Casey Anthony: An American Murder Mystery



00:20 Street Outlaws
 01:10 What On Earth?
 02:00 Salvage Hunters
 02:50 Storage Hunters UK
 03:15 Storage Hunters UK
 03:40 Misfit Garage
 04:30 Container Wars
 05:00 How Do They Do It?
 05:30 How Do They Do It?
 06:00 Abandoned Engineering
 06:50 You Have Been Warned
 07:40 Gold Divers
 08:30 What On Earth?
 09:20 Shipwreck Men
 10:10 The Island With Bear Grylls
 11:00 The Wheel: Survival Games
 11:50 Life After: Chernobyl
 12:40 Heavy Rescue
 13:30 Fast N' Loud
 14:20 Diesel Brothers
 15:10 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
 16:00 Abandoned Engineering
 21:00 Fast N' Loud
 21:50 How It's Made: Dream Cars
 22:15 How It's Made: Dream Cars
 22:40 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
 23:30 Heavy Rescue



00:00 Ultimate Guide To The Presidents
 01:00 Weapons At War
 02:00 America's Book Of Secrets
 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 Weapons At War
 08:00 America's Book Of Secrets
 09:00 Ancient Aliens
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11:00 The Universe
 12:00 Ultimate Guide To The Presidents
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 15:00 Ancient Aliens
 16:00 Your Bleeped Up Brain
 17:00 The Universe
 18:00 Ultimate Guide To The Presidents
 19:00 Weapons At War
 20:00 America's Book Of Secrets
 21:00 Ancient Aliens
 22:00 D-Day: The Lost Films



00:20 Queen Of The Chase
 01:10 Unlikely Animal Friends
 02:00 Lion Gangland
 02:50 Survive The Wild
 03:45 Safari Brothers
 04:40 My Life Is A Zoo
 05:35 Lion Gangland
 06:30 Survive The Wild
 07:25 Safari Brothers
 08:20 My Life Is A Zoo
 09:15 Python Hunters
 10:10 Wild Argentina
 11:05 1000 Days For The Planet
 12:00 Great White Code Red
 12:55 Secrets Of The King Cobra
 13:50 Wild 24
 14:45 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
 15:40 Predator Fails
 16:35 Python Hunters
 17:30 Wild Argentina
 18:25 1000 Days For The Planet
 19:20 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
 20:10 Predator Fails
 21:00 Python Hunters
 21:50 Wild Argentina
 22:40 1000 Days For The Planet
 23:30 Great White Code Red



00:04 Boj
 00:16 Barney And Friends
 00:44 What's The Big Idea?
 00:50 My Little Pony
 01:13 Qumi Qumi
 01:26 Transformers: Rescue Bots

01:48 Pound Puppies
 02:11 Chuck And Friends
 02:33 Bali
 02:47 Kit 'n' Kate
 03:00 Littlest Pet Shop
 03:22 Heroes Of The City
 03:38 Heroes Of The City
 03:53 My Little Pony
 04:16 What's The Big Idea?
 04:22 Qumi Qumi
 04:35 Barney And Friends
 05:03 Transformers: Rescue Bots
 05:25 Boj
 05:38 Pound Puppies
 06:00 Chuck And Friends
 06:23 Bali
 06:37 Kit 'n' Kate
 06:43 Kit 'n' Kate
 06:50 Thomas And Friends
 07:01 Littlest Pet Shop
 07:24 Heroes Of The City
 07:40 Heroes Of The City
 07:55 Barney And Friends
 08:23 My Little Pony
 08:46 Qumi Qumi
 08:58 Transformers: Rescue Bots
 09:21 Boj
 09:33 Pound Puppies
 09:56 Chuck And Friends
 10:18 Barney And Friends
 10:46 What's The Big Idea?
 10:53 Kit 'n' Kate
 10:59 Bali
 11:13 Thomas And Friends
 11:25 Littlest Pet Shop
 11:47 Heroes Of The City
 12:03 Heroes Of The City
 12:18 My Little Pony
 12:41 What's The Big Idea?
 12:48 Qumi Qumi
 13:00 Transformers: Rescue Bots
 13:23 Barney And Friends
 13:51 Boj
 14:03 Pound Puppies
 14:26 Chuck And Friends
 14:48 Kit 'n' Kate
 14:55 Kit 'n' Kate
 15:01 Thomas And Friends
 15:13 Littlest Pet Shop
 15:35 Heroes Of The City
 15:51 Heroes Of The City
 16:06 My Little Pony
 16:29 What's The Big Idea?
 16:36 Qumi Qumi
 16:48 Transformers: Rescue Bots
 17:11 Boj

Word Search Puzzles

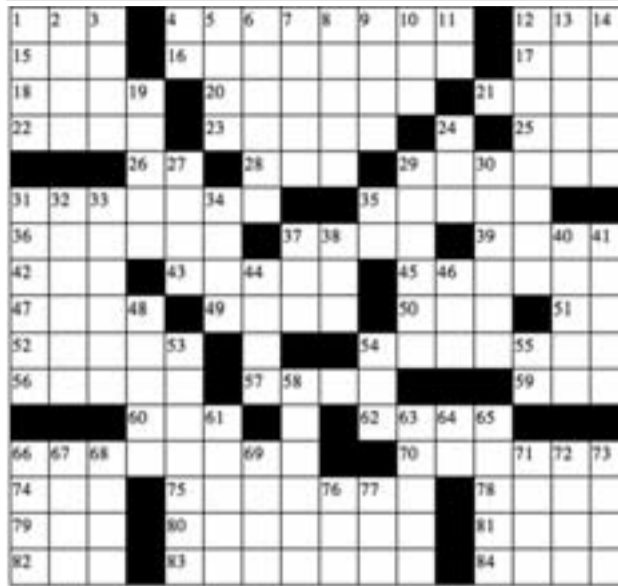
Fruit

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

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

- | | | |
|------------|------------|-------------|
| APPLES | DATE | ORANGE |
| APRICOT | FIG | PAPAYA |
| AVOCADO | GRAPEFRUIT | PEACH |
| BANANA | GRAPES | PEAR |
| BLACKBERRY | KIWI FRUIT | PERSIMMON |
| BLUEBERRY | KUMQUAT | PINEAPPLE |
| CANTALOUPE | LEMON | PLUM |
| CHERRIES | LIME | POMEGRANATE |
| CHOCOLATE | LYCHEE | RASPBERRY |
| COCONUT | MANGO | RHUBARB |
| CRANAPPLE | MULBERRY | STRAWBERRY |
| CRANBERRY | NECTARINE | WATERMELON |

CROSSWORD 1644



ACROSS

- A tight-fitting headdress.
- Not having a coating.
- An inflated feeling of pride in your superiority to others.
- Group insurance that entitles members to services of participating hospitals and clinics and physicians.
- Lacking pathways.
- Characteristic of a mob.
- Open to or abounding in fresh air.
- A person who participates in a meeting.
- A slender double-reed instrument.
- A city in east central Texas.
- State in northeastern India.
- An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
- A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- A person who makes or repairs shoes.
- Placed crosswise.
- A hollow device made of metal that makes a ringing sound when struck.
- A Nilotic language.
- Any of various large keen-sighted diurnal birds of prey noted for their broad wings and strong soaring flight.
- (Greek mythology) One of the three Graces.
- By bad luck.
- Type genus of the family Ulvaceae.
- The cry made by sheep.
- A nonmetallic largely pentavalent heavy volatile corrosive dark brown liquid element belonging to the halogens.
- An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
- A Buddhist who has attained nirvana.
- Someone who copies the words or behavior of another.
- 10 hao equal 1 dong.
- Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
- South African term for 'boss'.
- A close friend who accompanies his buddies in their activities.
- Atlantic coast round clams with hard shells.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- A benign epithelial tumor of glandular origin.

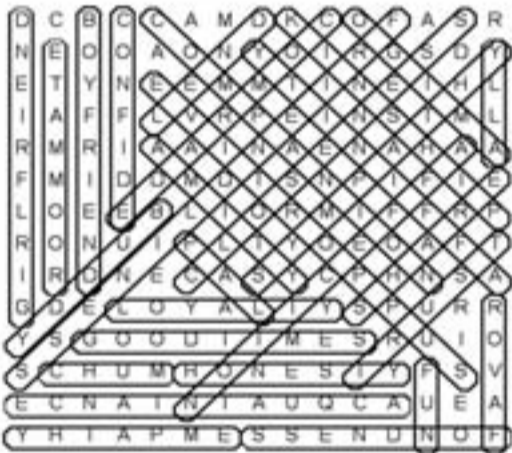
- Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
- Government agency created in 1974 to license and regulate nuclear power plants.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- On or toward the lee.
- A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
- A member of the Caddo people who formerly lived in the Dakotas west of the Missouri river.
- Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.

DOWN

- A wad of something chewable as tobacco.
- Type genus of the Amiidae.
- Meat from a domestic hog or pig.
- An ancient city of Sumer located on a former channel of the Euphrates River.
- Acute ulceration of the mucous membranes of the mouth or genitals.
- Conqueror of Gaul and master of Italy (100-44 BC).
- A port city of south central Ukraine on an arm of the Black Sea.
- The table in Christian churches where communion is given.
- Be teeming, be abuzz.
- The rate at which red blood cells settle out in a tube of blood under standardized conditions.
- An honorary degree in science.
- Web spinners.
- Articles of commerce.
- A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
- A cruel and brutal fellow.
- The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
- Other than what is under consideration or implied.
- A member of an agricultural people in southeastern India.
- 1 species.
- Of or relating to or resembling the eye.
- A decorative pin worn by women.
- (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
- A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
- Being five more than one hundred fifty.
- A unit of length of thread or yarn.
- A small faint zodiacal constellation in the southern hemisphere.
- Very slow in tempo and broad in manner n.
- Sustentacular tissue that surrounds and supports neurons in the central nervous system.
- United States liquid unit equal to 4 quarts or 3.785 liters.
- An ordered reference standard.
- A member of an Indian people formerly living along the Gulf coast of Louisiana and Texas.
- Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
- A midwestern state in north central United States in the Great Lakes region.
- Having a squat and fleshy build.
- Alcoholic drink from fermented cider ('cider' and 'cyder' are European (especially British) usage for the fermented beverage).
- Jordan's port.
- A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.
- The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- A United Nations agency created to assist developing nations by loans guaranteed by member governments.
- Small European freshwater fish with a slender bluish-green body.
- The basic unit of money in Ghana.
- An interior passage or corridor onto which rooms open.
- An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
- South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
- The month following February and preceding April.

Yesterday's Solution

Friendship



- | | | |
|--------------|--------------|------------|
| ACQUAINTANCE | COMPANION | HONESTY |
| AFFECTION | COMRADE | KINSHIP |
| AFFINITY | CONFIDE | LEND |
| ALLY | EMPATHY | LOYALTY |
| AMIGO | FAVOR | PAL |
| AMITY | FONDNESS | ROOMMATE |
| BOYFRIEND | FRIENDLINESS | SHARE |
| BUDDY | FUN | SUPPORTIVE |
| CHUM | GIRLFRIEND | SYMPATHY |
| CLOSENESS | GOOD TIMES | TRUST |

The hidden message is: CAMARADERIE

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Yesterday's Solution



BOLIVIAN GLACIER SAMPLES SET FOR GLOBAL ARCHIVES

LA PAZ: Scientists studying global warming recently climbed Bolivia's towering Mount Illimani and extracted samples of glacier ice packed with thousands of years of climate data. The international ICE Memory project team braved low oxygen and bitter, ice-cold wind that whipped them mercilessly at an altitude of 6,300 meters to drill deep into the glacier and pull out two cylinders of ice.

The weather was too dangerous for

the team to extract a third sample as originally planned. The ICE Memory project members, which have completed a similar task at Mont Blanc in the Alps, will take their samples to a research station in Antarctica. One of the samples will be studied, and the other one preserved. Their goal is to create an "ice archive sanctuary in Antarctica ... in an effort to preserve ice cores from the world's key endangered glaciers," according to the group's website, which

is sponsored by the French and Italian national commissions for UNESCO. That way, future scientists "will still have enough high-quality raw material to investigate and make future discoveries," says the site. "This second expedition has been a fantastic collective success," said Patrick Ginot, ICE Memory expedition coordinator.

18,000 years of information

The team of 15 scientists from France, Russia, Brazil and Bolivia, supported by some 30 porters and guides, faced extreme conditions in their May 22-June 18 quest for the ice samples. One of the samples taken reached all the way down to the bedrock at a depth of 137 meters into the glacier, and the second to 134 meters, ICE Memory said. These long shafts of ice were then cut into smaller lengths and taken away in heatproof cylinders.

The samples were treated as precious relics once they were returned to base camp and carefully stored for transportation. Scientists say that the glacier at Mount Illimani has 18,000 years' worth of weather and environmental data for a broad region between the Bolivian highlands and the country's Amazon rainforest region. Mount Illimani, located in La Paz department, is part of the Cordillera Real, one of Bolivia's two ice and snow covered mountain ranges. The glaciers, however, are threatened by global warming and mining activity, something locals have complained about this year. — AFP

WHY SOME AIRPLANES DON'T FLY IN HIGH HEAT

WASHINGTON: When it comes to getting airplanes off the ground in broiling weather, it's not the heat or the humidity. It's the air density. Hotter air gets thin, making it harder to take off and land safely, mostly for smaller jets. That's what has kept some planes grounded in Phoenix this week where temperatures have been pushing 120 degrees. Airplanes take off and stay aloft because of lift, the force from the movement of air underneath the plane's wings that push it upward. "As air warms up, it expands and there's fewer molecules to be under your wing," said Lou McNally, professor of applied meteorology at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

With less lift, "you need more of everything. You need more thrust to take off. You need more distance (on the runway) to take off. You need more distance to land. You need more speed to land. It gets to a point for some aircraft that it gets just too much," he said. High heat also means a plane climbs at a lower rate, said pilot Patrick Smith, author of the book "Cockpit Confidential."

To compensate, planes have to generate more thrust or power and have larger wings. Smaller jets that generate less thrust, like Bombardier's CRJ regional jets, which have a 118-degree limit at Phoenix's elevation, are more likely to be stuck in the heat. At Dubai International Airport and other Gulf airports, which are used to hot weather, many flights - but not all - arrive at night and early morning to get around the heat problem. Gulf carriers also tend to operate longer flights using larger planes that aren't as limited by high heat.

In Phoenix, temperatures around 118 are infrequent enough that airlines continue to use regional jets for shorter trips. If a plane does try to take off beyond its temperature threshold, it may keep racing down the runway and not get up in time and have to abort. And if it tries to land when the air is too thin and hot, that's not good either because it can run out of runway, McNally said.

Before they fly, pilots consult a sheet that tells them about the temperature, elevation and even humidity - factors that go into something called density altitude, a key measurement of flight conditions. Airlines can take other steps when the temperature climbs too high. — AP

POLAND GOVT LEGALIZES MEDICINAL MARIJUANA

WARSAW: Poland's lower house of parliament, which is controlled by the conservatives, yesterday voted to make medicinal marijuana legal under certain circumstances. The EU member follows in the steps of the Czech Republic, Finland, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, as well as 23 US states and Uruguay, which in 2013 became the first country to make cannabis entirely legal. Four hundred and forty lawmakers voted in favor with two against and one abstention of legislation to allow prescription-only cannabis-based medicine to be made at pharmacies using imported ingredients. The law, which still needs to be approved by the senate and the Polish president to come into force, excludes the recreational use of cannabis.

Lawmakers rejected the possibility

to cultivate marijuana for medicinal purposes in Poland, which had been included in the draft legislation. The bill was tabled last year by Piotr Marzec-Liroy, a rapper-turned-politician who at the time belonged to the Kukiz'15 anti-establishment movement and is now an independent. An opinion survey conducted in January found that 78 percent of Poles believe access to marijuana should be legal. Public debate of medicinal pot usage in Poland intensified in 2015 after the controversial firing of a doctor at a Warsaw children's hospital who had administered marijuana to his young epileptic patients on an experimental basis without notifying his superiors. The debate was then revived last year by the leftist lawmaker Tomasz Kalita, who suffered from brain cancer and later died in January 2017. — AFP

CLINIC
PAGE



Kuwait Times
THE LATEST NEWS FROM KUWAIT AND THE GULF

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

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

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Friday Times BUSINESS

FRIDAY, JUNE 23, 2017



Foxconn says
Toshiba deal
'not yet over'

PAGE 41

TROUBLED TAKATA PLUMMETS ON BANKRUPTCY FEARS

PAGE 39



This combination of pictures created yesterday shows an American Airlines plane sitting on the tarmac of McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas on Feb 15, 2017, and photo taken on June 12, 2017 showing a Qatar Airways plane landing at the Hamad International Airport in Doha. — AFP

QATAR SEEKS 10% STAKE IN AMERICAN

BID UNSOLICITED, BUT CEOs OF BOTH AIRLINES HAVE SPOKEN

NEW YORK: State-owned Qatar Airways is attempting to buy a 10 percent stake in American Airlines, triggering US antitrust oversight of deals that size. American said in a regulatory filing yesterday that the bid was unsolicited, but that the CEOs of both airlines have spoken. Qatar submitted a filing under the Hart-Scott-Rodino Act, which is subject to review by the Justice Department's Antitrust Division.

Earlier this month Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain cut ties with Qatar and blocked direct flights with the country. Qatar Airways, one of the region's largest, also stopped its flights to the four Arab countries in response to the UAE's Etihad, Emirates, FlyDubai, EgyptAir and Bahrain's Gulf Air suspending flights to Qatar.

A tie-up with American could help it lever-

age influence with both Wall Street and, more importantly, decision-makers in Washington as Qatar's most recognized global brand is pressed from all sides. American and Qatar are already members of the Oneworld marketing alliance, which allows passengers to earn and redeem points on each other's flights. An expanded partnership could make it easier for American passengers to get to smaller cities in India, and developing countries in Southeast Asia.

But American, United Airlines, and Delta Air Lines have been pushing US political leaders to curtail the growth of the Middle East's three biggest airlines, Qatar, Emirates and Etihad, saying that they are all government-owned, subsidized airlines that have an unfair advantage. Also, the three Middle East airlines are cutting into lucrative routes overseas for

US airlines. American said that Qatar's proposed investment doesn't change its belief that there needs to be enforcement of the Open Air agreements with the United Arab Emirates and the nation of Qatar and fair competition with Gulf carriers, including Qatar Airways. Qatar has been on a global buying spree of late, mirroring a strategy followed by a smaller Gulf rival, Abu Dhabi-based Etihad Airways. Qatar last year set up a revenue-sharing partnership with British Airways parent International Airlines Group, deepening its partnership with that company. It owns just over 20 percent of IAG, which also controls European carriers Aer Lingus, Iberia and Vueling.

In July Qatar Airways announced a deal to buy a 49 percent stake in Meridiana, Italy's second-biggest carrier. And in December it

announced a 10 percent stake in Chile's LATAM Airlines Group, acquired for \$608 million. Qatar plans to buy at least \$808 million in common stock of American Airlines. American's shares are listed on the Nasdaq, and the airline said that Qatar plans to make its purchases on the open market.

American's certificate of incorporation restricts anyone from buying 4.75 percent or more of its shares without advanced board approval following a written request. American says it hasn't received such a request. The US prevents foreign ownership of airlines to less than 25 percent. American said that Qatar's proposed investment wouldn't change its board makeup, governance, management or strategic direction. Shares of American Airlines Group Inc rose 3 percent at the opening bell. — AP

ETIHAD TO OPEN LOUNGES TO PASSENGERS FOR A FEE

DUBAI: Etihad Airways is to open up its lounges to economy class passengers for a fee and will start charging for chauffeur services that had been complimentary as it joins rivals in looking for new ways to boost revenues. The changes, announced yesterday, come amid a strategy review at the Abu Dhabi carrier as once rapidly expanding Gulf airlines face tighter profit margins amid overcapacity in the market and tighter corporate travel budgets.

The fee for economy passengers to access the business class lounge at Abu Dhabi

International Airport will start from 370 dirhams (\$101) and will depend on how much time is spent in the lounge, an Etihad spokesman said. It will also offer economy class passengers paid access to its lounges at other airports around the world.

The changes, effective on July 3, will also allow business class passengers to pay to use the first class lounges, whilst a previously complimentary chauffeur for business and first class passengers will become a paid for service outside of Abu Dhabi. Etihad will also

open up the service to economy passengers. Will Horton, senior analyst at Australian aviation consultancy CAPA, said chauffeur services have always been a high-cost for airlines so to start charging for them was "not surprising".

Passengers travelling in the three-room suite available on Etihad's Airbus A380s, dubbed 'The Residence,' will not be charged. Rival Emirates said in January it would allow economy class passengers who are frequent flyer members to pay to access its lounges. That followed an earlier decision to introduce

fees for advanced seat selection for economy passengers.

Other changes at Etihad include introducing a bidding system for economy passengers to pay to have up to three empty seats next to their own, following similar systems in place at some other airlines. "Airlines are increasingly asking what they have and do not sell but could," Horton said. "Airlines have been allowing passengers to bid for upgrades but guaranteeing an empty seat next to you is still catching on." — Reuters

2 IRAN AIRLINES TO BUY 73 AIRBUS JETS

PARIS: Airbus said yesterday two Iranian airlines had committed to buying 73 planes in a last-minute flurry of deals for the European planemaker at the Paris Airshow. Iranian domestic carrier Zagros Airlines signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to buy 20 Airbus A320neo jets and eight A330neo aircraft, while privatized Iran Airtour signed an MoU for 45 A320neos.

Iran has ordered more than 200 planes since international sanctions against the country were lifted last year in return for curbs on the country's nuclear activities. IranAir has ordered 100 planes from Airbus, 80 from US rival Boeing and 20 ATR turboprops but implementing the deals has been hampered by uncertainty over financing. Boeing has also signed a deal for 30 737 MAX jets with Iran's Aseman Airlines, which is managed as a private company and owned by Iran's civil service pension foundation.

Iran Airtour was established as a subsidiary of IranAir and privatized in 2011 but maintains a status as subsidiary of the national flag carrier, according to CAPA aviation consultancy. Zagros Airlines is a private carrier. Airbus Chief Operating Officer and planemaking president Fabrice Bregier said he did not believe the deals were related to political issues.

The company said the MoUs were contingent upon all necessary approvals, including from the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control. Airbus sales chief John Leahy said he expected the U.S. approvals within the next couple of months. Airbus said it would continue to act in full compliance with the Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action, and associated rules. — Reuters



PARIS: An Airbus A380 jet airliner lands during a flying display during the International Paris Air Show in Le Bourget yesterday. — AFP

INFLIGHT NET READY TO TAKE OFF

AIRLINES USING DIFFERENT PRICING MODELS

LE BOURGET, France: Inflight Internet access, a nascent market still hobbled by slow speeds, is set to take off as dedicated satellites make surfing in the skies a reality, experts say. Even bans on bringing laptops and tablets on board imposed by Britain and the United States on flights departing from certain airports won't halt it, industry players and analysts gathered at the Paris Air Show believe. "It is undeniably a trend. The main thing is to jump on the wave at the right moment," said Marc Rochet, chief executive of the low-cost airline French Blue, about the technology which is rapidly evolving but comes with a high price tag.

By 2021 more than 17,000 airliners - or nearly half the global fleet of commercial aircraft - will be equipped for inflight Internet, according to a recent study by the Euroconsult firm. That is close to triple the 6,500 planes equipped in 2016. The increase is being driven by a new generation of satellites that allow the use of smaller and lighter antennae on aircraft, as well as greater coverage by land-based systems.

This allows for higher data transmission speeds making the experience for users much as they get at home, and not the slow and spotty connections available so far. It is a far cry from the early systems that began to be introduced around five years ago that allowed users to consult emails.

'Game changer'

The United States was the pioneer in developing a network of ground antennae for inflight Internet. There, some 4,000 planes are equipped for inflight Internet compared with just hundreds in Europe. In 2016 new satellites capable of supporting video and television streaming, games and social media began to be deployed. "The ability to support video streaming on a large scale shall be a game changer," said Euroconsult. According to William Huot-Marchand, sales director at the inflight entertainment division at the aerospace firm Thales, there is also a generational change underway in airline passengers.

If previously most passengers accepted

flights as a time to disconnect, younger generations, particularly millennials, don't appreciate the forced withdrawal from social media and online access. Euroconsult estimates that revenues to suppliers for providing inflight internet connectivity topped \$1 billion in 2016 and should reach \$6.5 billion by 2026. But the investment isn't negligible, with the cost of equipping each plane running up to half a million euros.

Captive audience

The airlines which have taken the plunge are using different pricing models. Some offer inflight Internet as a free perk. Others charge by the hour, flight, or even offer longer subscriptions as a way to recoup their costs and avoid overloading the available bandwidth. With passengers being in effect being a captive audience, some airlines are considering how to use it as a means to boost onboard sales. It can also help reduce losses, helping airlines to recoup their investments.—AFP



PARIS: People wait before entering an aircraft on display at the International Paris Air Show in Le Bourget yesterday. — AFP

FACEBOOK KEEPS WRAP ON POLITICAL ADS DATA

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook said it would not disclose information about political campaign advertising or related data such as how many users click on ads and if advertising messages are consistent across demographics, despite arguments from political scientists who want the data for research. Details such as the frequency of ads, how much money was spent on them, where they were seen, what the messages were and how many people were reached would remain confidential under the company's corporate policy, which is the same for political advertising as for commercial customers.

"Advertisers consider their ad creatives and their ad targeting strategy to be competitively sensitive and confidential," Rob Sherman, Facebook's deputy chief privacy officer, said in an interview on Wednesday, when asked about political ads. "In many cases, they'll ask us, as a condition of running ads on Facebook, not to disclose those details about how they're running campaigns on our service," he said. "From our perspective, it's confidential information of these advertisers."

Sherman said it would not make an exception for political advertising. "We try to have

consistent policies across the board, so that we're imposing similar requirements on everybody." Academics who study political campaigns worldwide said this kind of information fosters accountability by analyzing how candidates compete for votes and whether election systems live up to expectations of fairness. Transparency can also deter fraudulent ads, they said.

"We don't have the capacity right now to track it, and nobody does, as far as we can tell," said Bowdoin College professor Michael Franz, a co-director of the Wesleyan Media Project, which catalogs political ads on traditional television but has no means of doing so on Facebook. Television has been the backbone of political advertising for decades, and local US broadcasters are required to disclose a wealth of details about the cost and schedules of ads. The ads can be seen by anyone with a television provided they are aired in their markets.

Online advertising, though, often targets narrow, more carefully constructed audiences, so for example an ad could be directed only to Democrats under 25 years of age. Thousands of variations of online ads can be

directed at select groups and the targeting can be extreme. Academics argue this is where the process can become very opaque. "Candidates can speak out of both sides of their mouths," said Daniel Kreiss, a communications professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "Having some kind of digital repository of ads that are purchased during a particular cycle and linked to a particular source is a good, democratic thing for the public."

No such repository exists, and the quandary for researchers is expected to worsen as more politicians use digital advertising because of its relatively low cost and opportunities for target marketing. According to U.S. President Donald Trump's campaign, \$70 million was spent for its ads on Facebook, more than on any other digital platform including Google, and Trump has credited Facebook with helping him defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton last November.

Advertising on Facebook also figured prominently in recent elections in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, researchers said. Britain is investigating how candidates use data to target voters.

Facebook ads generally disappear with the scroll of a thumb on a smartphone, and they have no permanent links. Advocates for transparency call them "dark ads." Facebook calls them "unpublished posts". Researchers said that disclosure reports from the US Federal Election Commission are unhelpful because they show what campaigns pay to intermediaries, not to internet platforms.

The role of advertising online is as important to study as the effect of so-called "fake news", which has received more attention than ads, scholars said. "The holy grail, I think, of political analysis for the 2016 election is to figure out which communications from which entities had an effect on which jurisdictions in the United States," said Nathan Persily, a Stanford University professor who writes about elections.

Facebook has such information and should make it available for study, Persily said. Facebook's Sherman said the company was open to hearing research proposals, but he doubted much could be achieved. "Even if we were able to be more transparent in this area, it would only be a very small piece of an overall story," he said. —Reuters

IRAN BEGINS SENDING NATURAL GAS TO IRAQ

TEHRAN: Iran has begun exporting gas through a pipeline to Baghdad under a deal set to make Iraq the Islamic republic's top customer, the oil ministry said. "Iran's natural gas exports to Baghdad began Wednesday evening," Deputy Oil Minister Amir Hossein Zamaninia said late Wednesday in comments carried by the ministry's Shana website. "The exports have started with a volume of seven million cubic metres a day and will eventually reach 35 million cubic metres," he said.

The announcement came two days after Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi visited Iran following a fence-mending trip to its bitter rival Saudi Arabia amid diplomatic turmoil in the Gulf. A new pipeline links western Iran to Baghdad, while a second in Iran's southwest will pump Iranian gas to the southern Iraqi city of Basra. Once the Basra pipe comes online, Iraq's total gas imports from Iran are set to reach up to 70 million cubic metres a day.

Iran sits on the world's second largest natural gas reserves and produces some 600 million cubic metres a day. But despite almost doubling its oil exports since international sanctions were lifted under a 2015 nuclear deal, it consumes most of its gas domestically - partly for lack of export infrastructure. Turkey has so far been its only export client, importing some 30 million cubic metres a day under a 1996 deal.

The Islamic republic, seeking to expand its gas market, is developing production facilities in the huge offshore oil and gas field of South Pars, which it shares with Qatar. Shiite-dominated Iran and Iraq, which fought a devastating war in the 1980s, have become close allies since the 2003 fall of Sunni strongman Saddam Hussein and the rise of a Shiite-led government in Baghdad. — AFP



TOKYO: This file photo taken on Jan 13, 2017 shows the logo of the Japanese auto parts maker Takata displayed at a car showroom. — AFP

TROUBLED AIRBAG MAKER TAKATA PLUMMETS ON BANKRUPTCY FEARS

TOKYO: Takata suffered another crushing collapse yesterday, plummeting more than 50 percent on fears the airbag maker at the center of the auto industry's biggest-ever safety recall is headed for bankruptcy. The Tokyo-based car parts giant, facing lawsuits and huge recall-related costs over a bag defect linked to at least 16 deaths globally, has tumbled for four straight days. It is now worth less than a quarter of its value from just a week ago when a report by Japan's leading Nikkei business daily said it would seek bankruptcy protection and sell its assets to a US company.

At yesterday's close, the embattled stock had plummeted 55 percent to 110 yen (\$1) from a day earlier. "The shares are going to keep falling because the only buyers are day traders hoping to lock in gains from fluctuations in the price," Hiroaki Hiwata, a strategist at Toyo Securities, told AFP earlier. Another Nikkei report Thursday said Takata, with liabilities exceeding one trillion yen, would file for

bankruptcy protection as early as Monday. Takata's major automaker clients reportedly support the bankruptcy filing plan.

The scandal-hit airbag firm and some of its car customers are facing legal claims they knew about the problem and kept silent about it. Millions of vehicles produced by some of the largest firms, including Toyota and General Motors, are being recalled because of the risk that an airbag could improperly inflate and rupture, potentially firing deadly shrapnel at the occupants. The ultimate cause of the malfunctions has not yet been identified but three factors are suspected: A chemical component, ammonium nitrate, that responds poorly to humidity; extreme climatic conditions, such as heat and high humidity; and faulty design.

No decision'

Takata issued a brief statement Thursday that said "no decision of any kind has been made" on a bankruptcy filing. A filing would

clear the way for American autoparts maker Key Safety Systems, owned by China's Ningbo Joyson Electronic, to take over the firm's operations, the Nikkei has said. Takata's US-based unit TK Holdings is also expected to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Nearly 100 million cars, including about 70 million in the United States, were subject to the airbag recall, the largest in auto history, over the defective Takata airbags.

Takata has already agreed to pay a billion-dollar fine to settle lawsuits in the United States over its airbags, and the company was heavily criticized for staying largely silent as the crisis grew. "They should have been more upfront with the public and their customers in the early days to tackle this problem and take it more seriously," said Hans Greimel, Asia editor for the Automotive News. "In Japan you have that mentality...of trying to solve things in-house, reduce the embarrassment, get through it quietly and correct it for the future but don't make a scene.—AFP

MARKETS FALL FURTHER ON OIL PRICE DROP

LONDON: Most of Europe's major stock market indices swept lower yesterday by a pronounced slide in oil prices this week. Oil has been in the doldrums on stubborn concerns over a vast supply glut, casting a dark shadow over the energy sector. "The rout in oil prices continues, and the worries this creates are spilling over into equity markets as well, which are looking decidedly unhealthy once again," said Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at trading firm IG.

Both the London and Paris stock mar-

kets were down 0.3 percent in afternoon trading, while Frankfurt bucked the trend, edging up 0.08 percent compared with the close Wednesday. While oil prices rose Thursday on news of falling US inventories, this followed heavy declines caused by the market remaining awash with crude and remain down nearly a fifth from peaks two months ago despite OPEC and Russia agreeing to extend production cuts.

"European equities have fallen again as the weakness in oil is weighing on

investor confidence," noted CMC Markets analyst David Madden. "Oil has fallen back ... and traders are worried it could bring about low inflation and diminished growth." Low inflation can ultimately lead to deflation, or a prolonged period of falling prices, causing consumers to hold off purchases in the hope that the cost of goods will drop even further.

A barrel of bears
New York crude had

dived Wednesday to ten-month lows, hitting \$42.05 a barrel. London Brent oil meanwhile hit \$44.35, a trough last seen in November. "Overall, the market remains fixated on what happens with oil," added Beauchamp. Wall Street stocks opened higher, with the Dow up 0.03 percent. "US equities are managing minor gains in early-morning action as crude oil prices appear to be stabilizing, but are still in recently-reached bear market territory," said analysts at brokerage Charles Schwab. — AFP



LUCKNOW: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi performs yoga with thousands of Indians to mark international yoga day on Wednesday. — AP

INDIA EYEING BREAKTHROUGH ON US SURVEILLANCE DRONES

MODI TRAVELLING TO US FOR FIRST MEETING WITH TRUMP

NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON: India is pushing for US approval of its request to buy a naval variant of the Predator drone, officials said, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi tries to revitalize relations with Washington when he meets President Donald Trump for the first time. Securing agreement on the purchase of 22 unarmed drones is seen in New Delhi as a key test of defense ties that flourished under former President Barack Obama but have drifted under Trump, who has courted Asian rival China as he seeks Beijing's help to contain North Korea's nuclear program.

Modi's two-day visit to Washington begins on Sunday. Trump met Chinese President Xi Jinping in April and has also had face-time with the leaders of nations including Japan, Britain and Vietnam since taking office in January, prompting anxiety in New Delhi that India is no longer a priority in Washington. If the Indian navy gets the unarmed surveillance drones it wants to keep watch over the Indian Ocean it would be the first such purchase by a country that is not a member of the NATO alliance.

"We are trying to move it to the top of the agenda as a deliverable, this is something that can happen before all the other items," said one official tracking the progress of the drone discussions in the run-up to the visit. India, a big buyer of US arms recently named by Washington as a major defense ally, wants to protect its 7,500 km coastline as Beijing expands its maritime trade routes and Chinese submarines increasingly lurk in regional waters.

But sources tracking the discussions say the US State Department has been concerned about the potential destabilising impact of introducing high-tech drones into South Asia, where tensions are simmering between India and Pakistan, particularly over Kashmir, which is divided between them. Other strains have emerged, with the United States vexed by a growing bilateral trade deficit and Trump accusing New Delhi of

negotiating unscrupulously at the Paris climate talks to walk away with billions in aid.

US officials expect a relatively low-key visit by Modi, without the fanfare of some of his previous trips to the United States, and one geared to giving the Indian leader the chance to get to know Trump personally and to show that he is doing so. Modi is also not expected to press hard on a US visa program the Trump administration is reviewing to reduce the flow of skilled foreign workers and save jobs for Americans, seeing limited gains from raising a sensitive issue, they said. Indian Trade Secretary Ria Teotia told reporters this week the H-1B visa program, under which Indian IT firms send large numbers of professionals to the United States, would be one of the one issues on the table during Modi's visit.

Falling Off the Radar

"There is a palpable fear in New Delhi that the new US president's lack of focus on India, and limited appointment of South Asia focused advisors, has resulted in India falling off the radar in Washington," Eurasia Group's Shailesh Kumar and Sasha Riser-Kositsky said in a note. Defense deals, however, are one area where the two countries could make progress because of bipartisan support, an Indian official involved in the preparations for the visit said. The two sides have stepped up efforts in recent weeks to get inter-agency clearance for the sale of the Guardian drone, made by California-based General Atomics. India has raised the issue of the drones with the Pentagon three times since June 2016, officials said. US Senators John Cornyn and Mark Warner wrote in March to Defense Secretary James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson saying the Guardian deal, estimated at more than \$2 billion, would advance US national security interests and protect US jobs. — Reuters

RUBBISH PILING UP AS GREEKS PROTEST

ATHENS: Mounds of rubbish festered in soaring temperatures in Athens yesterday as thousands demonstrated in support of refuse collectors demanding the renewal of their contracts. Authorities said around 5,000 people gathered in central Athens, closing roads to traffic in the latest protest against austerity measures imposed by the country's international creditors. Protesters descended on Syntagma Square, which has become a crucible for popular discontent over Greece's flailing economy.

Refuse collectors in the capital have not done their rounds in three days due to a contract dispute, with unions suggesting 6,500 workers risk having their terms expire. With rubbish piling up across the city, Athens municipality urged residents not to take out their waste as temperatures topped 30 Celsius by mid-day (0900 GMT). Similar protests were held in Greece's second-largest city Thessaloniki and in Heraklion, the capital of Crete. Waste management in Greece is a recurring source of contention due to a recruitment freeze and many workers being offered only temporary contracts. In Athens, refuse workers are calling for a new dump as the only current disposal site is deemed to be overfilled and a public health risk. — AFP



ATHENS: A woman rides her motorbike past piles of garbage filling a street in central Athens yesterday. — AFP

DOLLAR FIVE-YEAR SUPER-CYCLE IS OVER: BARCLAYS

LONDON: Rises in US interest rates will probably prop the dollar up over the next 18 months, but its multi-year run higher since 2012 looks to be over, strategists from British bank Barclays said in a note yesterday. The swifter recovery of US banks and the US economy after the global financial crisis of 2008 have funded a stronger dollar in recent years, firstly against the yen in 2012 and 2013 and then more broadly from the second half of 2014. But those moves have long been stalling against the euro and the yen, and a downturn in data - and faith in the economic promises of US President Donald Trump's administration - this year have brought the index that measures the greenback's broader strength down from 14-year peaks.

"We believe the USD super-cycle of the past five years is over: the cyclical divergence that helped the dollar in these years has likely peaked, not only because of the European recovery, but also because the US business cycle is more advanced than in Europe," Barclays said in an updated global outlook dated June 22. — Reuters



NEW TAIPEI CITY: Terry Gou, Chairman of Taiwan's Foxconn, also known as Hon Hai, tears apart a Chinese version of the Commercial Times during a press conference yesterday. —AFP

FOXCONN SAYS TOSHIBA DEAL 'NOT YET OVER'

NEW TAIPEI CITY: The head of Taiwan's tech giant Foxconn said yesterday its pursuit of Toshiba "is not yet over", a day after the Japanese firm announced it preferred another group of bidders to acquire its prized chip business. Foxconn, also known as Hon Hai, is controlled by billionaire Terry Gou and reportedly had Apple as a financial backer in its multi-billion dollar bid for Toshiba's memory chip unit, seen as crucial for the cash-strapped Japanese firm to turn itself around.

Toshiba said Wednesday it would hold exclusive talks with a consortium of US, South Korean and state-backed Japanese investors, dashing Gou's ambitions. Gou blasted the decision as a "scam" after an annual shareholders meeting in New Taipei City Thursday, accusing Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) of interfering with the sale and engaging in "bureaucratic politics". The ministry declined to comment on Gou's remarks when approached by AFP.

Foxconn chairman Gou vowed to keep pursuing the acquisition, telling reporters the Taiwanese firm still had a "more than 50 percent chance". "The Toshiba case is not yet over. It is very similar to the Sharp deal," Gou had told shareholders earlier yesterday. He was referring to his takeover last year of the Japanese electronics firm for \$3.7 billion, a move he described as "really worth it". Gou is known for his aggressive dealmaking prowess, shown by his dogged determination to acquire Sharp despite concerns over the Japanese firm's mounting losses.

The inclusion of Japanese investors in the selected bidding group by Toshiba will ease reported government concerns about losing a sensitive technology to foreign owners. But a Foxconn official criticized Japanese authorities for taking a protectionist approach. "There's no end to their corporate crisis if they are not able to open up," said Tai Jeng-wu, who took over as president of Sharp after Foxconn's buyout. Gou said the deal had been "directed from the very beginning". "It's a big scam of the high-tech sector," he told reporters.

The Taiwanese firm is the world's largest contract electronics maker and is best-known for assembling products for international brands such as Apple and Sony. Gou said earlier this year he was mulling a \$7 billion investment to make flat panels in the United States in a joint project with Japan's Softbank. Foxconn plans to spend more than \$10 billion over five years investing in the US, a plan codenamed "Flying Eagle," Gou told reporters Thursday. He is in talks with six states, including Wisconsin and Ohio to build plants, which will create tens of thousands of jobs, he said. "The US has land, talent, resources. There is also protection in its legal and investment climate," he said. Gou has also said Foxconn aims to increase investment in China this year to try to boost Sharp's market share in the country. —AFP

FAKE SITES REVEAL GAMBLERS' SHADOW BANKING SYSTEM

DUMMY ONLINE STORES HELP LAUNDRER MONEY

LONDON: A network of dummy online stores offering household goods has been used as a front for internet gambling payments, a Reuters examination has found. The seven sites, operated out of Europe, purport to sell items including fabric, DVD cases, maps, gift wrap, mechanical tape, pin badges and flags. In fact, they are fake outlets, part of a multinational system to disguise payments for the \$40 billion global online gambling industry, which is illegal in many countries and some US states.

The findings raise questions about how e-commerce is policed worldwide. They also underline a strategy which fraud specialists say regulators, card issuers and banks have yet to tackle head-on. That strategy is "transaction laundering" - when one online merchant processes payment card transactions on behalf of another, which can help disguise the true nature of payments.

Credit card companies including Visa and Mastercard require all online purchases to be coded so they can see what type of purchase is being processed and block it if it is illegal in a particular country. The codes are known as Merchant Category Codes. Gambling transactions, for example, are given the code of 7995 and subject to extra scrutiny. The scheme found by Reuters involved websites which accepted payments for household items from a reporter but did not deliver any products. Instead, staff who answered helpdesk numbers on the sites said the outlets did not sell the product advertised, but that they were used to help process gambling payments, mostly for Americans.

Categorizing a gambling transaction as a purchase of something else is against the rules of card issuers including Visa and Mastercard, the card companies said in response to Reuters' findings. "Transaction laundering is serious misconduct - often criminal," said Dan Frechtling, head of product at G2 Web Services, a financial compliance company which works with leading banks and card issuers. "It violates the merchant's agreement with its acquirer, allows prohibited goods and services to enter the payment system, and may flout anti-money laundering laws."

Three other fraud experts consulted by Reuters said transaction laundering helps online merchants trade in areas that credit card issuers and banks may otherwise bar as "high risk," such as gaming, pornography or drugs. Some of them say thousands of online merchants may be using similar techniques to move billions of dollars that card companies would otherwise block. "It is the digital evolution of money laundering," said Ron Teicher, CEO of Evercompliant, a cyber-intelligence firm that works with banks to identify suspect sites. "The only thing is it is much easier to do, and much harder to get caught."

Gateway for Gamblers

The dummy stores came to Reuters' attention in late 2016, when an anonymous document posted on the Internet pointed to three online outlets that advertised products but did not actually deliver any. In December, a reporter placed an order for a yard of burlap cloth on one of the sites, myfabricfactory.com, a website run by a UK company called Sarphone Ltd. The fabric, advertised in US dollars at \$6.48 per yard, has "many uses including lightweight drapes", the website says. Sarphone did not respond to requests for

comment. This order went unmet. After a few weeks an email from My Fabric Factory arrived saying the product was out of stock. The payment was refunded. When a reporter called the helpline number given on the site, the call was answered by someone who gave her name as Anna Richardson. She said she was employed by Agora Online Services, a payment services provider. Payment services providers (PSPs) verify, process and code card transactions.

Richardson said Agora processes payments for poker and works with "hundreds" of online gambling sites. Asked which references on the reporter's card statement would be for online gambling, Richardson said, "If you have been using a betting site of any sort ... they are normally processed by us."

It was not possible to verify Richardson's identity. The My Fabric Factory email came from Agora's email address, info@agrsupport.net. Agora, headquartered in Iceland and linked to companies from the UK to Germany, is owned by a Mauritius-based company, DueXX Ltd, according to Orbis, a company database. Andrej Brandt, one of two directors of Agora and listed as the sole point of contact on DueXX's website, declined to comment. "Thank you very much for your interest but I don't like to share my views and insights," he said via text message after Reuters presented its findings. "I presume you understand." The other director of Agora, Joerg Henning, could not be reached.

Reuters placed orders for household products on six other websites, all owned by companies in the UK. All the orders went unfilled and payment was refunded without comment. The sites used the same mail server as one of Agora's web addresses, agrsupport.net, according to domain name records. The site helplines were answered by three individuals who all said they worked for Agora, a company that specialised in processing gambling payments. One was the woman who identified herself as Anna Richardson. Another gave her name as Lucy, and the third, who did not give his name, told the reporter, "Most of the people who gamble and end up having our charges on their accounts are Americans. Gambling is illegal in America." The staff said they were based in Germany.

When Reuters made payments on the seven sites, in each case the reporter's credit details were processed by Deutsche Payment, a payment processor headquartered in Berlin. Its website says it is certified by the PCI Security Standards Council, a global payment card security body. It was included in Visa Europe's May 2017 list of approved agents. Deutsche Payment did not respond to requests for comment.

The PCI Security Standards Council said it was up to the card companies to regulate payment processors. Presented with Reuters' findings, a spokesperson for Visa said, "We require all gaming sites to be processed under the relevant Merchant Category Code. Our rules are always subject to local law and we do not tolerate criminal activity." A spokesperson for Mastercard said: "When we are alerted to activities that may be against our rules or against the law, we work with the merchant's bank to confirm or investigate the allegation." After Reuters approached the payment processing companies, all seven online stores stopped accepting payments, although they remain visible online.

Ecosystem

Illicit gaming is hard to detect, partly because those involved cooperate to hide what they are doing, said Scott Talbot, head of government relations at the "Electronic Transactions Association, a trade organization for the payment processing industry that counts some of the world's largest banks as members. Also, sites like those found by Reuters are small cogs in a complex global infrastructure.

"Illicit finance is incredibly creative," said Gregory Lisa, a partner at law firm Hogan Lovells who has worked for the US Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network and as a trial attorney for the US Department of Justice prosecuting money-laundering and fraud cases. "It is a very difficult arms race between the government and illicit actors and their financiers." Fraud specialists say dummy stores like those found by Reuters are not meant to be visited by the normal public. They are designed to be hard to spot, and their role is simply as a shop front to back up the bogus description. Gambling sites that operate in countries where online gaming is illegal will take payment through their own sites, but then simply program the sites to give a reference to sites like the dummy stores in payment records, the consultancy Evercompliant says.

As far as the gambler is concerned, their payment has gone to the gambling site. Only when they see their card statement do they find a reference to the bogus store. If they visit the store and call the helpline number, the people who answer explain that the transaction actually corresponds to gambling - as Agora staff told the Reuters reporter. Evercompliant, which has developed proprietary technology to help large banks and finance firms check sites they deal with, analyzed the seven dummy stores at Reuters' request. It found they were part of what it called an "ecosystem" of nearly 50 interlinked websites, owned by companies in countries ranging from Georgia to Latvia. It analysed these sites and said if it had found such a network in a bank's portfolio of customers, it would suspect transaction laundering, CEO Teicher said.

Loopholes

Such sites get around checks by credit card companies by using loopholes in the system, according to Frechtling at G2. Some banks rely on payment processors to vet online merchants. While most PSP firms are legitimate, their due diligence can be perfunctory, he said. "Some PSPs will make a basic anti-money laundering check - for example, using sanctions lists," he said. "But they may not do a full vetting of you until you start transacting. That is a weak link. Transaction laundering directly through a bank doing thorough due diligence would be relatively difficult, but at a PSP that is sponsored by a bank it is often easier."

It was not possible for Reuters to determine which bank or banks work with Deutsche Payment or Agora. The UK firms that own the seven dummy online stores were set up by Simon Dowson, whose company formation agency closed down in 2015 after businesses it set up were involved in global scams including money-laundering. Reuters revealed last year how Dowson used residents of the English town of Consett as part of the scheme. —Reuters

UEHARA GIVES UP WALK AND WIN TO PADRES

CHICAGO: Chicago's Japanese reliever Koji Uehara gave up an eighth-inning walk with bases loaded to help San Diego to a come-from-behind 3-2 win over the Cubs in Major League Baseball on Wednesday. After the Padres' Erick Aybar hit a tying home run in the sixth inning, Luis Torrens walked with the bases loaded against Uehara, and San Diego stopped a three-game losing streak. Chicago rookie Ian Happ hit a two-run homer in the fourth against reliever Craig Stammen, going deep for the second straight game and third time in four. Uehara (2-4), the fifth of six Cubs relievers, replaced Pedro Strop starting the eighth and allowed singles to Wil Myers leading off and Cory Spangenberg with one out. Aybar was intentionally walked, loading the bases, Matt Szczur fouled out and Torrens took a 3-1 fastball that sailed inside. Phil Maton (1-0), the third of five Padres relievers, pitched a scoreless seventh for his first major league win, and Brandon Maurer got two outs for his 13th save.

MARLINS 2, NATIONALS 1

Max Scherzer's bid for the third no-hitter of his big league career ended with one out in the eighth inning, and he then gave up two unearned runs as the Miami Marlins rallied to beat the Washington Nationals 2-1. After backup catcher AJ Ellis reached on an infield single for Miami's first hit, an error by first baseman Adam Lind and a hit batter loaded the bases with two outs. Scherzer threw a wild pitch that scored the tying run, and Giancarlo Stanton lined an RBI single - the Marlins' only other hit - to put them ahead. Scherzer (8-5) threw no-hitters against the Pirates and Mets in 2015, and he seemed on his way to another when he began the eighth inning with a 1-0 lead. He retired 18 in a row before Ellis hit a chopper that bounced in front of the plate and glanced off the tip of Scherzer's glove as he reached overhead for it. The ball rolled to shortstop Trea Turner, who failed in his attempt to make a barehanded pickup and rush a throw. Official scorer Ron Jernick immediately ruled the play a hit, and Scherzer knew it. He picked up the ball and angrily flung it to the dugout - not as a souvenir. Washington totaled five hits against Dan Straily and three relievers. Kyle Barraclough (3-1) pitched the eighth, and AJ Ramos worked around a two-out single in the ninth for his 10th save.

ROYALS 6, RED SOX 4

Salvador Perez hit his first career grand slam, connecting in the eighth inning to rally Kansas City over Boston. The Royals have won nine of 11 and moved within a game of .500. Perez homered over the Kansas City bullpen in left field on the ninth pitch from Robby Scott (0-1). With Boston leading 4-2, reliever Matt Barnes started the inning by walking Jorge Bonifacio and Lorenzo Cain on 12 pitches. Scott was summoned to face Eric Hosmer, but walked him on four pitches to load the bases for Perez. The All-Star catcher fouled off three full-count deliveries before hitting his 15th home run of the season. Jorge Soria (3-2) worked a spotless eighth. Kelvin Herrera pitched the ninth for his 17th save. Andrew Benintendi and Xander Bogaerts homered in the fourth for Boston off Ian Kennedy.

RAYS 8, REDS 3

Tampa Bay left fielder Mallek Smith rushed in to tag out speedy Billy Hamilton after a lengthy rundown, highlighting the Rays' win over Cincinnati. Hamilton stole his major league-leading 31st base in the fourth inning. But he later got trapped when he thought about scoring from second base on a two-out grounder by Eugenio Suarez that shortstop Daniel Robertson bobbled. It took five throws to nab Hamilton between home and third, with six Rays lined up ready to take part in the rundown. Smith dashed from the outfield and was stationed at third to take a throw and tag Hamilton. Trevor Plouffe homered for his new team and Taylor Featherston also connected for Tampa Bay. Erasmo Ramirez (4-2), who was 0-2 with a 10.06 ERA over his previous four starts, held the Reds hitless until Scott Schebler hit his 20th home run leading off the fifth. Chase Whitley earned his second save. Plouffe hit a solo homer in a two-run fourth off Tim Adleman (4-4) that put Tampa Bay up 3-0.

DODGERS 8, METS 2

Yasiel Puig riled the struggling Mets with a long look at his three-run homer, Yasmani Grandal added two solo shots and the streaking Los Angeles Dodgers took over first place in the NL West by battering New York pitching again. Rich Hill (4-3) turned in his best five innings of the season for the Dodgers, who have won six straight and 12 of 13. They jumped a half-game ahead of Colorado, which had its six-game winning



CHICAGO: San Diego Padres' Craig Stammen, left, scores past Chicago Cubs catcher Willson Contreras off a hit by Jose Pirela during the fifth inning of a baseball game. — AP

streak snapped by Arizona. Outscored 30-8 in the first three games of this four-game series, the banged-up and frustrated Mets (31-40) have dropped six of seven overall and are nine games under .500 for the first time since Sept 2, 2014. Puig posed at home plate and watched his fourth-inning drive off rookie Tyler Pill (0-3), irritating New York first baseman Wilmer Flores. He said something to Puig as the Cuban slugger rounded the bag. Puig looked back at Flores as he was trotting toward second and cursed at him, Flores said. Between innings, Mets veteran Jose Reyes and outfielder Yoenis Cespedes, also from Cuba, spoke with Puig on the field.

MARINERS 7, TIGERS 5

Jarrod Dyson's bunt single broke up Justin Verlander's bid for a perfect game in the sixth inning and sparked Seattle to a comeback win over Detroit. Nelson Cruz had three RBIs and Mitch Haniger homered as the Mariners overcame a 4-0 deficit with three runs in the sixth and four in the seventh. Verlander retired his first 16 batters but didn't make it through the sixth. With one out, the speedy Dyson gave Seattle its first baserunner, beating out a drag bunt between the mound and first that Verlander was unable to reach. Mike Zunino walked and Jean Segura, just activated from the disabled list, followed with a broken-bat single to load the bases. Ben Gamel singled to make it 4-1. Robinson Cano struck out, but Cruz followed with a two-run double that chased Verlander after 110 pitches. He struck out 11 and walked one. Haniger tied it with a home run off Shane Greene (1-1) to open the seventh. Cano added a two-run double and scored on Cruz's single. Tony Zych (3-2) pitched 1 2/3 scoreless innings for the win. Edwin Diaz finished for his 12th save, despite allowing a two-out homer to Ian Kinsler.

DIAMONDBACKS 16, ROCKIES 5

Taijuan Walker pitched six solid innings and slapped an RBI single during Arizona's biggest inning ever on the road - a 10-run fourth - and the Diamondbacks went on to beat the Rockies. Shaking off Tuesday's tough loss in which Colorado rallied late for a one-run win, the Diamondbacks sent 14 men to the plate and pounded out nine hits, including a two-run double and RBI single by Brandon Drury in his two at-bats in the inning. Drury finished with four hits and career-high six RBIs and the Diamondbacks established season highs in run and hits (20). David Peralta and Paul Goldschmidt also connected for two hits in the inning and combined for three RBIs, helping the Diamondbacks snap the Rockies' winning streak at six games and setting up Thursday's match between the NL West rivals as the decisive game in the series. Walker (6-3), who had eight strikeouts, allowed three runs and six hits. Jeff Hoffman (4-1) could not get out of the fourth inning in taking his first loss of the season.

ASTROS 5, ATHLETICS 1

Carlos Correa homered and Mike Fiers won his fourth straight decision as the major league-best Houston Astros won their ninth consecutive game in Oakland. Evan Gattis hit a two-run single in the sixth to break a scoreless tie and back Fiers (5-2). The right-hander went six innings to win his seventh consecutive decision on the road for Houston (49-24). Jake Marisnick added an RBI single in the decisive sixth inning of the Astros' 14th victory in the last 15 overall against Oakland. Marisnick had a sacrifice fly in the eighth after the A's got on the board with pinch-hitter Stephen Vogt's RBI ground-out. Correa connected for his 14th homer in the ninth. Sean Manaea (6-4) lost for the first time in seven starts since a May 15 defeat at Seattle. He had won five consecutive decisions overall, but is yet to beat Houston in six starts.

CARDINALS 7, PHILLIES 6

Tommy Pham's second solo homer off Hector Neris in the ninth inning tied it as St. Louis rallied from a 5-0 deficit to beat Philadelphia in 10 innings.

Jedd Gyorko hit a two-run homer and pinch-hitter Jose Martinez also connected for St. Louis. The game went to extra innings after Freddy Galvis lined a double down the left-field line with two outs in the bottom of the ninth, but Odubel Herrera ran through a stop sign, around third-base coach Juan Samuel and was thrown out by around three meters. He didn't even attempt to slide and was pulled from the game in a double switch. Martinez led off the 10th with a double to right off Edubray Ramos (0-6). He advanced to third on a baulk and scored when Ramos made a throwing error on a pickoff attempt at first base after Dexter Fowler was intentionally walked. Yadier Molina added an RBI single. Phillies starter Nick Pivetta had a career-high 10 strikeouts and allowed three runs and four hits in six innings.

YANKEES 8, ANGELS 4

Didi Gregorius and Matt Holliday each hit a go-ahead homer and New York piled on from there, lifting the Yankees over Los Angeles to snap a season-high seven-game losing streak. New York's skid was its longest since 2007. The Yankees haven't lost eight straight since August 1995. They moved back ahead of Boston for first place in the AL East a night after losing the division lead for the first time since mid-May. Jordan Montgomery (5-4) pitched two-run ball over 5 2/3 innings. Relievers Chad Green and Dellin Betances got the ball to Tyler Clippard in the ninth, but Clippard allowed a two-run homer to Martin Maldonado, his second of the game. Aroldis Chapman came on to close out. Ricky Nolasco (2-9) lost his seventh consecutive start to match George Brunet's franchise record from 1967. — AP

NBA DRAFT INTRIGUE BEGINS AFTER FULTZ

NEW YORK: Markelle Fultz is still expected to be the No 1 pick, though the destination has changed. Lonzo Ball wants to stay home with the Los Angeles Lakers at No 2, and it seems surer than ever he will. The intrigue, then, starts with the No 3 pick in the NBA draft. That's where the Boston Celtics are scheduled to pick after moving down two spots in a trade with Philadelphia, giving the 76ers the right to select Fultz with their second No 1 pick in two years.

Forwards Josh Jackson of Kansas and Jayson Tatum of Duke are two players frequently mentioned as possibilities at the No 3 spot, and Celtics president Danny Ainge said Boston could get the player there they might have taken at No 1. Jackson never thought that would be him, so he said he didn't work out for the Celtics. "Me and my agent talked and we just didn't feel like they had much interest in drafting me at No 1, so we felt like it would be sort of a waste of time for me to go out and work out if they were really not considering drafting me," Jackson said. "After they got the third pick, we tried to schedule something for me to get out there. But it was just scheduling issues and it was a little delayed for me to get out there."

He said he had been open to working out for the Celtics and said it was possible they might draft him, anyway. Tatum and the Celtics seem to have more familiarity, with the 6-foot-8 swingman believing he'd be a good fit on the roster of the team that had the best record in the Eastern Conference. "I talked about that with coach Brad Stevens," Tatum said. "He just said guys that are my size and are versatile offensively and defensively, it's hard not to play those guys. That's what we talked about." Other things to watch from Barclays Center:

IT'S GOT TO BE THE SHOES: When Fultz walks on stage to shake hands with NBA Commissioner Adam Silver, he recommends you check out his feet. "Pay attention to my footwear," the Washington guard said. "I'm going to have some custom-made shoes that I think nobody ever had before."

LOVING LONZO - AND LAVAR: Ball acknowledged that there might be a "target" on him entering the draft because of all his father's comments. But if the Lakers want Lonzo - and it seems they do after trading point guard D'Angelo Russell to Brooklyn - they won't be turned off by LaVar. "They were just open arms," Lonzo said of his Lakers workout. "They said they love my dad and left it at that."

THEIR TIME TO SHINE: With so much trade speculation about All-Stars such as Paul George and Jimmy Butler, there hasn't been as much focus as usual leading into Thursday on the players who are in the draft. "We don't need that attention," Kentucky guard Malik Monk said. "We're going to get ours tomorrow."

FRESHMAN FUN: The record of 14 freshmen selected in the first round might last just one year. Of the 20 players expected to be in the green room, 13 were college one-and-dones.

DULL DRAFT: Neither Golden State nor Cleveland, who met in the NBA Finals, has a pick in the two-round draft. The Los Angeles Clippers and Memphis Grizzlies also are without a pick, while Houston, New Orleans and Washington don't have one in the first round.

INTERNATIONAL INTRIGUE: A year after nearly half the draft - a record 27 of the 60 picks - were international players, French guard Frank Ntilikina and Finnish forward Lauri Markkanen, who played a year at Arizona, are two of the top international players. Both have met with the New York Knicks, who scored well two years ago when they went overseas with their pick of Latvian Kristaps Porzingis - to whom Markkanen has been compared as a 7-footer with perimeter shooting skills. Markkanen was asked about potentially playing with or replacing Porzingis, who team president Phil Jackson told MSG Network on Wednesday the Knicks are taking calls about after he left New York without attending his exit interview. "I try not to think about it too much," Markkanen said. "I've been doing my work here and I'm just waiting for tomorrow night and whatever happens, happens." —AP



LAS VEGAS: Connor McDavid of the Edmonton Oilers poses with the Art Ross Trophy, left, the Hart Memorial Trophy, center, and the Ted Lindsay Award after winning the honors during the NHL Awards. —AP

EDMONTON'S CONNOR MCDAVID WINS HART TROPHY AS NHL MVP

LAS VEGAS: Connor McDavid won his first Hart Trophy. Hardly anybody in hockey believes it will be his last. The Edmonton captain claimed the award as the NHL's most valuable player Wednesday night at the league's post-season awards show at T-Mobile Arena, the new home of the expansion Vegas Golden Knights.

McDavid also won the Ted Lindsay Award, given to the league's most outstanding performer in a vote of his fellow players. He already knew he would win the Art Ross Trophy as the NHL scoring champion. "To see the trophies up close and personal, touch them, get your picture with them, it makes it a little more real," McDavid said. "Today is a very special day in my life, for sure."

The honors capped a remarkable sophomore season for the 20-year-old center, who won his first scoring title and led the Oilers back to the Stanley Cup playoffs after an 11-year absence. The former No 1 pick beat out fellow finalists Sergei Bobrovsky of Columbus and Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby. "I'm so proud to be in Edmonton," McDavid said. "I'm so proud to be an Oiler, and so proud to play with the guys."

Third youngest player

McDavid is the third-youngest player to win the award. Only Crosby and Wayne Gretzky claimed the Hart as teenagers. Boston center Patrice Bergeron won the Selke Trophy for the fourth time as the NHL's best defensive forward, and San Jose's Brent Burns won his first Norris Trophy as the top defenseman. Toronto center Auston Matthews easily took the Calder Trophy as the league's top rookie, and Columbus goalie Sergei Bobrovsky won his second Vezina Trophy.

Nashville's David Poile was named the NHL's top executive after the Predators' first Western Conference title, and Columbus' John Tortorella won the Jack Adams Award as the top coach. Ottawa goalie Craig Anderson won the Bill Masterton Trophy for perseverance, sportsmanship and dedication to hockey. Anderson left the Senators during the season to support his wife, Nicholle, in her fight against throat cancer, but returned to become Ottawa's career victories leader.

Calgary's Johnny Gaudreau won the Lady Byng Trophy for sportsmanlike play. The league also revealed the results of the Golden Knights' expansion draft during the show, with former Pittsburgh goalie Marc-Andre Fleury getting wild cheers from an arena filled with new fans of the NHL's

31st franchise. While Crosby didn't claim the Hart, the back-to-back Stanley Cup champion won the Richard Trophy as the NHL's top goal-scorer. "I haven't even thought about that, to be honest with you," Crosby said. "Been a lot of things going on."

Crosby was sorry to part ways with Fleury, his longtime teammate in Pittsburgh. "I'll let him know how weird it was seeing him in a jersey like that," Crosby said. "I know that he is going to do great things here." Bergeron also won the Selke in 2012, 2014 and 2015. The two-way Bruins star beat out Anaheim's Ryan Kesler and joined Bob Gainey as the only players to win the Selke four times.

'The right position'

Bergeron paid tribute to Gainey after the Montreal great presented the award to him. "I think it's the way that he played the game hard and was always in the right position," Bergeron said. "Not only him on the ice, but also him off the ice as a role model, as a person, I've always respected him for that. It was special to receive that award from him, because he was such an important player for the NHL."

Bobrovsky got 25 of the 30 first-place votes to outdistance Braden Holtby and Carey Price after leading the league with a 2.06 goals-against average and a .931 save percentage. Bobrovsky, the first Russian to win the award twice, and Tortorella played major roles in the Blue Jackets' revival for the best season in franchise history. Burns beat out Ottawa's Erik Karlsson for the Norris in a duel of two 70-point scorers. Burns doesn't think offensive numbers alone determine the Norris winner.

"That's the way I play the game," Burns said. "For me to be successful, to help the team, I've got to help create offense and get into the plays. If I'm not doing that, if I'm not skating and creating things, then I'm not really doing much out there." Matthews was the no-brainer choice for the Calder after his 69-point rookie season for the Leafs, who hadn't had a Calder winner since Brit Selby in 1966.

The Arizona-raised center was grateful to accept the award in Las Vegas, where he hopes more desert kids will be inspired by the Golden Knights. "I think it's going to be great," Matthews said. "For myself, when the Coyotes moved (to Phoenix), that's how I got into hockey. Seeing the teams in California kind of encouraged kids growing up to pick up the stick and start playing. (The Golden Knights) will definitely grow the game." —AP

SL'S MALINGA IN HOT WATER OVER 'MONKEY' COMMENT

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka fast bowler Lasith Malinga faced an investigation yesterday after he compared a government minister to a monkey following criticism that the country's cricketers were too fat. Sports minister Dayasiri Jayasekera said he ordered an inquiry after Malinga lambasted him for questioning the endurance of Sri Lankan players following their failure to reach the Champions Trophy semi-finals.

"He is now under investigation for making statements to the media in breach of his contract with Sri Lanka Cricket (board)," Jayasekera told AFP. "In my criticism of the appalling fitness levels of our players, I did not name Malinga, but he has chosen to put the hat on and attack me publicly." Malinga told a television network the minister knew nothing about cricket. "I don't care about criticism from those who are simply warming chairs," he said. "What does a mon-

key know about a parrot's nesting hollow? This is like a monkey getting into a parrot's nest and talking about it."

Jayasekera said some Sri Lankan players had pot bellies that stopped them moving and that often they could not hold catches. Pakistan skipper Sarfraz Ahmed was twice dropped in his side's Champions Trophy win over Sri Lanka. Both catches were off the bowling of Malinga, who ended up with just one wicket for 52 runs. Jayasekera said he ordered a fitness test on the team after their return from England last week and found that most of them carry too much fat.

"The typical body fat amounts for a cricketer should be about 16 percent, but most of our players have over 25 percent," Jayasekera said. "I want the results analysed and in future no one will be included

in a national squad if they are above 16 percent." Malinga, 33, was a surprise choice for the Sri Lanka squad as he has played little international cricket in the previous 18 months because of injury.

Just prior to the Champions Trophy, however, Malinga won the cash-rich Indian Premier League (IPL) title with the Mumbai Indians. Malinga was the only player excused from Sri Lanka's high altitude training camp before the Champions Trophy, because of the IPL campaign. "They improve their fitness level just to bowl four overs at the IPL," Jayasekera said, referring to Malinga. "These guys are not interested in playing for the country, they play for the IPL because of the money they get." Jayasekera said he was also making fitness a key requirement for other sports before an athlete can participate in overseas tournaments. — AFP



SOUTHAMPTON: England's Jonny Bairstow bats during the T20 Blast cricket match between England and South Africa at the Ageas Bowl. — AP

BAIRSTOW SEALS ENGLAND ROUT OF SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTHAMPTON: Jonny Bairstow made a dashing 60 not out as England thrashed South Africa by nine wickets in the first Twenty20 international at Southampton on Wednesday. England, set just 143 to win, reached their target for the loss of only one wicket with 33 balls left. Opener Alex Hales was 47 not out, his unbroken second-wicket stand with Bairstow worth 98 runs. But the foundations for a victory which put England 1-0 up in this three-match series were laid by their bowlers.

They restricted South Africa to 142 for three after Proteas skipper AB de Villiers won the toss. De Villiers made 65 not out and Farhaan Behardien an unbeaten 64 in an innings where fast bowler Mark Wood took two for 36. The fourth-wicket pair's unbroken partnership was worth 110 runs after they came together with South Africa 32 for three-which represented a recovery after they had slumped to seven for two. But South Africa's total still looked short of a

competitive score on what is usually a good batting pitch. Spinners Liam Dawson (four overs for 17 runs) and debutant Mason Crane (four overs for 24) both bowled tidily on their Hampshire home ground.

'Lost our way'

"The result doesn't look good for us," de Villiers told Sky Sports. "We lost our way at the start, had to rebuild and we were 20-30 runs short in the end," the star batsman added after a match where South Africa failed to get the boost they were looking for after their first-round exit at the Champions Trophy one-day international tournament.

Bairstow's innings followed his 43, made after replacing Jason Roy, in England's eight-wicket Champions Trophy semi-final loss to eventual tournament winners Pakistan in Cardiff last week. "I'm trying to progress all the time and I played a few shots I didn't have a few months ago," said Test wicket-keep-

er Bairstow, whose fifty took just 29 balls. England captain Eoin Morgan paid tribute to Dawson and Crane by saying:

"Our spinners were impressive and never let AB and Farhaan get away from us. "They managed to tie down one of the best players of our generation (de Villiers) and a very good international cricketer (Behardien)." England new-ball duo David Willey and Wood both struck with their opening deliveries. Left-arm paceman's Willey's had Jon-Jon Smuts out for a golden duck when he pushed forward tentatively and played on.

Wood then followed suit when Reeza Hendricks pulled his first ball to a leaping Willey at mid-wicket. Left-hander David Miller fell for nine when caught behind off Wood. De Villiers, stepping well outside off stump, slog-swept Willey to complete a 49-ball fifty. Behardien pulled Wood for four for his fifty and next ball hit him straight back over his head for six but it was too little too late. — AFP

AFGHANISTAN, IRELAND FACE THEIR TEST D-DAY

LONDON: Afghanistan and Ireland are poised to become the 11th and 12th members of Test match cricket's close-knit club yesterday when the sport's governing body meets in London. It's been almost two decades since Bangladesh were the last country to be granted Test status but International Cricket Council (ICC) chief executive David Richardson believes both Afghanistan and Ireland have impressive credentials.

"It's never wise to try and make a call too early, but certainly the applications of both are very well founded," said Richardson. "They both, on the face of it, meet the majority, if not all, of the full member criteria that has been set. "I'm optimistic that they'll be given serious consideration to have every chance of succeeding." No longer rank minnows, Asghar Stanikzai's Afghanistan are up for consideration following their victories over Ireland in the Intercontinental Cup in March.

Unlike the sport's other major players, Afghanistan was never a colony of the British Empire. Instead many Afghans' first contact with the sport took place during the 1980s and 1990s, as refugees fled to Pakistan to escape the Soviet invasion. Cricket struggled under the hardline Islamist Taliban, who viewed sports as a distraction from religious duties-and famously shaved the heads of a visiting Pakistani football team as punishment for wearing shorts.

But it has become hugely popular in the country since the regime was toppled in a US-led invasion in 2001. Recent successes, particularly in last year's ICC World Twenty20, have further raised the country's profile. Spinners Rashid Khan, who idolises former Pakistan international Shahid Afridi, and Mohammad Nabi both made their mark in the Indian Premier League. Khan was the sixth-highest wicket-taker in his debut IPL with 17 scalps, and the pair broke into the top 10 of the ICC one-day international bowling rankings during the just-concluded tour of the West Indies.

Their former batting coach and former Pakistan skipper Rashid Latif said a place among the Test nations was well deserved and would benefit them in the future. "Afghanistan deserves Test status because their performances are good. Once they get to play Tests, more and more players will come forward just like happened in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh-Kenya suffered because they were not awarded," he told AFP. "I think it will be the ICC's best decision of the century."

Last year, Afghanistan's national team shifted its base from Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates to Noida, Delhi, while India's former batsman Lalchand Rajput replaced Pakistan's Inzamam-ul-Haq as their national team coach. There are nevertheless questions about how well Afghanistan and Ireland will do in the game's longest format. Bangladesh famously floundered for their first decade while New Zealand took 26 years to win their first Test. Ireland, meanwhile, have beaten the West Indies, England and Pakistan in their time. —AFP



MONTREAL: In this image from video, competitors take part in the raft race at the Formula 1 Canadian Grand Prix. — AP

'GREAT MONTREAL RAFT RACE' PUTS FUN BACK IN FORMULA 1

MONTREAL: It's time to put the fun back in F1. Formula One's new owners are hoping to dial down some of the intensity of the high-power and high-pressure racing circuit this season, swapping the paddock for paddling at the Canadian Grand Prix this month with the return of the Great Montreal Raft Race.

Just hours before strapping rock star drivers into multi-million-dollar cars traveling at more than 200 mph, team crews - and executives - traded their firesuits for life preservers in a beer-soaked beach party on the erstwhile Olympic rowing venue next to the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve. There were no protests, no post-race inspections, no constructor points. Just a few dozen team members - from mechanics to principals - soaked but smiling as they paddled their hastily assembled crafts across the murky lagoon with nothing at stake except bragging rights.

"We take Formula One very seriously; that doesn't mean we should take ourselves seriously," said Sean Bratches, F1's managing director of commercial operations. "We let our hair down a little bit - or let our hair get wet today," he said after toweling off and taking a swig from a beer bottle to wash the taste of the lagoon from his mouth. "And it was quite enjoyable."

Since taking over Formula One this year, new owner Liberty Media has said it wants to liven up race week with a more American - meaning fun - approach to the events. (Executives were also careful to stress that they want to maintain the cachet that makes the races popular with its European base.) So when the traveling circuit returned to Canada this month, so did the raft race.

'The spirit of the event'

A staple of the Canadian Grand Prix until the late 1990s, the raft race fizzled out when the demands on the mechanics increased and they became too busy to design and build their own crafts. Before it was discontinued, the "rafts" grew increasingly complicated; in 1990, for example, Ferrari brought in a one-man craft with an outboard engine. To eliminate the technological arms race and maintain the focus on fun, this year's competitors were each given a couple of wooden pallets for the structure and some empty plastic water jugs for flotation. (There also was no shortage of beer.) They had 45 minutes.

"Please build with the spirit of the event in mind," teams

were told. "Utilization of that secret America's Cup project file you have tucked away on your laptop will be frowned upon." They were required to have seven people on the boat and encouraged to include the team principal among them. (Haas worked around this by having a life-sized cardboard cutout of principal Guenther Steiner, in full yacht club attire, at the stern.) Toro Rosso wore silly wigs, Renault had jaunty sailor's caps, a third group went with a pirate theme. Formula One management also floated a team, as did the media relations department.

Crews were given rope to hold the craft together, a megaphone for taunting opponents and paddles. Other than the mandatory life vests, and the goal of paddling up and back across the canal, there didn't seem to be many rules. Tennis balls were lobbed back and forth like inert cannonballs; a fire hose sprayed teams that got too far in front or otherwise looked too comfortable. "There may be something you think is a shark in the water," they were warned by the announcer, who also served as the DJ and gave updates during the race. "Please don't get too violent with it. It is a bloke in a black suit."

Micah Desforges, who waved the checkered flag, was part of the Tribu event-planning team that was hired by Red Bull. "Everyone is in a good mood, and we'll try to get some funky stuff happening," he said. "It's good to get the community together, have a good vibe, good event. Get the pressure down, and that's what it's all about." McLaren easily won the race - good for a chuckle, since the team has struggled all season in Formula One itself. That didn't stop them from celebrating with the traditional champagne spray from a makeshift podium.

"It's a good message for Formula One: To all work together to make Formula One great," said Ross Brawn, the circuit's managing director for motorsports. "It's a serious business; we know that. But evenings like this make it all worthwhile as well." Bratches said the raft race was a natural, because it had a history and the lagoon was already there next to the track. He said he'd like to see other fun events added during the season, "taking advantage of unique circumstances like rowing lakes that somebody else might have." "This is just a Montreal thing. But I think there's other creative things where we can engage one another and really extend the community," he said. "It's a great community of people at Formula One, and this was a fantastic event." — AP

RECORD AT STAKE ON LPGA TOUR

CROMWELL: As the scores kept going lower and lower at Erin Hills, more than one observer suggested the US Open looked more like the Travelers Championship. There is one big difference. The Travelers Championship might have more top-10 players on the weekend. Rory McIlroy and Jason Day, now No. 3 and No. 4 in the world, are part of a field that is stronger than usual at the TPC River Highlands. Both had the weekend off at the US Open. Joining them at the Travelers Championship are Jordan Spieth and Justin Thomas.

McIlroy has played only seven times this year because of a rib injury, so he's gearing up for a busy summer schedule. There's also that matter of a new PGA Tour regulation that requires players who had fewer than 25 tournaments last season to play somewhere they haven't been in four years. Ditto for Spieth. For all of them, the Travelers typically is a good way to wind down.

This was only the third time in US Open history that the winner finished at double digits under par. For the Travelers, the last time a winner finished in single digits under par was Nick Price. That was in 1993, the year Spieth and Thomas were born. The LPGA Tour heads to Arkansas for the Walmart NW Arkansas Championship, where Stacy Lewis is celebrating the wrong kind of anniversary. That was her most recent victory on the LPGA Tour, but it was three years ago.

The European Tour is in Germany for the BMW International Open, when Henrik Stenson as the defending champion. Stenson pulled out of the US Open on Friday last year with neck pain, then won the following week in Germany. He pulled out of the US Open on Friday this year, but that was because of his score. He missed the cut. Also on tap is the American Family Insurance Classic, hosted by Steve Stricker, who this year finally gets to play because he's 50.

PGA TOUR

If not for Russell Knox throwing his hat at a speed that would make Aroldis Chapman proud, he might be the forgotten defending champion. Jim Furyk captured most of the headlines last year by becoming the first player in PGA Tour history to post a 58, and he did it with a par on the final hole. Alas, all that got him was a tie for fifth, but his name in the record book is quite the consolation. Furyk now is the only player to post two sub-60 rounds on the PGA Tour.

Knox, meanwhile, wasn't throwing his hat for attention. He was so pumped by making that par putt to win because he thought for sure that would lock up a spot on Europe's Ryder Cup team. Turns out, European captain Darren Clarke overlooked him. Knox is no less proud of his achievement. And the Scot has a sense of humor on the dry side. Chris Berman of ESPN usually helps to present the trophy, though he missed out on the honor last year. So when Boomer ran into Knox at the Deutsche Bank Championship, he came over to apologize for not being there and praise Knox for winning a trophy that had some of the biggest names in golf on it. Sam Snead. Arnold Palmer. Billy Casper. Lee Trevino. Curtis Strange. "Ken Duke," Knox interjected. "I love Ken Duke," Knox said later. "We play a lot of practice rounds together." — AP



CROMWELL: Jordan Spieth watches his drive from the first tee at the Travelers Championship at TPC River Highlands. — AP

CHINESE INVESTORS BUY STAKE IN PARMA

ROME: Chinese businessman Jiang Lizhang's Desports group has agreed to purchase a 60 percent stake in Italian side Parma, club vice-president Marco Ferrari said yesterday. Former UEFA Cup winners Parma have earned a Serie B berth next season, two years after bankruptcy led to demotion to the Italian fourth division. Ferrari told a press conference in the north of Italy that the club had been looking for "a foreign partner" for several months. "We identified this partner in the person of Jiang Lizhang, president of the Desports group," he said. Jiang already owns Spanish La Liga club Grenada and

is co-owner of the Minnesota Timberwolves NBA franchise. He is the founder of Double-Edged Sports (DeSports), a company specialising in marketing and sports rights. Desports recently acquired retransmission rights for Champions League and Europa League matches in China for the period 2018-2021.

"The first phase of the operation has ended in recent weeks with the arrival of this new partner and a capital increase which has led to a minority stake of 30 per cent," explained Ferrari. "The transaction is expected to be concluded in the first week of July with an increase in its

stake to 60 percent." Both Inter Milan and AC Milan are already under Chinese ownership. Suning, a leading Chinese appliance retailer, controlled by billionaire

Zhang Jindong, spent 270 million euros (\$301m) to buy a 68 percent stake in Inter Milan. And in April AC Milan began life under Chinese ownership in a 740 million-euro deal, which ended former Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's 31-year reign as the club's owner and president and saw businessman Li Yonghong take a 99.93 percent stake in the club. Parma-winners of the second-tier

European competition in 1995 and 1999 won a play-off against Alessandria 2-0 in Florence last Saturday to win promotion to Serie B. It was the second consecutive promotion for the club who finished sixth in Serie A in 2014 but could not play in Europe the following season because of financial fair-play rules. The cash-strapped side finished bottom of the Italian top flight in 2015 and was declared bankrupt in March that year with club president Giampetro Manenti jailed. In July 2015 Parma Calcio 1913 was created and admitted into the Italian fourth division.—AFP

QUEIROZ, FROM MAN UNITED ENFORCER TO MR WORLD CUP

SEOUL: Carlos Queiroz was once Alex Ferguson's formidable number two at Manchester United, but he has now carved out a new reputation: the man who can take your team to the World Cup. After Queiroz's Iran became only the second team to qualify for Russia 2018, he is savouring the unique feat of reaching four World Cups with three different teams. It's a record that hasn't gone unnoticed, with Asian champions Australia reportedly interested in Queiroz's services once Ange Postecoglou departs next year.

"I feel very proud and honoured with that (World Cup) achievement," the grizzled Portuguese told AFP by telephone. "Other coaches have qualified four times but not with different teams." The former Real Madrid boss has now qualified with South Africa in 2002, Portugal in 2010 — leading them to the last 16 — and now twice with Iran, after he also took them to Brazil 2014. This month's 2-0 win over Uzbekistan made Iran the first Asian team to qualify for Russia, clinching top spot in Group A with two games to spare and without a single goal conceded in 720 minutes of football.

On top of that, Iran, who will now contest back-to-back World Cups for the first time, have been Asia's number one team in the FIFA rankings for four years, helped by a growing number of players succeeding in Europe. Walter Winterbottom took England to four successive World Cups starting from 1950, a record that was equalled by West Germany's Helmut Schon from 1966 to 1978. Oscar Tabarez could also make it four with Uruguay if the South Americans reach Russia. But nobody has done it with three different countries, apart from Mozambique-born Queiroz. "To do it with these different countries, cultures and mentalities is at least, unique," Queiroz said. "Each country has its own challenges, its own strengths and weaknesses."

'Football animal'

The 64-year-old became Iran coach in 2011 and has weathered cultural and logistical difficulties to find success with Team Melli, helped by the talent the country produces and the passion of the fans. "The fans love the team and the excitement they provide is special," said Queiroz. "When we play at home the atmosphere is great and there can be 100,000 fans. When we qualified, there were celebrations in Tehran all night."—AFP



Iran's Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz



MOSCOW: Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring his side's first goal during the Confederations Cup, Group A soccer match between Russia and Portugal, at the Spartak Stadium. — AP

TAX PROBLEMS? WHAT PROBLEMS? RONALDO SCORES IN PORTUGAL WIN

MOSCOW: Cristiano Ronaldo brushed aside his off-field problems by scoring the winner as Portugal edged out hosts Russia 1-0 at the Confederations Cup on Wednesday, before Oribe Peralta gave Mexico a come-from-behind 2-1 win over New Zealand. Ronaldo's eighth-minute header in Moscow gave Portugal their first win in the tournament and victory over New Zealand on Saturday would secure a semi-final spot.

Goals from Peralta and Raul Jimenez saw Mexico move top of Group A later in the day, above Portugal on goals scored, and knock New Zealand out of the competition. Ronaldo let his football do the talking after the recent tax-evasion accusations that have left his Real Madrid future uncertain, with his second man-of-the-match performance following Sunday's 2-2 draw with Mexico. The forward said Portugal were worthy winners after surviving a second-half Russian fight-back.

"We're very happy, it's the first time Portugal have won in Russia. The team played very well against a side playing at home with the support of their fans.

But we were better, we had more chances," he said. Ronaldo is accused by Spanish authorities of having evaded paying 14.7 million euros (\$16.5m) in tax and has been summoned to appear in court next month in Madrid.

But he was all smiles, escorting a young mascot in a wheelchair out onto the Moscow pitch before netting his first Confederations Cup goal. Portugal's win came at a cost though, as Borussia Dortmund defender Raphael Guerreiro had to be helped off on 65 minutes with a suspected broken leg. "He was hospitalised and we think he broke his leg," said Portugal coach Fernando Santos. Guerreiro's towering cross from the left flank hung in the air and found Ronaldo, who rose at the far post to head back across Igor Akinfeev.

Only a superb one-handed reflex save from Akinfeev, who made his 100th international appearance, stopped Andre Silva's bullet header just after the break. The hosts were unlucky not to force an equaliser after a string of chances in a strong second-half display. Defender Georgy Dzhihiya headed nar-

rowly over the bar from the game's final corner in added time.

Mexico send New Zealand packing

Later on Wednesday, Mexico needed second-half goals by Benfica's Jimenez and Peralta to grab victory over New Zealand in a bad-tempered match at Sochi. Juan Carlos Osorio's side now just need a draw against Russia in Kazan on Saturday to be sure of reaching the semi-finals. The Kiwis' superb first-half display and Chris Wood's shock goal rattled Mexico and a tense match boiled over with a mass brawl in the dying stages.

The match turned when Porto midfielder Hector Herrera came on for the second half and Mexico's attacks started to flow. "I am proud of what my team did, it's normal to have to suffer at this level, but we deserved to win," said Osorio. "We know how to adapt to different opponents." New Zealand coach Anthony Hudson had vowed they would bounce back after Saturday's opening 2-0 defeat by Russia and his team was true to his word.—AFP

AL ROUDHAN FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT



KUWAIT: Organizer of the Roudhan football tournament Abdullah Al-Roudhan (C) gives a bisht (traditional Kuwaiti cloak worn in ceremonies) to Spanish professional footballer Iker Casillas Fernandez (R), goalkeeper for Portuguese club Porto and the Spain national team and former Real Madrid goalkeeper, and goalkeeper Essam Al-Hadari of Egypt (L), during the Al-Roudhan championship in Kuwait City on June 21, 2017. The Roudhan football tournament is held annually in Kuwait during Ramadan and hosts iconic international football players as guests to participate in the event.

— photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



OSCAR GETS EIGHT-GAME BAN OVER CHINA BRAWL

SHANGHAI: Brazilian international Oscar was banned for eight games yesterday for triggering a spectacular mass brawl in the Chinese Super League between his Shanghai SIPG side and Guangzhou R&F. After the former Chelsea midfielder appeared twice to fire the ball deliberately at Guangzhou players on Sunday, he was rushed by several opponents. Oscar fell to the ground and a melee broke out around him.

The Chinese Football Association issued lengthy bans to four players, including the 25-year-old Oscar, and fined him 40,000 yuan

(\$6,000). Oscar, who was not booked at the time of the scrap, is one of the most high-profile players in the Chinese Super League (CSL) after he joined SIPG for an Asian-record 60 million euros this season. But that has not saved him from the mammoth ban as the CFA said he was responsible for sparking the ugly incident just before half-time in the away league match.

Oscar will not return to CSL action until late August. Among the games he will miss will be against Guangzhou Evergrande on July 22, as Andre Villas-Boas's second-placed

SIPG attempt to keep up the pressure on the league leaders. "It very badly impacted the Chinese Super League match," the CFA said in a statement, referring to Oscar's key role in the dispute in which players, coaching staff and substitutes poured off the benches and waded in.

Two players, one from each side, were sent off for their part in the brawl. One of them, Shanghai's Fu Huan, was banned for six CSL games, and red-carded Guangzhou R&F player Li Tixiang got five games. Guangzhou's Chen Zhizhao, who seemed to

push Oscar to the floor, was banned for seven league games and both clubs were fined and warned about their behaviour. Oscar was unhurt and the fiery encounter finished 1-1 to leave SIPG four points behind reigning champions Guangzhou Evergrande.

Villas-Boas defended Oscar afterwards, saying he was "just being passionate", and Oscar denied he purposely aimed the ball at R&F players. "Disrespect the opponent? It is not true. I am a very dedicated player and respect sportsmanship," Sina Sports website quoted the player as saying. —AFP

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Sports



Abdullah Al-Roudhan gives a bisht to Spanish professional footballer Iker Casillas Fernandez during the Al-Roudhan championship in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al Zayyat